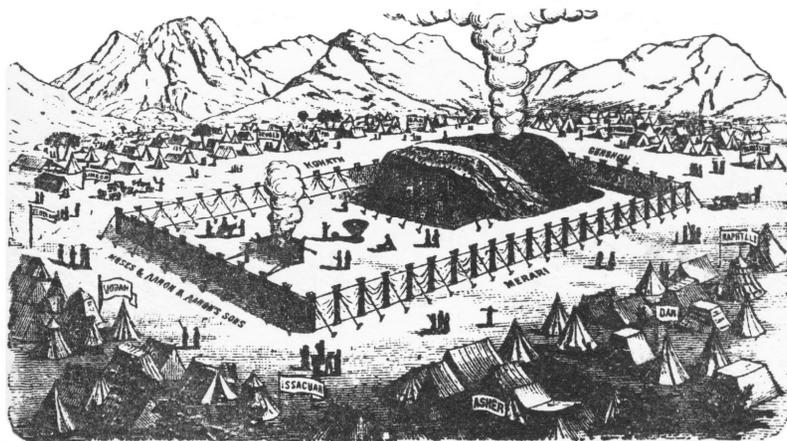


# THE SANCTUARY-KEEPER

*A Magazine for the Exposition and Defense of The Holy Scriptures*



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The Sanctuary-Keeper is published on a quarterly basis. The doctrinal position of this magazine is founded exclusively on the principles of Bible Truth as outlined and defined in *The Christadelphian Unamended Statement of Faith*

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### Back Inside Cover

Table, Comparison of the Gospels and their Audience

### Back Cover

"Defense of Truth"



We apologize for the delay in the 3<sup>rd</sup> Quarter issue of the S.K. and, Lord willing, hope to be back on schedule with the 4<sup>th</sup> Quarter.

Table. Comparison of the Gospels and their audience					
Society / politics/ law	History	Language	Citation of OT	Unique themes	Domain
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Assumes readers know the oral traditions of the Pharisees (1:5-1-2)</li> <li>2. Assumes readers know why Joseph could put Mary away (1:18-19)</li> <li>3. Does not have to explain or name the temple tax (17:24-27)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Assumes readers know how Abraham was</li> <li>2. Does not need to take genealogy to Adam</li> <li>3. Assumes readers know the account &amp; who is Bathsheba (1:6)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Quotes the LXX – use of language ties book to OT (Gen 5:1)</li> <li>2. Uses OT titles &amp; spiritually significant names</li> <li>- Land of Israel (2:20-21)</li> <li>- the Holy City (4:5)</li> <li>- city of the Great King (5:35)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Many hard/ obscure Messianic prophesies (1:21-23; 2:14-15; 2:16-17; 4:12-16; 8:17; 12:17-21; 13:35; 27:9-10) documents Jesus is the Messiah</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Sent only to the lost sheep of the House of Israel (10:5-6; 15:22-28)</li> <li>2. Jesus meets the essential requirements to be the Messiah (genealogy: 1:1-7 cp Gen 5:1)</li> <li>3. Will not destroy the Law (5:17-19)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Mathew (Jewish audience)</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Assumes readers do not know the oral traditions of the Pharisees (7:1-4)</li> <li>2. Does not examine the differences within the Pharisees (10:2 cp Matt 19:3)</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Assumes readers do not know Aramaic (5:31; 7:34; 15:34)</li> <li>2. Uses more Latin words (especially 6:27; 15:39 cp Matt 27:54)</li> <li>3. Opening (1:1) similar to writings about Caesar</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. General/ nonspecific, but establishes connection to OT for antiquity</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Action</li> <li>2. Similar to preaching of Peter (Acts 11:34-43)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Roman/ Latin audience)</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Has to explain how the synagogues operated (4:14-20 cp Matt 13:54)</li> <li>2. Has to explain/ give details of the Law of Moses (Lk 2:21-24; 22:1)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Assumes readers do not know Adam was the first man (3:38)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Uses the LXX</li> <li>2. A historian</li> <li>- Follows classical Greek historian formats. See intro to Josephus, Lucian ‘How to Write History’</li> <li>- Ties to world events (2:1-2; 3:1-2)</li> <li>3. Translates Aramaic (Acts 1:19)</li> <li>4. Addressed to a person with a Greek name (1:1-4)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. General/ nonspecific, but establishes connection to OT for antiquity</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Deliverance/ salvation/ belief/ morality of Gentiles</li> <li>- Elijah &amp; Gentiles (4:24-29)</li> <li>- Good Samaritan (10:30-27)</li> <li>- Believing leper (17:11-19)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Luke (Greek audience)</li> </ul>
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Uses the word ‘Jew’ more than anyone else</li> <li>- 7:1 synonym for leadership?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Assumes readers know some Messianic prophesies (1:21 cp Mal 4:5; Dt 18:15)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Jesus is the Christ</li> <li>2. ‘that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ’ - or - ‘they ye might go on believing’</li> <li>3. No focus on Gentiles</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. John (Believers?)</li> </ul>

# DEFENSE OF TRUTH

“Controversy for the sake of controversy has little to commend it; but avoiding the defense of truth when that precious entity is being misrepresented is both cowardly and unworthy of the holy Name that we bear. Most will assent to the fact that our Lord is the example given for us to follow. Jesus fearlessly defended both his Father and the Father’s truth when confronted and challenged by those of worldly motivations, who only hypocritically honored and obeyed the Father’s Word and will (Matt. 23:13-36; John 8:13-47). Moreover, Paul minced no words with the Galatian brethren, who were being led astray by false teachers (Gal. 1:6-9; 3:1-3). Paul admonished Titus similarly, and Jude teaches that we should “contend earnestly” (v.3). Contending earnestly in defense of the faith (truth) is a far cry from merely being contentious. Paul warned Timothy, and us (2<sup>nd</sup> Tim. 2:16-26), that challenges to God’s truth will arise, which must be answered, but in the proper spirit of meekness, lest our defense be not for truth but our own opinions.” (...)

“To follow the course of indifference as to whether God’s truth is being misused or corrupted is to tell God that we are really not much concerned about what to Him is so intensely important. This tells God that our human interrelationships, which we do not want jeopardized, are more important to us than God is. We would deeply resent another human being relegating us to unimportance. Can we reasonably imagine that God is pleased by our indifference toward Him and His distinguishing excellence? To urge that our brethren overlook, out of totally mistaken sense of compassion for others, corruption of God’s Holy Word is to offend God’s holiness and spotless righteousness. Jesus told us that if we love others, even those nearest of kin to us, more than we love him, we are not worthy of him. This is the divine standard of love, far transcending the love of our brethren, about which so much is made in these days of widespread confusion. Jesus stated clearly that the words that he spoke were not his, but the Father’s.”

“What is tragic for the body of Christ is for an erring brother for reasons of his own to persist in teaching error, and thereby to lead astray a following to the hazard of their individual salvations. This is no new phenomenon; Paul and John had to contend with it in their days of inspired leadership. Though in these days we are without benefit of inspired shepherds of the flock, that does not relieve those of full (spiritual) age (Heb. 5:14) from the responsibility to do whatever may lie within their power to counteract the onslaught upon pure truth. They bear a responsibility to the whole body of Christ to call attention to developing apostasy.” (...)

“What is even more tragic is for modern, humanistic concepts to have become alloyed with Bible teaching and to have become a part of accepted thinking within the Christadelphian body itself. Again, this not an altogether new phenomenon. The flesh has always lusted against the spirit, hence, there has always been a struggle between those who would keep both doctrine and practice pure, on the one hand, and those seeking to make the way to the Kingdom of God less restrictive, on the other hand. Natural human laziness and the desire to make life easy and pleasing to the emotions make any teaching that will pander to these desires far more attractive. The wider the gate and the broader the way the road of life can be made to appear, the more popular will be the appeal of those who represent that philosophy.”

# THE SANCTUARY – KEEPER

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*“Ye shall keep the charge of the sanctuary, and the charge of the altar”  
Num. 18:5*

*“Ye are...an holy priesthood to offer up spiritual sacrifices.”  
I Peter 2:5*

*“Thou hast kept My Word and hast not denied My Name”- Rev. 3:8*

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## SHOULD CHRISTADELPHIANS AND THEIR CHILDREN BE INVOLVED IN INTERNET SOCIAL WEBSITES?

The past five years have seen an explosion in the number of Christadelphians and their children signing on and using Internet websites such as MySpace, Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter and the like. The question we as Christadelphians should ask ourselves is, “Is this pleasing and acceptable to Yahweh?” As believers in the Truth, we are exhorted in Scripture to have the mind of Christ. The mind of Christ is a way of thinking that is derived from the Word of God and patterned after the personal example of our Savior. We are advised in Philippians 2:5, “*Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus*”, and in I Corinthians 2:16, “*For who hath known the mind of the Lord, that he may instruct him? But we have the mind of Christ.*” Do we profess to have this same mind? When our children were growing up and wanted to do something that was objectionable, many parents would ask the question, “What do you think Jesus would do?” We could now apply the same question to, “Would Jesus be using these Internet sites?”

From what I have read or been shown about the aforementioned websites, they put forth the **carnal mind** with glamorized photo’s, inappropriate photo’s and comments, boastful accomplishments, and vanity statements. Currently

when people sign up, they create profiles that include as much information as they want to give – everything from their relationship status to likes and dislikes. Each person can browse profiles of anyone on his or her network. They can also search for people outside of their networks and gain access to their profile by asking permission. Though the networks are far from private and can be hacked, young people especially, have grown to see Facebook as their private homes online. This is very dangerous to well being and security. Not only do these websites promote **humanism** and **vanity**, they are also dangerous places for sexual predators lurking to exploit the young as users search for perverted pleasure. Many of us have read or heard about the young boys unknowingly conversing with pedophiles, the deceiving old man who is arrested trying to meet the young girl he deceived online, or the girl cyber-bullied to the point that she committed suicide.

In an article on “MySpace vs. Workplace”, a marketing manager was screening job candidates when a recent college graduate applied. The manager was asked by a fellow employee “did you check out her MySpace page?” The manger did, and found “all kinds of compromising photo’s” including one of the applicant Jell-O-wrestling. They hired someone else. The article stated “what happens in Vegas may stay in Vegas”, but what happens on MySpace or Facebook can make it into the wider world. A university in Pennsylvania denied a 27 year-old woman a teaching degree just before graduation after she posted a photo of herself titled “Drunken Pirate”, contending that she had promoted underage drinking. Harvey Schwartz, a Boston lawyer says he doesn’t think sites like MySpace will be considered private from a legal standpoint. He said, “**If you’re putting something up on the Internet, anybody can read it.** I don’t think you should complain if somebody reads it who you hadn’t planned on reading it.”

As parents responsible for the Spiritual guidance and welfare of their children what can be done? Most elderly Christadelphians and some parents are not familiar with the actual working of these Internet sites and the dangers they pose to our Christadelphian Community. **They should be!**

**1<sup>st</sup>.** It is not wrong to monitor everything our children do online. If you put monitoring software on your computer you have the ability to log every keystroke your child makes and thus a good portion of his or her private world. You don’t have to be an expert to put it on your computer. You just download the software from a vendor and you will receive reports – weekly, daily, whatever – showing you everything your child is doing on the machine. Scary, but a good idea. Some parents won’t even consider it. However, most parents do monitor their children, watching over their environment, drug or alcohol usage, their school, etc. Do you tell your children that you have the possibility of putting monitoring software on the computer or that it is already there? I side

with putting it there. However, it could be enough to have discussions about your concerns, but it is still a good idea to let them know the capability is there.

**2<sup>nd</sup>.** Everything your child types can already be seen by the world – teachers, potential employers, neighbors, future dates, and **most importantly – God.** Shouldn't children learn now that the Internet is not a haven of privacy and that there are consequences for their actions on it?

**3<sup>rd</sup>.** At a minimum you should have access to your child's networks. Am I suggesting eavesdropping on every conversation? No. With new technology comes new responsibility; that works both ways. There is a fine line between being responsibly protective and irresponsibly nosy.

**4<sup>th</sup>.** **Probably the best answer** is to remove your child and yourself from a social-networking site and make sure your information doesn't last forever in cyberspace. Signing up for one of the sites is straightforward, but removing yourself from one can be less obvious. Each site has its own procedure for eliminating a profile using the "Settings" tab on the home page and choosing the option to delete your account or go to the "Help" tab and search for "delete account". It can take up to weeks for your profile to be removed from search engines such as Google so don't expect your information to be wiped out right away from the Web. **Moreover, don't expect any of the information to be wiped away from God's memory.** We read in Rom 14:11-12, "*For it is written, As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God. So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God.*" And in Matt 12:36-37, Jesus says, "*But I say unto you, That every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment. For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned.*"

*A Concerned Brother*

**EDITORIAL NOTE:** The practical concerns brought up by the previous writer provide an appropriate springboard for broader discussion considering that along with the world, the Brotherhood has embraced the Internet in its various forms. The Internet certainly is an amazing tool – it provides immediate sources of news and information; any kind of information in the realms of text, audio and video is shared and broadcasted on an exponentially much faster, far-reaching and eye appealing scale (including a promulgation and defense of the Truth); and it eliminates the barriers of distance in our social connections with one another.

The Internet certainly has what would seem to be some very positive uses, apart from the great evil that we know exists on the Internet. But despite what may appear to be positives, has the Internet really been an overall positive influence on the Brotherhood in how it is used in regard to social networking

between fellow Christadelphians, its use by the young people and the sharing of matters of belief among Christadelphians the world over? For all of the amazing opportunities that the Internet supposedly provides, and knowing that Christadelphians have taken full advantage of this medium – *Is the state of the Brotherhood, its young people and the cause of the Truth better off now than before the introduction of the Internet onto the world scene?* If one stops to think about the rapid deterioration of the health of the Christ Body over the past few years (and there are many factors for this) it should make us all rethink our relationship to this ever growing and all pervasive medium in which modern life is becoming more dependant.

Though used as a business and government tool since the 1970's, we remember when the first advertisements for the Internet as a general public medium hit the television airwaves (television being a source of grave concern in its own right) in the mid 1990's. The initial advertisements were very vague – but what has stuck with us was the advertising pitch touted of the *endless possibilities* of "**The Human Network**".

Certainly, not even its creators could foresee how far reaching the effects of this "human network" would be.



Along with the commonly known phrase "*the world wide web*", this idea of a "*human network*" should raise up a red flag for our spiritual sensibilities. Understanding the consequences of unfettered human interconnectivity of thought and imagery, a worldwide stage and promotion of all things flesh (ranging from the ordinary and ridiculous to the pornographic) and the immediate gratification to the senses that this brings; this "human" interconnectivity on such a massive and interwoven scale cannot be equated to those things which are well pleasing to our Heavenly Father. Considering the message of the website image provided above – remember the attitude of desired unity and self determination that led up to the fiasco of the Tower of Babel. "*Go to, let us build us a city and a tower, whose top may reach unto heaven; and let us make us a name...*"

But it might be asked, "*Surely when Christadelphians utilize this amazing tool, it can be a force for good?*" We would answer – like with all technologies there can be those who use such a resource responsibly. But, as one types in the name "Christadelphian" into a search engine, one will see an **overwhelming**

and **disgusting** array of beliefs and presentations that fall under the name of “Christadelphian”, but hardly represent the beliefs and mannerisms of the Apostolic Faith once demonstrated by early Brethren. It should be of no small concern that when an alien may type in the word “Christadelphian” they will be exposed to ideas or characteristics that hardly represent what we would want presented to the world. One is quickly exposed to the presentation of false doctrines, promotion of evangelical/ecumenical influences, “Gay Christadelphian” sites, professional video productions of dramatized Biblical subject matter, videos of “Christadelphian” young people engaged in inane or disrespectful activities, “Christadelphian” bands promoting their mainstream Christian style pop and rock music...and so much more. **One literally has to hunt** for those sites exclusively devoted to the promotion of sound doctrine. But not only is this sad in considering what the alien is exposed to, what of our Christadelphian young people when in their computer savvy they search the “Christadelphian” name? What kind of influence does this have on our young people when they see such things appear as “normal” Christadelphian belief or behavior? How does this undermine the attempts of the few families and ecclesias who still are working to cling to “the old paths” of belief and practice?

Added to this concern for our young people, is the presence of the social or discussion sites as mentioned by the concerned brother in the previous article. Not only do they provide entrapments that can be of personal danger (or just simply a waste of precious time), we are seeing a whole Christadelphian cyber sub-culture currently functioning in these social sites and “blogs” under the noses of many of the older generation in our community who do not waste their time in such a venue. This is a social culture that is not appreciative of the “old paths”; a culture that is defiant of fellowship differences; a culture where “everyone can have their say” (akin to the democratic and “frog like” spirit of “equality, liberty and fraternity”); a culture that is often protective of their subversive messages and offered to “members only” or those deemed as “friends”; and a culture that is not afraid to deride any who stand in their way.

A couple of examples: Facebook has the “Christadelphians for Unity” – an online group made up of young people (and not so young people) from around the world, promoting the agenda of world-wide Christadelphian unity through adoption of the NASU initiative. Within the first couple of weeks with the organization of this online group, the number of those joining had swelled to over 600 members. The communications that flow from this effort make it clear that nothing will stand in their way to achieve worldwide unity among Christadelphians as well as those of the CGAF. It has also been made clear that it is up to the younger generation to achieve what the older generation has been unable to accomplish in regard to “unity”. As another example, when the Arkansas Bible School was cancelled this past summer due to the damage incurred from a last minute storm, an online feeding frenzy among various liberal minded and disenchanting individuals took place on a sister’s personal

Facebook page with charges that this was God’s judgment on the School for being too strict and unloving. Many half truths and misinformed comments were posted from various corners in order to vindicate their own vitriol against the more conservative positions taken by the school and its committee. (It is very ironic how those who cry “love”, “forbearance” and “judge not” to justify their tolerance of those things outside of long held beliefs and practices can be the quickest to cast off these principles when they see the opportunity to deride those things they despise.)

Many more examples could be given, but it should be realized that the far reaching influence and speed in which these kind of movements and activism can be developed and promulgated cannot be underestimated. And, more could be said in regard to the various aspects of Christadelphian usage of the Internet. No doubt there are some positive uses, but again we ask these questions – *Is the Christadelphian community better off now than before the arrival of the internet? Has the Truth been better served? Are our young people spiritually better off now that they can spend countless minutes or hours posting and reading various ideas or thoughts, viewing video or pictures of their friends and their various activities, being exposed to false doctrines and attacks against the “old paths” that are passed on as the wisdom of a modern and more “enlightened” generation?*

Whether young or old, the Internet provides an attractive escape where one can lose themselves in an endless circle of mindless activity and create an almost childish need and craving for constant social connection (tie this in with the cell phone/texting phenomena). Television has been a dangerous source of escape and influence for over a generation now; but television is passive entertainment while the internet is interactive – and though they are somewhat similar, this interactive aspect of the internet and the sense of relevancy, self empowerment and self importance (i.e., narcissism) it may give the user, makes the internet even more potent and mesmerizing. Personal study of the Bible and our rich collection of Christadelphian literature do not have the same pleasurable affect on the natural senses as do our modern technologies. The former requires effort and quiet meditation, which humbles us and subdues our natural inclinations – a far cry from what makes our modern multi-media technologies so attractive. Therefore, the Internet is but yet another and highly competitive, fleshly challenger for our time and our state of mind.

With these things in mind we transition to the next editorial article that deals with yet another example of the dangers lurking on the Internet under the “Christadelphian” name. *“And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.”*

A. Thomas

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## THE TRUTH SHALL MAKE YOU FREE

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### Editor's Note

*In a recent posting on an Unamended Christadelphians Facebook page, the subject of "Let us be FREE IN Christ" was discussed. The subject of "Freedom in Christ" may be misinterpreted to allow believers to choose open fellowships, toleration of erroneous doctrines and immorality, freedom from adherence to a Statement of Faith and non-conformity to any Ecclesial standards. As servants of Yahweh, we must realize that Yahweh has set certain boundaries that we cannot cross over and He has also given us the opportunity to enjoy certain privileges associated with our covenant relationship with Yahweh. We present these thoughts for your consideration of the believer's relationship to our Heavenly Father. (B.H)*

**O**pening Reading: The 8<sup>th</sup> chapter of John, vv. 31-32 – *"Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, if ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."*

In these two verses, we find in the teachings of Jesus a very important scriptural principle. These verses teach us that by following (obeying) the word of Christ, we will then become a disciple of Him, we will gain a correct understanding of the Truth and we will be made "free" because of our understanding and application of the Truth in our lives. As we ponder verse 32, there are some questions that should come to our mind.

- What is truth?
- Through the truth, what are we freed from?
- What are we free to do in the Truth?
- What are we not free to do in the Truth?

The scriptural principles that provide answers to these questions probably constitute the most critical principles in our spiritual life. We would like to look into the scriptural answers to these four questions and see how we can use these answers to help us become better servants to our Heavenly Father.

Although the answers to these questions are valuable for all, I hope that those who have not yet taken on the name of the Lord Jesus Christ may especially profit by understanding the scriptural answers to these questions, as they form the foundation of that life that we have been called unto and which we make a commitment to live for the entirety of our lives in Christ.

### WHAT IS TRUTH?

The scriptures provide several answers to this question. As we look at these verses, we should notice that they are related and it is our responsibility to understand these relations. Let us read the following verses.

- **John 8: 36** – In verse 32, we read that the truth shall make us free. In verse 36, we read that Christ has made us free. Therefore, the Christ, the Son of God, must be embodied within the Truth.
- **John 14:6** – In Christ's own words, he tells us that He is the way, the truth and the life.
- **John 17:17** – This verse tells us that God's word is truth. Let us compare this to John 1:11 and John 1:14. John 1:1 teaches us that God's Word was from the beginning. We should understand that the word translated as "Word" is "Logos". The Logos is the Plan and Purpose of Yahweh. It is the teachings and doctrines of the Divine Creator. John 1:14 tells us that the Word was made flesh. We are taught from this verse, that the Plan and Purpose of God was completely manifested in His only begotten Son, the man known as Jesus Christ.
- **James 1:18** – we are begotten by the word of truth, so that we can become first fruits of His creation.
- **Psalms 100:5** – God's truth endureth to all generations. It is absolute and everlasting. There are no variances tolerated regarding the one Truth of Yahweh. The Truth is just as much a part of God's character as is His other everlasting characteristics such as mercy, forgiveness, grace and love.

### OBJECTIVE OF THE TRUTH

- **John 17:19-20** – to sanctify the believers. Acceptance and adherence to the one Truth should make us holy and separate us from the evil, sinful, wicked and doctrinally incorrect individuals that we may encounter in our race for eternal life.
- **II Tim 3:15** – God's word (the Truth) will make us wise unto salvation. Through the influences of the truth, we should be able to put aside the ignorance of the fleshly mind and nature that all mankind are born into. God's Truth will lead us to the wells of salvation offered by our heavenly Father.

Because of its sanctifying power and ability to make us wise unto salvation, God's Word must be hallowed and feared by all seeking salvation. The fear of Yahweh is a prominent teaching in the book of Proverbs. This principle of Divine Truth must be incorporated into the characteristic of reverential fear that the wise man speaks of. Please consider Proverbs 1:7, 9:10; and 14:26-27.

If the love of the truth is a major component in the principle of the fear of the Lord, then we can see that the love of the truth is a fountain of life. This last verse that we read in Proverbs brings us full circle to the definitions of the truth

that we have previously discussed. Read John 4:7-14. In this teaching of Christ, we learn that the well of water that He can provide will lead one to eternal life. In Proverbs, we learn that the fear of God is a fountain to life. Therefore, we should be able to see that the fear of God, the love for His Truth can only be obtained through the knowledge, understanding and application of God's Word and the manifestation of these divine principles through His Son. We must figuratively eat and drink of the body and blood of our Lord. This means that we should emulate His life to the best of our abilities. This is not only done through the symbolic emblems that are partaken of during our Memorial Service but daily through our obedience to all of God's commandments that we learn about in His Holy Word.

### **OUR RESPONSIBILITIES IN THE TRUTH**

**Proverbs 23:23** – We should buy the truth and sell it not, also wisdom, instruction and understanding. In order to purchase something, we must make a sacrifice of something that we value in exchange for something of greater value. The object that we give up is our self will, the desires and lusts of the flesh. We must always have the Truth in the forefront of our minds and our actions. Romans 12:1-2 teaches us that we should present our bodies a living sacrifice and that we should not be conformed to this world. Paul teaches us that this is our reasonable service. We should never “sell” the Truth, as it is the most valuable item that we have in this life. Our love for the Truth should exceed all human relationships, be it our natural families, our ecclesial families, our friends and acquaintances, our work, our hobbies, our education or anything else in our life of probation. There will be times in our spiritual life where we will have to make choices between the Truth and something far less valuable. Our prayers should always be that we are strengthened to never move the Truth down our list of priorities.

**1<sup>st</sup> John 1:6** – We must allow the Truth to be our guiding force in our lives and we must walk in the light of the Truth. If Christ is the Light of the World, then to walk in the light of the Truth is to walk after His example. We should never let our paths be darkened with the evils and sins of this world or from the fleshly sins, thoughts, words and deed that emanate from our fleshly constitution.

**Jeremiah 9:3** – we must always be valiant for the truth of God's word. At times, this may be difficult and unpopular, but brethren, do we have a choice? Where in the Scriptures can we find one instance where an individual was **commended** for not being valiant for the Truth and standing up for its defense? Rather brethren, we see just the opposite. We must always be strong and courageous as many of our elder brothers have been encouraged over the years.

**1<sup>st</sup> Timothy 6:20** – keep that which is committed to thy trust - We must guard the deposit that has been left for our safekeeping. If the Truth is the most valuable gift that God has given us in this life, then why would we not use every

ounce of strength that we can to live up to our high and holy calling and to keep the truth pure?

**Romans 1:18** – If we hold the truth of God in unrighteousness, through neglect, indifference, misuse or corruption, we are subject to the wrath of God. This is a very serious statement. God's wrath is unimaginable. This verse may apply to those who have woefully turned aside from all aspects of the Truth, such as the apostasy that is seen in most religions of the world. However, if we think about the wide breach between the false religions of the world and the Truth, we must realize that this breach in religious doctrine probably originated from a very small, maybe even minor straying from the straight and narrow path of the Truth. There is a scriptural principle that a little leaven leaveneth the whole loaf. This is why it is imperative that we understand all of these scriptural admonitions regarding our responsibilities in and for the truth.

**John 4:23** – We must worship the Father in spirit and in Truth.

We must remember that the Truth is the property of God and we must strive to maintain the purity in which it has been given to us. The truth is the only worthwhile heritage that we can pass on to our succeeding generations. Therefore, we should never allow the standards of the Truth to be lowered or corrupted. We are commanded to love God at all times and our neighbor as our self. To love God is to love His Truth, His holy word, His doctrines of righteousness, His promises of eternal life and incorruptible nature and the opportunity to serve Him for the eternity. We would never take the name of God in vain, because of our deepest love and respect for our Creator. When we hear the name of God taken in vain and used incorrectly, we probably have a very strong desire to separate from those who do this. Do we have the same love and respect for His words of truth? Do we have the same love and respect for those who are in covenant relationship with the Father and Son as we are, but who have strayed from the straight and narrow path that the Truth leads us? Can we truly love God and His Truth and not always strive to be strong in the Truth and strong for the Truth?

Of course, everything done in the name of God's Truth should be done with the right attitude and with the correct disposition. This is an example of where faith and works cannot be separated. We must know, understand and have an overwhelming desire to always be obedient to the godly principles that make up our high and holy calling. We must have faith in God's Word, His Truth. We must run to it in our weakest hour. We must understand that God has promised that he will never leave us nor forsake us and that He is our strong refuge and a place of rest. Along with this faith in our Father's Word, we must perform the works of the Truth. This concept of performing the works of the Truth will lead us to the second part of our consideration of John 8:32, which is our freedom in Christ.

### FREEDOM IN CHRIST

Let us be reminded of the three questions that we would like to address regarding this subject.

- Through the truth, what are we freed from?
- What are we free to do in the Truth?
- What are we not free to do in the Truth?

As we contemplate this subject, let us think about the definitions of certain principles that we find associated with the concept of freedom. These definitions were taken from the online Webster's dictionary and I have only included those definitions that most directly impact our discussion of this subject.

- **Freedom** – The quality or state of being free as in the absence of necessity, coercion, or constraint in choice or action; the quality or state of being exempt or released usually from something onerous.
- **Bondage** – A state of being bound usually by compulsion (as of law or mastery); a servitude or subjugation to a controlling person or force.
- **Liberty** – The quality or state of being free; the power to do as one pleases; freedom from arbitrary or despotic control, the positive enjoyment of various social, political, or economic rights and privileges.

When we think of “freedom”, and as citizens of the United States of America, we may automatically think of two famous documents that were created at the formation of this country. Do we remember reading these quotes in our formal education? *“We hold these truths to be self evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.”* Or, *“Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances.”*

We know that these quotes came from the Preamble of the Declaration of Independence and the First Amendment to the Constitution of the United States. Are these the rights and freedoms that Paul is referencing in the 8<sup>th</sup> chapter of Romans? – Of course not. As brethren of our Lord and Master, we understand that the freedoms in verse 32 have a far greater significance and impact on our lives – now and in the future – than any rights or freedoms that we may have been imparted with by the powers of worldly, humanistic and feeble governments.

What is the meaning of verse 32? What are we freed from and what are we free to? I think that one of the verses that we read from Proverbs regarding the fear of the Lord gives us the very simple answer. Reread Proverbs 14:27 – *“The*

*fear of the LORD is a fountain of life, to depart from the snares of death.”* Our response to the high and holy calling of the Truth, through the proper manifestation and application of the fear of the LORD, will keep us from the snares of death. Without a proper response to the Truth's calling, we have been sentenced to eternal death. With a proper response, we will be delivered from the snares and bondage of death that all mankind inherits from our father Adam.

If we think back to one of our definitions of freedom, we see that this explanation fits exactly. **“Freedom** is the quality or state of being exempt or released usually from something onerous.” We have been released from the onerous chains of death. Romans 7:24-25 gives us a picture of the majesty of this wonderful release from eternal death. *“O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from this body of death? I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord, so then with the mind I myself serve the law of God, but with the flesh the law of sin.”* We know that the apostle is speaking of the constant war that we rage against our fleshly nature, but we also can see how he is speaking about the condemnation that we are born into. Romans 8:1 should also help us understand the 32<sup>nd</sup> verse of this 8<sup>th</sup> chapter of John. *“There is therefore now no condemnation to those which are in Christ Jesus”*. (The remainder of this verse is inaccurate and should be stricken from the KJV as this condemnation is referencing the condemnation inherited from our father Adam.)

Therefore, it doesn't matter if we walk after the flesh or after the spirit; we still have been released from the condemnation of eternal death once we come into Christ. This is how we are made free through a proper response to the Truth's high and holy calling. Let us now read Romans 8:2 – *“For the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death.”* In the life of the believer, there are two laws that he or she are subject – *The Law of Sin and Death*, which law we are born into, and *The Law of the Spirit of Life in Christ Jesus*, into which jurisdiction we come under after coming into covenant relationship with our Heavenly Father. Through the Truth, we are free from the law of sin and death. Although we may still sin and we may still die before the return of our Master, for those in covenant relationship with our Father, we are assured of a resurrection to the Judgment Seat of Christ to answer for the things that we have done during our years of probation.

The Scriptures use another phrase that we need to examine in regard to this subject. Please take note of Romans 8:21; James 1:25 and James 2:12. In these verses, we are introduced to the concept of liberty. James mentions a law of liberty. This is the same as the law of the Spirit of Life in Christ Jesus that we have previously discussed. Our definition of liberty taught us that this means the state or quality of being free and the positive enjoyment of various rights and privileges. In the concept of God's divine Truth, we should use the term privileges rather than rights. As mortal creatures of the dust, we have no God

given rights except the grave. I think that when we start demanding that our rights be honored or that we have to obtain something because we deserve it, then we are letting our pride and humanism get the best of us. We should remember the admonition of Luke 7:10 - *“So likewise ye, when ye shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say, we are unprofitable servants: we have done that which was our duty to do.”* We have no rights, but we certainly have many privileges when we are in covenant relationship with Yahweh.

We would like to close our words of exhortation by looking at these wonderful privileges that we have in our covenanted lives. But, first, let us briefly look at some things that we are not free to do when we have put on Christ, who is the Way, the Truth and the Life. There probably are a host of other things that each of us can think of that we are not “free” to do as dwellers in the Truth, but this is a good start to help us in our daily self examination.

- As previously discussed, we are not free to dishonor God, His Son or His Truth.
- We are not free to pick and choose the commandments of God that we want to obey.
- We are not free to treat our brethren in any way that does not follow the example of Christ.
- We are not free to always be striving to come up with some new doctrinal ideas.
- We are not free to lead others astray from the One Truth.
- We are not free to put the things of the world, or each other or anything else above the Truth.
- We are not free to discard parts of the Scriptures for any reason.
- We are not free to focus all of our time on a small portion of Scripture so that we ignore the other pieces of the divinely given puzzle.
- We are not free to ignore obvious departures from the Truth.
- We are not free to refrain from studying some parts of God’s Holy Word due to any controversies regarding that portion of Scripture.
- We are not free to habitually be absent from any spiritual activity where the Truth of God is taught.

Let us now end on a positive note. The Truth has set us free and has allowed us the opportunity to enjoy many God-given privileges.

- We have the privilege that though a proper application of God’s Truth to our life, we can bring God glory and honor.
- Through the separateness that the Truth requires from us, we have the privilege of being called the sons and daughters of our Heavenly Father.
- We have the privilege of approaching to our Father in prayer through the one mediator, Jesus Christ, who knows the feeling of our infirmities.

- We have the privilege of knowing that our God is loving, merciful, and is forgiving of all our sins, trespasses and iniquities, if we approach Him with the correct attitude.
- We have the privilege of having the knowledge of the precious promises that God has given to His called out ones.
- We have the privilege of being able to fellowship with those of like precious faith.
- We have the privilege of dwelling in the protective care of our Father who loves His children.

Brethren, what more can we ask for? The Truth shall make us free. We pray that very soon, we will enjoy the fullest blessing of the Truth, when we will indeed be free from the pangs of death, the sorrows and despair of this mortal, corruptible body, when we will have no more pains, tears or worries. What a wonderful, marvelous, exciting and beautiful thing is OUR TRUTH. Let us buy it and never sell it. It is our heritage that has been handed to us and that we are to keep intact, passing it on to those of the world who will hear and to our younger generation. Let us always live it, pray for its continuance, pray that others may be called into the beauties of God’s Truth and pray for the soon fulfillment of the Truth’s promises.

*B. Henderson*

**Unamended Statement of Faith - Proposition #8:** *That these promises had reference to Jesus Christ who was to be raised up of the condemned race of Adam, in the line of Abraham and David, and who, though wearing the condemned nature, was to obtain a title to resurrection by perfect, obedience, and by dying, abrogate the law of condemnation for himself and all who should believe and obey him.*

**Bro. James Stanton:** “The word ‘abrogate’, means to repel, annul, rescind or abolish. The law of condemnation, or the law of sin and death, once had jurisdiction over Jesus, as it has all sons of Adam. But the work of Jesus was to abrogate that law and obtain a title to resurrection for himself and for as many others as should believe in Him. .... “There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus. For the law of the Spirit of Life in Christ Jesus has set me free from the law of sin and death.” Romans 8:1-2 (RSV). Those who participate in the abrogation of the law of condemnation along with Christ are those who understand who Christ is, what He has done, and who have an affectionate interest in following His commandments. By being baptized into His name they become recipients of the benefits which His perfect obedience accomplished, namely, abrogation of the law of condemnation and a title to resurrection.

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## MODERN DAY LESSONS FROM THE LETTERS TO THE CORINTHIANS

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### PART 3

#### THE CORINTHIANS' REACTION

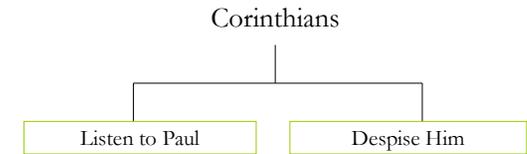
The first letter to the Corinthians was not easy for Paul to write, nor did he take any joy in doing so, as demonstrated in 2 Cor 2:4 when he writes, *“For out of much affliction and anguish of heart I wrote unto you with many tears; not that ye should be grieved, but that ye might know the love which I have more abundantly to you.”* As stated, his intention was not to upset them or cause them grief or pain, but his letter was written out of love to them and the desire that they change from their sinful state and repent of their errors. To this point, in 2 Cor 7:8-9 (*Complete Jewish Bible* translation) he writes, “If I caused you pain by my letter, I do not regret it. Even if I did regret it before – for I do see that that letter did distress you, though only for a short time. Now I rejoice not because you were pained, but because the pain led you to turn back to God. For you handled the pain in God’s way, so that you were not harmed by us at all.”

The following introduction to the second letter to the Corinthians is taken from Matthew Henry’s Commentary: “There was no place in which the apostle Paul met with more opposition from false apostles than at Corinth; he had many enemies there. Let not any of the ministers of Christ think it strange if they meet with perils, not only from enemies, but from false brethren; for blessed Paul himself did so.”

The first letter to the Corinthians surely would have been difficult for the members of the ecclesia to hear, as it detailed their errors and the things that they needed to change, lest they lose their opportunity for salvation. As has been stated earlier, there are always choices to make when presented with a difficult situation. How would the Corinthians react to Paul’s constructive criticism? Would they 1) recognize the love that Paul sought to demonstrate to them, understand that he was an oracle of God who spoke the Words of God, and therefore repent and correct their errors? Or would they 2) despise him because of his criticism, have hurt feelings, become offended, and react by lashing out at the bearer of this criticism? We will see throughout the remainder of this text that, while a small group within the ecclesia took Paul’s exhortation to heart and repented of their wrong doing, unfortunately, the vast

majority of the ecclesia responded negatively to Paul and went on the offensive against him. The following is written by Scofield as an introduction to the 2<sup>nd</sup> Letter to the Corinthians:

#### CHOICES



“The second epistle to the Corinthians was written within a year of the first letter to the same ecclesia. Paul’s spiritual burden was great; for, in addition to the problems with which the Apostle had to deal in his first letter, a wave of distrust in relation to Paul himself had now swept through the ecclesia. Some said he was not sincere; others even questioned whether he had Apostolic authority. Consequently, Paul here defends his authority by placing before the ecclesia the overwhelming evidence of his sincerity in serving God.”

As stated, since this letter was written only one year after the first, obviously the first was not well-received, in that the Corinthians responded to Paul’s constructive criticism with criticism of their own. Of course, while Paul’s admonition was scriptural and God-ordained, the Corinthians’ counterattack was the result of fleshly thinking and in trying to justify their erroneous behavior. It has been surmised by a few sources (including Barling) that the second letter to the Corinthians is a compilation of correspondence between the Corinthian leadership and Paul. This appears to have merit, in that it seems that once Paul adequately answers one line of their criticism towards him, another and another is taken. As Paul so adequately does throughout his arguments and responses in his various letters, he methodically overcomes all of their false accusations so that in the end, the fallacy of their criticism should have been apparent to them.

Unfortunately, the Corinthians reacted in a way that is common to the flesh, being void of the guidance and wisdom of God that must be searched out in the scriptures. Because they did not like the message, they sought to discredit the messenger. This is a common tactic used in man’s court of law: discredit the witness, and you can discredit his testimony. As stated at the onset of the article, the Corinthian society, as in this present Laodician day, was filled with ease of life. Like us, the tendency is to resent one who makes us uncomfortable in our actions or in our conscience, having shed light upon darkness. Rather than esteeming the words of Paul in the manner in which they should have, they instead resented him for making them feel inadequate in their morality and walk. Though Paul’s constructive criticism was founded upon scriptural principals, the Corinthians’ responses were founded upon the attempt at character assassination, mudslinging, malicious lies, and what would essentially

be referred to as name-calling. In particular, these accusations against Paul consisted of accusing him of:

- 1) Having no Apostolic authority
- 2) Being a hypocrite
- 3) Using harshness of speech
- 4) Bullying them
- 5) Questionable intentions and desire to Lord over them
- 6) Being a “huckster” for the Gospel, or selling the wares of the gospel for monetary gain
- 7) Being a Thief

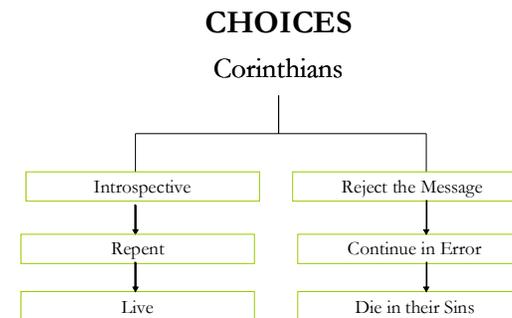
In response to these railing accusations against him, Paul demonstrates his spiritual character in 2 Cor. 10:3-5 (CJB) saying, *“For although we do live in the world, we do not wage war in a worldly way; because the weapons we use to wage war are not worldly. On the contrary, they have God’s power for demolishing strongholds. We demolish arguments and every arrogance that raises itself up against the knowledge of God; we take every thought captive and make it obey the Messiah.”*

When Paul states that *“we do not wage war in a worldly way,”* the insinuation is that this is what his opposition engaged in – waging a *“smear campaign,”* against him in order to discredit him so that his criticisms and messages could be ignored. As we so often see in political campaigns, this is *“man’s way,”* in which he *“wages war.”* It is devoid of spiritual understanding and practice, being in opposition to the way in which Yahweh would have us act. Rather, as Paul states here, he is not using human rationale, arguments, and tactics, but the Word of God to formulate his understanding and arguments. Human rationale cannot overcome God’s wisdom, so that the frustration felt in trying to do so will eventually lead the worldly person to hate the Godly person, prompting Paul to write in 2 Cor. 12:15, *“Though the more abundantly I love you, the less I be loved.”* As Paul states in the passage under consideration, the wisdom of God that is revealed in the scriptures has the power to *“demolish strongholds.”* As Matt 22:46 says in regard to the wisdom of Christ that came from God, *“And no man was able to answer him a word, neither durst any man from that day forth ask him any more questions.”*

Finally, Paul identifies their opposition to him and their use of *“worldly weapons,”* as *“arrogance that raises itself up against the knowledge of God,”* and exhorts them to correct this arrogance and worldly and sinful way of thinking by *“taking every thought captive (forceful imprisonment) and make it obey the Messiah.”* The imprisonment and captivity of the flesh is not something that comes naturally to mankind, so that it must be taken captive by *force* and *made* to obey God. This is what Paul had effectively accomplished throughout his life, and what he encouraged the Corinthians to do as well. To this point, Paul tells the Corinthians in 2 Cor. 10:7-8 (CJB) that, *“You are*

looking at the surface things,” as he continues to make the point that the Corinthians were looking at things from a mortal and faulty perspective, rather than from the wisdom from the Lord. As we have considered, Paul rebuked them in 1 Cor 3:1-3 for not growing in the knowledge and wisdom of the scriptures, but rather continuing in the *“milk”* of the word. They had become stunted in their spiritual growth because they had succumbed to the fleshly acts of *“envying, strife, and divisions,”* within the ecclesia, and this constant state of uproar and turmoil had prohibited them from advancing spiritually, both in understanding and in actions. This situation had not been resolved since his first letter; rather, they continued to be heavily influenced and impressed with the so-called wisdom of mankind. They had convinced themselves that they were following the will of Christ by their actions, but since their understanding was incomplete and lacking, their actions reflected this. In their own eyes, they were righteous and they believed themselves justified in their criticism of Paul; in actuality, they were just too spiritually immature to understand and believe his instruction to them. They believed themselves to be wise, but their wisdom was of the world and not of God, prompting them to fight against the wisdom that came from Paul.

An important and pertinent lesson to be learned from Paul’s interchange with the Corinthians is the concept of being introspective. When criticized, the response by the believer should first be that of introspection, especially if the source of the criticism is credible. For instance, and in conjunction with our theme of choices that we make, the Corinthians had a decision to make



regarding the criticism from Paul. Would they 1) Be introspective of the exhortation he provided, repent, and live, or 2) would they instantly reject the message, continue in error, and ultimately die in their sins?

The lesson to the believer is that, instead of reacting as the Corinthians and automatically dismissing the message because they did not like its content, the believer should have the courage to first consider the criticism and determine whether it is merited. This takes a humbleness of spirit to try to see through the criticism and determine whether or not it is legitimate. If it is legitimate, then the bearer of the criticism has provided a great service to the one criticized—one that may effect change from error and ultimately preserve him from eternal death. If, after careful contemplation and spiritual

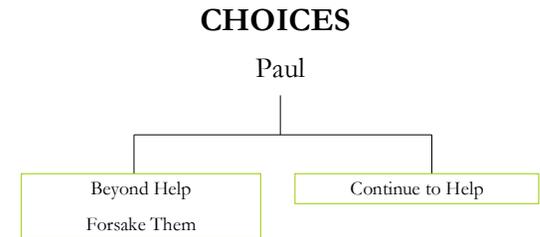
consideration, the criticism is considered unmerited, then it can be dismissed. This is a concept that Paul clearly alluded to in 1 Cor 4:3-5.

As will be demonstrated, though the KJV interpreters make no distinction in their translation, Paul uses two different words for “judge” throughout the reference: one meaning “to examine, scrutinize” and the other meaning “to condemn,” with the implication being an eternal condemnation. It is therefore important to correctly define the word “judge” being used in order to determine the correct definition and intended meaning. When applying the correct definition of the word “judge” to the reference, it reads as such: *“But with me it is a very small thing that I should be “scrutinized” of you, or of man’s “condemnation”: yea, I “scrutinize” not mine own self. For I know nothing by myself; yet am I not hereby justified: but he that “scrutinizes” me is the Lord. Therefore “condemn” nothing before the time, until the Lord come, who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts: and then shall every man have praise of God.”*

As Paul seeks to demonstrate in this passage, while in our fleshly state of being, man is not fit, nor does he possess the authority, to “condemn” our brethren (which carries the context of eternal rejection), as this is the duty of Christ at the judgment. Only God, and Christ at his coming, will be able to “bring to light the hidden things of darkness and make manifest the counsels of the heart.” However, by using a word that means, “to examine or scrutinize,” Paul teaches the concept that we should not be afraid of being scrutinized or examined by our fellows, since they are powerless to eternally condemn us, as this is reserved for Jesus Christ at the Judgment Seat. At that time, we will all be “examined and scrutinized” by Christ, and a righteous determination will be made as to whether we are accepted or condemned. The prevailing message is that criticism should always be sincerely reflected upon and weighed in the balance of scripture, in order to determine its credibility. If it is credible, then we must change accordingly. If it is scripturally determined that it is *not* credible, then it should be dismissed, with no further thought given to it, since ultimately, only Christ and God have the power and authority to condemn us eternally. In the case at hand, Paul determined that the criticism from the Corinthians, being weighed in the balance of Truth and the Scriptures, was incorrect and to be dismissed.

Having accused Paul of such egregious behavior because they did not want to repent of their tainted actions that he brought to their attention (for their own spiritual good), Paul was also forced to make a decision. Would he 1) determine that the Corinthians were beyond help spiritually and not worthy of his great efforts and time and therefore forsake them in order to spend his efforts on other “more worthy” ecclesias? Or would he 2) continue to engage them, in the spirit of demonstrating agape love towards them and in seeking their best spiritual interests and well-being? Being led by the spirit, rather than the flesh,

Paul chose the latter path, and was therefore forced to defend himself from the railing accusations against him. It is a worthy concept to note that Paul did *not* defend himself because he highly valued his own reputation or standing among brethren. Rather, he was forced to defend himself because if the Corinthians succeeded in discrediting him, then his ability to effectively work in the vineyard and do the Will of the Lord would be severely compromised. If that were the case, then he would no longer be able to effectively carry out the will of God and complete the great task that he had been commissioned to do.



This, of course, is a worthy lesson to all believers. Before making any important decision or taking any pertinent action, we should ask ourselves, “What is my motivation?” Is my motivation self-serving and contrary to the scriptures? Or is it done in the spirit of agape love and seeking what is spiritually best for my brethren? If this is our first inclination, then our decision will more likely reflect the will of God, rather than our own. In this manner, Paul’s defense of himself was not self-serving, but in the recognition that, if he were discredited to the degree that his teachings and efforts were undermined, then it was necessary to take action to defend himself and his character. God’s will was put first, and his own will was made subordinate.

Paul’s exemplary character in this matter remains a great lesson to the believer this day, as we are sure to encounter similar difficulties. When criticized and questioned, it is easy to either remove ourselves from this most difficult situation or to lash out against those we see as our opponents. However, as Paul demonstrates with such great effectiveness, it is much more difficult to continue to show agape love toward our brethren by seeking their best spiritual outcome, whether or not we have friendly feelings towards them. It is our duty to continue to help our brethren by reasoning with them from scripture – the only source of wisdom – in the hope that some may hear and heed Godly advise and witness the good example that we should always endeavor to display. As Paul states in 2 Cor. 4:1-2 (CJB), *“God has shown us much mercy that we do not lose courage as we do the work he has given us. Indeed, we refuse to make use of shameful underhanded methods, employing deception or distorting God’s message. On the contrary, by making very clear what the truth is, we commend ourselves to everyone’s conscience in the sight of God.”* This is a most important point to remember when we are criticized in an unjust way – do we respond “in kind” or in the same manner as our accuser, or do we first search out the wisdom from scripture and answer in accordance with our findings?

At this time, we will examine how Paul addressed the particular accusations against him, in the interest of preserving his status and trust amongst them so that he could continue to correctly guide them and ultimately present them as “*a chaste virgin to Christ* (2 Cor 11:2).” It is imperative to note two most important points that are apparent throughout this entire discourse and defense of himself: 1) Paul *never* acted in a condescending, angry, disgusted, hostile, or otherwise inappropriate manner; by using the guidance of Scripture, he correctly responded in a loving and long-suffering manner. 2) None of the Corinthians’ accusations addressed his *doctrine* or his *morality*, because these could not be disputed effectively. Therefore, they endeavored to slander his character, question his intentions and his motives – those things that are easy to call into question, but hard to quantify.

### INTIMIDATING OR BULLYING THE ECCLESIA?

In 2 Cor. 10: 1-2 (CJB) Paul writes, “*Now it is I myself, Paul, making an appeal to you with the meekness and forbearance that comes from the Messiah, I who am considered timid when face-to-face with you but intimidating from a distance. But I beg you not to force me to be intimidating when I am with you, as I expect to be toward some who regard me to be living in a worldly way.*”

Another area of criticism that was levied against Paul by his opposition in an attempt to discredit him was that he was “two-faced,” in that he was “timid” in person, but “intimidating,” from a distance through his letter writing. This accusation demonstrates the Corinthians’ misunderstanding of what Paul meant when he wrote to them in 1 Cor. 9:19-22, “*For though I be free from all men, yet have I made myself servant unto all, that I might gain the more. And unto the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might gain the Jews; to them that are under the law, as under the law, that I might gain them that are under the law; To them that are without law, as without law, (being not without law to God, but under the law to Christ,) that I might gain them that are without law. To the weak became I as weak, that I might gain the weak: I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some.*”

This discourse was not meant to indicate that Paul would compromise the Truth and the One Way that was given to him by Yahweh to teach, so that he could increase the ecclesial numbers in any way possible. Rather, the intended message is that Paul was willing to do *whatever was necessary* in his efforts to preach the truth and do the will of Yahweh. If he needed to speak in simple terms, then he did. If he needed to speak in a manner that was understandable to the Jews, then he did so. If he needed to use terminology and examples that were easily comprehended by the Gentiles, then that’s exactly what he would do. Apparently, when he originally taught the Corinthians the gospel message, he did so with the humbleness and sincerity that was appropriate when delivering such “good news,” to those who were at that time outside the covenant of promise. However, he also states that when necessary he could be

very forceful, as demonstrated when he wrote the first letter. This did not make him hypocritical in his character, but rather was a great demonstration that the circumstances dictated Paul’s reaction to them – always with the overriding intention that he would *first and foremost* accomplish the will of God.

It was not Paul’s desire to be forcefully assertive in order to accomplish the necessary results in the Corinthian ecclesia. His desire was to come in a meek and humble manner, in the hopes that they had corrected those things that he was compelled to criticize. However, he also states that “I expect to be (intimidating, or forceful) toward some,” in the ecclesia who had wrongfully accused him of the various things that we have discussed throughout this study. This is a good example what was discussed earlier on this subject: that it is sometimes *necessary* to defend oneself if untrue accusations are precluding him from advancing the will of God because his credibility and intentions are in question. Paul did not do this because Paul’s pride was pricked, but because if the matter wasn’t addressed, his ability to advance Yahweh’s Will would have been negated. This also should be our motivation in doing so—not for our pride’s sake, but in seeking to do the will of God.

Paul also addresses his supposed, “bullying,” or “harshness,” in 2 Cor. 10:9-11 (CJB), writing, “*My object is not to seem as if I were trying to frighten you with these letters. Someone says, ‘His letters are weighty and powerful, but when he appears in person he is weak, and as a speaker he is nothing.’ Such person should realize that what we say in our letters when absent, we will do when present.*”

As stated in the verses at hand, Paul’s intention in writing these letters to the Corinthians was not to “frighten” them or “tear them down,” but rather to “build you up.” This was done in the spirit of agape love, not in the spirit of only phileo love. By addressing the Corinthian errors and guiding them to repentance, Paul was truly demonstrating the desire to achieve the best spiritual interest of his brethren. His message was not “smooth words,” that would have been easier to hear but would ultimately lead them to rejection by Yahweh. Rather, he desired that they change from their worldly error and to the ways of God, so that they would find acceptance by Him. He had been accused of being strong, bold, and forceful in his letters to them, but weak and incompetent in person. This was undue and unfair criticism towards a man who had boldly stood against principalities, kings, dignitaries, philosophers, and Judaizers, and had looked death in the face many times over. He was not weak in spirit and resolve, although apparently not physically imposing in person. His words were powerful and strong because they were from God, who does not care about the stature of man.

Though the Corinthians were not impressed with his speaking abilities, anyone who reads his speeches should be impressed with their Godly logic and wisdom. Rather, the Corinthians desired theatrics and the polished speaking

abilities of those who would usurp Paul as their leader. While these so-called leaders may have been more entertaining, they were void of Truth and Spiritual substance, as shown by the fact that they opposed Paul. This is the state of Christianity this present day, and that which the Christadelphian community must avoid at all costs – being impressed with the oratory or writing skills of certain brethren, but ignoring the straightforwardness and uncompromising nature of the Truth.

As stated, when Paul first taught them, he did so in the manner that was most benefiting to them – with sincerity and humbleness. Now that they were in need of “the rod,” he would react accordingly. If they misunderstood his humbleness as being timid in the Ways of Truth, they were sorely mistaken, and this error would quickly be made known to them upon his arrival. Paul was intimidated by no man, nor did he fear any man, for he knew that in him resided the Word of God and he was “not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ.”

#### QUESTIONABLE INTENTIONS?

In 2 Cor. 6:3-5 (CJB), Paul writes, “*We try not to put obstacles in anyone’s path, so that no one can find fault with the work we do.*” It is apparent that Paul’s opposition was advertising the false notion that he put obstacles and hindrances in the way of their salvation by using harsh and difficult-to-hear criticism and that he desired to “Lord over their ecclesia.” Rather, Paul explains in verses 4-5 that, “*On the contrary, we try to present ourselves in every way as workers for God by continually enduring troubles, hardships, calamities, beatings, imprisonments, riots, overwork, lack of sleep and food.*” These difficulties that Paul and his associates endured validated the fact that they worked for the benefit of God’s Word and in doing His appointed will; in addition, this also clearly proved the fallacy of the accusations against them, since no one who desires self aggrandizement willfully endures such demeaning difficulties. These things described by Paul are considered abasing and humbling – not self promoting and haughty, which again proved that Paul sought to be a laborer for God and not a self-exalted leader of men as his enemies sought to portray him. Rather, he continues in verse 6 by stating that, “*We present ourselves by our purity, knowledge, patience, and kindness; by the Holy Spirit; by genuineness of love and truthfulness of speech; and by God’s power.*” In other words, in addition to the works that Paul had unceasingly demonstrated throughout his life in teaching the gospel message to all who would hear it, his Godly character that was on constant display should have removed any doubt regarding his sincerity and motives. He describes these Godly Characteristics as:

- Purity (of heart, motives, intent)
- Knowledge (that could not be debated or refuted, so it must be God-given)
- Patience (shown to ecclesias throughout his ministries)
- Kindness (toward all who sought to do the will of Yahweh)

He did all things because of his “genuineness of (agape) love,” and through “truthfulness of speech,” which demonstrates that many times bluntness of speech is necessary when trying to display agape love. Unfortunately, in this day of being “politically correct,” bluntness and plainness of speech in proclaiming the Truth is oftentimes mistaken as being “unloving” or “mean.”

Finally, in order to alleviate any misinterpretation that he was bragging about himself and his attributes, he makes sure to give credit to the One Source of these blessings and attributes that he has identified – God’s power.

#### A “HUCKSTER”?

In 2 Cor. 2:17 (CJB), Paul writes, “*For we are not like a lot of folks who go about huckstering God’s message for a fee; on the contrary, we speak out of a sincere heart, as people sent by God, standing in God’s presence, living in union with the Messiah.*”

Incredibly, Paul had been accused of being a “huckster,” desiring to gain glory and wealth from preaching the Gospel message to the various ecclesias. This would have been quite the insult to Paul, who had consciously deprived himself of physical comforts in order to constantly work in preaching the gospel message to the Gentiles in order to call them from the darkness of the world and into God’s marvelous light. This false accusation is addressed by Paul in 2 Cor. 12:14-18 (CJB), where he writes, “*Look, I am ready this third time to come and visit you; and I will not be a burden to you; for it is not what you own that I want, but you! Children of Israel are not supposed to save up for their parents, but parents for their children. And as for me, I will most gladly spend everything I have and be spent myself too for your sakes. If I love you more, am I to be loved less? Let it be granted, then, that I was not a burden to you; but, crafty fellow that I am, I took you with trickery! Was it perhaps through someone I sent you that I took advantage of you? I urged Titus to go and sent the brother with him; Titus didn’t take advantage of you, did he? Didn’t we live by the same Spirit and show you the same path?*”

Regarding this section of verses, Matthew Henry gives much insight to its intended meaning, saying, “If it should be objected by any that though he did not **himself** burden them, yet, being crafty, he caught them with guile, that is, **he sent those among them who pillaged them**, and afterwards *he shared with them in the profit*: ‘This was not so,’ says the apostle; ‘I did not make a gain of you myself, nor by any of those whom I sent; nor did Titus, nor any others – we walked by the same spirit and in the same steps.’ They all agreed in this matter to do them all the good they could, without being burdensome to them, to promote the gospel among them.”

Paul addresses the slanderous and deviant accusation that, though he himself did not take anything from them, perhaps he sent someone else to do so, and they “split the profit.” This foolishness was easily proven false by the fact

that Titus acted in the same manner as Paul, taking nothing, while teaching the exact same gospel. There was no deviation and therefore no merit for criticism. This line of thinking proves that when the fleshly mind desires to discount and discredit someone, it will go to extraordinary and ridiculous lengths. The foolishness of this accusation should have been apparent to the Corinthians by the simple recognition that, as Paul states in 2 Cor. 11:9 (CJB), “*And when I was with you and had needs, I did not burden anyone; my needs were met by the brothers who came from Macedonia. In nothing have I been a burden to you, nor will I be.*”

He had taken nothing from them while preaching the gospel to them when the ecclesia was initially formed. In recognizing that he took nothing from them at that time, how foolish it was to accuse him of later profiting from them! It is accurate that he had solicited donations from them on behalf of the needy and persecuted Jews in Jerusalem, but to accuse him of thieving this donation was despicable. (*To be continued...*)

Arthur Sankey

## Spiritual Mindedness

Spiritual-mindedness is a result to be achieved only by the wholesome and continued influences of the Gospel; it is dependent for its development upon the enthronement of the truth in the affections, as well as in the understanding. A truly scriptural-minded saint is one in whom the faith rules as a motive power, in whom it dwells as a quickening impulse, and a never-dying object of interest and supreme delight. A spiritual mind minds the things of the spirit with unwearying attention and a ravishing love; while a carnal mind is swallowed up in the things of flesh and creature sense, and irets out its very existence on passing vanities. Spiritual-mindedness is not the pious ghostly solemnity of Sunday Christians, nor does it consist in the sanctimonious airs of surpliced dignitaries, but it describes those who have so entirely fallen in love with Christ, as to be entirely out of love with everything else that has not Christ for its object, and which does not recognize Christ also in its ways of working.

## THE SONS of ZADOK

### *Immortal Priests of the Age to Come*

#### The Levites



Ezekiel, the prophet-priest, (ch.44:10-14, 17-31) outlines the duties and responsibilities of the mortal priesthood to serve in the Temple of the Kingdom Age. Within this prophecy we see the re-gathering of the tribe of Levi from the nations – as can only be accomplished by the hand of Yahweh. These men will be re-established in the land of Israel and elevated to limited positions of responsibility and authority. We find from our reading in Ezekiel 44:10 that the Levites will be suffering the punishments from Deity due to the iniquity of their fathers. “*And the Levites that are gone away far from me, when Israel went astray, which went astray away from me after their idols; they shall even bear their iniquity.*”

History bears the fact that the priesthood after David and Solomon did not continue in upholding the commandments of Yahweh. In the days of Hezekiah the Levitical Priesthood had sunk to a deplorable condition requiring the Kings encouragement in order to bring them to restoration. 2 Chron. 29:4-7, “*...ye Levites...carry forth the filthiness out of the holy place. [For] they have shut up the doors of the porch, and put out the lamps, and have not burned incense nor offered burnt offerings in the holy place unto the God of Israel.*”

The prophet-priest Ezekiel had witnessed during his day the wickedness of the priesthood. We read in chapter 22:26, “*Her priests have violated my law, and have profaned mine holy things: they have put no difference between the holy and profane, neither have they shewed difference between the unclean and the clean, and have hid their eyes from my sabbaths, and I am profaned among them.*”

Regarding the iniquity of the Levites during the days of David and Solomon, one may look upon the defection of Abiathar to Adonijah (1 Kings 1:7) as an act of idolatry. Remember the words of Samuel, “*For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry. Because thou hast rejected the word of the LORD, he hath also rejected thee from being king.*” (1<sup>st</sup> Sam. 15:23)

Abiathar's rebellion and stubbornness, by not remaining faithful to Yahweh's anointed, caused his dismissal from his elevated position by King Solomon (1 Kings 2:26-27). Although Solomon thought he was deserving of death, he allowed him to live out his life due to his previous acts of obedience in the service and charge of the Ark of the Covenant.

Can we see a typical enactment of this event in the Kingdom age? In that day we see Christ, sitting as the Anti-typical King Solomon, directing the Levitical Priesthood to continue in a subservient position to the Sons of Zadok in their service to Yahweh. At last, though, Deity shall not allow the disobedience of one man, such as Abiathar, or others that turned away from Him unto idols, to overshadow the faithfulness of the upright Levites that offered up faithful service throughout their probationary lives. Besides the prophecy of Ezekiel defining the re-immersion of this peculiar people, the prophet Jeremiah speaks of the restoration of this divinely selected tribe.

*"Then may also my covenant be broken with David my servant, that he should not have a son to reign upon his throne; and with the Levites the priests, my ministers. As the host of heaven cannot be numbered, neither the sand of the sea measured: so will I multiply the seed of David my servant, and the Levites that minister unto me."* Jeremiah 33:21-22

Ezekiel chapter 44: 10-14, 17-31 outlines the responsibilities that the restored Levitical Priesthood shall assume – ministers to Yahweh's house and help in the sacrificial offerings of the people. Ezekiel also reveals that these men have the infirmities of the flesh still upon them, as they are able to sweat, drink wine and continue in the practice of marriage. Therefore we draw the conclusion that the Levites are mortal Jews, born of the tribe of Levi, those who have been saved through the time of Jacob's trouble, and participated in the recognition of Jesus of Nazareth, as their Messiah, the Son of God. (Zech 12:10; 13:1-6)

"It is therefore a principle of the kingdom of God that the Levites shall be priests in that kingdom under the New Covenant, or constitution, as well as under the Old.... The reason given why they shall not do the office of a priest before God but shall act as menials in the service, and in relation only to the people, is because under the Mosaic Covenant 'they ministered to the people before their idols, and caused the house of Israel to fall into iniquity.' This is the ground of the future degradation from their former rank, to that of the lowest class of the priesthood under the New Covenant (Faith in the Last Days, pp. 122-124)."

#### **The Sons of Zadok**

In Ezekiel 40:46, 44:15-16, 48:11 we are introduced to a class of individuals that have been given significant responsibilities in the service of the Temple to be erected in the Kingdom age. Bro. Thomas, we believe, correctly identified this unique class of priests as well as their responsibilities. He notes

that the Sons of Zadok "will have no immediate communication with the people in performing the service, but will **officiate immediately between the people's priests and 'the Prince,'** who is then High Priest, and *Yahweh's* anointed for ever. **Zadok signifies just or justified.** Zadok, who was contemporary with David and Solomon, is their representative father in the priesthood as David is their representative father in the faith. Hence in the priesthood, the saints are 'the sons of Zadok'; in the royalty, 'the sons of the Prince' (Ezek. 46:16); and in the faith 'the seed or sons of Abraham.'" (Faith in the Last Days, pp.122-124)

The Sons of Zadok are the immortalized saints that have been given the occupation of ministering unto Christ as a priest in the Kingdom. Some may believe that this will only be a position for blood – Levites, which may be the case. Yet, from the exclamation of the redeemed in Revelation 5 it provides the proof necessary to conclude that this position can be granted to any of the redeemed.

**Rev. 5:9-10,** "And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and **hast redeemed us to God** by thy blood **out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; And hast made us unto our God kings and priests:** and we shall reign on the earth."

The Sons of Zadok are those that will be rewarded for their faithfulness during their probation. **Ezekiel 44:15-16,** "But the priests the Levites, the sons of Zadok, that kept the charge of my sanctuary when the children of Israel went astray from me, they shall come near to me to minister unto me, and they shall stand before me to offer unto me the fat and the blood, saith the Lord GOD: They shall enter into my sanctuary, and they shall come near to my table, to minister unto me, and they shall keep my charge.

Bro. Thomas even offers insight to the identity of "the Sons of Zadok;" "The members of the Royal Family are in the aggregate styled "*Christ's House*" in the New Testament. They are "the sons of Zadok," the children of the promise, who, in Christ, are counted for the seed of Abraham and David. It will be a numerous family; though as compared with the totality of the sons of Adam from among whom they will have been redeemed, they will be but a "little flock," the few who find eternal life out of the many who seek to enter in. They are the 144,000 redeemed from the earth; "not that there are only so many thousands. This is a representative number; a definite for an indefinite. They are "the meek" who "shall inherit the earth;" the poor in spirit," to whom pertains "the kingdom of God." None will be of this number, who do not believe in this kingdom;" (Herald, 1851, p.210)

This is an order in the State composed of men who shall have become priests "after the power of an endless life," having been during the interregnum (*interregnum: an interval of time between the close of a sovereign's reign and*

the accession of his or her normal or legitimate successor) washed in baptism, sanctified by the anointing spirit, and consecrated by the blood of the covenant. These are "priests to God," who, saith the LORD, "shall enter into my temple, and they shall come near to my table" to minister unto me, and they shall keep my charge." – Ezek. 44:16. They are then the priests of Zion clothed with righteousness and salvation (Ps. 132:9, 16); the meek whom the LORD hath beautified (Ps. 149:4). **They are representatively styled "the sons of Zadok" and are kings also as well as priests, and therefore priests "after the order of Melchizedek."**

The priesthood of the kingdom is consequently a Royal Priesthood; and as it is "for ever" its officials are immortal and "equal to the angels." They are perfect as their Father who is in heaven, having no evil in their flesh, or impurity of character. Such are the priests of the kingdom when the saints shall possess it "under the whole heaven."

The Royal Priesthood is an order under one chief, who is called High Priest. He is the elder brother of the order, all the rest being "his brethren." He was once like them in the days of their sinful flesh, "a little lower than the angels;" but being also "made after the power of an endless life," he enjoys the spiritual, angelic, or higher nature, and sits as high priest for ever on his father David's throne, and bears the glory. **The sons of Zadok, or Jesus and his brethren, are constituted priests forever by "the word of the oath;" so that the royal priesthood of the kingdom is without predecessor or successor. Its officials do not derive their inheritance from Aaron and his sons; nor from the old covenant of the kingdom.** They inherit under the New, which gives them all the privileges and honors they possess. The word of the oath made their Chief, though a son of Judah and of David, High Priest contrary to the Mosaic law which created Aaron; it makes them priests also of the same order by constitution) when in the interregnum they were" made the righteousness of God in him." Being in him they are "complete in him," and "joint-heirs' with him of all his titles, honors, and real and personal estate. (Herald, 1851, p.204)

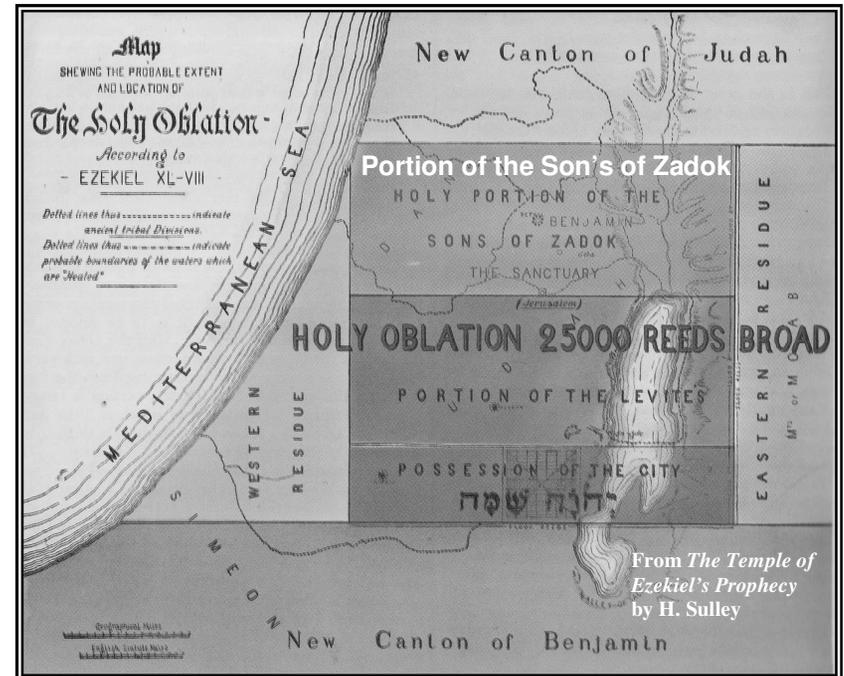
We can reason then that the title **SONS of ZADOK** will be a glorious title to be granted to the redeemed in the Kingdom of Israel. It is this class of Saints that will be accounted as "Sons of the Just," those who remained faithful to their elder brother Christ and Father Yahweh, as did Zadok under the reigning kings David and Solomon. This will be a royal priesthood, a title of inheritance, though, not because of their family name – but having the will to usurp the desires of their fleshly nature by adopting the requirements of the Everlasting Covenant – continued faithful to Yahweh's chosen King of Israel. These men will constitute the antitypical Melchizedek, being made kings and priests to reign upon the earth.

In addition to the above points, the identity of the Sons of Zadok become even clearer once a better knowledge of the land grants as specified in the

prophecy of Ezekiel's temple is understood (see map below). The land divisions, the offerings made at the alter, the interior buildings specified in the temple, all work in harmony to identify the purpose of the Levites and Sons of Zadok in the Kingdom Age. These points we intend to look into further, Yahweh willing, as we examine in a future article the Holy Oblation and the City of *Yahweh Shammah*.

Sons of Zadok	Sons of the Just	The redeemed faithful to their elder brother Christ and Father Yahweh
Antitypical Melchizedek	Constituted Priests by the word of the oath	A royal priesthood without predecessor or successor
Antitypical Melchizedek	king of Salem...priest of the most high God. (Gen 14:18)	And hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth. (Rev. 5:10)
Antitypical Zadok	Zadok faithful to King David and Solomon	The faithful redeemed servants of Christ in his Davidic & Solomonic Rule over the earth.
Antitypical Zadok	Usurped position of Ahimelech the High Priest	Because of faithfulness to Yahweh, the redeemed Sons of Zadok will usurp the position of the Natural Seed, the Levites.

Robby Bennett



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## JOHN'S AUDIENCE

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John's Gospel corresponds to the final face of the cherubim, the eagle. The other Gospel writers targeted specific audiences for the accounts of the life, death and resurrection of our Lord and Savior. John, too, is written for a particular audience. Just as Luke does, John tells us his purpose for writing. *But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name* (20:31).

Luke, as an historian, wrote to set everything in order and to make a history. John has a different purpose. He is writing so that *ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ*. Based on the same analytical approach of looking at language – implicit knowledge, citation of scripture, and themes several potential audiences are suggested.

First, all the Gospels use the word “Jew”, but slight differences exist. For example, Matthew uses the word five times and in four of those instances (2:2; 27:11; 27:29; 27:37) it is spoken by a Gentile or part of a title. Mark and Luke use the word six and five times, respectively, in a very similar fashion. In contrast, John uses the word more than sixty times and uses it in fundamentally different ways. For example: *And the Jews' passover was at hand* (2:13); *Now the Jews' feast of tabernacles was at hand* (7:2); *because of the Jews' preparation day* (19:42). This usage suggests some degree of separation between the audience and the Jewish people. A similar passage further emphasizes this point. John 15:25 states, *“But this cometh to pass, that the word might be fulfilled that is written in their law.”* For John, it is *their* Passover and *their* Law; it is not *our* or *yours*.

In addition, on occasion, John will use the word as somewhat of a synonym for the people's leaders. John (7:1) records Jesus left Judea for Galilee because the Jews were looking to kill him. Were the Jews in Judea looking to kill him? The leaders in the Temple area certainly were (5:18), but he also had a great public following (6:1). Likewise, not every Jew in Galilee was looking to kill him or he would not have sought respite there. From this we may infer, John is either writing to an audience that does not identify itself as Jewish anymore or one that does not identify with the Jewish leadership in Jerusalem, particularly the Sadducees and the Pharisees. For example, Matthew recorded that the brethren of Christ must exceed the righteous of the scribes and Pharisees (5:20) and that their teachings should be followed (23:2). John has no words that even sound positive for these leaders of the people.

While the previous information indicates a separation from Judaism, or the leadership of the Jews, it is not a foregone conclusion that John (the power of God working through John – ed.) targeted his gospel for a Gentile audience.<sup>1</sup> Jesus is still Jewish in John (4:9) and salvation is of the Jews (4:22). Also, John does not particularly highlight the faith of Gentiles to the extent that Luke does.

The account of John the Baptist provides some additional indications about John's audience. First, John 1:21 assumes the reader knows both the prophecy concerning Elijah (Mal. 4:5) and the prophet greater than Moses (Deut 18:15). Therefore, John's audience may be fairly knowledgeable in terms of Messianic prophecies. Second, the Gospel assumes some familiarity with John the Baptist, since no information beyond what is recorded by the other evangelists is provided. However, John does something very curious in his account of John the Baptist. John is the only one to say (1:8) of John the Baptist, *“He was not that Light, but was sent to bear witness of that Light.”* Additionally, the Immerser, himself, affirms this fact. *“And this is the record of John, when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, Who art thou? And he confessed, and denied not; but confessed, I am not the Christ”* (1:19-20). No one else records John's firm denial that he was the Messiah. In Luke (3:15) it is the people who *mused in their hearts of John, whether he were the Christ, or not,* but in John, the role of John the Baptist is clearly articulated by the man himself.

John the Baptist's statement that he was not the Messiah introduces a theme prevalent in the Gospel of John. John repeatedly states that Jesus is the Christ. He uses that title more than any of the other Gospel writers. John uses the title more frequently than Matthew (twenty-one times to seventeen), and more often than Mark (seven) and Luke (thirteen) put together. In fact, John is the only one to transliterate Messiah directly into Greek.

Lastly, some help may be obtained by a further examination of John's statement of purpose, John 20:31. Instead of *that ye might believe* (or *so that you may believe* in modern translations), some old manuscripts read *so that you may go on believing*. This constitutes a substantial difference. The first is somewhat directed at the unbeliever or the new believer. It is a form of convincing. The later is a form of support to an already accepting audience.

These above criteria do not, at least in my mind, clearly identify a single group; they suggest several legitimate candidates. Points exist in favor of each of the following groups and for that reason no claim to a firm answer is made, but merely suggested for your evaluation.

### The followers of John the Baptist:

Bro. Rick Farrar forwarded this option in a series of adult Bible School classes in Kentucky and New Mexico. A cursory reading of the gospels quickly reveals the Gospel of John is more enigmatic and that Jesus is more overtly the

Son of God than in the others. In other words, the Gospel of John is more “spiritual” than the others. This implies that it was targeted at an audience who had an above average understanding. Couple that level of understanding with a regard for the leadership and worship in the Temple as corrupt and the followers of John the Baptist make logical sense. The disciples of John the Baptist were still proselytizing after Jesus’ death – particularly in the area of Ephesus (Acts 18:25; 19:4). John’s work is associated with Ephesus (Rev. 2:1) and tradition has that of his place of death. Furthermore, the beginning of John would be an effective means of opening instruction to this group by unequivocally stating the individual these disciples had been following was not the Messiah by his own admission.

#### Hellenistic Jews:

As stated, John does not particularly highlight the faith of Gentiles. (The woman of Samaria [4:7-26] is a notable exception, but she may at least claim Jacob as *our father*.) However, John does note the Greek-speaking Jews do want to see Jesus. The *certain Greeks* of John 12:20 are not Gentiles, but are Jews of the Diaspora; they lived, and were probably born, outside the land of Israel. They could possibly be the intended audience as they might have had less affiliation with the leadership in Jerusalem, but would still be a knowledgeable audience.

#### The Essenes:

All previous primary Gospel audiences were stated to be cultural or ethnic groups. However, five different sects or movements form the backdrop of the Gospel period that were not related to culture or ethnicity. The Sadducees and the Pharisees are the most frequently mentioned and obvious antagonists. Both Matthew and Mark mention the Herodians, the third group, in passing. Fourthly, the zealots sought and attempted open rebellion against the Roman Empire (Simon the Zealot was one of the twelve (Lk 6:15) and the group is referenced in Acts 5). The Essenes are not mentioned in Scripture, but are by Josephus and Philo. However, this was the desert monastic community most likely responsible for the Dead Sea Scrolls.<sup>2</sup> The Essenes saw the Temple and the associated worship as corrupt; the Essenes were particularly opposed to the Sadducees and the high priest. In addition, they were students of the Old Testament and very messianic in their expectations. They clearly were awaiting the Messiah and wrote many commentaries on the Scriptures. Authors have suggested that John the Baptist may have had extensive contact with this group.<sup>3</sup>

#### Believers:

This final option enjoys the longest history of support. Essentially, John’s record is a general Gospel to all believers covering events in the life of Jesus that the other evangelists omitted. Returning to the image of the cherubim: Matthew was the lion (royalty), Mark the ox (servant), Luke the (universal) man, and John the eagle (spiritual). This interpretation would fit with the

alternate reading of John 20:31 (*you may go on believing*) as directed to an already baptized audience.

#### Conclusion

This and the preceding articles endeavored to demonstrate that the Gospel writers fulfilled their respective roles of the chroniclers of the life, death and resurrection of our Lord by addressing their respective accounts to differing audiences for differing purposes. That is not to say that these primary audiences were the only audiences that were to ever read these works. Nor does it mean that each of these audiences were completely naive about Christ and the gospel message before reading these works. Each author recognizes their audience may have a different level of understanding, background knowledge and expectations. These differences exist between the Gospels and unless they are recognized and explained adequately, charges of conflicting teachings or misunderstanding interpretations can arise.

As a summary, the following table (back inside cover) comparing gospel features is included as a review of the arguments offered in this series to help illustrate the different areas of emphasis and how the Gospels work together to completely manifest our Lord.

*Josh Vest*

<sup>1</sup>However, it is very clear that John wrote his epistles for a Gentile audience (1 Jn 5:21; all names are Greek).

<sup>2</sup>Abegg Jr. M, Flint P, Ulrich E. (trans) *The Dead Sea Scrolls Bible*. Harper-Collins 1999.

<sup>3</sup>Encyclopedia Britannica, *The Essenes*. 2008. & Encyclopedia Britannica, *John the Baptist*. 2008.

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## EDITORIAL COMMENT

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### *Recognition of Hard and Sobering Facts*

Within the past few months we were forwarded an article that appeared in *The Christadelphian* magazine for the month of June. The article is titled, “*Holding fast in challenging times*” and is signed off by the committee for the magazine. The article is a recognition of some of the critical challenges and influences that are corrupting Christadelphia from within. Early on in the article they make the observation that, “*A strong desire exists in some quarters to see radical innovations in faith and life, including many practices that have characterized life in the brotherhood throughout its history.*” They then go on to provide a summary of concerns which we quote verbatim in the following bullet points:

- A robust and comprehensive understanding of what Christadelphians believe and practice (including aspects of separation from the world) is not deemed essential to true baptism.
- Our distinctive Bible-based beliefs are said to be unreasonable. Instead brothers and sisters are encouraged to ignore existing fellowship boundaries and pursue links with other church groups, to attend ecumenical activities and conferences, and not to restrict fellowship at the memorial table.
- The scriptural authority of the ecclesia is either ignored or undermined in favor of looser groupings operating on a different basis.
- The style of worship promoted at ecumenical gatherings is preferred to the worship developed within the brotherhood, aspects of which are reflected particularly in the deeply thoughtful and scriptural words of many of our hymns.
- Popular Christian literature is read (often indiscriminately) and promoted widely, while material produced by brothers and sisters is frequently ignored, or if noticed it is denigrated and ridiculed.
- Practices are stridently advanced that are clearly rejected in the scriptures, but which are promoted in our politically-correct world that allows no discrimination on grounds of gender or sexuality.
- There is an emphasis on what is modern and novel, while terms such as “traditional” and “historical” are used pejoratively.
- There is a suggestion that there is somehow something shameful about being known as a Christadelphian – a brother or sister of Christ.

The October *Logos* magazine has also recognized *The Christadelphian* editorial in its own editorial section under the title – “An Appeal to Faithfulness”. The *Logos* editor states, “We add our voice to the appeal of *The Christadelphian* committee, by urging the paths which might provide a last-minute reprieve from our community sinking into the church-aligned condition that took the ecclesias of the early centuries into the arms of the Catholic organization. It was only a small remnant of the faithful who continued to remain steadfast to the Truth believed at that time, as the “woman” was forced into “the wilderness” of mankind (Rev. 12:6).”

The *Logos* identifies additional concerns regarding various interpretations and understandings regarding, “*The principles of Atonement and the nature of flesh.*” And, in a connected article titled “Contend Earnestly” it is recognized that “a real despair has surfaced in our community over the changing trends in the Brotherhood.”, and the question is asked, “Will the name Christadelphian soon lose its significance?” Areas of concern that are raised in the article include: *The casting off of Christadelphian traditions; the activities and ideas coming out of Internet discussion groups; the introduction of new styles of music in meetings; as in the days of Noah, the preoccupation with worldly pursuits and comfort; the segregation of young and old, sisters*

and brethren into various subgroups for study and spiritual instruction; the use of sisters as teachers and speakers; and the issue of changing views of prophecy – “Any interpretation of prophecy that does not align with Daniel 2 will be wrong. It is simple as that!”

### Impact on the Unamended Community

Though the concerns and sphere of influence of *The Christadelphian* and *Logos* is on the other side of the fellowship divide, we all can recognize many, if not all, of these same challenges eating away at the Unamended Christadelphian community as well. It is not that these kind of insidious influences have not been warned against by discerning brethren – warnings have gone out for years regarding these rising and sinister challenges to the One Faith. But, unfortunately such warnings are often dismissed as the old and worn out rantings of “traditionalists” and “extremists”, or the tell tale signs of “legalism”. Maybe the humanistic influences that are making shipwreck of the Faith could have been nipped in the bud when they were in their infancy (to borrow from a common expression). But, by and large this did not happen, and the scriptures taught us to expect a severe declension in “The Faith” prior to the Master’s return. The struggle to preserve the Truth is constant, and the “leaven” of sin and apostasy only needs a small opening. We know what the Apostle Paul declared about the powerful possibilities of “a little leaven”.

And now, as the areas of Doctrine, Prophecy and Walk continue to be undermined by “radical innovations” from some quarters, we also have a growing level of despair as to the current state of our Fellowship. From some there seems to be little concern towards the apostate ideas that are finding promotion, from others there is concern but a sense of helplessness as to what can be done. Others, in confusion or despair have seemingly thrown their hands up as if none of it is really worth contending for if it interferes with the social aspects of our Community. As we have seemingly entered a period akin to the time of the Judges when “every man did what was right in his own eyes”, and as the spiritual “wolves” have had virtual free run amongst the flock to devour, divide and scatter – our community continues to become splintered into various factions and subgroups with varying areas of concern or focus. Some may rally around certain doctrinal points; others may view prophecy as the defining issue; and others around certain walk concerns. Brethren, we cannot lose sight of the fact of the absolute interconnectivity of all matters pertaining to The Truth - IT ALL MATTERS. As bro. Thomas Williams wisely noted in *The World’s Redemption* - “THE TRUTH is such a perfect system that it will not admit of the introduction of one error without making confusion.” (p. 138).

### Balance

We often hear cries for “balance” in the brotherhood, and expressed concern that some have gone to “extremes” in their contention for the “old

paths” or opposition to growing error. Granted – it takes spiritual discernment to not weigh any specific issue heavier than its proper place in the perfect balance that is The Truth. “Extremes” have to be avoided. This is a struggle for all of us. But as we slide further away from our Christadelphian heritage, the concept of “balance” and “extremes”, as they pertain to spiritual matters, is no longer being defined with any broad consensus or clarity. Norms of the past are increasingly being viewed as “extremes” today, while evils of the past and trends in belief or practice once viewed as unimaginable become more tolerated as we continue to adopt the laxity that has overtaken the world. Let us be extremely vigilant and with the whole council of God as our guide let us with “righteous judgment” properly discern and practice a balance that truly reflects God’s will, and that is not in conformity to the fleshly trends being amalgamated into Christadelphia. Look to the “old paths” for guidance!

### The Unamended Challenge

While most of the trends and issues expressed by *The Christadelphian* and *Logos* are also found within the Unamended Community, there are other specific matters that continue to corrupt and/or pull apart our own fellowship:

- Continued efforts towards unity with the Amended and the CGAF, while watering down vital aspects of the Atonement, offer a constant pull on ecclesias and our young people.
- The WCF is now almost 40 years advanced and virtually unchallenged in its agenda and community wide influence towards church like centralized organization, ecumenical policies and general falsehood.
- “The Judaizers” book influence and WCF’s *Thought for the Week* e-mail campaign, which has introduced (and continues to introduce) nothing short of “another gospel” into our ranks, has yet to be effectively and with unified voice repudiated by our Community. An influence that derides the “traditional” as “legalism”, that has promulgated the present (spiritual or legal) possession of eternal life and the present existence of a spiritual Kingdom already inhabited by baptized believers, etc., etc. Not only has this not been widely dealt with, it is now having a divisive affect on the Brotherhood. If we are not willing to draw the line on matters **so basic and fundamental** to our Hope such as this, where will we be willing to draw the line that separates our understanding of Truth and error?
- There is a growing variance on IF and HOW error in general should or should not be handled.
- The subject and implications of Scriptural Fellowship itself is becoming misunderstood and all too often sidestepped.
- Differences of belief on Divorce and Re-Marriage has and continues to put strains on our community – though we recognize that there will be no resolution of this issue this side of the Kingdom.

- The matter of Prophecy has become an ever more divisive subject within our Community, as a growing array of beliefs dilute the “sure” visions of prophecy that were given for us to understand, so that we might rightly expect those things that are coming upon the earth. Christadelphians could once give a unified vision of prophetic expectation to the alien. Can we offer them such unified clarity now?
- And, the powerful influences of the world on our Community goes without saying.

### The trial of our conviction

These are disheartening things to consider, and as we literally see the world at large in a maddened and tumultuous state, we all are even more desirous for the Household to be a bulwark for The Truth and a quiet and steady refuge that provides singleness of vision and purpose, and that which helps to support our Faith in those things that are yet unseen. But without turning a blind eye, current trends in the Household make it virtually impossible to find wide-spread unity of belief and vision that helps to encourage us, and that which is commanded by the Scriptures (1<sup>st</sup> Cor. 1:10; Rom. 15:5,6; Phil. 1:27).

The Unamended community, though there have been many challenges along the way, has in the past enjoyed many generations of sound teaching, vitality, brotherly love (agape) and warm camaraderie. Along with this, we have lived very comfortable lives for many decades, as the world has provided us with an abundance that very few in the history of mankind have enjoyed. The Brotherhood itself has benefited from a relative long stretch of peace to worship in freedom and security – free of persecution and execution.

So why do we see such deterioration and confusion as we are so close to the Return of the Master? Quite simply - *The Truth does not prosper in prosperity*. What we mean by this is that the times of unprecedented prosperity have not necessarily been good for the Household, and the cause of the Truth in general. The scriptural record teaches this quite clearly. This is what the *Laodicean* model foretold and what was meant when Israel’s faltering due to their spiritual and temporal abundance was prophesied – “*But Jeshurun waxed fat, and kicked: thou art waxen fat, thou art grown thick, thou art covered with fatness; then he forsook God which made him, and lightly esteemed the Rock of his salvation.*” (Deut. 32:15) Prosperity has bred apathy and over concern with self interest, status and personal crotchets. BUT, it is trial and adversity that strengthens our faith, brings us closer together, molds and humbles our character and tests us to see what manner of person we are. It exposes our weaknesses and bolsters our strengths – if we are properly exercised thereby. It can fortify our resolve and sharpen our senses to “rightly divide the word of Truth”. Peace and prosperity (this side of the Kingdom) has the opposite affect – it numbs our senses and softens our spiritual fortitude. Christadelphia is currently a product of the world we have enjoyed – and therefore so are our problems.

Do we rely on God and Him alone? Do we have faith that the beliefs of the Christadelphians, as embraced in the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century, were a revival of THE Abrahamic/Apostolic Faith? Do we cling to the simplicity and beauty of that Hope? Do we believe that the Unamended position is doctrinally sound and of a vital nature in relation to atonement related issues? Do we really practice the principle of being “strangers and pilgrims” in this world? Do we believe that the Catholic System represents the Apostasy of the scriptures, and abhor the abomination of her espoused doctrines and the putrefied nature and ecumenical influence of her “daughters”? Do we garner courage and strength from the continual witness of the Jewish state of Israel? Do we watch a revitalized and arrogant Russia (and a weakening and demoralized U.S.) with the expectation that the long prophesied world crisis of the Gogian invasion is at the door? Are we convinced that Christ will in fact return to this earth soon? **These (among many) are matters of faith that difficult times may challenge us on.** How convicted are we? Despite the faltering and errors that are overtaking the Brotherhood and the perilous developments in the world, how assured are we of our convictions? Are we willing to stand firm, despite the disapproving opinions of our beliefs and demeaning insults about our character that we might receive from our fellow brethren? **This is the trial that we face.** And as we will only answer for ourselves at the Judgment, whatever the storm that rages around us, we must have the inner peace and confidence in the unchanging and irrefutable nature of THE TRUTH.

Do we have hard and sobering facts to face up to? – Absolutely. But, as hard as it may be to see sometimes, the challenges we face are signs of the nearness of our Master’s Return. And as we await that Return, in the days or moments left us, we have the opportunity to “*lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us*”. (Heb. 12:1) We have the opportunity to, “*contend for the faith, once (margin: “once for all”) delivered unto the saints*” (Jude 3) – **no matter the consequences** (Jer. 1:17). We have the opportunity to “*stand fast, and hold the traditions which ye have been taught, whether by word, or our epistle.*” (2<sup>nd</sup> Thess. 2:15).

Let us not cower, stray or tire - and understanding the power, simplicity, beauty and Divine genius of THE TRUTH that we hold dear, let us take in hand the “*sword of the spirit*” and put on the “*whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.*” Remember the exhortational and Messianic words found in Isaiah– “*I gave my back to the smiters, and My cheeks to them that plucked off the hair: I hid not my face from shame and spitting. For the LORD GOD will help me; therefore shall I not be confounded: therefore have I set my face like a flint, and I know that I shall not be ashamed* (...) *Who is among you that feareth the LORD, that obeyeth the voice of His Servant, that walketh in darkness, and hath no light? Let him trust in the name of the LORD, and stay upon his God.*” - S.K.

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## ISRAEL vs. RUSSIA

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As we make the final preparations to send this issue of the S.K. to the printers, on a daily basis we are reminded of the ever accelerating events on the world scene. As the U.S. continues its policies of appeasement towards Iran, the U.S. has been officially rejected by Russia, specifically Putin, in any attempts to enact sanctions against Iran in order to head off their nuclear armament ambitions (10/13/09). The U.S. had even pulled out of a missile shield system for Poland and Eastern Europe in the hopes that Russia would be more cooperative in helping with Iran – but has gotten nothing in return. Russia’s protection of Iran should be of no surprise to Believers based upon the prophetic declaration in Ezekiel 38:5, that “Persia” (Iran) will be confederate with Gog when he comes as a “cloud to cover the land” of Israel. From a natural standpoint we are amazed at the naivety of American leadership towards both Iran and Russia, and the startling belligerence that the U.S. is exhibiting towards Israel. But it is this naivety that is opening up the way for a more confrontational and resurgent Russia and Iran, as well as a Western and Eastern Europe that understands that they can no longer look to the U.S. for leadership. And, it is this belligerence against Israel that is opening up the way for other countries of this world to no longer try to mask the deep rooted hatred that they have towards Israel and the Jews in general – Israel no longer has a big brother.

Israel continues to find itself in a growing rift with Russia, as Russia continues to support Iran’s nuclear ambitions (with desires towards Iran’s massive oil/natural gas reserves no doubt in mind). In a whirlwind trip to Moscow last month, Netanyahu challenged Putin and Medvedev by presenting a list of Russian scientists who are helping Iran with their nuclear bomb efforts. This was reported as being a “short, tense meeting” – we can only imagine. Vague reports have also been surfacing regarding the mysterious disappearance of a Russian cargo ship a few months ago. It is coming to light that the cargo ship, which was reportedly carrying “timber” to Africa, actually was carrying missile defense systems to Iran. Some reports claim that the ship did not necessarily disappear, but was intercepted by the Israeli’s.

Netanyahu’s speech to the U.N. was also monumental, and sent a stinging rebuke to the world for its inaction against Iran. Israel is stepping on some very big toes as it continues to cry out against Iranian nuclear ambitions and prepare for a military strike if needed. It is not just Israel vs. Russia, it is even Israel against the world. If Israel does in fact attack Iran, we know that the outpouring of anger by the world will be nothing short of extraordinary. And, how much longer will Russia “tolerate” this thorn in its side that is Israel? “*And what I say unto you I say unto all, Watch.*” (Mark 13:37)