

“Set thee up waymarks, make thee high heaps, set thine heart toward the highway, even the way which thou wentest” (Jer. 31:21)

The Living Way

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*Upholding the Original Christadelphian Faith concerning:
“the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ” (Acts 8:12)*

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“I saw, and behold, a white horse; and he that sat up on him had a bow: and a crown was given unto him: and he went forth conquering, and to conquer” (Rev. 6:2)

The following piece is from an item written by Bro J Thomas in the style of a dialogue between two men, Josedec who is being taught by Elpis, and is included for the interest of our readers

KNOWING IN PART—THE ENIGMA

“We know in part, and we prophesy in part. But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away. When I was a child, I spake as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things. For now we see through a glass in an enigma; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known” (1Cor 13:9-12).

Josedec: But an inspired apostle has said “we know in part”.

Elpis: He did not say, “We know the gospel in part before baptism,” as you quote these words out of their connexion to prove. The apostle is discoursing about “spiritual gifts,” such as, “the word of wisdom,” or “prophecy,” “kinds of tongues,” and “the word of knowledge” (1Cor 11:10, 13:8). These were coveted by the members of the “One Body;” some of whom only were privileged to possess them for the benefit of all (11:7). He pointed out the best of the spiritual gifts, and exhorted them to seek after those, nevertheless, he would show them a way more excellent than even the possession of the best of the spiritual gifts (verse 31).

This way, which should abide when the gifts “failed,” “ceased,” or “vanished away,” consisted of “Faith, Hope and Charity; the greatest of which is charity.” (13:13). He then defined what he meant by “charity;” (and according to his definition of it, the most loving pietists of the churches of the Gentiles are utter strangers to it;) and said “Charity never faileth;” but that “prophecies,” “tongues,” and “knowledge” would fail, cease and vanish away. He then gives the reason why these gifts should be withheld; and after which withholding, faith, hope and charity would continue: “because,” says he “we know in part, and we prophesy in part; but when perfection comes, then that which is in part shall be annulled.” (13:9,10).

KNOWING IN PART

Now, the word rendered “in part” does not bear the sense you attach to it. It is the same phrase as in 1 Corinthians 12:27, which is translated “in particular,” and refers to the same thing; namely, to the partial manifestation of the Spirit through the Spiritual men of the congregations; which consisted of those to whom the Spirit severally divided the gifts as he pleased (11:11) and the idiotoi, or those “occupying the room of the private person,” or plebian; rendered the “unlearned” in chapter 23:16. These two classes of the Temple of God, the public and the private brethren, having been all, by the spirit’s teaching through the apostles, baptised into one body (12:13) constituted that body in Christ; but the public brethren were “the members in particular,” the foot, the ear, the eye, the hand, the nose, the tongue &c.—of the whole; and constituted thus by the special gifts, called “spiritual”.

This was an imperfect state of the “One Body,” whose prophesyings, faculty of speaking foreign languages, and revelations, were individual, or “in part,” and not general.

But there is a time coming, when perfection will have come; and then the Body of Christ will no longer “know in part, and prophesy in part,” as in apostolic times; but all the individuals then composing it, will, without exception, be qualified in a higher degree than the apostolic “members in particular;” so that the least in the kingdom of the heavens will be endowed with greater accomplishments than all the Spiritual Men of Paul’s day put together. In the apostle’s day, even with the Spirit’s manifestations through a part of the body, or “members in particular;” they could only say, “We see at present by a mirror in an enigma, but then (when the reality is manifested) face to face; now I am skilled (speaking for the Body,) by mirror-like partial manifestation but then (when perfection is come) I shall know perfectly as also I shall be known perfectly,” having then attained perfection by resurrection unto incorruptibility and life (Phil 3:11,12, Luke 8:32).

SEEING BY A MIRROR IN AN ENIGMA

Can the miserable abortions, my dear Josedec, that pass current for Christians in our day, say, that they see by a mirror in an enigma - “with unveiled face beholding in a mirror the glory of the Lord” - do then see the image of that glory there, being transformed into it, “from glory,” comprehended by faith, “to glory,” inherited when perfection is obtained (2Cor 3:18, Col 3:10)? What sort of a school of Christ is that you talk about, where the pupils after all the ‘new and elevated lessons in the gospel of the kingdom,’ they are said to receive, are as ignorant to their last breath, of the Image of Glory mirrorized in the gospel, as though there were no image there? Will you be content to remain in that school of the Outer Court, the professors of which have not yet attained to the great principles of the Truth? If I could, I would seize you by the hand as another Lot, and bid you to escape to Zoar, nor look back at your old gloomy and dingy cloisters, at the peril of your life.

Josedec: the things you bring to my ears interest me greatly; and in proportion as I perceive their import, I confess, I lose my admiration for the things which are behind. Will you be kind enough to add a little more in connexion with the mirror?

THE MIRROR

Elpis: With great pleasure. When you take up a position before a mirror, you see delineated thereon by the rays of light passing from real objects, a beautiful and exact representation, or image, of the landscape behind you. You study it artistically; and the more you consider it, and dwell upon it, the more is your admiration heightened and the more you appreciate its excellencies, until by this operation this picture is transferred, as it were, from the mirror to the “fleshly table of your heart,” mind, or sensorium; which becomes to you a mirror, upon which also an image of the original is vividly impressed.

Such is the process by which realities that have existed, do exist, and shall exist, are stamped, written, engraved, or impressed upon the heart of man. The fleshy tables of the heart, by way of access to which is ordinarily by the five senses (extraordinarily by the direct operation of the Spirit upon “the tables” themselves) are in the aggregate the mirror. Now through the apostolic ministry of the Word, the Spirit of the living God, impinged “the light of the glad tidings of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God”

upon that mirror. In this way “it shone into” the mirrors of the unmanifested mathetes. The beauties and magnificence of Christ’s glory fixed their attention, and they began to contemplate them artistically; until becoming so captivated with “the image,” its attributes began to shine forth from within them, and “they were known and read (or recognised) of all men,” who themselves understood the truth (2Cor 4:4; 3:11).

In this way, the Image of God, which is the Christ in his glory and sufferings, was depicted upon the fleshly tables of their hearts, and so long as it remained there, he “dwelt in their hearts by faith.” (Eph 3:17) - “the hope of glory” (Col 1:27). Here was a new man formed within them by the creating spirit, and what they now had to do, was to put on this new man by baptism into him (3:10). When they looked into their own hearts to see if they were in the faith, they beheld with unveiled face, as in a mirror, the Image of the Glory there, “in an enigma”.

THE ENIGMA

When Miriam and Aaron spoke against Moses, Jehovah summoned the three before him, and addressed them, saying, “If there be a prophet among you (Israelites), I, Jehovah, will make myself known unto him in a dream. Not so my servant Moses, who is faithful over all mine house. I will speak with him mouth to mouth, even in sight and not in riddles, and the Image of Jehovah shall he behold” (Num 32:6-8). “Not in riddles, and the Image of Jehovah shall he behold,” is rendered by the King of Egypt’s seventy translators, “not through enigmas and the glory of the Lord shall he behold.” By vision and dream was the enigmatical mode of revelation which Jehovah communicated his truth to the prophets, much of which they could not unravel. It was too enigmatical for them, and even for Angels (1Pet 1:10-12). This enigma was the salvation of lives in connection with the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow. The Image of Jehovah came into Moses’ sight on the Mount of Transfiguration; Moses spake with him mouth to mouth, of his decease, which he should accomplish at Jerusalem (Luke 9:31). This was the basis of the enigma; for without that decease there would be no salvation of lives, or souls, no joint-heirship with the Christ in his kingdom and glory. Isaiah, in vision, saw Jesus, “the King, Jehovah of armies,” as contemporary with “the whole earth being full of his glory” (Is 6:3-5, Jno 12:41); but he did not see him in glory at the head of his armies, in the enigma of his decease and resurrection for the remission of the sins of those Jews and Gentiles who should share with him in that glory. It was revealed to Isaiah and the rest of the prophets, that their diligent search for a solution to this enigma, was in vain; inasmuch as it was purposely hidden from them; but would be revealed at a future time.

Josedec: This was the reason then, why the unsolved enigma is styled by Paul, “the hidden wisdom of God in a mystery, which God ordained before the ages unto our glory” (1Cor 2:7)?

Elpis: It is. And in another place he styles it, the mystery of the Christ, which in other generations was not made known to the sons of men as it is now revealed to the holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit (Eph 3:5); “and made manifest to his saints; to whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory” (Col 1:25-27).

THE MYSTERY OF CHRIST

Before the sending forth of the apostles, “the Mystery of the Christ” was not made known as they preached it; and when they announced it, they set forth the riches of its glory, which, when believed, became the hope of the believer. By their word, or teaching, the Spirit of the living God, daguerretyped the Mystery of the Christ upon the fleshy plates of their intellectual and moral sentiments and faculties, styled in the aggregate “the heart”. They saw that the purpose of God was to set up a kingdom in Judea, which would have dominion over the whole earth: and that its administration should be justice and righteousness. They saw the Son of God, the Lord (eth-Adonai) highly exalted, sitting upon the throne of the kingdom, which was Jehovah’s Davidian kingdom, in which was Jehovah’s Davidian throne, in the enjoyment of omnipotence, and riches, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing, for ever more (Rev 5:12).

They saw Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets, and many from the four corners of the earth (Luke 8:28) associated with him in his kingdom, and ascribing glory, honour, and thanks to him, because he had redeemed them out of all nations, peoples and tongues, and had made them God’s kings and priests to reign on earth with him (Rev 4:9, 9:10). They saw that both the King and his Associates were clothed in robes which had been made white and free from all spot, wrinkle, stain, or blemish, in the blood of One slain as a lamb in sacrifice (Eph 5:27; Rev 7:14) and declared to be all undefiled, guileless, and without fault before the throne of God (Rev 14:3,4,5); and well-fitted therefore, to rule the nations with a rod of iron (Rev 2:26) in righteousness, as their own peculiar and absolutely exclusive inheritance (Ps 2:8,9; 25:13; 111:6; Is 54 to the end).

When they contemplated the Spirit’s Daguerreotype artistically, they saw that the King, sitting upon the throne high and lifted up, was no other than the deceased Nazarene, named Jesus; and that he was, therefore Son of David and Son of God. They perceived that he attained to his high exaltation over the mundane system, as the heir of certain wills and testaments made by Jehovah, the God of Israel, with Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, David, and their seed (Gen 11:7, 1,3,7; 13:15; 15:7,8,21; 17:5,8; 18:18; 26:3,4; 22:17,18; 28:4,13,14; 2Sam 7:12,16; 1Chron 17:11,14) as “the heir of all things,” and that, as he was “God manifested in flesh,” this decease was the death of THE TESTATOR of those Wills, which came into force thereby, and acquired a sanctifying efficacy for him and his joint-heirs (Heb 9:16,17; 10:10,14; Mat 26:28). Sanctified by the covenant with Abraham, inaugurated and made purifying by the death and resurrection of his seed, this federal person and all in him, when that all is filled up, entered, they perceived, on the possession of the kingdom and glory by resurrection from among the dead, or by transformation if living, temporary with the event.

Here, then, were the kingdom and glory set forth in an enigma, styled by Paul, my gospel (Rom 2:16, 16:25,26). Those upon whose minds his declaration of the testimony (1Cor 2:1) and reasonings (Acts 17:2, 18:4,19, 19:8) daguerretyped his enigmatical gospel, having searched the scriptures to see if it accorded with what was written there (Acts 17:11) and finding it in strict accordance with Moses and the prophets, believed.

FAITH

If you do as the Bereans did with the scriptures I have quoted, you will comprehend their faith, which was something worthy of the name. It was “true christian faith based upon the plain word of God,” which they could not read for themselves, until the enigma it contained was expounded by the apostles under the guidance of the Spirit. To such believers with their eyes truly opened, the apostles presented an invitation, or call to the kingdom and glory they beheld with unveiled face in the mirror of their hearts (1Thess 2:12). Joyfully they accepted the high vocation (Eph 4:1, Acts 16:34) being ready to do anything commanded by the apostles. We do not read of any sorrowing for sins; they had fallen in love with the righteousness and goodness of God; and rejoiced in the hope of his glory; and there repentance evinced itself in their joyous obedience to “the truth as it was enigmatically set forth “in Jesus”.

John Thomas, June 1856

“Seek Ye First the Kingdom of God, and His Righteousness ...”

The Master is clear that the primary things to be sought after in life are those things that pertain to the Coming Kingdom, and the Righteousness of God. His words are: “seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things [i.e. the food, drink, clothing etc of verse 31] shall be added unto you” (Mat. 6:33). In our considerations therefore, we shall examine each of these aspects in turn: namely that of “seeking” particularly in connection with the coming Kingdom, and secondly, “seeking” in connection with the Righteousness of God.

SEEKING

Matthew chapter 13 parabolically describes the Kingdom in terms of a precious treasure, to be sought after at all costs:

“... the kingdom of heaven is like unto treasure hid in a field; the which, when a man hath found, he hideth, and for joy thereof goeth and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth that field” (Mat. 13:44).

Again, we have *seeking* in connection with the Kingdom: here, it is a great treasure to be obtained. The discoverer rejoices so much at what he has discovered, that he is willing to give even his last penny to obtain it. Giving even “all that he hath,” he seeks to obtain what is described in Luke’s record of the Master’s discourse as: “a treasure in the heavens that faileth not, where not thief approacheth, neither moth corrupteth. For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also” (Lu. 12:33)

The allusion here is to Proverbs chapter 2, speaking of the virtues of Wisdom: “if thou seekest her as silver, and searchest for her *as for hid treasures*; then shalt thou understand the fear of Yahweh, and find the knowledge of God” (Prov. 2:4-5). A man’s life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth (Lu. 12:15), and so

it is only reasonable that he gives his all to obtain eternal things, even the incorruptible treasure of immortality. Being enlightened to the true nature of man, and the vanity of life without God, men of the spirit count all the things of this life to be but dung (Phil. 3:7) when compared with the glories to come. So the Prophet likewise exhorts:

“Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price. Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread? And your labour for that which satisfieth not? Hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness” (Isa. 55:1-20).

And in allusion to these same things, Messiah exhorts:

“Labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of Man shall give unto you ...” (Jno. 6:27).

The message of these combined testimonies is that to exert oneself in the things of the world - even if it be ostensibly to obtain the things necessary to sustain a mortal existence - is vanity. Our primary focus needs to be on the obtaining of the spiritual food, provided by no less than the Son of the Almighty, which will eternally satisfy our hunger for righteousness. And then, the Master teaches, “all these things shall be added unto you”. These spiritual meats are available to all: they cannot be “bought” simply by the giving of worldly money, and therefore can be obtained by the poorest among men: “he that hath no money”. Rather, a man must give his all – everything he has in life, to be granted the gift by grace.

THE KINGDOM

Solomon, upon his ascendancy to the Throne of David, was invited by Yahweh to choose a blessing that he could receive:

“... Yahweh appeared to Solomon in a dream by night: and God said: Ask what I shall give thee...” (1 Kings 3:5).

Solomon’s answer is very instructive for us to consider. What was his heart’s desire? If we were similarly given such an opportunity for a Divine Blessing – anything we like, what would be our response? Great riches? A long and prosperous life? Not Solomon: he sought first the things pertaining to the Kingdom he had been given rule over. He sought the Wisdom of God in order that he might correctly and wisely administer justice in the kingdom:

“... give therefore thy servant an understanding heart to judge thy people, that I may discern between good and bad: for who is able to judge this thy so great a people” (1 Kings 3:9).

Solomon sought after Wisdom, as hid treasure. His desire was not for the things pertaining to his own affairs, and his own sphere of existence, but for the Kingdom, that he might have the wisdom to govern it righteously in the sight of Yahweh. And so, in the words of Messiah, all other things that he might have sought after were “added unto” him:

“And God said unto him, Because thou hast asked this thing, and hast not asked for thyself long life; neither hast asked riches for thyself, nor hast asked the life of thine enemies; but hast asked for thyself understanding to discern judgment; Behold, I have done according to thy words: lo, I have given thee a wise and understanding heart ... and ***I have also given thee*** that which thou hast not asked, both riches and honour ...” (1 Kings 3:12-13).

Here is a tremendous example for us to give heed to. Because Solomon sought the wellbeing of the kingdom over which he would reign above all else, his desire was granted - but those things he could have sought after, but did not, were given to him also. Not that if we seek the Kingdom that we shall be granted riches in this life; that would not be right at all. Rather, the “Greater than Solomon” shall obtain glory and honour in his kingdom, and we who shall live and reign with him, shall be partakers of the prosperity of that kingdom to come. In that day, we shall sing with loud voices:

“Worthy is the Lamb that was slain ***to receive power and riches and wisdom***, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing” (Rev. 5:12).

SEEK RIGHTEOUSNESS

The citation which we began with is often quoted by brethren – put in part. “Seek ye first the kingdom of God” is a phrase that all Messiah’s brethren should instantly recognise, but the passage continues “... and his righteousness”. We seek not only a coming kingdom, but one in which the governing laws, precepts, and principles shall themselves show forth the Righteousness of God. We seek both the Kingdom, and the Righteousness together: indeed, one without the other would be an impossible situation. The prophet Zephaniah gave a similar exhortation:

“Seek ye Yahweh, all ye meek of the earth, which have wrought his judgment; ***seek righteousness***, seek meekness: it may be ye shall be hid in the day of Yahweh’s anger ...” (Zeph. 2:3).

Notice that here, seeking meekness and righteousness is paralleled with seeking Yahweh. This is characteristic of all of the worthies of old: their pursuit after the righteousness of Israel’s Deity, in seeking His Ways, in all meekness and humility. A number of characters in Scripture are said to have sought Yahweh: we shall only consider one: Jehoshaphat.

The inspired Narrative in 2nd Chronicles speaks of king Jehoshaphat at the beginning of his reign:

“... and Yahweh was with Jehoshaphat, because he walked in the first ways of his father David, and sought not unto Baalim; but sought to the God of his Father, and walked not after the doings of Israel” (2 Chron. 17:3-4)

Here is one who, like Solomon sought after the ways of Yahweh in his dealings with the kingdom that he had been appointed to reign over. Spurning the idolatry of his day, he sought to the Deity that his Father worshipped, and so we read that “Yahweh was with Jehoshaphat”. Moreover, as Messiah taught, other things were “added unto him”:

“Therefore Yahweh stablished the kingdom in his hand; and all Judah brought to Jehoshaphat presents; and he had riches and honour in abundance” (2 Chron. 17:5).

Like wise king Solomon, because he sought Yahweh’s ways above all else, Yahweh blessed him abundantly. Not that he sought after riches and honour, but that seeking first to rule righteously before his God, Yahweh blessed him with the things of this life, as well as that which is to come.

THE EXAMPLE OF MESSIAH

Proverbs 15:9 teaches that: “the way of the wicked is an abomination unto Yahweh: but he loveth him that followeth after righteousness”.

In these two examples, we see this principle outlined very plainly. Both Solomon and Jehoshaphat were men who Sought Yahweh, and His Righteousness, and were plentifully rewarded for so doing. But even these exemplary cases fade into insignificance when compared with the righteousness of Messiah. The Spirit of Christ in the Psalms writes concerning him:

“Thou lovest righteousness and hatest wickedness: therefore God, thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows” (Psa. 45:7).

Christ fed upon the spiritual food of the Word, which enabled him to discern between good and evil:

“butter and honey shall he eat, that he may know to refuse the evil, and choose the good” (Isa. 7:16).

As “the Word Made Flesh”, Messiah was pre-eminently the Wisdom of God, as it is written:

“of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is ***made unto us wisdom***, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption: that according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord” (1 Cor. 1:30-31).

The primary things that concerned the Master, were not the material things of this life. “My meat is to do the will of Him that sent me, and to finish his work” (Jno. 4:34) was his maxim. Seeking only those things that related to his Father, he was the Son in whom Yahweh was “well pleased”.

The Spirit writing to the Hebrews directed their attention to consider Christ from a particular aspect. That is, the aspect of one who constantly sought the things of God:

“... let us run with patience the race that is set before us, Looking unto Jesus the Captain and Perfector of our faith; 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. 12:1-2).

Jesus endured all things for our sakes. What kept him strong, able to bear the shame of the cross, was not simply a brute determination: it was the motivating power of a joyous vision of the future. That vision is one that we can share – indeed, it must be so, for the Apostle presents Christ as an example to follow in this particular. Let us therefore lay aside every weight and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and focus our attention upon the finish line in the race in which we are engaged. Let us constantly have a vision of the Kingdom before our minds, and do all that we can to keep a focus on that vision, seeking to show forth the glorious righteousness of Yahweh in some way – however imperfectly – that in the day to come we might be granted glory, honour, and immortality.

Christopher Maddocks

John 17 - The Prayer of the Lord

Our readings for today bring us to consider the last recorded prayer of the Master, before his suffering upon the cross. There are many themes and principles contained in this prayer, we shall consider some of them by way of exhortation today.

The prayer commences with giving glory to God:

“glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee. As thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him ...”

Here, we find that Messiah was to be glorified, in order that God Himself would be glorified. And part of this process of glorification, is the giving of Eternal Life, that his brethren would also share that glory: “... the glory that thou gavest me I have given them: that they may be one, even as we are one” (vs. 22). Unity in Glory then, is the overriding purpose of the Almighty in Christ, for the entire earth will ultimately be filled with the glory of Yahweh (Num. 14:21). Then, God will be magnified in the salvation of his servants, who know and believe in Him.

The Master continues this aspect:

“And this is life eternal, that they may know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent” (Jno. 17:3).

These words echo the words of the prophet:

“But let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me, that I am Yahweh which exercise lovingkindness, judgment and righteousness in the earth for in all these things I delight, saith Yahweh” (Jer. 9:24).

According to Messiah, to know the only True God and his Son “is life eternal”, and these are things that we can glory in. As John further describes: “... we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that

is true, and we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the True God, and eternal life” (1 Jno. 5:20). We therefore must have “an understanding” of our God, knowing Him that is True.

Sometimes Isaiah 55 is cited against this:

“For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith Yahweh. For as the heavens are above the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts” (Isa. 55:8-9).

The suggestion is that God is unknowable, and beyond understanding. But although that is true for the natural men who cannot receive the things of the spirit of God (1 Cor. 2:14), it ought not be so for Messiah’s brethren. It is true that the human mind cannot comprehend the eternal nature of our Father, but it is also true that we must understand Him to the extent that He has Revealed Himself to us, through his Son, and the written Word. Yes, God’s ways are high above those of the natural man, but for the saints all that means is that they must aspire to heavenly things: “If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things that are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth” (Col. 3:1-2).

To know the only true God is a characteristic of true believers, as Peter expressed in his salutation: “Grace and Peace be multiplied unto you through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord ...” (2 Pet. 1:2).

DECLARING THE NAME

The Only True God has a Name and knowing that Name is part of knowing God. Hence, Jesus says: “I have manifested thy Name unto the men which thou gavest me out of the world ...” (Jno. 17:6). Elsewhere, the Master states that “I am come in my Father’s Name ...” (Jno. 5:43), and in his prayer under consideration, he says of the disciples: “While I was with them in the world, I kept them in thy Name ...” (vs 12). The declared Name then, is a place of safety that the righteous can be kept “in”. So the Proverbs have it: “The name of Yahweh is a strong tower: the righteous runneth unto it, and is safe” (Prov. 18:10). The believers can enter this strong tower by submitting to baptism, which is into the Name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit (Mat. 28:19). Being constituent parts thereof, they will share the glory of their Lord and Elder brother – it is essentially a family Name, which denotes the true brethren of Messiah.

Later in his prayer, the Lord said: “... I have declared unto them thy Name, and will declare it, that the love wherewith thou hast loved me may be in them, and I in them” (vs. 26). This reference to Declaring the Name is from Psalm 22: “I will declare thy name unto my brethren: in the midst of the congregation will I praise thee” (Psa. 22:22). And this is cited in Hebrews in application to Messiah and his brethren (Heb. 2:11). Like the glory of God positioned upon the Mercy Seat of the Tabernacle in the midst of the two Cherubim, the Lord declared and glorified the Divine Name in the midst of his brethren. But the point in Hebrews chapter 1, is to do with oneness and unity. There is one Name, held by those who “are all of one”, like the Mercy Seat and the Cherubim were all one piece of gold (Exo. 37:7).

This theme of Oneness is a major theme in Messiah's prayer:

"... that they *may be one* as we are ..." (vs 11)

"... that they *all may be one*; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us ..." (Vs 21)

"... that they *may be one*, even as we are one ..." (vs 22)

"... I in them, and thou in me, that they *may be perfect in one* ..." (vs 23).

The point is, that the true brethren of Christ have a unity of spirit and mind (Phil. 1:27), which is reflective of that which exists between the Father and His Son.

PRAYERS FOR THE WORLD

Whilst the Lord prayed for his brethren, he does not intercede for, or pray for the world at large. This is something he is specific on: "I pray for them: *I pray not for the world*, but for them which thou hast given me ..." (vs 9). The World, he says elsewhere, is ignorant of the Only True God: "O righteous Father, the world hath not known thee; but I have known thee, and these have known that thou hast sent me" (vs 25). Indeed, it hates the brethren: "*... the world hath hated them*, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world" (vs 14). Jeremiah was told not to pray for apostate Israel: "... therefore pray not thou for this people, neither lift up cry nor prayer for them, neither make intercession to me: for I will not hear thee" (Jer. 7:16). Even so, we ought not to pray for those who spurn the ways of the Living God and refuse to diligently seek after him (Heb. 11:6). Apostate Christendom knows nothing of the Only True God, preferring to believe in a fictitious triune deity instead. The true believer will not pray for them.

MEN GIVEN TO THE SON

The disciples of Christ are described by him as: "... the men which thou gavest me out of the world: thine they were, and thou gavest them me; and they have kept thy word" (vs 6, also Heb. 2:13). The allusion here, is to the giving of the Levites to Aaron for the conduction of Divine Service:

"And I have given the Levites as a gift to Aaron and to his sons from among the children of Israel, to do the service of the children of Israel, in the tabernacle of the congregation ..." (Num. 8:19).

But the means by which they were given in service is highly interesting:

"... thou shalt bring the Levites before Yahweh: and the children of Israel shall put their hands upon the Levites: and Aaron shall offer the Levites before Yahweh for an offering of the children of Israel, that they may execute the service of Yahweh ... And thou shalt set the Levites before Aaron, and before his sons, and offer them for an offering unto Yahweh" (Num. 8:10-13).

Notice that the company of Levites were offered as a single sacrifice/offering to Yahweh. Whereas ordinarily the sacrifices were comprised of slain animals, these were men who were alive, and separated to perform the service expected of them. This would appear to be what Paul alludes to in Romans 12:

“I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies **a living sacrifice**, holy, acceptable unto God, which is **your reasonable service**. And be not conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God” (Rom. 12:1-2).

Just as the Levites were given as an offering to “execute the service of Yahweh,” even so the disciples are presented as living sacrifice, devoted to a “reasonable service” of the Lord.

THE TRUTH OF THE WORD OF GOD

In verse 18 of Messiah’s prayer, we have a declaration concerning the nature of the Word of God:

“Sanctify them through thy Truth: thy Word is Truth” (Jno. 17:18).

In an age where Truth is considered to be subjective, with each individual being at liberty to hold and believe their own “truth”, this verse is of fundamental importance. God’s Word “is Truth”, and this fact is testified many times in Scripture. Hence, a certain woman said to Elijah: “... now by this I know that thou art a man of God, and that the word of Yahweh in thy mouth is truth” (1 Kings 17:24). And again, the Psalmist: “Thy Word is true from the beginning: and every one of thy righteous judgments endureth for ever” (Psa. 119:160).

Sometimes it is said that we are arrogant to claim to have the Truth. As one of our adversaries put it: “we don’t have a monopoly on the truth”. But this misstates the case. It is not that we have the Truth, it is rather that the Bible is Truth, and we believe the Bible – as other men and women can also, if they so choose. The Word of God is True in all it’s aspects, and therefore that which differs from it is not true. It is not that “we are right” and others are wrong – it is that the Bible is right, yet others choose not to believe it. We choose to believe the Truth of God’s word, and other prefer not to, for whatever reason. Indeed, “let God be true, but every man a liar” (Rom. 3:4). The disciple of Christ will implicitly believe the revealed Word, and will eschew the folly of men’s speculation and perceived wisdom.

SANCTIFICATION

The word of Truth is a sanctifying power to those who would believe it. Hence, Christ said: “Sanctify them by thy Truth”. But the Master continues in verse 19 to say: “... and for their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth”. The sanctification of Messiah then, must take place first, and then he is able to sanctify his brethren “through the Truth”.

The allusion here, would appear to be back to the sanctification of the Altar in the Tabernacle arrangement of things. Exodus 29 describes this:

“And thou shalt offer every day a bullock for a sin offering for atonement: and ***thou shalt cleanse the altar***, when thou hast made an atonement for it, and thou shalt anoint it, ***to sanctify it***. Seven days thou shalt make an atonement for the Altar, and sanctify it; and it shall be an altar most holy: ***whatsoever toucheth the altar shall be holy***” (Exo. 29:36-37).

These aspects of the Mosaic system of things were “patterns” of things yet to come in the Lord Jesus Christ. In Hebrews chapter 9, we read that “almost all things are by the law purged with blood; and without shedding of blood is no remission. It was therefore necessary that the patterns of things in the heavens should be purified with these; but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these” (Heb. 9:22-23). It is evident that “the heavenly things themselves” includes Messiah, who is in heaven, who was “purified” by the better sacrifice of himself. This was foreshadowed by the cleansing of the Altar: it was sanctified first, and then it would in turn sanctify, or make holy those who came into contact with it. We have found that those who deny that Messiah had to be sanctified first for himself, in order to then sanctify his brethren, are at a loss to explain the cleansing of the Altar under the Law of Moses.

We must therefore come to the Christ-Altar to receive sanctification and redemption, that we might become part of that immortal throng who will sing the praises of the Lamb in the day of coming glory. We must receive the Word of God for what it is: absolute Truth, and be devoted to our “reasonable service” which it is our honour to engage in. Then, knowing and serving the Only True God, and His Son whom he hath sent, we will be given “life eternal” to serve the Lord throughout the ages to come.

Christopher Maddocks

The Current Work of the Lord Jesus Christ

Speaking of the redemptive work of our Lord Jesus Christ, the apostle Paul spoke of how he, “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). But from this portrayal of our Lord being seated in this manner, it is assumed by some that his work has temporarily ceased - that he now is in a position of recline until the appointed time of his Kingdom’s establishment. But if this is the case, then we are left with the question of what the Lord Jesus has actually been doing for the last 2 millenia, for we are surely not to assume that the Lord has simply been sitting upon a seat, in a state of dormancy for such a time. In a previous study, we examined the future Kingdom of our Lord Jesus, against the claims of some that his reign is present: but now we turn our attentions to the current activities of Christ in relation both to the believer, and to the world he will come to judge.

The positioning of the Lord Jesus at the Father's Right Hand certainly is not a position of inactivity. This is the Inspired Testimony of Paul: "Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, **who also maketh intercession** for us" (Rom 8:34). The Lord Jesus then, in having such a highly exalted position, currently carries out the role of an intercessor at his Father's Right Hand. Indeed, this function is an intrinsic aspect of his Priesthood after the Order of Melchisedec, as it is written: "this man, because he continueth ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood. Wherefore he is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, **seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them**" (Heb 7:25). The Priesthood to which the Lord Jesus belongs is "unchangeable", which requires one who is himself unchangeable (cp Heb 13:8), and not subject to death. And this perpetual unchangeableness of the Lord Jesus is essential for him to fulfil his role as a priestly intercessor - he "ever liveth to make intercession" for his brethren, which proves this work to be an aspect of his immortal activity. There are those who suppose that the Lord's role as a Priest was fully accomplished with His Sacrifice, the offering up of himself for the forgiveness of our Sins. Yet this is not the Testimony of Scripture.

THE LORD'S ROLE AS AN INTERCESSOR

An "intercessor", in Scriptural terms, is one who stands between two estranged parties, to bring about reconciliation. This we see from the words of the Lord to Jeremiah, saying "therefore pray not thou for this people, neither lift up cry nor prayer for them, **neither make intercession** to me: for I will not hear thee" (Jer 7:16). And again, in challenging the False prophets, "if they be prophets, and if the word of Yahweh be with them, let them now **make intercession** to Yahweh of hosts, that the vessels which are left in the house of Yahweh, and in the house of the king of Judah, and at Jerusalem, go not to Babylon" (Jer 27:18). This challenge provided a sign to Israel; if when the Babylonians came, they took the vessels from the House of Yahweh, those prophets who spoke of Peace would be proved to be false, unable to intercede between the wicked nation and their Righteous God. The Truth of the matter was, that because of Israel's abundant wickedness, no intercession would suffice; it was forbidden to even Jeremiah to attempt to intercede on behalf of his people, for there would be enmity between Israel and their God (cp Is 59:2) until the time of their repentance.

But in contrast to this, the Lord Jesus Christ is able to intercede for those who come to Him in faith, and so show such repentance. Indeed, he has been Divinely appointed to such a position, in the absence of any other person able to fulfil this role; as Isaiah spake: "he saw that there was no man, and wondered that **there was no intercessor**; therefore his arm brought salvation unto him; and his righteousness, it sustained him" (Is 59:16). And again, the prophet spoke of how the Lord, in having "poured out his soul unto death" was "numbered with the transgressors; and he bare the sin of many, and **made intercession** for the transgressors" (Is 53:12). So then, it was the obedience of the Lord in yielding to the shame of the Cross - in presenting himself as a perfect sacrifice, that he might intercede to heal the breach between man and his Maker.

But the Lord's intercessory work did not end with his Sacrifice. The Lord's Sacrifice began the work - in being "numbered with the transgressors" upon the cross, he "made

intercession” for transgressors - yet the Scriptures reveal that part of his current work is to continue making intercession. The simple truth of the matter; is that although a believer finds forgiveness through association with the Sacrifice of Christ in Baptism - even after Baptism he still sins. After finding forgiveness at Baptism, he is in a continual need for intercession. Each one of us, due to the fallen nature we bear, continually find ourselves transgressing the Divine command, falling short of the standard of Divine Glory (Rom 3:23), not willingly, but because of the weakness of the flesh. And each one of us therefore, is in a continual need for intercession - not simply at one occasion when we are baptised into the death of Christ (Rom 6:3). And the exalted priesthood of our Lord is able to meet all the necessary requirements, for he “ever liveth” to perpetually offer intercession on behalf of the faithful.

The Lord Jesus, it is testified, having put away sin by the sacrifice of himself, has entered “into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us” (Heb 9:24) for that very purpose. As our High Priest, he appears in the Divine presence at the representative of those who believe in him. And as the Almighty continually beholds the people’s representative, he sees one who is now free from sin, holy and undefiled. He beholds only righteousness, the righteousness of Christ, which is in fact God’s own righteousness, as declared by him, and not the sins of the people who Christ represents. He is able to be a representative, because he was one of us, who laboured under the dominion of death (Rom 6:9), who was a partaker of the infirmities of our nature. Yet he is able to appear before God on our behalf, because he condemned sin in the flesh (Rom. 8:3) by dying and rising again from the dead. So he now stands before God, free from sin. He is able to plead our cause before the Divine presence, that though we still transgress, because we are represented before the throne of Grace by one who is perfect, we might find forgiveness continually.

This principle is also the testimony of John: “My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the Righteous: And he is the propitiation for our sins ...” (1Jno 2:1,2). If we sin, we have an advocate; and intercessor who is able to plead our cause in righteousness. The term, “advocate”, translates the Greek *parakletos*, which carries the meaning of one who is “called to one’s side”, to be a help or a comforter (cp Jno 14:16,26; 15:26; 16:7). For the faithful therefore, there is no need to fear because of sin, for they have one at their side, so to speak, who pleads for their forgiveness before the Father in whose presence He sits. And that forgiveness is granted, for Christ’s sake, for the principles of redemption which were worked out in his sacrifice.

LORD OVER THE ANGELS OF GOD

When considering the most highly exalted position of our Lord Jesus Christ we notice how he has been raised to a status even higher than that of the Angels of God: “Being made so much better than the angels, as he hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they” (Heb 1:4). Indeed, the apostolic testimony is that Angels are currently subject to Christ, “who is gone into heaven, and is on the right hand of God; angels and authorities and powers being made subject unto him” (1Pet 3:22, cp Eph 1:21). Angels are “subject” to the Lord, which suggests that they hearken to the voice

of his word, performing his will, in a similar manner to the way they respond to the voice of the Almighty Himself (Cp Ps 33:9), But how can “authorities and powers” said to be subject to Christ when as yet he exercises no kingly dominion over them? In Daniel chapter 4, we learn of the Creator’s current rulership over a rebellious earth. In speaking of the vision of future affliction for Nebuchadnezzar, the angelic “holy one” spake thus: “This matter is by the decree of the watchers, and the demand of the word of the holy ones: to the intent that the living may know that ***the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men***, and giveth it to whomsoever he will, and setteth up over it the basest of men” (Dan. 4:17, cp verses 25, 32). So it is that as the apostle proclaimed, “the powers that be are ordained of God” (Rom 13:1). But how? Not by rulers willingly submitting to the commands of the Almighty, but by the hands of Yahweh’s angelic ministers manipulating world affairs to the end that powers and rulers are ordained by the Divine Will, according to the Divine Purpose (Cp Dan 10:13-21). This is how the Almighty can be said to “rule” over the Kingdom of men; not manifested as a King (for is the **Kingdom** of men - not of God), but by unseen angelic hands, unrecognised by the unenlightened, yet ever active and present nevertheless.

But following his resurrection to Glory, the Lord Jesus has been set above the angelic hosts; for “when he (The Almighty) bringeth in the firstbegotten (from the grave) into the world, he saith, And let all the angels of God worship him” (Heb 1:6). The Lord Jesus is “the Lion of the tribe of Juda, the Root of David” who “hath prevailed to open the (apocalyptic) book, and to loose the seven seals thereof” (Rev 5:5). Having conquered the grave through righteousness, he is qualified to unroll the apocalyptic scroll of history, unloosing each seal at the appointed time, and ensuring his Angelic ministers execute the things written therein. The sequence of events as revealed to John in the visions he saw whilst “in the Spirit” (Rev 1:10) are all under the control of the Lamb, ensuring that all things work for the ultimate good of his brethren, moving towards the final events at the expiry of the 6th vial, when “the kingdom of this world” shall be replaced by that of “our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever” (Rev 11:15).

To conclude then, when we consider the scope of the current work of our Lord Jesus Christ, there is great comfort. Because the Lord ever lives to make continual intercession for us, we can have the hope and confidence that despite our many failures, we can nevertheless “come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need” (Heb 4:16). We have an advocate with the Father, even Jesus Christ the Righteous who is the propitiation for our sins (1Jno 2:1,2), who is over the angels of God - “the ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation” (Heb 1:14), ensuring all things work together for their ultimate good. And as we consider the unfolding of world events, we are comforted in the knowledge that the overriding hand of our Lord is guiding all things to that great crisis in world history when the Kingdom of men shall be shattered, and replaced with a glorious new age of righteousness, when our Lord will reign openly, as King over a subdued world. Let us therefore seek to understand more fully the current activities of our Lord carried out on our behalf, that we might learn to be more appreciative of what it is that he does for us.

Christopher Maddocks

The Searching Spirit of Yahweh

*"Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me,
and know my thoughts: and see*

*If there be any wicked way in me, and lead me
in the way everlasting" (Ps 139:24).*

The Word of Yahweh came through Jeremiah in rebuke of the false prophets, who spake under the assumption that the Almighty could not see or hear their wickedness: "am I a God at hand, saith Yahweh, and not a God far off? Can any hide himself in secret places that I shall not see him? saith Yahweh. Do not I fill heaven and earth? saith Yahweh. I have heard what the prophets said, that prophesy lies in my name, saying I have dreamed, I have dreamed" (Jer 23:23-25). Here is a simple, yet profound Truth expressed - that there is no escape from the eye of Divine scrutiny, that all things are open and manifest to him with whom we have to do. No man can act against the dictates of the Most High, and assume that He will not know. True it may be that there are no immediate thunderbolts of wrath in response to man's evil; but it would be a grievous mistake to assume that because there is silence there is ignorance.

Asaph became perplexed at the apparent prosperity of the wicked, those who said "How doth God know? and Is there knowledge in the Most High?" Yet, in his musings he went to the Sanctuary, and recognised the reality of the hopeless situation the wicked are in. "When I thought to know this, it was too painful for me; until I went into the sanctuary of God; then understood I their end. Surely thou didst cast them in slippery places: thou castest them down into destruction" (Ps 73:16-18). Within the Sanctuary, as he beheld the brasen plates of the Altar – the place of death and burning – he was faced with a memorial of Korah's rebellion, and the rejection of those who exalted themselves against the knowledge of the Most High (cp Num 16:38). That is the true end of all the wicked; a sliding into oblivion and an ignominious rotting in the depths of the earth.

COMFORT FOR THE SAINTS

For the righteous however, the outlook is very different. Rather than to be fearful of the constant Divine cognisance of all that they do, the saints of the Most High can rejoice, being comforted by the fact that in whatsoever circumstances they are in, the all-pervading diffusion of Yahweh's Spirit is there. Whereas the Prophet spoke of the Omniscience of the Most High by way of warning to the wicked to turn from their ways; the Psalmist contemplated the same matter with comfort and hope: "Whither shall I go from thy spirit? Or whither shall I flee from thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there: if I make my bed in sheol, behold, thou art there. If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; Even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me" (Ps 139:7-10). Whether David was ascending up the mount of Olives towards Heaven, in flight from his own son Absalom (2 Sam 15:30-31), or being compassed about by the enemy, as the cords of sheol (2 Sam 22:5), he lived in the constant awareness that Yahweh was with him, and that his deliverance from adversity was certain.

There is another facet of knowing of the all-seeing Divine Eye. In the verses cited above, David speaks of the impossibility of fleeing from the Spirit-presence of Yahweh. But we would do well to ponder why such a man as he would want to do this – why would he want to flee from the overshadowing care and guidance of his Maker? The prophet Jonah provides an example of one who sought to do just that; and his motives for doing so are enlightening: "Now the word of Yahweh came unto Jonah, the son of Amittai, saying, Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and cry against it; for their wickedness is come up before me. But Jonah rose up to flee unto Tarshish from the presence of Yahweh ..." (Jon 1:3). Jonah then, was one who sought to flee from his responsibilities. Yahweh purposed for him to do a particular task, yet he sought to evade accomplishing it, because of the unsavoury nature of that task to his natural senses. In seeking to escape the Divine presence, he did attempt to go to "the uttermost parts of the sea" (cp Ps 139:9), where he might continue his mortal existence free from the dictates of the Most High. Yet he was shown that this could not be so; no man can flee from the Almighty, for He is present in all places by the diffusion of His Spirit which is at One with His Person.

THE DARKNESS OF DEATH

Being swallowed by a Divinely prepared "great fish", Jonah descended to the depths of the earth in the darkness of a typical grave, during which time he became enlightened as to the unfathomable searchings of Yahweh's Spirit: "then I said, I am cast out of thy sight ... the waters compassed me about, even to the soul ... I went down to the bottoms of the mountains; the earth with her bars was about me for ever: yet hast thou brought up my life from corruption, O Yahweh my God. When my soul fainted within me I remembered Yahweh: and my prayer came in unto thee, into thine holy temple" (Jon 2:4-7). Though he were in the bleakest of situations within the whale's belly, hidden, as he thought from the Divine Eye; when he prayed, Yahweh heard. By His Spirit, the Father was present even in the depths of the ocean, and the prayer of his formerly rebellious servant was answered, as Jonah emerged from the belly of death to a restoration of his former life.

In his contemplation of the penetrating discernment of the Eternal Spirit, David recognised that though he trusted, he could not fully understand: "such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high, I cannot attain unto it" (Ps 139:6). And how much do those of our age – the age of the so-called "information revolution" - need reminding of that principle! Through the ingenuity of man - particularly with respect to computer technology and the Internet – news and data can be transmitted globally in an instant, as the event happens. Knowledge truly is increasing throughout the earth more than ever before, as man increases in his understanding and perception of the world around him, and is able to know precisely what is going on at almost any part of the earth, at any given time. But the Creator's knowledge is far greater even than this. Not only does He perceive the intricacies of detail unknown to man; knowing the end from the beginning He predicts events long before they take place. And by His infinite Spirit, even the very thoughts and motives of men can be scrutinised, as he searches the hearts and reins of men (cp Jer 20:12), something which even the most attentive political analyst cannot do. Yea, even in the grave Yahweh is there, beholding his faithful sleeping ones, that as the God of the living, he might raise them to dwell in a new age of Right-

eousness to come, as we shall presently consider. Truly it is, that whilst the Spirit searches out all the ways of man, man simply "cannot attain" a comprehension of the ways of the Spirit.. Things ordinarily hidden to mortal man, are scrutinised by the Father who sees in darkness – even the developing child in the womb: "If I say darkness shall cover me; even the night shall be light about me. Yea, the darkness hideth not from thee; but the night shineth as the day: the darkness and the light are both alike to thee. For thou hast possessed my reins: thou hast covered me in my mother's womb" (Ps 139:11-13). Darkness, whether it be the darkness of the night, a whale's belly, the womb – or even of the grave (v 15) is no hindrance to the Spirit of Yahweh.

NICODEMUS – A MAN OF THE NIGHT

These various strands of the unsearchable ways of the Spirit, the birth of a new life, and Divine Scrutiny even within darkness, come together in Christ's discourse with Nicodemus: "There was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews: The same came to Jesus by night, and said unto him, Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him. Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the Kingdom of God" (Jno 3:1-5).

Even though the Master discerned him to be "a master of Israel", Nicodemus had insufficient understanding of Spiritual things to perceive what he was being taught, concerning this new birth. He answered: "How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born? Jesus answered, Verily, verily I say unto thee, Except a man be born of the water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the Kingdom of God". The rebirth of which Christ spake was not a physical emergence out of the womb; but an emergence from Baptismal waters to a new life of holiness – followed up in due course with the final, physical emergence of the New, Immortal man in the discarding of mortality. That which emanates from the flesh is flesh, but that which is the product of the indwelling of the Spirit Word, when the flesh-nature and all it stands for ceases to be mortal, is Spirit. But how can that be? That was Nicodemus' question (3:9) – how can such a development take place?

The Preacher spoke of the incomprehensible nature of a literal birth to mortal man, comparing it to how man cannot know the ways of the Spirit: "As thou knowest not what is the way of the spirit, nor how the bones do grow in the womb of her that is with child: even so thou knowest not the works of God who maketh all" (Eccl 11:5). The case of Nicodemus is not unlike this; being unable to receive earthly things (the birth of Baptismal water), similarly he could not receive heavenly things (being born of the Spirit), as the Master told him (v 12). And just as the foetal development of a new life cannot be ordinarily discerned by the natural man, even so the Spiritual Rebirth was above his understanding: "the wind (spirit) bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth (or, "in what he goes away", JT): so is everyone that is born of the spirit" (Jno 3:8). Though they heard the sound, or voice of the Spirit both through John, and now the Master himself, the Pharisees could not perceive it's Divine Origin, that it was from Heaven. Neither could they say in what form it would depart from them; namely in the resurrection of Christ and His ascension to heaven (v 13). Those who are 'born of the Spirit',

will, in like manner be raised and immortalised, in following the example of their master. Having received the word of the Spirit of life, the sound of the Spirit breathing where it pleases, it dwells and grows within them to form the New Man, fashioned after the image of it's maker. It is, to all intents and purposes, a 'new creature'(2Cor 5:17), indiscernible to the natural man, even as the Apostle taught: "he that is spiritual judgeth all things, yet he himself is discerned (marg) of no man" (1Cor 2:15).

Though he sought the cover of darkness, Nicodemus was seen, and known of by the Master, who, we are informed only a few verses earlier, "needed not that any should testify of man: for he knew what was in man" (Jno 2:25). The Lord discerned the true nature of this man's nocturnal approach, and spake in such terms so as to make that clear: "light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil" (Jno 3:19). Men love darkness, because under it's cover, their activities cannot be easily discerned, themselves being laid open to rebuke and condemnation: "For everyone that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved. But he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest that they are wrought in God" (Jno 3:19-21). Nicodemus however, though his initial approach was under the cover of darkness, was nevertheless drawing nigh to the True Light. And it is ironic that the next recorded approach of this man, was when that Divine Light was temporarily extinguished in death. Then, he drew nigh, this time with spices to anoint and bind up the Lord's body for burial (Jno 19:39-40), that henceforth he might await the time of resurrection, and the Lord's own birth of the Spirit.

RESURRECTION FROM THE DEAD

Like as the Master drew a parallel between the natural, yet inscrutable birth of men, and the two-fold Rebirth required for them to emerge into the new world of his Kingdom, even so the Spirit of Christ through the Psalmist spake of the Father's watchfulness over his own son yet within the womb – and also within the tomb:

“Thou hast possessed my reins: thou covered me in my mother's womb ... My substance was not hid from thee, when I was made in secret, and curiously wrought in the lowest parts of the earth. Thine eyes did see my substance, yet being unperfect; and in thy book all my members were written, which in continuance were fashioned, (RSV: The days that were formed for me) when as yet there was none of them” (Psa. 139:13-16).

Like as the Christ-body was to emerge from the womb of Mary to be a habitation of the Spirit, even so it was to emerge from the earth, to a new, immortal life; energised and born again of the Spirit. But the depiction here is not of the Lord Jesus alone – it is the Multitudinous Christ-Body, comprised of many members, each of whom are written in the Father's Book of Life (Rev 3:5). In this book, the Psalmist continues, are to be found the details of the faithful, itself a testimony to the fact that the Holy Ones, though sleeping in dust are not forgotten before Him. Before the appointed days for their resurrection to glory – before there were any of them – the multitudinous 'members' of the Christ-Body were inscribed within in that book, in preparation for the day of awakening and restoration to life.

CURIOSLY WROUGHT

The Christ-Body is here spoken of here as being "curiously wrought" whilst in "the lowest parts of the earth", the substance thereof being imperfect. Interestingly, the phrase "my substance, yet being imperfect" translates a single Hebrew word, 01564 only used on this one occasion. It's root is also used only once (2Kings 2:8), where it is translated "wrapped". To wrap then, would appear to be one of the senses contained within the word, maybe being expressive of the graveclothes with which Nicodemus and Joseph bound our Lord, prior to his burial. The Father beheld his Only Son wrapped in burial garments, themselves being symbolic of death and mortality, to be left behind in the emergence of the risen Christ from the tomb (Jno 20:5).

But what of the Christ-Body being "curiously wrought"? The Hebrew here, speaks of embroidery, or needlework and is thus translated 9 times to do with the Tabernacle arrangement of things:

"them he filled with all wisdom of heart, to work all manner of work, of the engraver, and of the cunning workman, and of the embroiderer, in blue, and in purple, in scarlet, and in fine linen, and of the weaver, even of them that do any work, and of those that devise cunning work" (Ex 35:35).

"And the hanging for the gate of the court was needlework, of blue, and purple, and scarlet, and fine twined linen ..." (Ex 38:18).

Notice here, that the "needlework" is not so much the fabric which made up the hangings, but that which was worked into it, to make up the varied colours which gave it it's distinctive qualities. The fabric was fine twined linen; but embroidered into that, were other qualities which determined the nature of appearance which that linen would have. That being so, when we contemplate our Lord's body in the grave, we have a beautiful picture of the Spirit being woven into it, as it were; flowing through his veins in the place of the blood common to mortal flesh. The resurrected Lord, whilst not emerging with immortality, nevertheless no longer had the 'diabolos', or 'the law of sin' woven into the fabric of his being (cp 1 Pet 4:1,2), rather the Spirit of the Law of Life. The Spirit was embroidered into the body of our Lord, repairing it, and preparing it for restoration to life, and determining it's character, to be holy, spiritual, and ready for the bestowal of everlasting life.

And this is the hope of all the saints. No matter what distresses and perplexities may befall us in the days before our Masters' coming, we can nevertheless have the confident assurance that the Father's Spirit is present with us. In whatsoever circumstances we are brought into, He will hearken unto our prayers of faith. Yea, even if we be laid in the dust of the ground in the sleep of death, we will not be forgotten; for His Holy Ones are written in Yahweh's book, awaiting that great day of awakening when their bodies also shall be embroidered by the Spirit, ready to be changed at the twinkling of an eye, when accepted at the judgement, and "fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself" (Phil 3:21).

Christopher Maddocks

The Atonement and Federal Headship

It has often been said by brethren from John Thomas's day to our own, that in the out-working of the salvation of repentant sinners, God deals with the entire Human race in terms of a Federal Headship. Sometimes this is objected to on the basis that the word "federal" is not found in Scripture, and that we are therefore using unScriptural language. However, the deficiency is one of understanding, not expression. In this article, we seek to demonstrate what is meant by the use of the term, and that although the word itself is not in the Bible, the concept truly is - and that it is an important aspect of the Atonement.

As an example, the following was written in response to a correspondent by Robert Roberts:

A. J. B.—What was true of the community to whom Peter wrote in respect of Christ having borne their sins (1 Peter 2:24), becomes equally true of all who at any time come into the same position of privilege in relation to Christ. In Christ, the consequences accruing to all mankind, as the result of the first man's transgression (Romans 5:12), have been rectified, sin and death brought to an end, and life and incorruptibility brought to light for all who believe. To effect this the first thing that was required was a man perfectly innocent of sin (1 Peter 2:22); next to this, that such an one should be born in "the likeness of sinful flesh" (Romans 8:3), and therefore a partaker of the death-stricken flesh and blood common to the race he came to redeem (Hebrews 2:14). Under these circumstances sin was "condemned" and "put away," death "abolished," and "eternal redemption" obtained in Christ's own person; and therein in trust, as a result in due time to be extended to all who should obey the truth. This participation begins with the moral and symbolic counterpart, represented by the baptismal institution, whereby men are introduced into the *new federal headship*.

For Christ having "died to sin," and thereby having become free from the "law of sin," which hitherto dominated in his members, it is required of those who believe that they also be buried with him by baptism into his death-to-sin; that they also may be reckoned as dead to sin, and therefore as "freed from sin." For, says Paul, "our old man is crucified with him that the body of sin might be destroyed" (Romans 6:6). This shows us that the thing effected in Christ's crucifixion, and the design of our being planted in the likeness of His death, is the destruction of "the body of sin." In Christ the whole thing was in progress from the first, to the point of its culmination in his sacrificial death; and followed finally by his resurrection, to a life no longer dependent upon the blood that energised the first man to sin; and no longer subject to the law of sin, that brings death in its train to all mankind, having "died to sin" he now "lives to God" by the power of an endless life. *Being a representative man* (2 Corinthians 5:14), those who choose him, or accept him *as their representative*, are made partakers of the sacrificial act, by which that which hitherto had possessed the power of death was de-

stroyed, and made one with the righteousness by which it was all effected (Romans 5:18), and as the result of which the “last Adam” has now become the first-born of a finally immortal family of sons and daughters. The old constitution of sin and death having come to an end (Daniel 9:24), a result achieved in Christ’s own person; men are thereupon invited to make these results theirs, by making themselves one with the instrumentality, by whom, and in whom they have been effected. ***Christ’s death was racial*** (as is shown by his being called “the last Adam.”) The benefits of it, beginning with the forgiveness of sins, are for “whosoever will” The once-shed blood, and the once-offered body of Christ, avails for all, in every age of history, that flesh and blood has anything to do with (Heb. 9:15). Men only need to come into touch with it to become partakers of the benefit which enables them to say, “Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, be glory and dominion;” or to join at last with the crowned heads of Messiah’s all-nation kingdom, in the song that says, “Thou wast slain and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood” (Rev. 5:9, 10).

Robert Roberts, The Christadelphian Magazine, 1888 Page 624–625.

He also wrote this in the following year:

“Adam. I.—He was “the figure” (as before said) of him that was to come (Rom. 5:14), and therefore one in whom, in some particulars, Christ was prefigured. These particulars include his name, which was also one of the names of Christ (1 Cor. 15:45); his being a first-born son of God (Luke 3:38); ***the federal head of the race***; and the possessor of dominion and authority to subdue the earth, and to fill it with life and the fruits of his labour and skill. In these points we have a kind of portrait of Christ, of which we have already seen the initial counterpart, with much more to come that is still more glorious. As Adam was the “one” by whom came sin and death, so Christ is the “one” by whom has come righteousness and life. Again, “as in Adam all die, so in Christ shall all be made alive.” For as God has dealt with the whole race in Adam, so now he is dealing with the whole race in the representatives “last Adam,” and “second man.” In this we have Adam, the head of a mortal race, and Christ the head of an immortal race, developed out of the old stock. The parallels, comparisons, and what we might call comparison-contrasts, are matters of many references one way or other in the epistles.

Robert Roberts, The Christadelphian, 1889 Page 35–36.

From these words, we find that our salvation is bound up in a family relationship. We are naturally descended from Adam, a sinner, and bear the consequences of that situation. But spiritually (and physically later), we can embrace Christ as the head of a new creation, and obtain benefits from being in that relationship.

CONSEQUENCES OF ADAM'S SIN

The early chapters of Genesis describe to us the entrance of sin - and subsequently death - into the world. The Apostle Paul emphasises certain points in connection with this:

“... by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, in whom (JT) all have sinned” (Rom. 5:12).

The very plain teaching here, is that through Adam, sin entered into the world, and as a consequence, “death passed upon all men”. In other words, Adam is the head of a race, and because of his sin and it’s punishment, all of those emerged from his loins die - death passed upon all them. Not that we bear any sort of legal or moral guilt for that sin, but rather that we bear the physical consequence of it. So, the Apostle states “in Adam all die” (1 Cor 15:22). As Robert Roberts has it: “men are mortal because of sin, quite independently of their own transgressions” (The Law of Moses, p. 173).

The Bible is very clear that the reason we die is because we are mortal descendents of Adam:

“Let not sin therefore reign in *your mortal body*” (Rom. 6:12).

“... he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken *your mortal bodies* by his Spirit that dwelleth in you” (Rom. 8:11).

“... we which live are always delivered unto death for Jesus’s sake, that the life also of Jesus might be manifest in *our mortal flesh*” (1 Cor. 4:11).

We die then, because we have a “mortal body,” consisting of “mortal flesh”. That is why babies - who have done no sin - sometimes die, even in the womb: they are mortal descendants of Adam.

But this mortality came upon man as part of the curse and punishment upon Adam for his transgression (see Genesis 3). As well as being death-stricken, the now defective physical condition of man gives rise to sinful thoughts and actions. Because that condition came about as a consequence of sin, it is described by Paul as “sin that dwelleth in me” (Rom. 7:17, 20). He further says that “I know that in me (that is, in my flesh), dwelleth no good thing” (Rom. 7:18), and refers to this principle as “the law of sin and death”, and “sin in the flesh” (Rom. 8:2-3). Notice, that it is one law - a physical principle of our being - hence Paul exclaims: “who shall deliver me from the body of this *death?*” (Rom. 7:25), when speaking of his inability to overcome this indwelling sin.

In fact, we find that this law of mortality is personified as the *diabolos*, translated, Devil in Hebrews chapter 2: “... him that had the power of death, that is, the devil” (Heb. 2:14). This is the Bible devil: not a rebel angel, but the element within the human constitution that gives rise to sin, and which makes it mortal (i.e. having the power of death). This is why it was so necessary for Jesus to have that same nature in order to

overcome it: “forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same ...” (Heb. 2:14). He could not overcome sin in the flesh, if there were no sin in his flesh.

THE LAST ADAM

A key passage in understanding the salvation that can come through Jesus is 1 Corinthians 15:

“and so it is written, *The first man Adam* was made a living soul; *the last Adam* was made a quickening spirit. Howbeit that was not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural; and afterwards that which is spiritual. *The first man* is of the earth, earthy: *the second man* is the Lord from heaven. As is the earthy, such is the earthy: and as is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly. And *as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly ...*” (1 Cor. 15:45-49)

Here, mankind is divided into two categories: those who bear the image of the first Adam, and those who will bear the image of the second. All men and women bear the image of the first, by being physically descended from him. Being his offspring, they bear the likeness of his now sinful flesh. In this sense, Adam, the father of the human race, stands as a *federal head*. So Brother Thomas explains:

“The two Adams are *two federal chiefs*; the first being figurative of the second in these relations. All sinners are in the first Adam; and all the righteous in the second, only on a different principle. Sinners were in the loins of the former when he transgressed; but not in the loins of the latter, when he was obedient unto death; therefore, “the flesh profiteth nothing”. For this cause, then, for sons of Adam to become sons of God, they must be the subjects of an adoption, which is attainable only by some divinely appointed means.”

(Elpis Israel, “The Constitution of Righteousness” p. 132)

The idea of a “Federal Head” has been expressed thus:

“Federal headship refers to the representation of a group united under a federation or covenant. For example, a country’s president may be seen as the federal head of their nation, representing and speaking on its behalf before the rest of the world.”

(Wikipedia)

Once we appreciate the words of Paul cited above, we can see that the phrase is wholly appropriate to our standing in relation to both Adam and Christ. Adam is the federal head of the human race, and Christ, the second Adam, is the federal head of a new creation, being the firstborn of many children comprising a new, immortal race.

ADAM AND CHRIST

To emphasise the point: although we are in no way guilty for what Adam did, we do bear the physical consequences of it - as our misfortune, not our crime. So Paul made a comparison between the two heads:

“... for if ***through the offence of one many be dead***, much more the grace of God, and the gift by grace, which is by one man, hath abounded unto many ... therefore as ***by the offence of one judgment came upon all men unto condemnation***; even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life. For as ***by one man's disobedience, many were made sinners***, so by the obedience of one shall many be righteous” (Rom. 5:15-19 - read whole chapter)

The emphasis in this passage, is that just as the consequence of one man's offence condemnation came upon all his progeny, even so it is through the consequence of one man's act of righteousness (Jesus) that righteousness can be imputed to those over whom he is the head. We shall return to this aspect presently.

It is clear that any way of forgiveness and salvation must acknowledge and demonstrate that God is right to require the condemnation and destruction of that element within man which gives rise to committed sin - AKA “sin in the flesh” and “the *diabolos*”. The sacrifice of Christ fulfills that condition: so the Apostle wrote of the Master:

“Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, ***to declare his righteousness*** for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; ***to declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier*** of him which believeth in Jesus” (Rom. 3:25-26).

The Lord Jesus Christ was morally sinless, so for him to die was not a consequence of any sin committed by him (as it has been falsely claimed that we teach). Neither was it any sort of punishment for bearing the guilt of another man's sin (as the substitution theory claims). Rather, by being physically descended from Adam, he inherited a nature that was under condemnation. God sent His own Son “in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh” (Rom. 8:3). This arrangement of things declared God's Righteousness in order that He could be a Justifier, at the same time as being Just Himself. That is, His righteousness in requiring the condemnation and destruction of sin in the flesh / the *diabolos* (Rom. 8:3, Heb. 2:14) was upheld, and it was upon the basis of this declaration that sins can be remitted.

“Christ was the ‘seed of Abraham’, the flesh of David, the sin-nature of the condemned Adam, for the condemnation of sin in the flesh. The condemnation rested on him, which was the uncleanness, and this antitypical uncleanness of the ‘one great offering’ could only be cleansed after the example of the type - by death and burning: the burning being the change effected by the Spirit on the risen body of the Lord after his death for sin”

(Robert Roberts, *The Christadelphian* 1873, p 407).

If a saviour had to declare that God was right to require death, he must willingly die to make that declaration. This is what took place in Christ. But once that declaration had happened, it so pleased the Father to raise his Son to be the beginning of a new creation: "But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept" (1 Cor. 15:20).

Morally, Jesus was sinless, and it had to be so. If he had sinned, he would not have been an acceptable offering, for he would have been committing the very cause for which death came into existence! In order for sin to be rightly condemned "in the flesh" of Christ, he had to be without transgression - only then could it be said that he had overcome it, otherwise it would have overcome him! But as Brother Roberts shows, the sacrifice was not complete until the smoke rose up, and was accepted by Yahweh. Even so, it was the rising up again of the Master that signified the victory over sin, and the acceptance of a sacrificial offering.

A PARTICIPATORY SACRIFICE

The offering up of the Lord is sometimes referred to as being "participatory". This means that those for whom he laid down his life have to do something themselves - i.e. they have to actively *participate* in the principles being exhibited. And the way in which it so pleased the Father for them to accomplish this, is by passing through the waters of Baptism, and subsequently leading a life devoted to Him. By being baptised, a person enacts the principles of Messiah's offering. By being immersed in water, they acknowledge that God rightly requires the putting to death of sinful flesh, and in a figure, their sins are washed away (Acts 22:16).

Baptism is the means by which it has pleased our Creator (in this dispensation) for his willing servants to be advantaged by the offering up of his son. Speaking of the Ark that Noah built, it is said to be: "the like figure whereunto even ***baptism doth also now save us*** (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God) ***by the resurrection*** of Jesus Christ" (1 Pet. 3:21). So it is that baptism "saves us" but "by the resurrection of Jesus Christ," and the victory that this accomplished.

SAVING SINNERS

It is written that: "this is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world ***to save sinners ...***" (1 Tim. 1:15). As the angel spoke to Joseph: "... thou shalt call his name Jesus: for ***he shall save his people from their sins***" (Mat. 1:21). But the way in which sinners can be saved, is by acknowledging and forsaking the root cause of transgression: sin in their flesh which was condemned (judged against) in the death of Messiah, and finally abolished in his resurrection. Sinners can be forgiven by choosing to change their relationship to their respective federal heads: from being "in Adam" to being "in Christ". It is written that "as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive" (1 Cor. 15:22). Being constitutionally "in" Christ, we can inherit life, just as those who remain "in" Adam inherit death. Brother CC Walker expressed the situation thus:

"The federal principle involved is expounded by Paul in his epistle to the Romans (ch. v. 12-19). It is, in effect, this: that sin entered into the world by one man, Adam, and death by sin : that death (dissolution and return to

dust) has thus passed upon all, even upon babes who have not themselves sinned, and that thus, through one man's disobedience, all were made or constituted sinners, and all (with the single exception of Jesus of Nazareth) themselves became actual sinners by individual transgression. That God, in His grace and forbearance, raised up Jesus as a second Adam in the family of Abraham and David, and, commanding him to lay down his life, thus gave him as a sacrifice for sins in his obedience unto death, and for his righteousness sake raised him from the dead, and gave him as the head of a new generation of the race which should be begotten upon a higher principle. All men are sons of Adam by fleshly descent; but no man is a son of the Second Adam, or son of God, otherwise than, by belief of the gospel and baptism into him.

(CC Walker, The Ministry of the Prophets - p 646)

SUMMARY

What we have endeavored to show, is that the way of Salvation through the Lord Jesus Christ involves a change of family relationships. It has pleased our Creator to deal representatively and racially with us. Naturally, we physically inherit the law of sin and death from Adam. But if we recognise the righteousness of God by being Baptised into Christ, and seek to crucify the flesh with the affections and lusts (Gal. 5:24), our sins can be forgiven for Christ's sake. We become "in Christ" rather than "in Adam", and will receive the consequence of his righteousness, like we inherit the consequence of Adam's sin. If we do this, then when Messiah comes again, it will be granted us to bear the image of the heavenly rather than the earthy, and we shall be made like unto him: the firstborn of a new creation and family, which will ultimately fill all the earth with the revealed Glory of God, even as the waters cover the sea (Num. 14:21).

Christopher Maddocks

King Uzziah

The name "Uzziah" is said to literally mean "my strength is Yah". His father's name was Amaziah = Yah is Mighty (2 Chron. 26:1), and his mother's name Jecoliah = Yah is able (2 Chron. 26:3). Uzziah began his reign by reflecting all of this principles: Yahweh was able through His Might to strengthen the king, and establish his kingdom. So we read:

*"he did that which was right in the sight of Yahweh ... and he sought God in the days of Zechariah ... and as long as he sought Yahweh, **God made him to prosper**" (2 Chron. 26:4-5).*

Again, the record states:

*"And **God helped him** against the Philistines, and against the Arabians that dwelt in Gur-Baal, and the Mehunims" (vs 7)*

And again:

“... his name spread far and abroad; for *he was marvellously helped*, till he was strong” (vs. 15).

The key factor for Uzziah’s prosperity, was the fact that “he sought God ...”. It is written of God that:

“without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of *them that diligently seek him*” (Heb. 11:6).

Notice that here, belief in God is not a passive thing. Diligence is needed to seek after him – it is not enough to have some sort of vague idea that God exists, as is the manner of many. Rather we need to exert ourselves in seeking after Him and His Ways - and Uzziah demonstrated that due diligence.

These principles are also seen in King Asa. He “did that which was good and right in the eyes of Yahweh his God: for he took away the altars of the strange gods, and the high places, and brake down the images, and cut down the groves: and commanded Judah *to seek Yahweh God of their fathers*, and to do the law and the commandment” (2 Chron. 14:2-4). Not only did Asa seek God himself, he also commanded his people to do likewise. Hence he was also caused to prosper, as he said: “... *because we have sought Yahweh our God, we have sought him*, and he hath given us rest on every side” (2 Chron. 14:7). And when faced with an invading army, Asa “cried unto Yahweh his God, and said, Yahweh, *it is nothing with thee to help*, whether with many, or with them that have no power: help us, O Yahweh our God; for we rest on thee, and in thy name we go against this multitude. O Yahweh thou are our God: let no man prevail against thee” (2 Chron. 14:11). Like Uzziah, Asa was helped in his contending against the adversary, because of the fact of his diligence in seeking Yahweh.

The prosperity of Uzziah is seen in his diligence in establishing his kingdom and army:

“... he built towers in the desert, and digged many wells: for he had much cattle, both in the low country and in the plains: husbandmen also, and vinedressers in the mountains, and in Carmel: for he loved husbandry. Moreover, Uzziah had an host of fighting men, ... and he made in Jerusalem engines, invented by cunning men, to be on the towers and upon the bulwarks, to shoot arrows and great stones withal. And his name spread far abroad; for he was marvellously helped, till he was strong” (2 Chron. 26: see verses 9-15).

The prosperity of Uzziah seems to have been unmatched in Israel, other than the great kingdom of Solomon. Yet, there were some deficiencies:

“... he did that which was right in the sight of Yahweh, according to all that his father Amaziah had done; Save that the high places were not removed: the people sacrificed and burnt incense still on the high places” (2 Kings 15:3-4).

Though there is no evidence that the king worshipped these idols, he did not take them away, and the people still worshipped them.

BEING MADE STRONG

The Divine record continues: “But when he was strong, his heart was lifted up to his destruction ...” (2 Chron. 26:16). This is always the danger of riches and prosperity – the heart of man is deceitful above all things (Jer. 17:9) and being exalted in station can lead to being exalted in spirit. This was the situation with Uzziah.

The Proverbs provide appropriate remarks on this situation:

“Pride goeth before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall” (Prov. 16:18).

“Remove far from me vanity and lies: give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with food convenient for me, Lest I be full, and deny thee, and say, Who is Yahweh? Or lest I be poor, and take the name of my God in vain” (Prov. 30:8-9).

Being lifted up in prosperity, Uzziah’s pride led him to destruction, in a particular way that we shall proceed to examine. But this verse in Proverbs 30 is sobering for those who strive to obtain as much as this world’s goods as is possible: “give me neither poverty or riches” – both present their challenges to the faith of God’s elect. Seeking first the kingdom and righteousness of God, the believer in Christ will be satisfied with that which they have, trusting in the Lord to provide all that they have need of – as distinct from all that they would want!

In a similar way, Israel were warned of this from the beginning:

“... Beware that thou forget not Yahweh thy God, in not keeping his commandments, and his judgments and his statutes, which I command thee this day: lest when thou hast eaten, and art full, and hast built goodly houses, and dwelt therein, And when thy herds and thy flocks multiply, and thy silver and thy gold is multiplied, and all that though hast is multiplied, **Then thine heart be lifted up, and thou forget Yahweh thy God ...**” (Deut. 8:11-14).

Although Uzziah evidently did not forget Yahweh his God, and did not turn aside to idols, there were problems related to his worship. He took upon it himself to approach the dwelling of God as his own high priest. So the narrative describes:

“But when he was strong, **his heart was lifted up to his destruction:** for he transgressed against Yahweh his God, **and went into the temple of Yahweh** to burn incense upon the altar of incense.” (2 Chron. 26:16).

The priests tried to remonstrate with him, but rather than listen to their rebuke, “Uzziah was wroth, and had a censer in his hand to burn incense: and while he was wroth with the priests, the leprosy even rose up in his forehead before the priests in the house of Yahweh, from beside the incense altar ... and Uzziah was a leper unto the day of his

death, and dwelt in a several house, being a leper; for he was cut off from the house of Yahweh” (2 Chron. 26: see verses 16-21).

Uzziah took it upon himself to be a priest, and as a consequence he was “cut off” from the system of worship in Israel, and lived as a leper until the day of his death.

But by contrast, we read of the Lord Jesus Christ:

“So also Christ **glorified not himself** to be made a high priest; but he that said unto him, Thou art my Son, today have I begotten thee. As he saith also in another place, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec” (Heb. 5:5-6).

Messiah then, was not self-appointed, as Uzziah was: he was ordained by God. And in connection with this, it is significant that Isaiah (whose name means “Salvation of Yah”) saw a vision of the Lord in glory in the holy place, in the same year that Uzziah died:

“In the year that **king Uzziah died**, I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple. Above it stood the seraphim ... and one cried unto another, and said, Holy, holy, holy, is Yahweh of armies; the whole earth is full of his glory” (Isa. 6:1-3).

Notice that the emphasis of this prophecy of Isaiah, is that Yahweh is glorified and pronounced to be thrice Holy, not man. Hence, under the Law, the high priest had to wear a golden plate upon his forehead that proclaimed this:

“And thou shalt make a plate of pure gold, and grave upon it, like the engravings of a signet, HOLINESS TO YAHWEH ... and it shall be upon Aaron’s forehead, that Aaron may bear the iniquity of the holy things, which the children of Israel shall hallow in all their holy gifts; and it shall be always upon his forehead, that they may be accepted before Yahweh” (Exod. 28:38)

When Uzziah went into the Temple, he was not wearing the priestly garments, and so did not have this golden plate upon his head.

Gold represents perfected faith in Scripture: hence Peter refers to: “the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of **gold that perisheth**, though it be tried with fire ... “ (2 Pet. 1:7). And the forehead represents the arena of thought – hence in the Apocalypse we read of the preaching angel: “Hurt not the earth, neither the sea, nor the trees, till we have **sealed the servants of our God in their foreheads**” (Rev. 7:3). That is, they have received the Divine Impress into their thinking.

The golden plate then, amongst other things, represented how that the High Priest had to have faithfulness to Yahweh (i.e. gold) and ascribe Holiness to him in his thinking (i.e. upon the forehead). Uzziah did none of those things: he was neither faithful, nor did he hallow the Holy Place - and neither did he ascribe holiness before God. So it was, that he was smitten with leprosy in his forehead.

Leprosy in the forehead was evidently one of the worst kinds of leprosy. It is described in the Law of Moses thus:

“... then the priest shall look upon it: and, behold, if the rising of the sore be white reddish in his bald head, or **in his bald forehead**, as the leprosy appeareth in the skin of the flesh; he is a leprous man, he is unclean: the priest shall pronounce him **utterly unclean**; his plague is in his head ...” (Lev. 13:43-44).

Notice this, the leper who was infected in his head was not just unclean: he was “utterly unclean”. His head was filled with disease, not unlike the way in which the head of the natural man is carnal, filled with diseased thoughts and intentions. Indeed, Jude makes a comparison between leprosy and the pernicious influence of false teachers:

“likewise also these filthy dreamers **defile the flesh**, despise dominion, and speak evil of dignities ...” (Jude 1:8).

The words of false brethren are like a disease: “their word will eat as doth a canker: of whom is Hymenaeus and Philetus; who concerning the truth have erred, saying that the resurrection is past already; and overthrow the faith of some” (2 Tim. 2:17-18). Like a disease, the influence of false teachers spreads, defiling the flesh and plaguing the body. It must be eradicated like the leprosy under the law of Moses.

The prophet Amos, we are told, commenced his ministry “in the days of Uzziah king of Judah, and in the days of Jeroboam the son of Joash king of Israel, two years **before the earthquake**” (Amos 1:1). This earthquake is also spoken of later by the prophet Zechariah: “ye shall flee to the valley of the mountains; for the valley of the mountains shall reach unto Azal; yea, ye shall flee, like as ye fled **from before the earthquake** in the days **of Uzziah king of Judah** ...” (Zech. 14:5). There is a tradition that this earthquake took place at the same time when Uzziah went into the Temple unlawfully – although this cannot be verified from Scripture. But if that were the case, then it is perhaps significant in this context that when the vail of Messiahs’ flesh was rent and access to the Holy Place was made, there was a great earthquake (Mat 27:51), and again at his resurrection (Mat 28:2). But be that as it may, through faith in Messiah’s priesthood, the believers in Christ have access to that which Uzziah did not. Hence the apostle exhorted:

“Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the vail, that is to say, his flesh, and having an high priest over the house of God; **let us draw near** with a true heart in full assurance **of faith**, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water ...” (Heb. 10:19-22).

We must not therefore be lifted up in pride as Uzziah was, but rather we must emulate the example of Messiah, waiting to be elevated by Divine appointment. Then, if we hold fast in faith, with a spirit of holiness, we shall be part of that great company of singers, singing “a new song, saying, thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and nation; **and hast made us unto our God kings and priests**; and we shall reign on the earth.” (Rev. 5:9-10).

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