

“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)

Sacramentalism

The following article was penned by Brother John Thomas in 1859 in response to a correspondent on the subject: “Is the Lord’s Table a Sacrificial Altar?” – we reproduce it for the benefit of our readers, as it touches on certain aspects of our arrangements today:

A sacrament (from the Latin *Sacramentum*, an oath) is defined by ecclesiastical speculators to be “an outward and spiritual grace.” The Roman Mother has “Seven Sacraments,” but her Protestant Daughters and their Abominations, recognize only two of them, which they style Baptism and Eucharist. Their sacrament of Baptism consists in sprinkling the face of a babe at any time from its first breath, and making upon its forehead the sign of a cross with the finger of an ordained administrator, dipped in water, either previously “consecrated” or consecrated in the act of using it for the sprinkling. This is “the outward and visible sign” which ought to be styled Rhantism, or Sprinkling; for there is no baptism or dipping in the case, the fingers of the clerical sorcerer excepted.

But of what is this rhanism the sign? It is said to be “the sign of an inward and spiritual grace” operated upon the immortal soul of the babe, which in the process is regenerated, cleansed from all sin, and ingrafted into the body of Christ! This marvellous work is sacramentalism, the hypostasis or basis of which is, abstract spirit without, operating upon concrete spirit within, the babe! Hence faith is not necessary to sacramentalism, either in clergyman or subject: water, the form, and abstract spirit are all that are necessary; even an ordained administrator may be dispensed with, if it be thought the babe would die before the person could arrive. Hence nurses and doctors’ apprentices often administer “the outward and visible sign”

HOLY WATER

In all this theological sorcery and spiritual legerdemain¹, the spirit is supposed to be subservient, or in the water. That is, when the words “I baptise thee, &c.,” are uttering or uttered, Holy Spirit strikes into the water, as it were, and makes it holy water. Hence, what the spiritual sorcerers call “holy water” may be styled spirit suspended in water. The Devil is said to hate this very much, so that it has become proverbial to signify intense hatred, as “he hates virtue as the Devil hates holy water”. But the contrary is true. The Devil is very fond of holy water, for he uses it abundantly in all his lustrations. When a pagan, he used it freely; and when he became a Catholic, and filled his wardrobe with popish, protestant and sectarian investments for public occasions, according to the community he found himself among, he has always called the pint basin or “font,” with “the outward and visible sign”.

¹ *Legerdemain* refers to skillful, often deceptive, hand movements, commonly known as sleight of hand or conjuring tricks

But, how doth this water regenerate? How is the “spiritual grace” it contains made “inward,” and blended with “the soul”? Not by any mental or moral process assuredly, because the subject of “the sign” is incapable of thought, being simply a newborn animal. The mental and moral being excluded, the physical alone remains. We have seen the mesmerised drink pure water, and vomit at the unexpressed will of the operator; after the same example therefore, we may suppose, that the clerical sorcerer mesmerizes the little animal by his manipulations, and wills the regeneration of it’s “immortal soul”; by which will, the “spiritual grace” in the water being *en rapport* with his spirit, strikes “inward,” and blending itself with “the particle of the Divine Essence”- *divina particular auras* – “the soul,” washes, sanctifies, justifies, and save it: so that being thus generated or born again, its body may be buried in consecrated ground with “christian burial,” and itself become “a little angel with wings,” flying about with its companions like clouds of gnats on a summer’s eve, “beyond the realms of time and space” – somewhere “beyond the skies!!”.

THE BREAD AND WINE

But what has all about clerical rhanism to do with our correspondent’s difficulty? Much every way. Her difficulty relates to the subject of the remission of sins. “For a number of years,” says she, “I supposed that if a believer committed sin, he received remission thereof by confession of the same, and partaking of the bread and wine, viewing it as a sacrificial altar, to which we were commanded to come for the purpose.” This supposition is sacramentalism – REMISSION OF SIN BY A SACRAMENT; the foundation corner of the Apostasy, of whose wine all peoples, and nations, and tongues have drunk to intoxication, so that when the Lord Jesus Christ returns to the earth, he finds them “drunk” and wallowing in the mire – Rev. 17:2,6; 18:3. We have dwelt upon the Sacrament of Rhanism as a familiar example of sacramentalism – “an outward and invisible sign of the inward and spiritual grace” of remission of sin from “the soul” of a new born animal. Only think of it reader; the sin of a part of Deity, called the “immortal soul” purged away by subvenient spirit suspended in a few drops of water trickling from the fingers of an old wife, parson, or apocathary’s apprentice! Are you not astounded at the magical effects of “holy water”? But look at the absurdity – Satan will have it that “the soul” is immortal, or deathless; and yet the sin cleansed out is said to be of that deathless soul: but the Scriptures saith, “the wages of sin is death;” how, then, can there be sin in the soul, and that soul deathless or immortal?

Again, Satan admits that God is sinless, and that his parts partake of the nature of his whole. Now Satan teaches that the human soul is a particle of God’s essence; how, then, can that soul just born, innocent of all action whatever, be sinful, and “in danger of the pains of hell for ever?”

That fact is, that Satan is a deceiver and deceived. He is lost in “his depths as they teach” (Rev. 2:24). His sacramentalism has bewildered him; and he is stultified by “the sentiments of all christendom,” in which he piously and clerically ministers to the admiration of the Devil in all his manifestations of the flesh.

SUPPOSED REMISSION OF SIN

Now as to Eucharistic Saramentalism, or the remission of sin by confession and partaking of the bread and wine, the eating of the bread and wine is the “outward and visible sign;” and the remission of sin is the “inward and spiritual grace;” or abstract spirit, communicated. The sacrament of the Eucharist, or of Thanksgiving, differs from the sacrament of Rhantism, or Sprinkling, not in the theory of its opus operatum, or work operated, but in the form and subject. The vehicle through which the “grace” is transmitted”, is bread and wine instead of water; and the subject one that has been satanically rhantized or aspersed. An unsprinkled animal cannot be admitted to “the altar”.

The unsprinkled are brought to the conventicle pint-basin, or to the parochial font, and no further towards the clerical sanctum; but the besprinkled, Satan’s own newborns, are admitted to the altar-rail, and permitted to eat a “wafer,” or if they belong to the reformed synagogue, to eat bread and drink wine for the healing of their immortal souls, that is, for the remission of any sin or defilement the incorruptible and deathless soul may have contracted, since it was cleansed “by grace” in the water, or by a previous eating. In Satan’s papistical synagogue, the ministers keep the decanter to themselves; while they give the wafer to their dupes. Satan’s ministers love good cheer above all things, and always take care of number one.

TRANSUBSTANTIATION

They persuaded the foolish people that there was such virtue in their ministry that by repeating the words of Jesus over a wafer, they call the “host,” and over a tankard, or cup, of wine, they could convert the wafer into the flesh, and the wine into the blood, of Christ, so that, when these elements were before the people, they beheld Christ really present – sacrificially. The process developing this result, they call it “the Sacrifice of the Mass;” and the thing itself, “the Real Presence.” Only think of the sorcery! A devil of a priest, the very antitype of Judas, whom Jesus styled a devil (Jno. 6:70), takes a little flour, water, and salt, makes it into a paste, and then mutters over it in Latin, *Hoc est corpus meum* (“this is my body”), and instantly the words pass through his lying lips, the wafer-dough becomes the actual flesh that was crucified! By this sorcery, the cannibal makes his god, and eats him!

But the process does not stop here. He takes a cup of wine (the best, doubtless he can find in the market, as he intends, selfish tippler that he is, to drink it all himself,) and mumbles over it, *Hoc est sanguis mea* (“this is my blood”), and instantly the wine becomes the real blood that poured from the heart of Jesus when “filled with iron, and the shaft of a spear.”

But, behold the creature’s “depth” or subtlety! He says, to the people, this blood was poured out for you; but it is not lawful for you to drink it; but for the priest only. You may eat of the wafer; and in eating of this, you, in effect, take also the blood, for the blood pervades all the flesh. Oh! Ye knaves, ye children of the devil, enemies of all

God's righteousness, witnessed by the law and the prophets! Ye say that ye have turned wine into real blood? Suppose ye had, why do you not pour it upon the ground, and cover it with dust? - Lev. 17:13-14. Who gave you a dispensation to do as worship what it was not lawful for Peter and the other apostles, nor for any Gentile Christians to do? Ye hypocrites, ye generation of vipers, ye deceivers and destroyers of the people, hear what the apostles say to you, and to all who profess the faith of Jesus:- "It seemed good to the Holy Spirit, and to us, to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things: that ye abstain from meats offered to idols, and from blood, and from things strangled, and from fornication; from which, if ye keep yourselves, ye shall do well" – Acts 15:28-29.

Hear this, ye blood-drinking priests "it is a necessary thing that ye abstain from blood": but ye pretend to make it, and to drink it too! But what is the use of talking to you about what the Scripture teacheth, except, indeed, for the benefit of your dupes, who perchance may read it. Your "wisdom" is from beneath, and your mission therefrom to deceive the world, and to make the Word of God of none effect by your traditions.

LUTHER

But Luther, a sorcerer himself, taught his contemporaries that his brother priests did not effect what they pretended—that they did not convert the substance of the dough and wine into the real blood, flesh, and bones of Christ; but that the words uttered over them brought Christ down into a mystical union with the dough and wine: which were not consubstantial with the iron, when heated to redness. This was only a modification of the original absurdity; the absurdity essentially remained. The bread and wine were eaten sacramentally by all sorts of ignoramuses, whose "immortal souls" were healed by the con, or "grace", while the substance, or bread and wine, were digested in the usual way.

After Luther, Zwinglius and Calvin, two other sons of the Sorceress declared that the monk of Wittemberg, though a little more rational than most of his order, was still very wide of the true exposition. They admitted that the Eucharist was "a sacrament", but taught that the bread and wine were only emblems of the body and blood of Jesus, and to be eaten as such for the reception, in some way or another, of "an inward and spiritual grace". This dogma of Zurich and Geneva is the sacramentalism of the Parliamentary Superstition of Britain, and of American Sectarianism. Until quite recently, "infidels" and "deists" used to take the Sacrament of the Eucharist as a qualification for a seat in Parliament, to which they had been elected. People of all sorts of opinions, and of no opinion (we say nothing of "faith" in their ease), take the sacrament at the parochial altar rails from the hands of the ministers duly authorised to administer ordinances by Satan. Being ignorant of Bible Christianity, any "grace" they are supposed to obtain gets into their "immortal souls" sacramentally; and the bread and the wine become to them "a sacrificial altar".

Men's opinions on the nature of the Eucharist used to define their position, in the beginning of the controversy of Rome. If they confessed the Real Presence in the Sacrament, they passed for good Catholics; but if they denied it, they were deemed to

be Protestants, and worthy of the stake. The question was put to the Princess Elizabeth, while under surveillance in the reign of her sister, “the bloody Queen,” what she thought of the bread and wine in the Eucharist. But she, perceiving the snare, replied, saying,

*Christ was the Word that spake it;
He took the bread and brake it;
What he did make it,
That I believe—and take it.*

But what he did make it, she pretended not to say.

THE TRUTH OF THE MATTER

But the truth is, the institution is not a “sacrament” at all. Apart from an enlightened mind, the bread and the wine are of no more benefit to the eater, than immersion for the person dipped. Immersion is a sign; and the eating of the bread and of the wine is a sign. The former is a burial and a rising again from the water, in which the believer was put out of sight. It is memorial of his death to sin, and his resurrection to a new moral existence; and a sign of his resurrection from the grave of earth, to live and reign with Christ a thousand years. But it is a memorial and sign of these things only to him who is the possessor of the “One Faith”; to all others, it is neither—Rom. 6:2-11; 1Cor. 15:29; Col. 2:12; Gal. 3:26-29.

The latter is also memorial and significant. It memorializes the breaking of the body of Jesus for his brethren, and the outpouring of his blood for the dedication for the Abrahamic Covenant, by which covenant so dedicated, all the believers of it’s promises are sanctified in putting on Jesus as it’s Anointed Mediator. It memorializes the body as the victim and altar on which sin was condemned, and upon which the iniquity of all the faithful was laid. All in Jesus are therefore “in the altar” – partakers of the Altar “of which they had no right to eat who served the Tabernacle” – Heb. 13:10; and of which they could not possibly eat, being without faith. It is a sign of feeding on Christ, the bread of heaven, “whose flesh is meat indeed, and his blood drink indeed”; for as bread and wine nourish the outward man upon physical principles, so the testimony, or unadulterated milk of the Word concerning Christ in his sufferings and glory, understood and believed, is mental and moral nourishment upon which the faithful feed, and grow, and become strong. It is a sign of this spiritual eating, digesting, and assimilating of the word of Christ or “the Spirit, which” says John, “is the truth” – 1John 5:6. This is the bread that came down from heaven—the Spirit-truth; “if any man eat this bread, he shall live in the age”: for it is the spirit that maketh alive; the flesh profits nothing; spirit is, and life is, the words which I speak to you.” “As often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye show the Lord’s death until he come”- 1 Cor. 11:26. It memorializes the first coming, and reminds the partaker continually that he will certainly appear again, not to suffer, but to conquer and to reign.

It is manifest, then, that without understanding of the truth, it is impossible to eat in the true sense of the institution. It must be eaten in faith with the unleavened (cakes) of purity and truth—1 Cor. 5:8. An ignoramus cannot do this, for “ignorance alienates

from the life of God” – Eph. 4:18; such can only eat unworthily, not discerning the Lord’s body in it’s spiritual relations.

The bread and the wine are no altar at all, but memorials of the altar. That altar, we have seen, is Jesus: and the saints in him, the worshippers thereat. About three or four years after the death of the Apostle John, Ignatius, in one of his letters, says, “Let no-one mistake: if any man is not within the altar, he is deprived of the bread of God. The altar was the place of sacrifice; therefore, all within it, are in a suffering state. If they offend, they have the privilege of approach to the Father through their advocate Jesus Christ, the Righteous One, who is the covering for their sins, and to cleanse them from all unrighteousness—1 John 1:9; 2:1,2. They eat bread and drink wine as the memorial of this: not as a sacrificial altar, sacramentally imparting the remission of sins.

John Thomas, Herald of the Kingdom and Age to Come

NOTE:

Brother Thomas demonstrates that the bread and the wine of Messiah’s appointed memorial do not change into anything else by the priest’s blessing. But the use of clumsy and thoughtless language in Christadelphian circles can also give the wrong impression. Countless times we have heard prayers like: “we pray for a blessing upon the bread” or “upon the wine” and concerning the wine “help it to strengthen us in our faith”. But precisely what is the “blessing” sought for? What difference is there between bread & wine so blessed, and bread & wine unblessed? Surely none: the bread and the wine remain natural bread and natural wine, and it is the simple partaking thereof which provides a memorial of the sacrifice of Messiah. The language is vague, inaccurate, and must surely fall into the category of what Bro Robert Roberts called: “prayers that smell of the old Roman cask; prayers that are unreasonable, that could not be answered, that are a mere rattle of words, and in their implications are an unintelligent shutting of the eyes to facts, and an insult to the majesty of God” (1893)

CAM

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Priesthood and Mediatorship

Clause XIII of the Christadelphian Statement of Faith reads:

“That on the third day, God raised him from the dead, and exalted him to the heavens as priestly mediator between God and man, in the process of gathering from among them a people who should be saved by the belief and obedience of the Truth (1Cor 15:4; Acts 10:40; 13:30-27; 2:24-27)

The means of Redemption having been provided through the shed blood of the Slain Lamb, it is the Father’s expressed purpose to gather out from among men a people to show forth the praises of His Name, as James showed following Simeon’s discourse to the believers at Jerusalem: “Simeon hath declared how God at the first did visit the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for his name ...” (Acts 15:14). But what were the actual words of Simeon in which such a declaration was set forth? This is what he said:

“Men and brethren, ye know how that a good while ago God made choice among us, that the Gentiles by my mouth should hear the word of the gospel, and believe. And God, which knoweth the hearts, bare them witness, giving them the Holy Ghost, even as he did unto us ...” (Acts 15:7,8).

From this, we find that this visitation of God to the Gentiles was via the preaching of Simeon-Peter, and commenced with the conversion of Cornelius. The Father selected Peter for that purpose, making “choice” among all the disciples, that he should be the One through whom the word of the Gospel would be brought to the Gentiles. Notice this, however; his mission differed to that of modern-day self-appointed evangelists, who compass sea and land to proselytise the world – it was not to convert the world – rather it was to be a Divinely appointed means of selection; to “take out of them a people for his name”. The entire process was one of Divine selection, from the preacher who was chosen to convey the word of the gospel, to the people who were taken out of the masses for the Father’s purposes.

But the BASF states that it was “in the process of” accomplishing this work – a work which is not yet complete – that the Messiah was “exalted to the heavens as a priestly mediator.” That is to say, his present position as both Priest and Mediator is part of the means whereby the selection of peoples for the Father’s Name might be accomplished. We need then, to consider both of these roles in order to see how it is so.

MEDIATORSHIP

Within the pages of Scripture, we find that the roles of priest and mediator, although related – and intimately so – are nevertheless distinct from each other. That was plainly shown under the Law of Moses, the Divinely appointed “Schoolmaster” (Gal 3:24) leading us to Christ. Here, a different personage was selected to perform each role; Aaron, and his descendants through Eleazar were to be priests, whereas Moses alone

was to be mediator. Moses could not take on Aaron's role as priest, and in turn, Aaron could not take on Moses' role as Mediator – as will become evident, they are two distinct offices, yet both come together in the Lord Jesus Christ, who is both priest and mediator.

Another significant detail, is that there were many priests, for each could not continue perpetually “by reason of death” (Heb 7:23), and were therefore continually replaced – but there was only one mediator, the man Moses (Gal 3:19). He had no successor in that capacity; although Joshua was appointed to succeed him in the role of Captain of the people, thus foreshadowing the Lord Jesus (Heb 2:10) in leading them to inherit the promised land. But he was not a mediator, as becomes apparent upon a consideration of how the Scriptures define the role of Mediatorship.

The Apostle declared concerning the Law:

“it was added because of transgressions, till the seed should come to whom the promise was made; and it was ordained by angels *in the hand of a mediator*” (Gal 3:19).

The Mediator then, was the One in whose hands the Law was placed, that it might be relayed to the people. And historically, this was Moses; the law was given to him through Angelic hands and then by his hand, it was brought to the multitudes. So, Moses, in his mediatorial capacity, stood between God and man as the channel of communication through whom the ways of the Most High, and his requirements of His People were made known.

Accordingly, Moses spake of himself, in recounting the events at Sinai to do with the giving of the Old Covenant:

“Yahweh our God made a covenant with us in Horeb. Yahweh made not this covenant with our fathers, but with us, even us, who are all of us here alive this day. Yahweh talked with you face to face in the mount out of the midst of the fire, (I stood between Yahweh and you at that time, to shew you the word of Yahweh: for ye were afraid by reason of the fire, and went not up into the mount)” (Deut 5:2-5).

Moses stood between Yahweh and the People, as the Mediator of the Torah, conveying His Word to His People, that a covenant might be made with them on His terms. This is why there was no successor appointed to be a Mediator after Moses, until the appearance of the Lord Jesus; there was only one Law given, there was only one Covenant given and therefore there would be no requirement for a further Mediator – there would have been nothing for him to mediate. Until Christ, that is, through whom the New Covenant is brought to us, for even as Moses stood between Yahweh and the People, so it is said of the Master:

“There is one God, and *one mediator between God and men*, the man Christ Jesus; who gave himself a ransom for all” (1Tim 2:5-6).

Christ then, as Moses, is a mediator between God and men. The order is important here, in their capacity as Mediator, neither Moses, or Christ were stood between Man and God but between God and man. They each brought a covenant from Him to the people – that of Christ being greater, hence he is apostolically styled the “mediator of a better covenant:”

“now hath He obtained a more excellent ministry, by how much also He is the mediator of a better covenant, which was established on better promises” (Heb 8:6)

“for this cause, he is the mediator of the new testament, that by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first testament, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance” (Heb 9:15)

“Ye are come unto Mount Sion ... and to Jesus the mediator of the New Covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling that speaketh better things than that of Abel” (Heb 12:22-24).

The Role of Mediator then, was to receive a Covenant from Yahweh, and to bring that Covenant to the people of Yahweh, seen firstly in Moses, and secondly in the Greater than Moses, through whose sprinkled blood the New Covenant has come to us.

THE PRIESTHOOD OF CHRIST

Whereas the Mediatorial Role is to stand between God and Man, the Priestly function is the reverse; to stand between Man and God, as can be seen in the example of Aaron and his successors, who represented the Nation before Yahweh once yearly on the Day of Atonement. The Lord Jesus Christ performs both functions, hence, he is a “priestly mediator”, as the BASF styles him.

The Spirit to the Hebrews describes the functions of a priest thus:

“Every High Priest, taken from among men, is ordained for men in things pertaining to God, that he may offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins: who can have compassion on the ignorant, and on them that are out of the way; for that he himself also is compassed with infirmity” (Heb 5:1,2).

The Lord Jesus, being “touched with the feeling of our infirmities” (Heb 4:15) can therefore be a merciful High Priest, having compassion and offering a Greater Sacrifice; even himself, for the sins of those he came to deliver.

But the Spirit continues, demonstrating the superiority of Christ's priesthood, over the ancient Aaronic order:

“no man taketh this honour unto himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron. 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 5:4-6).

Christ then, is not simply a High Priest, but the “Great High Priest” (Heb 4:14), of a greater order; a King-Priest after the Order of Melchisedec, concerning whom we cannot speak particularly in this place. Moreover, whereas the Levitical order required a continual succession of priests, “by reason of death”, Christ is “a priest for ever” after the Melchisedec order:

“this man, because he continueth ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood. Wherefore he is able to save them to the uttermost that come to God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them ... the word of the Oath maketh the Son, who is consecrated for evermore” (Heb 7:45-28).

As our Great High Priest, Christ appears in the Presence of the Eternal El “for us” (Heb 9:24), and as such is the means whereby we can “come to God”. He represents us before the Father, and enables us therefore to “come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need” (Heb 4:16).

A MEANS OF GATHERING

Returning to the BASF; we saw how it teaches that Christ was raised, and exalted to the heavens “as priestly mediator between God and man, in the process of gathering from among them a people who should be saved by the belief and obedience of the truth.” The priesthood/mediatorship of Christ provides the means whereby such a gathering of peoples may take place; men are drawn to the Father by being united in identification with Christ. He, as Mediator, has instituted a “better” covenant than that of Old, even a covenant which gives life to those who desire a justification through faith. And as Priest, having received that Covenant by his hand, we can draw nigh the throne of Grace through him, presenting all our petitions and praises in His Name before the Father. But notice this – it is not every man who might so draw near to the Father, only those who become part of the Household of Christ; those who are united in him, who believe and obey the Truth. Only these benefit from the intercession of the Great High Priest, hence we must ensure that we are part of that people!

Christopher Maddocks

Daniel in the Lion's Den

The inspired Psalmist wrote of the opposition that Christ would experience, in terms of a lion roaring against him: “they gaped upon me with their mouths, as a ravening and a roaring lion” (Psa. 22:13). This “lion” was the embodiment of the Jewish authorities who sought his destruction as lions devour their prey, but their intentions were foiled as Messiah was delivered out of the pit of death, and escaped their clutches. We see these things foreshadowed in our reading for the day, Daniel chapter 6, where the prophet Daniel was cast into the lion's den, and was subsequently delivered out of it. Daniel was a *type*, or pattern of greater things to come in the experiences of our Master, and we would do well to consider his example of consistent faithfulness; a righteousness which delivered him out of adversity.

Daniel chapter 6 describes how that the presidents and princes sought occasion against Daniel, out of jealousy for his position. We are told that Daniel had “an excellent spirit” in him, which induced the king to set him over the whole realm as chief among them. There was such a spirit in our Lord Jesus Christ, described in Romans chapter 1 and verse 4, as “the spirit of holiness”. It was because of the excellent spirit of holiness that dwelt in Jesus that God was “well pleased” in him, and purposed to set him over the whole kingdom to be established in the not too distant future. And like Joseph's brethren of old time, the Jews envied Christ, as Pilate recognized: “he knew that for envy they had delivered him” (Mat. 27:18). They sought his destruction, just as the enemies of Daniel had designs to bring him into condemnation and death.

But the same “excellent spirit” that was in Messiah must also be found in us. This is the apostle's testimony: “now if any man have not the spirit of Christ, he is none of his” (Rom. 8:9). We must then give avid attention to the examples of the faithful men of old, to emulate their spirit and show forth the same trust and confidence in Yahweh our redeemer. If we have the spirit that Christ had, then we will be raised up to live and reign with him in the kingdom to come.

BEING FAULTLESS

Returning to Daniel chapter 6, we find that the adversaries “could find *none occasion nor fault*; forasmuch as he was faithful, *neither was there any error or fault* found in him” (Dan. 6:4). Again, we see a parallel with our Messiah - as the repentant thief expressed it: “this man hath done nothing amiss” (Lu. 23:41). So Mark informs us: “the chief priests and all the council sought for witness against Jesus to put him to death; and found none” (Mark. 14:55). What a spirit of true holiness this is! Can it be said of us, as with Daniel, that there is no “fault”, or “error” in our doings? Certainly, this is something for us to aim towards, as we seek to develop the spirit of Christ. The Jews rose up in a similar fashion towards the Apostle Paul, making false claims to have him condemned. But he pointed out that: “neither can they prove the things whereof they now accuse me” (Acts 24:13). They could find no fault in him, and so sought to make up accusations, which they could not prove. However, being unable to find personal faults in Paul, they instead directed their attention to the

ministry of the Gospel that he preached. So Paul continued: “but this I confess unto thee, that after the way which they call heresy, so worship I the God of my fathers, believing all things which are written in the law and in the prophets” (Acts 24:14). They accused Paul of heresy, and on those grounds sought to have him condemned.

In a similar way, Daniel’s adversaries sought occasion against his religion, and the things that he stood for. They said “We shall not find any occasion against this Daniel, except we find it against him concerning the law of his God” (Dan. 6:5). Here, the issues widened: no longer was it simply a personal issue to do with Daniel, in these matters they involved Daniel’s God, and His law. The events that followed dealt with issues of life and death, and whether Daniel’s God was able to save His Prophet from the hands of wicked men. And these things find an obvious parallel in the life of our Master: in rejecting him, they rejected his God, and denied His power to save.

Our circumstance is again similar. Just as Daniel, as a Jew amongst Gentiles maintained his personal integrity, so must we, as Christ’s brethren amongst unbelievers: “... abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul; **having your behaviour honest among the Gentiles** that, whereas they speak against you as evildoers, they may, by your good works which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation” (1 Pet. 2:11-12). Though they might raise up false accusations against us, we must give them no grounds for the things that they might claim – and it might be that when Christ comes, our good works will be a witness to them of the righteousness of Christ, leading them to accept him, and glorify God in that day. This is an aspect of things that perhaps we don’t often consider: when Christ comes, there will be a mortal population who submit to his reign – and these may partly be as a consequence of our witnessing to them before he comes. Seeing world events being played out just as Bible Prophecy indicates, particularly in connection with Israel, there will be a powerful witness to the truth of the things that we have told them about before that time comes.

THE EXCLUSION OF PRAYER

The way in which the prophet’s adversaries brought him into condemnation, was by instigating a law that appealed to the pride of the king. They sought to establish: “a firm decree, that whosoever shall ask a petition of any God or man for thirty days, save of thee, O king, he shall be cast into the den of lions” (Dan. 6:7). This effectively excluded prayers to Yahweh. It became illegal to pray before the God of the universe, and only petitions to an idol-king were permitted. Daniel’s response to this is most instructive:

“when Daniel knew that the writing was signed, he went into his house; and his windows being open in his chamber towards Jerusalem, he kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed, and gave thanks before his God, as he did aforetime” (Dan. 6:10).

There are a number of exhortational points that come out from this verse: we are told of that which Daniel did habitually. He made a point of praying “three times a day” kneeling upon his knees. The Psalmist similarly endorsed this practice: “Evening, and

morning and at noon will I pray, and cry aloud: and he shall hear my voice” (Psa. 55:17). This is a good habit that we would do well to emulate: we should pray not simply when we have a specific need, or circumstance to petition our Father about, but rather we should constantly pray by way of giving praise whenever opportunity allows. We tend to eat morning, noon and evening as a matter of course: how much more should we pray at these times?

Another point is that Daniel prayed towards Jerusalem. We learn later in his prophecy that he was familiar with the writings of Jeremiah, who spoke of a return to the land after a 70-year period of servitude in Babylon. Daniel’s heart was in Jerusalem: he doubtless prayed for the peace of Jerusalem, the place where Yahweh had chosen for his name to dwell. After the manner described by Solomon (see 1 Kings 8), he prayed facing the city whose restoration he sought for.

We have some idea as to the content of Daniel’s prayer in the Psalms that he would have been intimately acquainted with:

“O Yahweh my God, in thee do I put my trust: save me from all them that persecute me, and deliver me: ***Lest he tear my soul like a lion***, rending it in pieces while there is none to deliver” (Psa. 7:1-2).

“I sought Yahweh ***and he heard me***, and delivered me from all my fears ... this poor man cried, ***and Yahweh heard him***, and saved him out of all his troubles” (Psa. 34:4,6).

Daniel trusted in Yahweh’s deliverance out of the den of lions – but interestingly, so did the Gentile king Darius: “the king spake and said unto Daniel, Thy God whom thou servest continually, he will deliver thee” (Dan. 6:16). Notice the certainty in these words: “he ***will*** deliver thee”. He recognized that Daniel’s service to his God was done “continually,” and constantly. Again, we can do no better than to emulate Daniel’s constancy in prayer, worship, and manner of life. All of these things demonstrate an excellent spirit in which God will be well pleased.

Returning to Psalm 34, cited above, the passage continues:

“the angel of Yahweh encampeth round about them that fear him, and delivereth them” (Psa. 34:7).

And so it was that Yahweh sent his Angel to redeem his prophet. Previously, Yahweh had sent his Angel to save Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego from the burning fiery furnace (Dan. 3:28), and now he was sent again to save Daniel. So the prophet told the king who came to see what had befallen him: “My God hath sent his angel, and hath shut the lion’s mouths, that they have not hurt me; forasmuch as before him innocency was found in me; and also before thee, O king, have I done no hurt” (Dan. 6:22).

THE LORD JESUS CHRIST

In Daniel being placed into the den of lions, and his subsequent deliverance, we can see a number of parallels with the circumstances of the Lord Jesus Christ. Daniel 6 speaks of how a stone was rolled over the entrance to the pit:

“a stone was brought and laid upon the mouth of the den; and the king sealed it with his own signet, and with the signet of his lords; that the purpose might not be changed concerning Daniel.” (Dan. 6:17).

Similarly, the Gospel record describes how the grave of Messiah was secured:

“they went, and made the sepulchre sure, sealing the stone, and setting a watch” (Mat. 27:66).

Daniel 6 records how:

“Then the king arose very early in the morning, and went in haste unto the den of lions” (Dan. 6:19).

And similarly, the Gospel record describes those who went to the opened tomb of Messiah:

“now upon the first day of the week, very early in the morning, they came unto the sepulchre ...” (Lu. 24:1).

Just as Daniel was delivered by the Angel being sent, we have a number of occasions where the angels are said to have come to minister to the Lord. Psalm 91 seems to be appropriate here:

“he shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways. They shall bear thee up in their hands, lest thou dash thy foot against a stone” (Psa. 91:11-12)

And just as Daniel was saved out of the Lion’s den, even so our Lord was saved from the pit of death:

“in the days of his flesh, when he had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto him that was able to save him out of death, and was heard in that he feared...” (Heb. 5:7).

OUR OWN SALVATION

The prophet Daniel was placed under an unchangeable law of death. He was to be cast into the den of lions, from which there was no escape. But although the law was carried out to its conclusion, God saved Daniel by sending his angel to shut the mouths

of the lions. That which was to cause death was rendered powerless by God. Even so, we are all under the law of sin and death, which brings certain condemnation to all who are affected by it. But by the raising up of Messiah out from the grave, we see the means by which that unchangeable law becomes nullified. True, if the Master remains away, we shall all die. The law will operate to its conclusion. But we, like Christ can be raised up again to a newness of life. These are the principles that we come together to memorialize each week in the bread and in the wine: the great declaration of God's Righteousness in the offering up of His Son. And as we seek to emulate our Master, we can take heed to the Type of Daniel, and his deliverance from the lion's den.

Christopher Maddocks

The Rod out of The Stem of Jesse

In Isaiah chapter 11, we are given a prophecy concerning Jesus, the Messiah:

“... there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots” (Isa. 11:1).

The word translated “*the stem*” in this place, literally means: “*to cut down, i.e. a stump*”. The sense is that the various branches of the Household of Jesse had been cut off, the tree being cut down - and that out of the stump that was left, a new Branch would emerge, growing out of the same rootstock.

The Jesse Family Tree was cut down in the days of Zedekiah, when the wicked prince, as the last reigning member of the household was deposed:

“Thou, profane wicked prince of Israel, whose day is come, when iniquity shall have an end, Thus saith *adonai Yahweh*, remove the diadem, and take off the crown: this shall not be the same: exalt him that is low, and abase him that is high. I will overturn, overturn, overturn it: and it shall be no more until he come whose right it is: and I will give it him” (Eze. 21:25-27),

So it was that Zedekiah would be cut down. Moreover, the family tree of Jessie was no longer to experience a blessed state of prosperity; rather it would be cut down simultaneously, so that only a stump remained. Thus, it would remain dormant until He whose right the diadem is shall return to take up his inheritance.

There are many principles given for our instruction in these things. The natural branches were cut off, so that only a stump remained. Similarly, the inspired Apostle used the analogy of an olive tree having its branches removed:

“for if the firstfruit be holy, the lump is also holy: and if the root be holy, so are the branches. And if some of the branches be broken off, and thou, being a wild

olive tree, wert grafted in amongst them, and with them partakest of the root and fatness of the olive tree: Boast not against the branches. But if thou boast, thou bearest not the root, but the root thee. Thou wilt say then, The branches were broken off, that I might be grafted in. Well; because of unbelief they were broken off, that I might be grafted in. Well; because of unbelief they were broken off, and thou standest by faith. Be not highminded, but fear” (Rom. 11:16-20).

The people of Israel, as natural branches, were broken off as they did not bear any fruit in the sight of the most High God. But we Gentiles were grafted into the remaining stump – the Israelitish rootstock, by grace. We therefore ought not vaunt ourselves against those who fell, but rather we ought to fear, lest we fall after their example.

Speaking at the individual level, John described the coming judgment in these terms:

“And now also the axe is laid unto the root of the trees: therefore every tree which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire” (Mat. 3:10).

Here again, men are likened to fruit trees. A fruit tree that does not bear fruit encumbers the ground with its presence, and is suitable only to be dug up and cast away. Even so, those men and women who refuse to bring forth the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22) will be consumed in the fire of coming judgments. Moreover, notice that in this analogy, the axe is laid into “the root” of the trees, meaning that in this case there was no stump remaining, to be allowed to grow again (cp Job 14:7). The entire tree was destroyed in the fire, roots and all. There was no hope of the Tree’s survival, just as for those who are forgetful hearers of the Truth, there is no hope of the life of the *Aion*, when Messiah shall judge every man according to his deeds.

The Jesse-tree had hope, that though it was cut down yet it would sprout again, for from its roots would proceed the BRANCH (Is. 11:1). The branch is spoken of elsewhere in the prophetic writings, most notably in Zechariah 6:12, Jeremiah 23:5, and Jeremiah 33:15. In all of these places, the picture presented forms a vision of hope to the remnant that still held fast to the things of the Spirit. Jeremiah 23:5 particularly associates with the passage in question:

“Behold, the days come saith Yahweh, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch, and a king shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgement and justice in the earth. In his days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely: and this is his name whereby he shall be called: *Yahweh tsidkenu*”, or, Yahweh Our Righteousness (Jer. 23:5,6).

The prophecy of a Branch once again growing from the Jesse-root then, was intended to uplift the spirits of those who suffered under the Babylonian oppression, for it spoke of a time of peace and prosperity, when Judah would be saved, and Israel dwell in safety. It taught that there would come One who would redeem them out of the hand of their enemies – including the greatest enemy of all, even their own sinfulness. So

it is written: “there shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and will turn away ungodliness from Jacob: for this is my covenant unto them, when I shall take away their sins” (Rom. 11:26, 27). Notice these two aspects; Christ is a deliverer to rebuke the Gogian hordes – but also to deliver Israel from their own sins. He will establish his throne at Jerusalem, as the ancient Davidic seat of power restored. He truly will be a “branch” bearing fruit in abundance to the Glory of the Great Husbandman, even Yahweh himself.

Concerning this Man whose name is the BRANCH, Isaiah tells us that: “the spirit of Yahweh shall rest upon him” (Isa. 11:2). This can be seen in the days of his mortality, when the Holy Spirit descended in dove-form, settling upon the Son of God. At Messiah’s baptism, we read that:

“Jesus, when he was baptised, went up straightway out of the water: and, lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him: And lo a voice from Heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased” (Mat. 3:16-17).

Notice here, the allusions to the Creative Work of the Father as described in the early chapters of Genesis. There, we are told that “the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters” (Gen. 1:2) in order to bring about the events that followed. The word for “moved” here also carries the sense of “brooded”, a word particularly relevant to the actions of a bird. Also, each creative day ended with the pronouncement “and *Elohim* saw that it was good”, signifying the Father’s approval of the Holy-Spirit activity.

In Matthew 3, instead of the water being symptomatic of the earth being without form and void, it contained the Son of Man, and John the baptiser. Upon Christ did the Spirit descend in bird-like form, with the voice signifying that what was being accomplished was “well pleasing” to the Father. A baptism brings a “newness of life”; it marks a new beginning after the Old Man of the flesh has been put to death. Even so, Messiah’s baptism was an act which was prophetic of his own death and resurrection, an example to all to follow. Christ is the beginning of the New Creation, being the firstborn from the dead (Col. 1:18), and all that is in him is Good, that is to say, all that is in him is his Father’s goodness, revealed to man in an arm of salvation to pluck those who would take hold of it out of the mire of humanity.

But though the Spirit dwelt in Christ during the days of His mortal existence, the passage in Isaiah 11 is really speaking of how it will remain with him in the future Age, in order that he might perform righteous judgment in the earth. Verses 2 and 3 describe the seven attributes that come as a consequence of the spirit of Yahweh resting upon him, and verse 4 reads:

“But with righteousness shall he judge the poor, and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth: and he shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked”.

The consequence of Yahweh's Spirit resting upon Messiah then, is that righteous judgments shall be exercised in the earth. But when Messiah reigns, he will not do so alone, for his brethren shall reign as kings and priests with him (Rev. 5:10). The attributes that are required in order to perform just judgment, therefore, must also be found within us. Though we do not have the Holy Spirit dwelling in us, in the sense of having the direct power of Yahweh being upon us, as in Jesus' case, nevertheless we do have access to the Word of God, which is His "power unto salvation" (Rom. 1:16). If we have this Word – which is spirit, and which is life (Jno. 6:63) – dwelling in us, we possess a spiritual power that can save our souls, and also prepare the New Man within us for perpetuation into the glory of the Age to Come. We would do well therefore, to consider the attributes possessed by Messiah, that we might permit the Spirit-Word to work the same characteristics within ourselves.

"The spirit of wisdom and understanding"

The Spirit of Wisdom is referred to a number of other times in Scripture, including Ex. 28:3; Deut. 34:9 and Eph. 1:17. The Exodus reference describes how that those responsible for making the furnishings of the Tabernacle were endowed with the ability to do their work. The Deuteronomy reference describes the preparation of Joshua to take over from Moses, bringing the Children of Israel into the land of promise. And the Ephesians reference describes the apostle's prayer for the disciples there to be given the spirit of Wisdom, in order that they "may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of his glory of his inheritance in the saints ..." (Eph. 1:18). In short, the Spirit of Wisdom was always given for constructive purposes; to ensure the raising up of the Tabernacle, to ensure that Joshua had the ability to bring the Israelites into the glory of their inheritance and to ensure the believer knew the principles of conduct and doctrine that was governed by the common hope they shared. It is true that there is a time to break down, as well as a time to build up (Eccl. 3:3), but a wise man will be able to discern which is appropriate in a given circumstance. Men of wisdom are builders in the ecclesia, seeking to edify the body with the nourishment of the Word, at the same time as contending with error. Men of faith will build up, yet also wield the sword of the Spirit to cut down every thought and thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God. To possess the spirit of wisdom and understanding goes beyond an intellectual comprehension of the Word – vital though that is – it is a discernment of how to apply the principles of the Word in daily living, for the benefit of all the saints, and to the Glory of the Father.

"the spirit of counsel and might"

Both Counsel and Might are things which come from giving heed to the word of Wisdom. So we read in Proverbs: "*Counsel is mine*, and sound wisdom: I am understanding: *I have strength*" (Prov. 8:14). A Counsellor in Scriptural terms, is one to whom we can go to for advice, and instruction as to what course we may take in a given circumstance. So Ahithophel was David's counsellor, who turned against him in providing counsel to Saul. And so this is also one of the titles of the Master, as described in Isaiah 9:

“for unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, *Counsellor*; The Mighty El, the Father of the Age, the Prince of Peace” (Isa. 9:6).

But how does Messiah give us counsel? In what sense is he a Counsellor? Although we do not have access to him to ask for personal advice specific to our circumstance, He has provided us with teachings that enable us to direct our lives aright in the sight of Almighty God. The Sermon on the Mount is merely one collection of wise sayings of Christ; in addition to what is taught plainly there, he has also given us parables describing differing circumstances, and which describe what behaviour is required in each.

We have a specific instance of where Christ gave counsel to an ecclesia in Revelation chapter 3. There, we read concerning the ecclesia at Laodicea:

“Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked: *I counsel thee* to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eyesalve that thou mayest see” (Rev. 3:17-18).

Here, the advice, or counsel, is to purchase gold (tried faith – 1Pet. 1:7), and white raiment (the righteousness of saints – Rev. 19:8). Here was a representative ecclesia which was failing to manifest the fruit of the Spirit, and concerning which remedial advice was given.

But we also ought to give heed to the same counsel, for the religious world of our day is no different to the Laodicean condition. Being neither hot nor cold, the noxious lukewarm teachings which emanate from the pulpits of Man’s Wisdom are stifling and sickening to the Saints of the Most High God. We ought to share the Spirit’s assessment of the circumstance ... but do we? In our age, rather than to see men earnestly contending for the faith, we behold men who send embassages of peace to those who are at enmity with the Father, seeking “union” with those of different persuasions than the teachings of Christ. To remain steadfastly resolute in the face of the derision of men is truly a trial of our faith, and to clothe ourselves with the garments of Christ’s providing may well make us stand out from the ignorant crowds who speak evil of us for Christ’s sake. Yet if we do not seek after those things, these are the words of the Spirit to the Laodicean philosophers: “I will spue thee out of my mouth” (Rev. 3:16).

“the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of Yahweh”

Here, knowledge, and reverential fear are coupled together. The Proverbs teach us that: “the fear of Yahweh is the beginning of knowledge” (Prov. 1:7). He that cometh

to the Father must firstly believe that He Is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him (cp. Heb. 11:6). To believe that the Father “is” must be coupled with the reverence that goes with the recognition of His Power and Might. The Jews of Messiah’s day did not choose knowledge, neither did they seek the fear of the Almighty (Prov. 1:29), therefore their destruction came suddenly. If we would be wise therefore, we must seek first the reverential fear of Yahweh, in order that we can then build upon our knowledge of Him, and so construct for ourselves an edifice of faith, which can resist the stormy blasts that life brings.

And shall make him of quick understanding in the fear of Yahweh

Here, the word rendered “understanding” signifies *scent, or smell*. The point has been made by many, that this is the same Hebrew words translated “spirit” in verse 3. The idea has been expressed that verse 2 expresses Yahweh breathing out the things pertaining to His Spirit, with Messiah breathing them in, as per verse 3. If this is the case, then we have a wonderful unity between the Father and Son in this place; with the reverential fear of Yahweh (mentioned again), Messiah lives and breathes in God’s spiritual atmosphere, to perform His Father’s Will in all things.

There is a lesson in point for ourselves here. We must be found breathing in the precepts and principles of Almighty God ourselves. But in addition to this, the unity which existed between Christ and his Father ought to be reflected in the interactions of the believers between themselves. We can see this from John chapter 17, and the Lord’s prayer which is recorded there:

“Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, *that they may be one, as we are ...* neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word *that they may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us:* That the world may believe that thou hast sent me. And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them, that they may be one, even as we are one” (Jno. 17:11, 21, 22, 23).

Here, we ought to pause and consider our own standing. Is the unity between ourselves and the other brethren and sisters reflective of that unity which exists between the Father and Son? Or do we harbour grudges, and seek to avoid those who we don’t feel we can get on well with? Let us all strive to attain that unity of mind and spirit which itself is a testimony to the world, that they might believe.

In the emblems of the Bread and Wine, we behold the judgment of Yahweh, and the intrinsic oneness between Him and His Son, in the common purpose of providing salvation for those who would be taught of God. In Christ, God condemned sin in the flesh (Rom. 8:3). In Christ, Yahweh’s righteousness was declared as the condition upon which sins may be forgiven. As we take these emblems into ourselves therefore, let us seek to assimilate into our beings the unity of the Father and Son, and let us seek to develop the Mind of Christ, bearing the attributes listed in Isaiah 11, that we, by His Grace, might enter into life eternal.

Christopher Maddocks

“When the Lord Jesus Shall be revealed from Heaven ...”

The Apostle Paul invites us to “behold ... the goodness and severity of God” in the context of Israel’s fall, and the subsequent extension of the Arm of Salvation to the Gentiles who might lay hold upon it. “On them which fell, severity; but toward thee, goodness, if thou continue in his goodness: otherwise thou also shalt be cut off” (Rom. 11:22).

Popular theology would claim that the Gospel is all about good deeds towards men, and benevolence towards man by the Almighty. But others are taught by the Apostle to know better, for whilst man may seek to minimise - and if possible exclude - the idea of coming judgments, Paul taught that we must behold the Severity of God, as well as the Goodness. Both aspects come together in the outworking of Yahweh’s Purpose, for in order for His Goodness to be established in the earth, those who despise His Ways must be excluded. There has to be the removal of the rubble of human superstition, before the Truth can be held aloft to shine brightly upon those who would walk in its light. For the Truthholders, there can be no compromise; the day of Judgments shall surely come, “according to” the “Gospel” taught by Paul (Rom. 2:16).

These two aspects are also brought together in the second Epistle of the Spirit through Paul to the Thessalonians. Here, the Apostle speaks of the time “when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels”, and “when he shall come to be glorified in his saints”. But in the same place, he also speaks of the Master “in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power” (2 Thes. 1:7-9). So again, we have the goodness of Yahweh being displayed in a multitude of Holy Ones, and His Severity against the wilfully ignorant, who choose to disobey His Word.

Part of the allusion in this place, is to Psalm 50 where these two facets are brought together again:

“Out of Zion, the perfection of beauty, God hath shined. Our God shall come, and shall not keep silence: a fire shall devour before him, and it shall be very tempestuous round about him. He shall call to the heavens from above, and to the earth, that he may judge his people. Gather my saints together unto me; those that have made a covenant with me by sacrifice ...” (Psa. 50:2-5).

Notice that in this place, just as in 2 Thessalonians, we have a devouring fire before the Coming of the Lord – Severity, and the gathering together of Yahweh’s Holy Ones (cp. 2 Thes. 2:1) – Goodness. This company of saints are those who are redeemed through the blood of the Lamb, and who present themselves as living sacrifices (Rom. 12:1), which is their reasonable service. These make their stand upon the principles of the New Covenant, or Testament, ratified by the blood of Messiah, by which blood he has purchased them for the glorification of Yahweh in them (1 Cor. 6:20). In these words, we have the overriding Purpose of Yahweh expressed: that out of Zion, God

will “Shine”, with the light of his glory extending across the globe, dispelling every work and shadow of darkness.

Malachi also speaks of this time, describing how: “unto you that fear my name shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in his wings ... and ye shall tread down the wicked; for they shall be ashes under the soles of your feet in the day that I shall do this, saith Yahweh of hosts” (Mal. 4:2-3). Here we have the Elohim shining forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father (Mat. 13:43) - that is, shining with the splendour of a Divine array of glorious attributes, revealed first in Yahweh’s Son, and then in a whole multitude which have been made to conform to his Image (Rom. 8:29). These have been developed through a lifetime of personal development, under the influence of the Spirit-Word, and the providential guidance of Angelic ministration, to bring forth a people that show forth the praises of He who has called them to inherit the earth. And it is these, who shall trample underfoot the ashes of those who have been consumed under the fiery judgements of the Almighty.

ISRAEL AND EGYPT

These two aspects which we are considering often come together in Scripture. In the deliverance of Israel from Egypt, we have the Goodness of Yahweh seen in that deliverance – yet also His Severity towards the Egyptians who perished under his judgments. Another example is the deliverance of Lot out of Sodom. Jude tells us that Sodom and Gomorrah particularly are “set forth for an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire” (Jude 7). Yet Peter informs us that “the Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of trials,” and cites “Just Lot” as a case in point. These examples are worthy of our utmost attention, for just like Egypt, and Sodom, the world in which we sojourn is about to suffer under the judgments of Yahweh. This is a coming reality from which there is no escape. There is a day appointed for the earth’s judgment, and that judgment shall begin at the household of faith (1 Pet. 4:17). To minimise or exclude that reality from our preaching is not loving, merciful or kind. In fact, it is the exact opposite of these things, for it is to leave men ignorant, and unprepared for that day.

For believers in Christ however, it is written that he has “delivered us from the wrath to come” (1 Thes. 1:10). They shall stand by grace, and not fall through disobedience in the great Day to come. Whilst it is true that the disobedient shall be “punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord”, for the righteous, these days will be “times of refreshing” which “shall come from the presence of the Lord” (Acts 3:19). We need to direct our conduct and affairs with wisdom and discretion in order to prepare for that day, for how we choose to respond to the calling of Christ will, at the last, determine our future at that time. We need to prepare now, that it might be given to us to shine with all the brightness of the Millennial Sun, rather than to be consumed with the fiery brightness of His Coming (2 Thes. 2:8).

Another example that we ought to consider in this place, is that of Cain, whose works it is testified, were “evil” (1Jno. 3:12). The passage under consideration states that

those who have chosen to be disobedient shall be “punished ... *from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his power*” (2 Thes. 1:9). And Cain provides an example of one whose punishment involved being forcibly removed from the Presence of Yahweh, and the glory of the Cherubim that dwelt at the east of the garden. He was guilty of murder: the first human death to take place in the history of the world. And complaining at his punishment he said:

“Behold, thou hast driven me out this day from the face of the earth; *and from thy face shall I be hid ...*” (Gen.4:14).

He recognised that his sin had separated between him and God (cp Isa. 59:2), that access to the Cherubic glory, and the way to the Tree of Life that they preserved was denied him by the fiery sword which turned every way. He would be hid from the face of God.

Interestingly, this latter expression appears to be picked up in Isaiah 53, speaking of our Redeemer:

“He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: *and we hid as it were our faces from him;* he was despised and we esteemed him not” (Isa. 53:3).

Notice here that rather to accept Yahweh’s judgment upon him, Cain complained that he would be driven from the Father’s Face of favour, whereas those spoken of by Isaiah hid themselves in shame. Like Adam and his wife, hiding in the shade of the trees of the garden, men hid themselves from the face of Christ, in a sense of shame and a feeling of guilt. Yet “he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed.” (Is 53:5). As a man of sorrows, he bare our sins in his own body upon the Tree. Though, like the publican in Messiah’s parable, we might not lift up our eyes towards heaven (Lu. 18:13), for the sense of shame and guilt that we feel, there is forgiveness with Yahweh - who does not regard the iniquity of those who become justified through faith in His Son. Nay, there is rather forgiveness and reconciliation to those who tremble at His Word, which was “made flesh” in the person of Christ. In this hope we rejoice, longing for the day when we shall be delivered from the body of this death, and become partakers of Divine Nature: even an endless perpetuation of life devoted in every way to the doing of our Father’s Will.

The central theme of the verses under consideration in 2 Thessalonians chapter 1 is that of Glory. Verse 9 speaks of the disobedient being excluded “from the glory of his power”. Verse 10 speaks of how Messiah will come “to be glorified in his saints”, and verse 12 describes how “that the name of our Lord Jesus Christ may be glorified in you” This is the right and proper focus of attention. Whilst the humanists see all things as being centred around Man, and what the Creator might, or might not do for them, the focus of Scripture is upon Yahweh as the Almighty, whose Name is to be exalted, and whose purpose centres around Glory to Him, that is, as manifested in a

glorious immortal multitude who show forth His praises. Not creating the world to remain uninhabited (Isa. 45:18) it is his purpose to call out a people for the development and furtherance of His Name – and their salvation from death is but a means to that end, and not an end in itself (Psa. 85:9).

Scripturally, the way to give glory to God, is to believe in His Promises, and to make confession of our sins. Speaking of Abraham, the Apostle describes how “he staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith **giving glory to God**” (Rom. 4:20). And in speaking to Achan, Joshua said, “my son, **give, I pray thee, glory to Yahweh Elohim of Israel, and make confession unto him**; and tell me now what thou hast done; hide it not from me” (Josh. 7:19).

Abraham gave glory by believing, and Achan was to give glory by confessing what he had done. Rather than to hide our sins, we must acknowledge them before He who knows the innermost thoughts and intentions of our hearts. And rather than to become despondent with our sense of weakness and failure, we, like Abraham, must believe that what Yahweh has promised He will surely perform at His appointed time.

When we come to consider the work of our Master, we behold once again, the goodness and severity of the Almighty. That is, the goodness of Yahweh in extending to us an Arm of Salvation, and the severity of condemning sin in the flesh (Rom. 8:3). In Christ we see Yahweh Glorified, showing forth a glorious array of Divine attributes. We know that our God is a consuming fire against the disbeliever, but that His Countenance will shine upon the faithful (Psa. 4:6). We must, therefore, walk in the light of His Revealed Word, and continue in His Goodness, that in the great Day to come, we might be approved to be partakers of that Glory yet to be revealed.

Christopher Maddocks

“Seek Ye Yahweh”

1 Corinthians chapter 1 describes the manner in which the Word was preached and received:

“Ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble are called: but God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; and base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are, that no flesh should glory in His Presence” (1 Cor. 1:26-29).

The system of salvation extended to Man therefore, involves the elevation of the Father only, making no provision for flesh to glory before Him. “We preach Christ crucified ... unto the Greeks foolishness” (1 Cor. 1:23) says the inspired Apostle, and

this maxim holds as true today as when it was first written. The Natural man is unable to receive the things of the Spirit (1 Cor. 2:14) - especially when to do so involves humility and self-abasement – and so holds fast to that which is natural to him - the indulgence of the carnal mind upon things that do not profit. Preachers of the Gospel taught by Christ and his apostles have been scorned and derided throughout the ages, for in themselves and their natural position in society, there is no human reason why they should be honoured. But “the foolishness of God [i.e. the cross of Christ considered foolish by men] is wiser than men; and the weakness of God is stronger than men” (1 Cor. 1:25) - and though the treasure is hidden within weak and earthen vessels, when Messiah comes to lead his people into victory against the powers of sin, the light shall be caused to shine across the entire globe, after the fashion of Gideon’s victory over his enemies.

This pattern is something that we find repeated in the prophecy of Amos. The seventh chapter recounts the prophet’s words in answer to Amaziah, the priest of Beth-El, who had told him to “flee thee away” and cease prophesying to Israel:

“I was no prophet, neither was I a prophet’s son; but I was an herdman, and a gatherer of sycamore fruit. And Yahweh took me as I followed the flock, and Yahweh said unto me, Go, prophesy unto my people Israel” (Amos 7:14-15).

So it was that in selecting men to deliver words of rebuke and correction to his people, Yahweh chose those who, by the world’s standards were weak and lowly. Amos was not among the rich and prosperous in the things of this life, neither did he elevate himself to be a prophet – rather he was taken and chosen by the Father, that having no glory in himself to detract from the message, he would be a vessel suitable to hold forth the word of life.

Amos chapter 1 tells us that the prophet’s ministry was during the days of Uzziah, king of Judah. And 2 Chronicles chapter 26 characterises this period as being a time of prosperity. Uzziah, we are told: “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 vine dressers in the mountains, and in Carmel, for he loved husbandry” (2 Chron. 26:10).

The record continues:

“and he made in Jerusalem engines invented by cunning men, to be upon 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 Ch 26:15).

Carmel was a fruitful place, and the prosperity of the land was shown by the need for vinedressers and husbandmen to tend the land and beasts. Yahweh blessed him greatly, but only whilst he was of a lowly spirit. He was “marvellously helped till he was strong” we are informed, “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). Had Uzziah remained humble, Yahweh would have continued to elevate him, but as “pride goeth before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall” (Prov. 16:18) even so Uzziah became haughty, and fell from his position of favour. Seeking to become his own High Priest by entering the Temple without Divine Authorisation, he was smitten with leprosy in his forehead, and remained a leper till the day of his death.

It is interesting to note that in the year of Uzziah’s death, the prophet Isaiah saw a vision of the glorified Messiah:

“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” (Isa. 6:1).

Notice here, the Master is “upon a throne”, which speaks of *kingship*, but his train filled “the temple,” which indicates the centre of *worship*, or religion. So it is that in the Kingdom, Christ shall be a High Priest after the order of Melchisedec, a king-priest officiating in the presence of Yahweh in the Most Holy.

However, unlike Uzziah, Christ does not elevate himself to be a priestly king: he is made so by Divine appointment:

“so Christ glorified not himself to be made an 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 after the order of Melchisedec” (Heb. 5:5-6).

Moreover, Christ sought salvation from death, in humility not presumptuously. The sacrifices he offered were not animal offerings, but tears, and a meek and lowly spirit that trembled at the Father’s word: “when he had **offered up** prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto him that was able to save him from death, and was heard in that he feared ...” (Heb. 5:7).

Returning to the prophecy of Amos, we find a constant exhortation to repent and “seek” Yahweh. “thus saith Yahweh unto the house of Israel, **Seek ye me**, and ye shall live” (Amos 5:4). This theme continues throughout the chapter: see verses 6, 8, 14. The exhortation is therefore, for sinful men to repent and seek Yahweh in spirit and in Truth. Amos’ ministry was particularly to the elevated class in Israel; against “the habitations of the shepherds, and the top of Carmel” which would “wither” (Amos. 1:2). Again, he spoke words against the “palaces” of both Israel and the heathen (1:4, 7, 10, 12, 2:2, 3:9, 11, 15). And chapter 5 describes the people:

“they hate him that rebuketh in the gate, and they abhor him that speaketh uprightly, forasmuch therefore as your treading is upon the poor, and ye have taken from him burdens of wheat ... they take a bribe, and they turn aside the poor in the gate from their right” (Am. 5:10-12).

The poor and defenceless were oppressed by men of standing and prosperity. Just as we read in 1 Corinthians that the truth-holders tend to be men of weak social standing, even so those who spoke out against the excesses of Israel were “hated” and “abhorred”. Even so it is today, that men of the flesh pour scorn upon men of the spirit.

But for those to whom Amos spake, although they denied the power thereof, they did have a “form of godliness”. They made a shew of desiring the long-promised Day of Yahweh to come, when they might be further glorified. But this was not to be so: the Day when it came was to be darkness and judgment, not light and glory to them:

“Woe unto you that desire the day of Yahweh! To what end is it for you? The day of Yahweh is darkness, and not light ... ***shall not the Day of Yahweh be darkness, and not light?*** Even be very dark, and no brightness in it” (Am. 5:18, 20).

Malachi spoke of that same day, saying, “who may abide the day of his coming” (Mal. 3:2). Joel spoke of that day, being “***a day of darkness, and of gloominess, a day of clouds and of thick darkness***” (Joel 2:2). These things ought to provoke us into an inward examination. When Messiah returns, there will be those who seek to be identified with him, and say, “Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy Name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them. I never knew you: depart from me ye that work iniquity” (Mat. 7:22-23). In that day, there shall be great darkness and gnashing of teeth on the part of the rejected (cp. Mat. 22:13). It is quite possible to look towards the coming Day of Yahweh with an entirely wrong heart and spirit. It is no use to seek the kingdom to come if it is not our present desire to live by the principles it will be established upon. For one thing, if we do not delight in the things of the Spirit of God, we will not be happy living in conditions where only those things are elevated. But more importantly, if we do not seek the righteousness of the Father in our age – how can we expect it to be imputed to us in the age to come?

Amos chapter 5 nevertheless provides us with a vision of hope. Although the coming Day of Yahweh would be darkness to those who cannot abide the glory of the Light, for the faithful there would be an entrance into a dawning of a new day:

“Seek him that ... turneth the shadow of death into the morning ...” (Am. 5:8).

In Yahweh then, there is hope and salvation. It may well be that during the days of our sojourn in mortal weakness that the path upon which we walk will lead us through times of bitterness and hardship. Times that seem like we are walking in the “shadow of death”. Certainly, this was true of David – yet he continued to trust in his God:

“Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me” (Psa. 23:4).

Again, Israel are depicted to Ezekiel (chapter 37) as dwelling in a valley of death – dry bones resting in hope that they might come together again at the appointed time, and be caused to stand up as a “great army”. In the darkest of whatever circumstances befall us, we can have the confidence that Yahweh is going to bring a new age of light, health, and wisdom – and that if we desire those things in our hearts, we will be part of that kingdom to come. To the Word and to the Testimony we look for light and hope (Isa. 8:20). As the “children of light” we do not seek our own glory, as did Uzziah. Seeking to be identified with he who was meek and lowly in heart (Mat. 11:29), we do not exalt ourselves, but trust in Yahweh that He will give the reward in due time. Not seeking the material things of this life, we seek first the Kingdom of God, and Yahweh’s righteousness, knowing that all other things we have need of will be provided for us (Mat. 6:33). The examples lie before us in the Scriptural record, but only we can made the decision to follow them.

Christopher Maddocks

Building upon a Rock

It is commonly taught amongst so-called Christian circles, that Salvation is through Grace alone (*sola gratia*), and that works have no bearing on our salvation. And like many pernicious false teachings, this is a combination of Truth and error. It is perfectly true to say that we cannot earn salvation through works: in the often quoted passage, Paul teaches that: “by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God : not of works, lest any man should boast” (Eph. 2:8). But Paul does not end there, he continues: “for we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus **unto good works**, which God hath before ordained **that we should walk in them**”. So it is that in the very passage cited to disparage good works, the apostle specifically states that we need to “walk in them.”

The truth of the matter is that a believer and follower of the Lord Jesus Christ is not at liberty to please his/herself in the way that they live their lives. Not that they can earn salvation by works, but rather that they should conduct themselves in a way appropriate to being disciples of Christ. This is plainly taught in our New Testament reading for today:

“And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, **and do not** the things which I say? Whosoever cometh to me, and heareth my sayings, **and doeth them**, I will shew you to whom he is like: He is like a man which built an house, and digged deep, and laid the foundation on a rock: and when the flood arose, the stream beat vehemently upon that house, and could not shake it: for it was founded upon a rock. But he that heareth **and doeth not**, is like a man that without a foundation build an house upon the earth: against which the stream did beat vehemently, and immediately it fell; and the ruin of that house was great” (Lu. 6:46-49).

Here is a warning to the *sola gratia* apologists: there will be those who profess the Lordship of Jesus, who he will reject (Mat. 7:23). As cited above, he will ask: “And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and **do not** the things which I say?” (Lu. 6:46).

Notice that the basis for their rejection is the fact that they “do not” the things which he says. This is precisely the situation of those of whom we speak: they acknowledge that Jesus is Lord, but deny the necessity of doing the things he commands, for his approval. And according to the Lord in that day, he will deny any relationship with them: “I never knew you”.

This parable of the Lord which immediately follows on from these words, was given to make this very point. The man who built his house upon earth is he that “doeth not” the things Christ said, and the man who built his house upon a rock is he that “doeth them”. The one survived, the other suffered the ruin of his house, which “was great”. Hence it is important to “do” the commandments of Christ!

LAYING THE FOUNDATION

It is much easier to lay a foundation upon the earth than to dig down into the rock. But that which is the easiest option in life is often the least wise – as evidenced by the outcome of each housebuilder. So it is, that to dig down into the rock is necessary to lay “a good foundation against the time to come” (1 Tim. 6:19). There are various aspects to this foundation. The writer to the Hebrews exhorts: “therefore leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection; not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God” (Heb. 6:1). Hence we learn that laying a foundation is one of the first principles to be followed, and that it involves repentance and faith.

Again, Paul describes the ecclesia:

“Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God, And are built upon ***the foundation of the apostles and prophets***, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone: In whom all the building fitly framed together growth unto an holy temple in the Lord” (Eph. 2:19-22).

Here, the foundation is that of the ecclesial house (cp. Heb. 3:6), rather than a personal dwelling, as in the parable of Christ. But the same principle holds true: the foundation is the testimony of the Apostles and Prophets – and the Lord Jesus Christ. Hence it is also written:

“According to the grace of God which is given unto me, as a wise masterbuilder, ***I have laid the foundation***, and another buildeth thereon. But let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon. ***For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ***” (1 Cor. 3:10-11).

Notice the two aspects: the foundation is that which is laid by the Apostle (as per Ephesians 2, cited above), yet it consists solely of Jesus Christ. Sometimes our adversaries take us to task, as our Statement of Faith (the BASF) states this as the Foundation clause:

“That the book currently known as the Bible, consisting of the Scriptures of Moses, the prophets, and the apostles, is the only source of knowledge concerning God and His purposes at present extant or available in the earth, and that the same were wholly given by inspiration of God in the writers, and are consequently without error in all parts of them, except such as may be errors of transcription or translation” (The Foundation, BASF).

Hence it is said that this is wrong, Jesus Christ is the only foundation, not a doctrine of inspiration. But this misses the point entirely! Yes, Jesus Christ is the only foundation, as per above. But the only source of knowledge that we have about that fact, is in the inspired Scriptures! This is how on the one hand, the only foundation is stated to be Jesus Christ only, and on the other, it is also described as “the foundation of the apostles and prophets” – this latter aspect is true because the doctrine of the apostles and prophets testified the truth concerning the Lord Jesus Christ. The point of the Foundation Clause of the BASF is that the Foundation is what the Scriptures teach concerning the Lord Jesus Christ!

A similar principle is illustrated by Messiah’s words concerning the confession of Peter:

“Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the Living God. And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona, for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven. And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and ***upon this rock will I build my ecclesia;*** and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it” (Mat. 16:16-18)

Here, Jesus said to Peter that “upon this rock” would his ecclesia be built – and the “rock” is evidently his testimony and witness that Jesus is “the Christ, the Son of the Living God”. Hence it is the testimony of the apostles and prophets concerning Jesus that comprises the foundation laid – and our Statement of Faith follows the same principle. So the ecclesial house is built upon an impregnable Rock!

THE NEED FOR DILIGENCE

As we mentioned above, to dig down to the rock is more difficult than to build upon the earth. And on a superficial level, there would appear to be no difference – the foundations are unseen until the storms come. On a sunny day, both houses will look identical – yet when the weather changes, there is no endurance for the sand-based house to withstand the stormy winds. So it is that great diligence is required of the disciple of Christ to dig deep:

“without faith it is impossible to please him [i.e. God]: 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).

Again, Paul exhorted:

“we desire that every one of you do shew **the same diligence** to the full assurance of hope unto the end: That ye be not slothful, but followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises ...” (Heb. 6:11-12).

Those who see no need for works in the grand scheme of salvation are slothful, and do not exercise diligence to dig deep to reach the rock bed. Supposing that all the work is done for them, they by their own confession do nothing. That is the easy way, yet the outcome will demonstrate how foolish it really is. To dig deep implies an intentional effort: one will not reach the rock by chance: it requires a focused resolve to shovel away the dirt and rubble, in order to build an enduring edifice upon the uncovered rock.

THE TESTIMONY OF JAMES

James has much to say in his inspired Epistle regarding our subject. Consider the following:

“yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: shew me thy faith without thy works, and I will shew thee my faith **by my works**. Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe and tremble. But wilt thou know, O vain man, **that faith without works is dead?**” (Jas. 2:18-20)

And again:

“but be ye **doers of the word**, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves” (Jas 1:22).

These words are so contradictory to the *sola gratia* mantra, that Martin Luther famously called the entire book a “right strawy epistle” (compared to the “gold” of other epistles) in his 1522 preface to the New Testament, and rejected its apostolic authenticity. However, we believe that rather than to reject those passages of Scripture which do not accord to our beliefs and preconceptions, it is far better to correct what we believe. As Brother Thomas wrote: “Investigate everything you believe: if it is the truth, it cannot be injured thereby; if error, the sooner it is corrected the better”. The only standard by which beliefs can be determined to be true or false is the Bible: “To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them” (Isa. 8:20).

Those self-confessed do-nothings who think it not necessary to set their hand to working the plough (Lu. 9:62), are builders upon earth, or sand (Mat. 7:26). Rather than being firmly founded upon the Apostolic testimonies concerning Messiah, they position themselves on the shifting sands of men’s opinion, and so do not have the

strength to endure hardships for Christ's sake. So the Lord taught in his parable of the Sower:

“some fell upon stony places, where they had not much earth: and forthwith they sprung up, because they had *no deepness* of earth: And when the sun was up, they were scorched; and because they had no root, they withered away” (Mat. 13:5-6).

And the interpretation is given:

“he that received the seed into stony places, the same is he that heareth the Word, and anon with joy receiveth it; yet hath he not root in himself, but dureth for a while: for when tribulation ariseth because of the Word, by and by he is offended ...” (Mat. 13:20-21).

The metaphor is different, but the lesson similar: it is necessary to dig down to the rock, or be deeply rooted, in order to survive the onslaught of adverse circumstances. James also uses the same figure:

“Let the brother of low degree rejoice in that he is exalted: but the rich in that he is made low: because as the flower of the grass he shall pass away. For the sun is no sooner risen with a burning heat, but it withereth the grass, and the flower thereof falleth, and the grace of the fashion of it perisheth: so also shall the rich man fade away in his ways” (Jas. 1:9-11).

The days are near when the wrath of God shall be manifested in His judgment of the kingdom of men. When the stormy winds fulfil His Word (Psa. 148:8), those who have not laboured to build the house appropriately will be overthrown. The people of Israel were condemned for their lack of building commitment:

“Because, even because they have seduced my people, saying, Peace, and there was no peace; and one built up a wall, and, lo, others daubed it with untempered mortar; Say unto them which daub it with untempered mortar, that it shall fall: there shall be an overflowing shower; and ye, O great hailstones shall fall, and a stormy wind shall rend it” (Eze. 13:10-12).

In the day of coming judgment, every man's work – or lack thereof will be laid bare to Divine scrutiny. Those who the Master never knew will fall, whereas those who laboured to build deep, will be preserved. As it is written: “the fear of the wicked shall come upon him: but the desire of the righteous shall be granted. As the whirlwind passeth, so is the wicked no more: but the righteous is an everlasting foundation” (Prov. 10:24-25). It is not enough to be inactive hearers of the Word, we must be doers also, lest we deceive our own selves (Jas. 1:22). Only those who are doers of the work “shall be blessed in his deed” (Jas. 1:25), and only they are those who the Master will acknowledge, and invite into his kingdom.

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