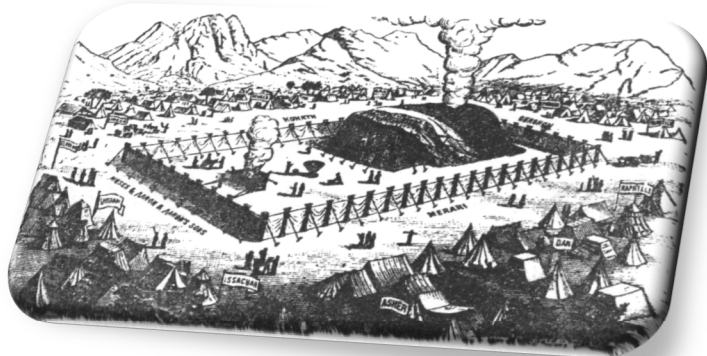


THE SANCTUARY-KEEPER

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



WHAT DOETH THE LORD
REQUIRE?
A NEW CREATION
THE MOUNTAINS OF ISRAEL
THE "PRE-EXISTENCE" OF CHRIST
GOD'S WAY

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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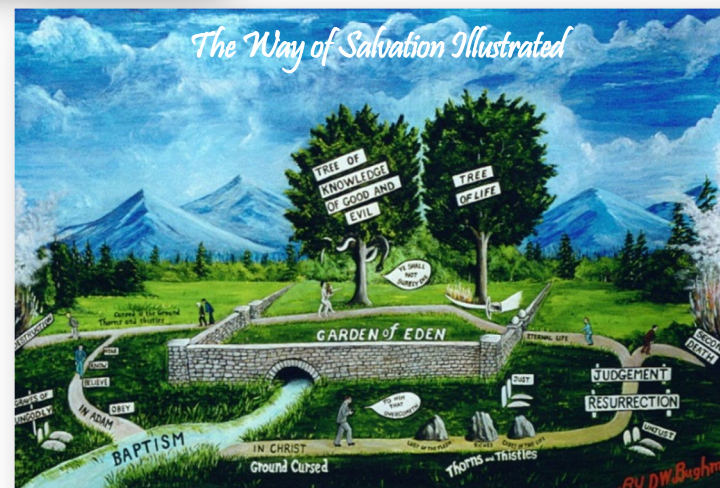
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The Holy Scriptures*

“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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WHAT DOTH THE LORD REQUIRE?

THERE are wide differences among men as to mental capacity and ability, but all such natural ability or talent is GOD-GIVEN. All boasting is excluded when it is recognized that it is a gift, and not something of our own getting and merit. What is required (we are speaking of spiritual things) that a man be faithful in the use of his talents, whether they be many or few? Paul says: “Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful” (1 Cor. 4:2). To Timothy he gave instructions: “The things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also” (2 Tim. 2:2).

That God has given to some, greater intellect and capacity, the history of mankind, revealed in Scripture, will bear out; the most prominent example being that of our Lord Jesus Christ. By today’s standards he would have been classed as a genius at the age of twelve. We have no doubt, by virtue of his being the Son of God, that he was possessed with a superior mind and intellect. We could mention men of the stature of Moses, the prophets of Israel, and the apostle Paul. These men were chosen vessels, leaders of their age, because of

their God given abilities and their proven love of God.

But “unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall much be required”. We would never be called upon to shoulder the burdens and great responsibilities that these men had to bear. We think, too, that such men as Dr. Thomas, Robert Roberts, Thomas Williams, etc., are worthy examples of men of our day who literally gave their lives to the Truth and to its defense and proclamation.

We do not eulogize these latter workers in the Truth’s vineyard, in the orthodox acceptance of the term; but we do LOVE and RESPECT what these men stood for and the profound spiritual influence for good that they have had on the thinking of the Household. These brethren have opened unto our minds beautiful truths, avenues of thoughts, that we of less gifted minds could never have seen or experienced. We are rather like the apostle Paul when he wrote to the Ecclesia of Thessalonica: “*And we beseech you, brethren, to know them which labour among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you; and to esteem them very highly in love for their work’s sake*” (1 Thess. 5:12-13). We, therefore, put forth for your consideration this question, What is required of us, of you and me, as recipients of the Oracles of God? Wherein lies our duty and responsibilities, to the alien, to our ecclesia, and to God?

Let’s look at the words of Jesus recorded in Matt. 25:14-30: “*For the kingdom of heaven is as a man traveling into a far country, who called his own servants, and delivered unto them his goods. And unto one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one; to every man according to his several ability; and straightway took his journey. Then he that had received the five talents went and traded with the same, and made them other five talents. And likewise he that had received two, he also gained other two. But he that had received one went and digged in the earth, and hid his lord’s money. After a long time the lord of those servants cometh, and reckoneth with them. And so he that had received five talents came and brought other five talents, saying, Lord, thou deliveredst unto me five talents: behold, I have gained beside them five talents more. His lord said unto him, Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord. He also that had received two talents came and said, Lord, thou deliveredst unto me two talents: behold, I have gained two other talents beside them. His lord said unto him, Well done, good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord. Then he which had received the one talent came and said, Lord, I knew thee that thou art an hard man, reaping where thou hast not sown, and gathering where thou hast not strawed: and I was afraid, and went and hid thy talent in the earth: lo, there thou hast that is thine. His lord answered and said unto him, Thou wicked and slothful servant, thou knewest that I reap where I sowed not, and gather where I have not strawed: thou oughtest therefore to have put my money to the ex-changers, and then at my coming I should have received mine own with usury.*”

Take therefore the talent from him, and give it unto him which hath ten talents. For unto every one that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance: but from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath. And cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

The key point of this interesting parable is that God *does require* something of His servants. But you will notice, too, that something had been entrusted to their care, and it was now time to give account of their stewardship. God is all-wise and ever merciful and He would not and does not require of us something which it would be impossible for us to give. We are plainly told that each received talents of varying degrees. He did not ask of the one-talent servant to produce to the same standards as that of five talents. All that was required was that the servant be faithful with that which was entrusted to him. That is all his Lord reasonably expected.

All who make up the body of Christ have a LEGITIMATE and necessary function. To the early church Paul wrote: "*Are all apostles? are all prophets? are all teachers? are all workers of miracles? Have all the gifts of healing?...*" (1 Cor. 12:29-30). Though many of the special gift manifestations have long since passed away with the death of the apostles and their immediate contemporaries, there are vital tasks still to be performed in the ecclesias of today. There have to be teachers, to help instruct those who are seeking for Truth and to guide them to a fuller appreciation of its beauty. There are those who exhort, to stir up the pure minds of the believers and to speak words of wisdom and truth, to provide meat in due season.

It has been said: "The word is suited to the occasion, the essential aim being the building up in faith and knowledge of the Word, exhorting to obedience the commandments of Christ. The speaker with only one theme, which he develops in season and out of season, does not provide a balanced diet." The Scriptures are like a well-set table with an abundance of everything, with a wide variety to suit the tastes and needs of all the guests. There are other extremes. A note of warning to those who would be spiritually alert: beware of those who would bring to you new ideas, taking plain, simple truths and putting interpretations on them which completely distort the beauty and harmony of the gospel as taught by the Lord and his apostles. "*Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world*" (1 John 4:1).

We spoke earlier of ecclesial responsibility. Every member of an ecclesia has a standing duty to act as a guardian of the spiritual health-state of his ecclesia. Now it becomes apparent that each one shares in the responsibility, in greater or lesser degree, according to experience, knowledge, talent and overall spiritual maturity. In the early history of Israel we have numerous references made to the ELDERS: men of renown, known for their sound judgment and spiritual integrity. In the early ecclesias we have mention made of elders, bish-

ops and deacons. In the ecclesias of today we refer to them as Managing Brethren, or Serving Brethren, because they serve.

Now a greater responsibility rests upon those whom the ecclesia designates as Managing Brethren, for they act as shepherds. As spiritual shepherds their duties are analogous to that of shepherds of old. They feed the flock, act as guard, and defend against peril and enemies. Suppose then that those who have been entrusted with this greater responsibility are unfaithful in the discharge of their duties? That unfaithfulness may take the form of indifference, carelessness and overall spiritual lethargy. We have a sobering answer in Ezek. 33:2-9. "*Son of man, speak to the children of thy people, and say unto them, When I bring the sword upon a land, if the people of the land take a man of their coasts, and set him for their watchman: if when he seeth the sword come upon the land, he blow the trumpet, and warn the people; then whosoever heareth the sound of the trumpet, and taketh not warning; if the sword come, and take him away, his blood shall be upon his own head. He heard the sound of the trumpet, and took not warning; his blood shall be upon him. But he that taketh warning shall deliver his soul. But if the watchman see the sword come, and blow not the trumpet, and the people be not warned; if the sword come, and take any person from among them, he is taken away in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at the watchman's hand. So thou, O son of man, I have set thee a watchman unto the house of Israel; therefore thou shalt hear the word at my mouth, and warn them from me. When I say unto the wicked, O wicked man, thou shalt surely die; if thou dost not speak to warn the wicked from his way, that wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at thine hand. Nevertheless, if thou warn the wicked of his way to turn from it; if he do not turn from his way, he shall die in his iniquity; but thou hast delivered thy soul."*

Brethren, these things are for our learning. Those of you who would feed the flock: Is careful attention being given to right doctrine? Is emphasis being placed upon LIVING the Truth as well as knowing it in theory? Those of you who would guide, Are you setting a good example? Are your standards conforming to Scriptural precept, whereby others might follow in reasonable safety? Watchman, are you alert to the perils that would endanger the flock? Is your spiritual armor such that you are ready and willing to go forth to do battle with those who would slay and scatter the sheep?

We spoke of every member of an ecclesia as sharing in the responsibility of what goes on, and of what is permitted in its function as an ecclesia. We mentioned the results when brethren who are selected by the body fail to act as watchman, become negligent and indifferent to the work entrusted to their care. WHO PUT THEM THERE? The ecclesia as a body shares in this responsibility. In the days of the apostles they had the assurance of the guiding influence of the Holy Spirit. In the ecclesias of today we have no such promise or assurance; therefore it is generally accepted that the ecclesial election by vote is the means whereby we perform this duty.

Those of you who would cast one small vote in the election of serving brethren, do you look at the spiritual qualification of the brother rather than personal friendship or possibly family ties? Is the selection of your serving brethren entered into with prayerful and thoughtful consideration, keeping in mind the Scriptural qualifications so carefully preserved for our instruction in the third chapter of first Timothy? We see, then, brethren how that the spiritual state of an ecclesia is closely related to the spiritual integrity of the individuals who make up the ecclesia.

We must not look for, nor can we expect, perfection in the evil state in which we live; but we are most assuredly admonished to strive toward that end. The very fact that each of us is guilty of sinning against God each day in some way or another, and the fact that we are by nature mortal, subject to all the evil passions of sinful flesh, should make us increasingly more aware of the need for a strong spiritual atmosphere whereby we might curb the tide of naturalism that would engulf us. Symbolically speaking, the ecclesial meeting is the rock or fortress whereby we make our stand against this tide of naturalism. Those who would open a breach in her walls are guilty of treason, and should be called upon to give account of their stewardship.

It has been said: "When we believe and accept the Truth, we must next obey the commandments. If we fail to do this, the Truth is not only of no advantage to us, but will be to our condemnation. A community in which the commandments of Christ are not obeyed is not the house of Christ, but the synagogue of Satan, however correctly the Truth may be discerned as a theory." That there will be some who come before the judge at the last day, still long on profession and short on works is clearly depicted in the words of Mat. 7:21-23: *"Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity."* Human nature is the same in every age; listen to what they were saying in the days of the prophet Ezekiel: *"And they come unto thee as the people cometh, and they sit before thee as my people, and they hear thy words, but they will not do them: for with their mouth they shew much love, but their heart goeth after their covetousness"* (Ezek. 33:31).

Brethren, do we have ears to HEAR? Can we let these words have their good work in us now, so that we might not be found pitifully asking for recognition, when it is too late? A large portion of our faithfully and successfully living the Truth consists in our REMEMBERING. We read the Word, and we forget; we hear good words of exhortation, we forget; we read stimulating works on the Truth, and we forget. There is an antidote. Read; make it your habit to read the Word EVERY day. Forsake not the lawful assembly of the saints, and give good heed to the words of exhortation being spoken. Also,

let us make the many good writings on the Truth our close and constant companions. There is no reason for any brother or sister going spiritually hungry with the wealth of material that is available. Each household should have a respectable library of works on the Truth.

Faithfulness is required of us in our association with the non-Christadelphian, our co-workers, and our neighbors. Our lives and our conversation should reflect that kind of faith that enables us to willingly speak of the Hope that we have embraced. When we have the opportunity to speak in defense of God's remedy for world conditions, we should be happy, too. Who knows but that in such discussions, someone will grasp a small ray of light and seek to enquire further into the matter. If we believe it to be the ONLY SOLUTION, we would be wrong in not speaking up in defense of the truth. We are well aware that discretion and common sense have to be used as to when a situation is suitable for such discussions, but let it not be said that our refusal to speak of the Hope of Israel was because we were ashamed to. We have a hymn (208) that speaks appropriately of the subject at hand:

Brave the foe, proclaim the Word,
Sons and daughters of the Lord;
Work ye for the Lord of heaven;
Give, as He hath freely given.

Ye who have the truth received,
By God's grace to you revealed;
Should you dare to keep it back,
You the rich reward may lack.

Had Jesus and the apostles waited till just the right moment to preach the gospel to their contemporaries, and always demanded the assurance that their message would be gladly received, their influence would have been extremely meager, and men would have gone on perishing for want of light. *"Brave the foe, proclaim the word."* Jesus said, *"Whosoever therefore shall be ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation; of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he cometh in the glory of his Father with the holy angels"* (Mark 8:38).

Any thinking person can see that there is something radically wrong with the reasoning of men. The thinking of mankind is sick at its roots, and that sickness is reflected in all strata of life, whether it be in government, religion, education, etc. World statesmen, religious leaders, and the intelligentsia of education, almost all agree that the world is living in universal anxiety. Tension is mounting among all nations; and because of mutual suspicion and, distrust, fear and nagging insecurity is commonplace. The almost 6000 years' history of mankind is living testimony to the truth of the words of the prophet Jeremiah: *"O Lord, I know that the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps"* (Jer. 10:23).

We have always felt that Wendell Willkie, the Republican candidate for president in 1940, was way ahead in his thinking in comparison to that of contemporary statesmen. He was a man of unusual vision and was closer to the truth than he ever dared to hope, when he advocated the bold new concept of One World. He was so thoroughly convinced of the basic soundness of his ideas that he wrote a book entitled *One World*. The essence of his philosophy was that the world could never expect universal peace and world disarmament until mankind progressed to the stage where they could clearly see the need for world unity and cooperation. The world of nations had become so inter-dependent and the mode of transportation had so dwarfed the earth that it was either one world or no world.

We wonder what Mr. Willkie would have thought if he had been handed the book, *The World's Redemption*. Had he pursued its pages he would have found that here was a plan embraced by a people who fervently believed that the world's redemption was altogether dependent upon ONE UNIVERSAL KINGDOM. We, as brethren of Christ, believe and teach that a world THEOCRACY is the only solution to the ills of the world. Any human concept of government is destined to failure, however well intentioned, because it leaves God out and places man in the seat of authority: a roll for which man is completely unqualified, both in his thinking and nature. The Psalmist says, "Except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it" (Psa. 127:1). Men recently have again built a house. It, too, like those which preceded it, was conceived in the desperate quest of peace. Its foundations were laid in a mighty land and they looked to it with hope and anticipation. It was formed by the victorious nations of World War II. "It was dedicated to keep the peace, and its supreme goal is to end war." They called it the U.N. (United Nations). We would like to quote from a recent edition of Compton's Encyclopedia: "It was expected that the great powers would work together to keep the peace. Instead, disagreements between Russia and the West have multiplied. The world has not enjoyed the peace and security that were promised."

To world statesmen and those who would design and fashion a new world, we would say: Consult the BLUE PRINT OF THE AGES, as brought forth from the hands of God, the Master Builder. "And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever" (Dan. 2:44). "The earth is the Lord's, and the fullness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein" (Psa. 24:1). "Why do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing? ... Be wise now therefore, O ye kings: be instructed, ye judges of the earth." "Say among the heathen that the Lord reigneth." "Thy throne is established of old: thou art from everlasting." "For, behold, I create new heavens and a new earth: and the former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind." "The Gentiles shall come unto thee from the ends of the earth, and shall say, Surely our fathers have inherited lies, vanity, and things wherein there is no profit." "And

the kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people of the saints of the most High, whose kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey him" (Dan. 7:27). "And he shall judge among many people, and rebuke strong nations afar off; and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up a sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more" (Micah 4:3). "For the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea ... The Lord is in his holy temple: let all the earth keep silence before him" (Hab. 2:14, 20).

Brethren, we have not followed after cunningly devised fables. This we believe to be the solution to man's extremity and the world's dilemma. Therefore we pray, "Thy Kingdom Come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven". "Watch therefore": for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come.... Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh. Who then is a faithful and wise servant ... Blessed is that servant, whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing" (Matt. 24:42-46).

WHAT DOTH THE LORD REQUIRE? "He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?" (Micah 6:8).

Ye servants of the Lord,
Each in his office wait,
Observant of His heavenly Word,
And watchful at His gate.

Let all your lamps be bright,
And trim the golden flame;
Gird up your loins as in His sight,
For awful is His Name.

Christ shall the banquet spread
With His own royal Hand,
And raise that faithful servant's head
Amid the Angelic band.
(From Hymn 212)

Ted O'Kelley

"Each of us will one day be judged by our standard of life, not by our standard of living; by our measure of giving, not by our measure of wealth; by our simple goodness, not by our seeming greatness." selected

A NEW CREATION

IN Gen 2:7, the Scriptures state, “*And Yahweh Elohim formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul* (‘a breathing creature’).” Thus, the Elohim, acting upon directive from the Almighty, formed a new and special creature that was unlike the previously created beasts because man was made in the image and likeness of the Elohim (Gen 1:26), who in turn are the manifestation of Yahweh. As the word, “image (‘resemblance’),” indicates, man was intended to resemble the Creator in bodily form, while the word, “likeness (‘character’)” indicates that man was also intended to manifest the characteristics of the Deity, or to “*be like Him*.”

The First or Natural Creation

Named Adam, he was the first Son of Yahweh of the present dispensation, made in a “very good” state, because he was without sin. As is recorded in Gen 1:27, man was “blessed,” by the Elohim and instructed to “*be fruitful, multiply, and fill the earth*,” indicating that he was meant to have progeny that would also be “*in the image and likeness of the Elohim*.” As verses 26-27 state, he was also to, “subdue it,” and have “dominion over it,” demonstrating that Yahweh gave him authority over the newly-formed earth. In every way, Yahweh provided Man with everything that he needed, as shown in verse 29 when the Elohim state, “*Behold, I have given you every herb bearing seed, which is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree, in which is the fruit yielding seed; to you it shall be for food*.” So blessed was mankind that he was allowed to regularly interact with the Elohim, who are depicted throughout this time period as conversing with and instructing this new creation.

When reviewing the totality of their work on behalf of Yahweh, verse 31 records that the Elohim proclaim it, “*very good*.” In defining the word, “good,” Strong’s uses the synonyms, “beautiful, bountiful, peaceful, in favor, joyful, loving, pleasant, precious, and prosperous.” We who have lived under the cursed condition of the earth since birth can only imagine the extent of the blessings that existed at that time in history, but it is clear that Yahweh’s goodness was prevalent in every corner of the earth, as described by those synonyms of the word “good” that have been considered. The creation was “beautiful;” it was “bountiful and prosperous;” it was “peaceful,” and all of the earth was filled with the “joy” of the Lord.

The seventh day of creation was reserved as a time of rest from the intense labor that had taken place during the first six days. As demonstrated in Gen 2:3, the day was blessed and sanctified, or set apart from the others as one that

was special. It was a time to appreciate the fruits of the labor that had occurred during the first six days and a time to be still and enjoy the peace, tranquility and beauty of the creation, while recognizing the wonder and great might of the Almighty whose power had formed it.

Though not perfect in nature like Yahweh and the Elohim, Man was without sin residing in his flesh as part of his nature, and therefore he was immune to death, for the Law of Yahweh dictates that, “*the wages of sin is death*.” So long as he obeyed Yahweh, Man continued to live in this blessed state. In recognizing the consistency of the Almighty, it must be contemplated that this new creature, after successfully overcoming a period of probation, would ultimately be endued with the Divine Nature of his Father and become as one of the Elohim by whose hands he was created. The fact that Gen 2:15 states that man was placed in the Garden of Eden to, “dress it and keep it,” indicates this point, as the word “dress,” is the Hebrew word, “*abad* (Strong # 5647),” meaning, “to work for another; serve another by labor, as a subject.” The word, “keep,” is “*Shamar* (Strong # 8104), meaning, “to guard, protect, and keep watch of, to wait for.” From these definitions, it becomes clear that Man was expected to serve his Creator by working in the Garden that had been entrusted to his care, being a Watchman who waited for a future reward to be granted.

Yahweh, in His infinite wisdom and perfect understanding, determined that Adam was in need of a companion who was similar in intelligence, nature, and emotion as he, and for this reason Eve was created. The creation of this bride, however, was contingent upon Adam paying a price or bearing a loss; that price was the loss of one of his ribs. To accomplish this, Yahweh caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam. And, it must be reasoned that, being ministering spirits on behalf of the Lord, one of the Elohim was commissioned to remove the rib and create Eve.

It is an interesting exercise to contemplate why Eve was created from the rib of Adam, for, as we well understand, the LORD does nothing without reason. Why not the femur, the shin, or the ankle bone? The reason may be to demonstrate that it was the Lord’s intention in creating Eve that she would literally be “called alongside Adam” being a partner to him and using their collective intentions, skills, and talents to bring pleasure to Him. When Adam awoke, his flesh was healed and the promised companion was a living and breathing reality. Just as he had named all of the other living creatures that had been created, he named his new bride “Woman,” because she had been taken from man, and therefore her existence and life had been made possible because of man. From this divine occurrence and order, the concept of marriage originated, for as is declared in Chapter 2:24, “*therefore, shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave* (or hold fast) *unto his wife; and they shall be one flesh*.”

In Gen 2:8 it is written, “*And the Lord God planted a garden eastward in Eden; and there he put the man whom He had formed. And out of the ground*

made the Lord God to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight, and good for food; the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of knowledge of good and evil.” When the term, “Garden of Eden,” is considered closely, we see that the word “Garden” is translated “paradise.” From this definition, it is understood that the original Tree of Life was located in the midst of the Paradise of Yahweh and assigned the name, “Eden,” which literally means “Pleasure, or Delight.” From these definitions, Yahweh’s intention in creating Man and the Garden is clearly revealed—that they were to bring Him “Pleasure and Delight”: a point that should constantly remain on the mind of all believers.

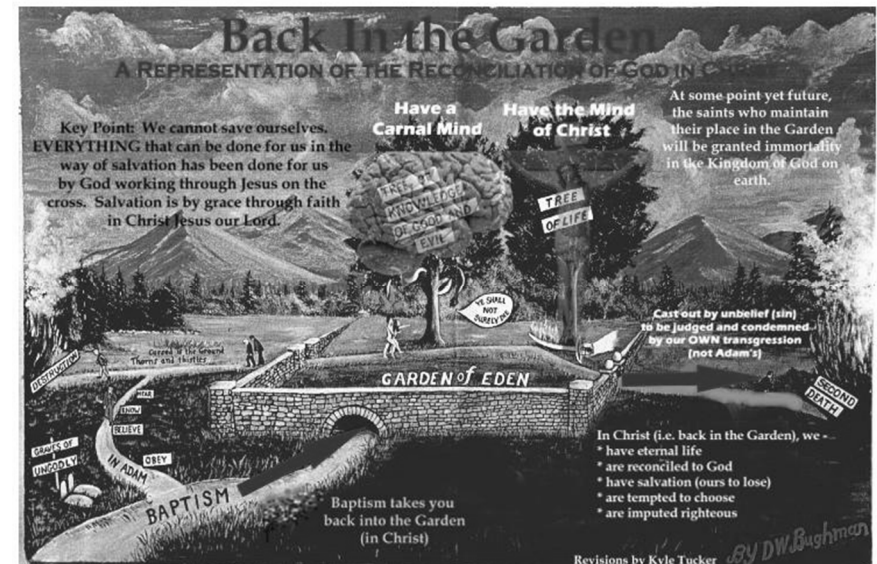
It is a useful exercise to consider why Adam and Eve did not partake of the fruits of the Tree of Life during their residence in the Garden. It is speculated that the Tree had not yet produced fruit at the time of their transgression, and therefore that life-giving fruit was not yet available. Although this may indeed be correct from a literal standpoint, it may be more appropriate to consider this question from a symbolic and spiritual perspective. The question should therefore be asked, “Is man able to avail *himself* of eternal life?” The scriptures consistently and unwaveringly state that this is impossible, revealing rather that eternal life is granted as a *gift* from the Almighty and that man cannot obtain it for himself, whether by his own works or some other means. This is the dilemma and error that the Pharisees faced, holding the belief that a man could somehow *achieve* the kingdom of God through works, and therefore become entitled to it. For this reason, it is doubtful that Adam and Eve could have taken of the fruit of the Tree of Life by their own methods. Rather, it seems consistent with the whole of Scripture that it was purposely unavailable to them by some means until the time when Yahweh would see fit to *give* them access to it, and although Adam and Eve could certainly approach and come near it, they were unable to grasp it for themselves.

In contrast, the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil was *readily* available to them and took very little effort to obtain and indulge in, therefore being an appropriate personification of sin. Sin is always within easy reach, being a willing and available partner to all of mankind. Its fruits, which seem so tempting and delicious, are always within our grasp if we so desire. Eternal life, however, is just the opposite. It is not within our reach during this time of mortality, in contrast to the new belief recently being promoted in the Christadelphian Community. Our first parents took the easier and more appealing approach by choosing the easy-to-grasp, low-hanging and physically appealing fruit that resulted in their expulsion from the Paradise of God, and the subsequent fall of all of their progeny. The advent of this sin caused the earth to change from its beautiful and blessed state in the Garden to its cursed and tainted state under which we now reside—that curse that can and will only be removed by Yahweh at the time the appointed time and in the precise manner.

Having disobeyed the commandment that had been given by the LORD, Adam and Eve fell from that blessed and “very good” state in which they had

been created, being cursed and excluded from the Garden and denied the life-giving fruit of the Tree of Life. This is shown in Gen. 3:22-24, which reads in part “lest he (man) put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live for ever: Therefore Yahweh Elohim sent him forth from the garden of Eden, to till the ground from whence he was taken. So he drove out the man; and he placed at the east of the garden of Eden Cherubim, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life.” Yahweh would have been just and righteous if He had allowed them to perish from the face of the earth, but because His divine character traits include love, mercy, patience, kindness, and long-suffering He chose to spare them from eternal corruption by instituting a plan that provided the means by which they and their heritage could eventually be reconciled to Him and regain that blessed state from which they had fallen. This plan of redemption was dramatically demonstrated in the provision of the skins that covered their nakedness and a depiction of the means by which they would be saved through sacrifice of a promised Seed. The Plan of Redemption for mankind was thus introduced and the means of the restoration of the earth to its grand original form and the re-entry of man into its blessed state were established.

The actual events regarding the expulsion of Adam and Eve from the Garden of Eden are very enlightening when confronting the new erroneous doctrine that has recently entered the Christadelphian community. Specifically, this doctrine professes that at baptism the believer spiritually “enters back into the Garden,” where he then “has eternal life,” since salvation is “ours to lose,” before immortality is granted at a future time. This incorrect logic has sought visual demonstration in the altering of Bro Bughman’s painting that has long been used by Christadelphians to pictorially demonstrate the “Eden-to-Eden,” path of reconciliation that mankind must follow. (“revision” below)



The advocates of this new view have sought its justification by declaring that *eternal life* and *immortality* are not synonymous terms, instead claiming that one can in some way possess eternal life after baptism before inheriting immortality after judgment, while seeking to defend this idea by declaring that eternal life actually means, “*life for the ages*,” or a specified time period, while immortality lasts forever. In addition to the plethora of Scriptures that have been used to refute this defected understanding, there is also a very simple explanation that reveals a fatal flaw in this rationale: the actual events that transpired in Genesis do not support the spiritual type that has been promoted. It therefore defies the scriptural precedent of deciphering types and symbols, namely that the spiritual type must be supported by the natural reality, as established in 1 Cor 15:46 which states, “*Howbeit that was not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural; and afterward that which is spiritual.*”

If we are to accept (and we do not) the teachings that are being promoted and defined above, then it would only stand to reason that the following actual events *should* have occurred after Adam and Eve sinned: after entering into covenant through the slaying of the animals that provided the covering skins, Adam and Eve should have then been allowed to enter “back into the Garden,” where they would then be allowed to partake of the tree of eternal life, since it only provided “life for the ages,” or for a specified time period (their mortality). They would then live out their mortality *within* the Garden before dying, being resurrected, and putting on immortality at Judgment. This, however, is not what the inspired record of Genesis details, so that one must simply ask himself: If Yahweh intended the above to be the pattern of redemption, why isn’t this clearly demonstrated in the actual events that took place? Rather, the simple and unquestionable fact is that Adam and Eve were instead *driven from the Garden and prevented from partaking of the Tree of Life!* Having been saved from a perishing death through covenant, they lived the remainder of their lives *outside the Garden* and *without* eternal life, while being instructed by the Elohim in how to, “*Work out their salvation with fear and trembling*,” which is exactly what Bro Bughman’s unedited painting visually demonstrates.

During their remaining lifetime of probation, they continued in the *hope* and *anxious expectation* that they would be redeemed through a Messiah and ultimately allowed to partake of eternal life and an entrance into the kingdom when it was *granted* to them after a favorable judgment. The actual events in the Garden are in direct opposition to the erroneous spiritual concepts being promoted, which should lead the Bible Student to the conclusion that this new belief is inconsistent and scripturally inappropriate.

The New Creation at Baptism

In 2 Cor 5:17-19, Paul writes of the “new creation” that a believer must become in order to be reconciled to God and the means by which he is to be changed. Using the *Complete Jewish Bible* translation, the passage reads,

“Therefore, *if anyone is united with the Messiah*, he is a *new creation*—the old has passed; look, what has come is fresh and new! And it is all from God, who *through the Messiah* has *reconciled* us to Himself and has given us the work of that reconciliation, which is that *God in the Messiah was reconciling mankind to Himself*, not counting their sins against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation.”

As stated in these verses, if one desires to be reconciled to Yahweh, he must first become a New Creation and the only way to become a New Creation is to be united with Christ in baptism. As is made clear in Gen 3:21, there was a need for mankind to be redeemed from the fallen, sinful state that had been introduced by sin. The coats of skins that covered the nakedness of Adam and Eve were intended to demonstrate the means by which Yahweh would mercifully provide reconciliation to Him, and that type was perfectly fulfilled in the provision of the Savior, Jesus Christ. Through baptism into his name and thereby aligning ourselves with him, the inherited sin that leads to a perishing first death as introduced as punishment for Adam and Eve’s sin is thereby removed and atonement is provided to those who “put on Christ,” being redeemed by the blood of his sacrifice. As Gal 3:27 states, “*For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ.*” In doing so, the baptized believer is no longer under the Federal Head of Adam, but rather becomes a New Creation that is distinguished from the mass of humanity that lives without redemption through the Savior. As Col 2: 11-21 (Diaglott) reads, “*In whom also you were circumcised with a circumcision not done by hand, in the putting off of the body of the flesh, in the circumcision of the Anointed, having been buried with him by the dipping; in which also you were raised by means of the faith of the strong working of the God of that one having raised him out of dead ones.*”

The baptized believer thereby Federally comes out of Adam and into Christ, putting off the old man and becoming a new creature “in Christ,” no longer being subject to the inherited sin that has been handed down to all of Adam’s progeny who remain outside of covenant. Just as Adam was not subject to death while in the “very good,” state that he was created, the New Creation is not subject to the “perishing first death,” that is the lot of all who are outside the covenant of baptism, for he is assured of resurrection to the Judgment Seat, though he may die during his probationary lifetime. Regarding this, Job 19:26 states, “*And though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God.*” In addition, Rom 6:3-10 states, “*Know ye not that as many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore, we are buried with him by baptism into death, that as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also of resurrection; knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin. For he that is dead is freed from sin. Now if we be dead*

with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him, knowing that Christ, being raised from the dead, dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him. For in that he died unto sin once; but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God."

Having put on Christ through baptism and therefore no longer being bound to a perishing first death due to Adamic Condemnation that has been removed in the waters of baptism, the verse reveals what is then expected on this New Creature: He is required to, "*walk in a newness of life,*" by seeking to act in the same manner as Christ, his new Head, by manifesting Yahweh though still residing in a fleshly body. As Paul states in Eph 4:22-24, "*That ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; And be renewed in the spirit of your mind; And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.*" As the verse specifies, after putting on the New Man in Christ through baptism, the believer is then expected to no longer act in a fleshly manner, as he did before entering into covenant, but is instead required to manifest Yahweh by walking in "*righteousness and true holiness.*"

How is the believer to do this? The answer is also given in the reference, stating that he is to "*be renewed in the spirit of your mind.*" In simple terms, he is to constantly seek to reenergize his mind by the zealous study of the Scriptures. Without doing so, the New Man will turn back to the sinful habits of the Old Man. Paul expounds upon this concept in Col 3:9-10 (CJB version) stating, "*You have stripped away the old self, with its ways, and have put on the new self (at baptism into Christ-author), which is continually being renewed in fuller and fuller knowledge, closer and closer to the image of its Creator.*" Being in Yahweh's image and having been called to be Sons of God, the New Man is now expected to grow in Yahweh's "likeness," by seeking to be "like Him," in thought, desire, action, and character traits as was Christ; who so perfectly manifested the Father that he rightfully stated, "I and my Father are one (John 10:30)."

As the verses considered clearly illustrate, baptism is the just beginning of a life-long effort to, as stated in Heb 6:1, "*go on unto perfection,*" by increasing in Scriptural understanding, faith, and works. Just as Adam was instructed to, "be fruitful and multiply," John 15:8 demonstrates that the believer is to act in like manner, as the verse states, "*Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples.*" The instruction and expectation is therefore made very clear – if the baptized believer desires to be a disciple of Christ and to glorify Yahweh, then it is necessary that he must "*bear much fruit,*" in His service. By doing so, the believer demonstrates his dedication and love for Yahweh and his understanding of Yahweh's Plan that has been revealed in His Holy Name – that He will be manifested in a multitude of Holy Ones who desire to do His will and seek to emulate His character. As Adam was instructed in the Garden to, "*subdue the earth,*" the New Creation in Christ

is to seek to do the same by following the pattern of expectations that has been clearly portrayed and accomplished by Christ the Firstfruit – to overcome and triumph over his fleshly desires and the sin that is resident within all of us.

Furthermore, just as Adam was specially separated from the beasts of the earth and instructed to have dominion over them, the Baptized Believer has been called to be holy (separate) unto Yahweh, as exemplified in 1 Pet 1:15-16 which states, "*But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy.*" In so doing, the Baptized Believer is expected to be separate from the sinful population of the earth (typed as beasts in the Scriptures) and must seek to gain dominion over the flesh by waging constant warfare against it. In Rom 7:22-25 Paul speaks regarding the ongoing internal warfare of the believer against sin in the flesh, saying, "*For I delight in the law of God after the inward man: But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this 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.*"

In a similar manner in which Adam, while in a "very good" state, held the privileged position of being able to communicate with and be instructed by the Elohim, the New Creation in Christ has the great privilege of having Christ as mediator to Yahweh. To this point Paul states in Heb. 9:15, "*And for this cause he is the mediator of the new testament, that by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first testament, they which are called might receive the **promise** of eternal inheritance.*" Though not personally instructed by the Elohim as was Adam, the Baptized Believer has been given the revealed Word of God in the Scriptures that are to lead him in the ways of Righteousness during his life. Throughout these scriptures is taught the concept of **Probation before Exaltation**, which was clearly demonstrated in the Garden when Adam was told that he must first *work* in the Garden (by dressing it and keeping it) and be faithful to the commandments of Yahweh before ultimately being granted eternal life at a time deemed appropriate by the LORD. It is necessary that the New Man in Christ follows this same pattern of faithfully working in the vineyard of Yahweh and being obedient to His commandments before ultimately being granted a change to immortal nature like unto that of Yahweh and the Elohim. This change to the divine nature is spoken of in 1st John 3, which states, "*Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.*"

Just as Adam was instructed to "*keep,*" the Garden, defined as, "*to guard, protect, and keep watch of, to wait for,*" the baptized believer is required to act as a Watchman for the Truth by guarding it from the spiritual harm that is always seeking to breach the wall of the ecclesial fortress. The passage in

Ezekiel 3:17-21 provides clear and definite instruction regarding this concept, including punishment for failing to do so. Though, as many have experienced, the role of the Watchman is wrought with great difficulty and challenge, it is not merely a *suggestion* that the Believer act in this capacity – it is *required as a direct command from Yahweh* and exhibits in the believer an understanding that it is oftentimes necessary to sacrifice personal comfort and ease in defending the Truth of Yahweh and seeking to save those who might otherwise be lost if left uncontested or uncorrected.

As was the first Adam, the Second Adam (Christ), has been betrothed to a worthy and faithful bride, the ecclesia. This bride anxiously and faithfully awaits her bridegroom and the time when she shall forever be enjoined to Christ, as shown when Paul writes in 2nd Cor 11:2-3: *“I am jealous over you with godly jealousy: for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ.”* As with Adam, this bride has been purchased with a great price, being the precious blood of Christ. As 1st Peter 1:18-19 states in regard to this concept, *“Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot.”* This was shown in type when Adam entered into a deep sleep which enabled the creation of Eve. In like manner, it was necessary for Christ to taste the sleep of death so that his chaste help-meet, the faithful ecclesia, could ultimately be joined to him. Like Adam, it was necessary that the flesh of Christ be broken so that his bride could be called alongside him. As Adam’s bride was taken from his side, thereby demonstrating her intended position in relationship to him, the ecclesia is also called to Christ’s side as an help meet in his endeavor to bring glory to his Father’s name. The similarities continue when we consider that, just as Adam’s flesh was healed upon arising from his deep sleep, Christ’s flesh was also healed in that his inherited nature was healed and replaced with an eternal spirit nature. Just as Eve is described as being, “taken from man,” the ecclesia has been, “*taken from Christ*,” because it is through him that the ecclesia has the promise of eternal life when finally enjoined to the bridegroom. As it was declared that Man was to leave his father and mother and be permanently joined to his bride, the New Creation is to become one with Christ, cleaving to him, while leaving behind the ways of the Old Man who was the natural progeny of Adam and Eve.

As demonstrated in the account in Genesis, after Eve was created, she was subsequently tested by the serpent, revealing the reality that is known by all believers who become baptized into Christ and become part of the bride – that trial and testing is necessary – not only to test the worthiness of the believer, but just as importantly to mold and shape them into acceptable servants of Yahweh. Unlike Eve, who was enticed to sin by the apostasy of the serpent that included both truth and lies, the Bride of Christ must reject the apostasy that exists all around her if she is to overcome where Eve failed. The Bride must show

patience and restraint while waiting for the bridegroom and the granting of the gift of eternal life and immortality, unlike the impatience and lack of self control that Eve displayed by desiring the reward of eternal life before enduring the probation that leads to exaltation. This error is strikingly similar to the afore-considered new doctrine being promoted within Christadelphia that one *legally or by position* possesses eternal life at the present time. This way of thinking is nothing more than a duplication of what led to Eve’s downfall: impatience and a premature grasping for a reward that is not yet to be granted. It is therefore of utmost importance that the believer understand the concept of eternal life for what it actually is – a future reward to be granted at the end of a probationary life lived in faith.

In conclusion of this section, the following chart seeks to illustrate the parallels that have been outlined:

In the Garden of Eden	At Baptism
Coats of Skins Provided	Sacrifice of Messiah Provided
Created Very Good and free from Death	Free from Adamic Condemnation
In the Image & Likeness of the Elohim	A Manifestation of Yahweh
Instructed to Be Fruitful & Multiply	Instructed to Bear Fruit in the Truth
Instructed to Subdue the Earth	Instructed to Subdue the Flesh
Separated and elevated from Beasts	Separated from the World
Instructed to Dress & Keep Garden	Instructed to Work & Be a Watchman
Adam Given a Bride	Christ Betrothed to a Bride
Deep Sleep of Adam	Death of Christ
Adam’s Flesh Broken	Christ’s Flesh Broken
Eve taken from Adam’s side	Bride “called alongside” Christ
Adam’s Flesh Healed	Christ’s Nature Changed
Eve Created from Adam	Ecclesia From Christ
Eve Tested	Ecclesia Tested

The New Creation in The Kingdom Age

The immortal nature that enables the glorified saint to live eternally will be granted only after a favorable ruling at the future Judgment Seat of Christ. It is at this future time that the accepted believer will become in fullness what he is now only in type – a New Creature, as his corruption will have put on incorruption and his mortality will have put on immortality. Rev 3:12 speaks of this new time, saying, *“Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out: and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, which is New Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God: and I will write upon him my new name.”* This New Creature will be the embodiment of what Yahweh always intended for His creation: that mankind be like Him in both appearance and nature, being equal to the angels and a perfect manifestation of Him, whom He

delights to call Sons. It is at this time when the holy and immortalized saintly host can truly be described as “very good,” as was Adam before his fall, being “beautiful, bountiful, peaceful, in favor, joyful, loving, pleasant, precious, and prosperous,” as they will be without sin that ultimately leads to death. As described in symbol in the first verses of Rev 22 in which a great Wood of Trees is depicted as yielding their fruit year-round, whose leaves are to be used for the healing of the nations, the glorified saint will bear great abundance of fruit in the manifestation of Yahweh’s Name during the Kingdom Age, providing the life-giving Word of God to the mortal populous who will thereby be healed from their sinful nature. It will be during this glorious time that the Saints will finally succeed in establishing dominion over the creation, being Kings and Priests who reign with Christ (Rev 5:10).

Like the Elohim in the Garden of Eden, the Saints in the Kingdom Age will take much joy in carrying out the will of Christ during the glorious age, being responsible for instructing and interacting with the mortal kingdom subjects and proclaiming His commandments. The anti-typical Sabbath day will be a reality, as the immortalized saint will no longer do the works of the flesh (working by the sweat of his brow) in order to sustain mortal life, but will instead do only the works of the Spirit: a lesson that Christ repeatedly sought to demonstrate during his ministry by healing on the Sabbath. This Sabbath of Rest will be a time wholly dedicated to serving the LORD, as the Glorified Saints will finally be able to rest from the difficulties and pressures of the world that presently surrounds them. Instead, their probation being complete, their exaltation will be joyfully realized through the mercy of Yahweh.

The intended role of the bride as instituted in the Garden (when Eve was taken from Adam’s rib) will then be perfectly restored, as the Bride will walk in perfect harmony *alongside* Christ as an help meet, though always gladly in subjection to him. Only then will the bride obtain that which Eve desired: to be like the angels in power, wisdom, and nature. As Christ taught in Luke 20:35-36, “*They which shall be accounted worthy to obtain that world, and the resurrection from the dead, neither marry, nor are given in marriage. Neither can they die any more: for they are equal unto the angels; and are the children of God, being the children of the resurrection.*” At the end of the millennial age, the curse that was pronounced upon Adam and Eve will finally be removed from the earth, as is proclaimed in such passages as Rev 21:4, which reads “*And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away.*” This time will witness the fulfillment of that which was prophesied in Gen 3:15: the destruction of the Seed of the Serpent that has made war with the Seed of the Woman. Though the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil has reigned in the form of sin and death since the fall of man, it will finally be uprooted and replaced with the Tree of Life when there will be no more sin or death at the end of the millennial age.

In conclusion of this section, the following chart seeks to illustrate the parallels that have been outlined:

In the Garden of Eden	In the Kingdom Age
Man Created in the Image and Likeness of Elohim	Glorified Saints a Perfect Manifestation of Deity
Adam the Natural Son of God	Saints the Spiritual Sons of the Deity
Adam & Eve Created with a Very Good Nature	Saints Transformed to a Perfected Nature
Instructed to Work to Bear Fruit	Produce Fruit in Abundance
Instructed to Subdue the Earth	Reign with Christ as Kings and Priests
Instructed by the Elohim	Instructors of the Mortal Subject in the Kingdom
Sabbath Day of Rest Instituted	Kingdom Age Wholly dedicated to Yahweh
Eve created as a Help Meet	Glorified Saints Called alongside Christ
Curse Pronounced	Curse Removed

The prophetic signs of the times give every indication that this Sabbath Day of Rest will soon be a reality. Seeing that the day is nigh, what is the believer to do? The answer is given in the instructions provided in 2nd Pet. 3:10-14: “*But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up. Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in **all holy conversation and godliness, looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat? Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness. Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless.***”

This instruction is reiterated in Mal. 3:16 which states, “*Then they that feared the LORD spake often one to another: and the LORD hearkened, and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before Him for them that feared the LORD, and that thought upon his name.*” Let the believer take heed of these instructions and so be found watching, guarding Yahweh’s Truth, patiently waiting, being diligent in study, prayer and works, while conversing often with one another to encourage faithfulness so that we might be transformed into this New Creation.

Arthur Sankey



THE MOUNTAINS OF ISRAEL

GOD, in His infinite wisdom, has used many of the inspired writers of the Bible to leave on record many wonderful and beautiful passages regarding the natural wonders of His creation. Each of us can probably recall or turn up many passages that speak of seas, rivers, streams, the animal kingdom, the plains and mountains of the Promised Land or any other aspect of the natural creation. We understand that many of these passages are symbolic in their meaning. However, it is sometimes difficult to determine if a particular passage has a symbolic/spiritual meaning or should just be read with only the natural meaning in our thoughts. This writer believes that the verse that we wish to review is one of those verses that presents unique challenges as there are different opinions within the brotherhood regarding the interpretation of this verse.

Ezekiel 39:4 reads – *“Thou shalt fall upon the mountains of Israel, thou, and all thy bands, and the people that is with thee; I will give thee unto the birds of every sort, and to the beasts of the field to be devoured.”* This verse is part of the discourse regarding the latter day northern Gogian invader of Israel. Everyone probably agrees that this verse is speaking about Gog and her Gentile associates. This verse as used by Ezekiel is understood by many to describe the extent of the invasion into the land of Israel. However, this is where the differences are manifested. Some in the brotherhood interpret this verse as teaching that the Gogian invader will not be allowed by Yahweh to invade the city of Jerusalem, as the northern oppressor is to *“fall upon the mountains of Israel”*, which is believed by some brethren not to include the city of Jerusalem. Others do not believe that this verse limits the extent of the Gogian invader as he comes against the nation of Israel in the latter days.

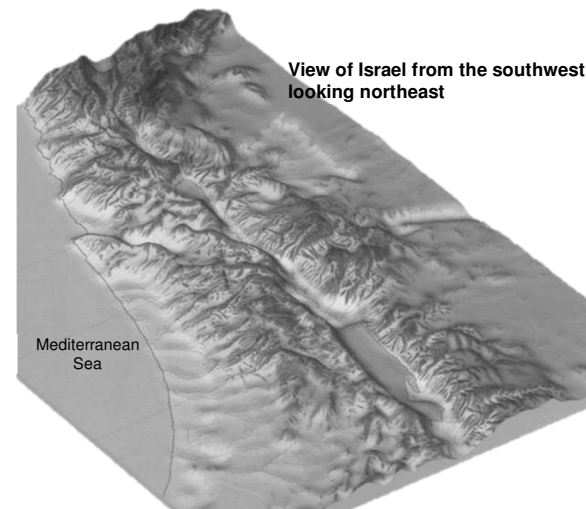
There is a lot of information that we should review in order to determine the most applicable and scripturally supported interpretation of this verse in Ezekiel 39:4. What is meant by the phrase – *“thou shalt fall upon the mountains of Israel”*? Where are the mountain ranges of Israel on a geographic map? Are there other clues in this discourse about the Gogian invader that we should look at in order to correctly interpret God’s Truth regarding the extent of his invading force?

Where are the mountain ranges of Israel on a geographic map? We found the following information from the Wikipedia website. *“The Judean Hills*

includes the populated area around Jerusalem and is also referred to as the Hebron Hills or the Judean Mountains or Harei Yehuda (in the Hebrew language). Running generally north and south, the mountains extend both to the west and east of Jerusalem, the southern end known as Mount Hebron. Other important cities in the mountain range are Hebron, Bethlehem and Ramallah. The range forms a natural division between the Shephelah coastal plains to the west and the Jordan Rift Valley to the east, as well as causing the rain shadow responsible for the Judean desert. The most holy places of Judaism are located in the mountain range – the Temple Mount and the Tomb of the Patriarchs.” End Quote.

We also find these comments on the website – www.bible-history.com – *“The city of Jerusalem rests on a limestone plateau 2500 feet above sea level. It is located in the central hill country, and is near the border of the Judean desert. It is far removed from any major trade routes. On the west side of Jerusalem are the Judean mountains, on the east side is the Judean desert which descends 4000 feet in 10 miles at the Dead Sea. The rugged terrain of Jerusalem was a definite military advantage, it was easy to defend because the city can only be reached on its northern side. The east, west, and southern sides had steep valleys. Jerusalem rests upon four hills or mountains, but only two of them have biblical names, Mount Zion and Mount Moriah. Between these mountains there is a large valley that the Romans called the Tyropoean. Mount Zion was referred to geographically as the southwestern hill of Jerusalem.”* End quote.

The map below shows the mountain ranges in the current land of Israel. This map indicates that the land is covered with mountains on both the east and west sides of the Jordan River.



The inspired Word of God uses many named mountains that can be found in the geographic areas of the Bible. Some of these named mountains are: Abarim, Ararat, Bashan, Carmel, Ebal, Gerizim, Gilboa, Gilead, Hermon, Hor, Horeb, Lebanon, Moriah, Nebo, Olivet, Pisgah, Seir, Sinai, Tabor and the most famous – Mr. Zion. There may be other mountains

that can be identified in the Scriptures. Granted, all of these mountains may not be located in the land territory occupied by the current nation of Israel. But, which geographic area does the prophet want us to understand that he is speaking about? Is it the land territory of the current nation of Israel or is it the land territory occupied by Israel of the past or is it the full and complete territory that will be occupied by the 12 tribes in the future? I think this is a very important matter that has to be resolved in the student's mind when they are contemplating the meaning in Ezekiel 39:4. This writer believes that since the context of the 38th and 39th chapters of Ezekiel have reference to the events of the latter days of the Kingdom of Men, then this prophecy is speaking about the full territory that will be given to the nation of Israel. When we consider the phrase "*the mountains of Israel*", which mountain or mountain range did the prophet want his readers to think about? Is it just the mountainous territory on the east of the Jordan or just the mountain range on the west of the Jordan or both? Is it scripturally correct to state that the Gogian invader will fall upon all of the mountains except those of Mt. Zion or the Mount of Olives? Brethren, there is no scriptural proof that supports this logic.



Central Mountains of Israel

So, what is meant by the phrase –"*thou shalt fall upon the mountains of Israel*"? A correct interpretation of this phrase should help us in gaining the right understanding regarding the extent of the Gogian invasion. This exact phrase, "*mountains of Israel*", is used 16 times in the Kings James version. I think it is very interesting that 15 of these 16 occurrences can be found in the book of Ezekiel. Therefore, we should agree that this phrase must have a special meaning that the prophet, through the inspiration of God, wanted to convey to His readers. As we review these 15 instances, we should try to determine if these occurrences are teaching us only about the natural mountains of Israel or should we be thinking about a spiritual application.

Ezekiel 6:2-3 – "*Son of man, set thy face toward **the mountains of Israel**, and prophesy against them, And say, Ye **mountains of Israel**, hear the word of the Lord GOD; Thus saith the Lord GOD to the mountains, and to the hills, to the rivers, and to the valleys; Behold, I, even I, will bring a sword upon you, and I will destroy your high places.*" These two occurrences are definitely symbolic as the prophet uses them as a symbol of the people dwelling in the land associated with the mountains. The Scriptures are full of warnings and condemnations and judgments from God against His chosen nation because of

their idolatry. These warnings and condemnations were against the entire nation, not just the people living in and around the mountainous regions. The sword was brought upon the people of the land, the entire land, in order to destroy their high places where they made sacrifices to other Gods.

Ezekiel 19:9 – "*And they put him in ward in chains, and brought him to the king of Babylon: they brought him into holds, that his voice should no more be heard upon **the mountains of Israel**.*" If we look at the context of the first few verses of this chapter, we find that the prophet is speaking about the parable of the lion's whelps. In this parable, the prophet presents a lamentation for the princes of Israel. The mother lion is the nation of Israel and the two lion whelps in these verses are the two kings of Judah – Jehoahaz and Jehoiachin (per the book "Ezekiel" written by J. Allfree). The people of the nation made these two men their kings. Verse 9 is speaking about the second of these two lion's whelps – Jehoiachin. This king was taken captive by the Babylonian monarch – Nebuchadnezzar. At that time, the King of Judah's voice was no longer heard on the mountains of Israel – or by the people of the entire land of Judah. This cannot make sense if we believe that the phrase "*the mountains of Israel*" is only applicable to the actual physical mountains of the land of Judah. We know that a king reigns over the entire land, not just a portion of the land.

Ezekiel 33:28 – "*For I will lay the land most desolate, and the pomp of her strength shall cease; and **the mountains of Israel** shall be desolate, that none shall pass through.*" Verses 28 and 29 both speak of the desolation of the entire land. Therefore, it appears that the mountains of Israel are to be considered in the context of the entire land.

Ezekiel 34:13-14 – "*And I will bring them out from the people, and gather them from the countries, and will bring them to their own land, and feed them upon **the mountains of Israel** by the rivers, and in all the inhabited places of the country. I will feed them in a good pasture, and upon the high **mountains of Israel** shall their fold be: there shall they lie in a good fold, and in a fat pasture shall they feed upon **the mountains of Israel**.*" In this chapter, the prophet is commanded to prophesize against the shepherds of Israel who were not meeting their obligation to feed the flock that was under their responsibility. Because of their inability to feed the flock, the flock had been scattered upon "*all the face of the earth* – vs. 6". God declares that is His intention to find his lost sheep and deliver them back to their own land and will feed them on the mountains of Israel and in all the inhabited places of the country. God does not just feed (spiritually or naturally) his sheep that live in one location and ignore those that do not live in the mountainous geographic regions. Once again, we have a connection of the mountains of Israel with the entire land of Israel.

These verses in Ezekiel 34 provide us a glimpse of the concept of God manifestation through the Great Shepherd – Jesus Christ. We believe that these verses present a beautiful picture of the future manifestation of Israel's

shepherd when He returns to deliver the natural and spiritual seed of Abraham – both Jew and Gentile. John 10:16 tells us that there shall be one fold and one shepherd. Christ laid down his life for his sheep and will ultimately feed them spiritually when his great flock is gathered on the mountains of Israel.

Verse 12 of chapter 34 provides us a clue to the time period in which this gathering of Yahweh's flock will occur. We note that the prophet declares that the flock of natural Israel was scattered in the cloudy and dark day. This day may remind us of the future day of the Lord that is also referenced in the prophet Joel as a day of darkness and of gloominess, a day of clouds and of thick darkness – Joel 2:2. The day of the Lord cometh, it is nigh at hand. The result of this future Day of Judgment will be to punish those Jews and Gentiles that do not accept the coming King and His righteous judgments and commandments. Those who do accept Christ as King will be blessed to enter into the most glorious era of the historical ages – the Kingdom of God.

Therefore, we should be able to see that the phrase “*the mountains of Israel*” in this verse has a very close connection to the entire land of Israel.

Ezekiel 35:12 – “*And thou shalt know that I am the LORD, and that I have heard all thy blasphemies which thou hast spoken against **the mountains of Israel**, saying, They are laid desolate, they are given us to consume.*” This entire chapter is recorded by the prophet to show God's judgments against Edom because of their treatment of the nation of Israel. The prophet uses the symbols of Mt. Seir and the mountains of Israel. Therefore, we should be able to understand that by using Mt. Seir as a symbol of the nation of Edom and their people, then he is also using the mountains of Israel as a symbol of the nation of Israel and their people.

Ezekiel 36:1 – “*Also, thou son of man, prophesy unto **the mountains of Israel**, and say, Ye mountains of Israel, hear the word of the LORD:*” This chapter is a continuation of Chapter 35. In this chapter, the prophet is now speaking to “*the mountains of Israel*” which we have already identified in Chapter 35:12 as the nation of Israel and their people.

Ezekiel 36:4 – “*Therefore, ye **mountains of Israel**, hear the word of the Lord GOD; Thus saith the Lord GOD to the mountains, and to the hills, to the rivers, and to the valleys, to the desolate wastes, and to the cities that are forsaken, which became a prey and derision to the residue of the heathen that are round about...*” Once again, we have a connection to the entire land and to the people of the entire land. Notice the similarity of the symbols in this verse to those used in the second and third verses of chapter 6 that we have previously discussed.

Ezekiel 36:8 – “*But ye, O **mountains of Israel**, ye shall shoot forth your branches, and yield your fruit to my people of Israel; for they are at hand to come.*” This again appears to be a reference to the entire land of Israel that will yield the fruits to the entire people.

Ezekiel 37:22 – “*And I will make them one nation in the land upon **the mountains of Israel**; and one king shall be king to them all: and they shall be no more two nations, neither shall they be divided into two kingdoms any more at all.*” In the opinion of this writer, this is one of the most definitive verses that the prophet has written to show that the “mountains of Israel” is used by the prophet of Ezekiel as a symbol of the entire land of Israel. This is the land promised to the twelve tribes and that is described in Ezekiel 48. No one would assert that the returned nation of Israel will only be settled on the natural mountainous regions of the territory. Israel will be given the land from the Euphrates to the Nile – Genesis 13:18. Using the reasoning that we glean from this verse, why is it necessary for some to apply a different meaning to this phrase when they read Ezekiel 39:4?

Ezekiel 38:8 – “*After many days thou shalt be visited: in the latter years thou shalt come into the land that is brought back from the sword, and is gathered out of many people, against **the mountains of Israel**, which have been always waste: but it is brought forth out of the nations, and they shall dwell safely all of them.*”

Ezekiel 39:2 – “*And I will turn thee back, and leave but the sixth part of thee, and will cause thee to come up from the north parts, and will bring thee upon **the mountains of Israel**:*”

Ezekiel 39:4 – “*Thou shalt fall upon **the mountains of Israel**, thou, and all thy bands, and the people that is with thee: I will give thee unto the ravenous birds of every sort, and to the beasts of the field to be devoured.*”

These three verses are referencing the same event – the Gogian invasion. Most Christadelphian students of prophecy appear to focus on these three verses in trying to understand the extent and impact of the Gogian invasion. We must interpret these verses using the same logic that the prophet has used for the remainder of the verses that we have reviewed that includes the phrase – “*mountains of Israel*”. In the RSV, Ezekiel 38:8 reads – “*After many days, you will be mustered; in the latter years you will go against the land that is restored from war, the land where people were gathered from many nations upon the mountains of Israel, which had been a continual waste.*” This version gives us a clearer picture of what the prophet was teaching. Can any student of prophecy argue that the Israelites of the latter day will just be settled on the actual mountainous area of this nation? We should be able to understand that this phrase is once again referencing the entire land. In interpreting Ezekiel 39:2 and 4, we should use the same logic in interpreting our phrase as we have used for all other verses in Ezekiel.

Ezekiel 39:17 – “*And, thou son of man, thus saith the Lord GOD; Speak unto every feathered fowl, and to every beast of the field, Assemble yourselves, and come; gather yourselves on every side to my sacrifice that I do sacrifice for you, even a great sacrifice upon **the mountains of Israel**, that ye may eat flesh,*

and drink blood.” This verse is the climax of the preceding verses that describe the destruction and burial of the northern invader. Verse 14-15 teaches us that the people of the land that have been selected for continual employment to mark the location of the bones of the fallen enemy and to bury the invader from the north will pass through all of the land in their search for those that were destroyed by the forces of Yahweh. We should note that these men did not just search the mountainous regions of Israel, but they “passed through all the land”. The extent of this search will be necessary because the Gogian invader comes against all of the land of Israel, including all of the cities, even Jerusalem.

The prophet also provides other internal evidence from the 38th and 39th chapters. In Ezekiel 38:9 and 18, we learn that Gog will be brought against the entire land. In verse 16, we read that the prophet will come against the people of Israel as a cloud to cover the land. This verse indicates that this cloud of destruction will be over the entire land. Ezekiel 39:4 speaks of the fall of Gogue on the mountains of Israel. However, verse 5 also teaches us that the invading army will also fall on the plains of the land. These two verses include the entire territory of the nation of Israel.

There are many other passages in other parts of God’s Holy Word that equates the mountains of Israel with the city of Zion. Here are a few examples. Psalms 87:1-2 reads – *“His foundation is in the holy mountains; the Lord loveth the gates of Zion more than all of the dwellings of Jacob.”* Psalms 125:1-2 uses the symbol of Mt. Zion for God’s people. *“They that trust in Yahweh shall be as mount Zion, which cannot be removed, but abideth for ever. As the mountains are round about Jerusalem, so the LORD is round about His people.”*

Conclusion

In the opinion of this writer, it is erroneous for us to limit the extent of the Gogian invasion to just the natural mountainous regions of the nation of Israel. It is also erroneous to exclude the city of Jerusalem from the destructive power of this latter day enemy of Israel. The prophet Ezekiel never uses the phrase *“the mountains of Israel”* in a manner restrictive to just a portion of the land. In all his usages of this phrase, we see that he is either referencing the entire land of Israel or the people of the entire land of Israel. Therefore, we believe that the prophet is teaching his readers of the vast destruction that this invader will bring upon the entire territory of the nation of Israel. This teaches us of the judgments that Yahweh is pouring out on his chosen nation and land. We know that there will always be a remnant that will survive the national judgments that God has used to punish the natural seed of Abraham because of their unfaithfulness. It is this remnant of the people that will live in the land at the time of the March of the Rainbow Angel that will finally recognize their Messiah and will cry to Him for deliverance. Our understanding of this phrase – *“the mountains of Israel”* will help us to gain a better understanding of the

prophecy of Zechariah that is recorded in chapters 13 and 14. We can now correctly connect the destruction described for the city of Jerusalem with the extent of the invasion described in Ezekiel 38 and 39, along with other prophetic passages. Indeed, this is the nation that was spoken of by the prophets of old that God would bring against His nation in the latter days – Ezekiel 38:17.

Although Yahweh will manifest His severity through the latter day “Assyrian/Babylonian”, He will ultimately gather His entire chosen people who will accept the King of Kings and Lord of Lords. Salvation will be offered through the Gospel message and those who choose to finally honor their God and His Son will be allowed to come into the Kingdom and inherit the promises made to their fathers. There will be no more international discussion or argument about the location of the settlers of the land of Israel. This remnant will be gathered and settled into their tribal allotment that the prophet describes in the latter chapters of Ezekiel.

No one who loves God’s Word or His chosen nation rejoices in the severity of this latter day destruction of God’s chosen land, but we cannot deny the unfaithfulness of this nation of Israel. The history of Israel teaches us that through their continual unfaithfulness throughout the ages, God has used the Gentile powers of the world to punish them for their sins. Is the current nation of Israel any more faithful than those of ages past? Surely, we do not affirm this statement. Where is the proof of their faithfulness as a nation? Throughout the history of this nation of Israel, we see a pattern of Sin, Suffering, Supplication and then Salvation. We should not expect anything different with the modern country. The modern country of Israel is still living in a state of blindness and will continue to do so until the time of the Gentiles is complete. We understand that this time of the Gentiles will not be complete until the Kingdom of God has been established on the mountains of Israel and Jesus begins His rule over the entire world. In today’s environment, we see the nation of Israel fully trusting in their own might, refusing to recognize their Saviour and Deliverer. The policies of this current nation of Israel are just as political as any other nation of the world. However, we do not curse this nation of Israel as others who have no hope or no knowledge of God’s plan with the natural seed of Abraham. All we can do is strive to develop a correct understanding of the prophetic things of the future and pray that in all things, that we are following the advice given to Timothy – *“Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.”* We know that the God of Israel will do right in all things.

B. Henderson



THE “PRE-EXISTENCE” OF CHRIST

Fundamental Considerations

Earlier this fall we were contacted through our ecclesial website by an individual who lives in western Canada. He was interested in Christadelphian beliefs, felt he had found some common ground and was also requesting literature, including a copy of *Elpis Israel*. Though he claimed to have many personal beliefs that paralleled ours and in fact rejected the concept of the Trinity; an extremely fundamental difference and a subject that has such a profound effect on other closely related matter was his erroneous belief in the personal “pre-existence of Christ”. As followers of The Truth, we understand that any deviation from a proper understanding of Christ destroys a correct understanding of his nature and the purpose of his atoning work. While denying the Trinity is a good step, to embrace the idea that Christ “pre-existed” is to merely throw off one gross error to embrace another, and to create a whole host of other problems. As we have quoted from bro. Williams many times before, “The TRUTH is such a perfect system that it will not admit of the introduction of one error without making confusion.”

This individual claimed to not hold to any “creed” or belong to any religious community, but as one brother suggested to us, his thought was that the individuals similarity of beliefs to us in many aspects while holding on to the “pre-existence” falsehood seemed very similar to the followers of Herbert Armstrong. We also know that the Jehovah’s Witness also cling very tightly to the error (along with many other errors). As the verses that he puts forward as evidence can be easily misunderstood, we know that the mistakes that he makes in interpreting various passages is common to Christendom in general. Though claiming to reject Trinitarianism, the reader will notice that he trips over many of the same passages they hold up for their position as well.

We provide the following correspondence for the readers consideration, as many of you may have been involved in the same kind of discourse with those of the world. Our answer to the correspondent is not provided as the perfect approach to this matter (far from it), and we imagine that our readers will have ideas on better ways to address this issue. Our correspondence essentially stopped after a reply to his initial thoughts, so we were not able to follow up further on specific points with the individual, therefore leaving some loose ends in the process. If anything else, we provide this as a reminder that we are to “**be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you**”, and maybe this will provoke some thought as to how the individual reader might answer when posed with this specific issue.

Some adjustments and edits have been made to make this appropriate for an article type format. – A. Thomas

Letter from Correspondent

Hello Aaron,

As far as the preexistence of our Lord....it's such a vast subject. I can only scratch the surface in this email. The topic and you deserve more time than I can give in this email, as I'm off to work shortly. But to get our dialogue started on this issue, I'll say that, it seems to me, that in Biblical witness, the Lord gives insights into His pre-earthly life.

Christ's calls Himself, “*the beginning of the creation of God.*” Rev 3:14. This passage isn't speaking about our Lord's Resurrection, because when speaking about our Lord's Resurrection He is referred to as “*...the firstfruits of many brethren...*” I believe that Rev.3:14 is referring to the Father's first act of creation. I also think that this is when Jesus Christ became God's son. The father-son relationship demands a time sequence....one being (the father) must exist before the other (the son)....one is the offspring of the other. Christ is “*The beginning of the creation of God*” and then, “*by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him.*” Colossians 1:16. Christ was used to create the entire universe, material & spiritual. And it seems that He was [the] reason why the Father started the entire creation project ...it was all made “*for Him*”. In Genesis 1:26 when God (*Elohim*), which is plural, says “*Let us create man in our image*”. I believe that God, the Father, is talking to His Son and not to angels/messengers as most of the Bible Students believe.

Jesus Christ said that “*No man hath seen the Father.*” John 1:18. Who did Moses see the 'hind parts' walking away from him? “*And the Father himself, which hath sent me, hath borne witness of me. Ye have neither heard his voice at any time, nor seen his shape.*” John 5:37. Who was the being that dealt with Israel and the prophets in the Old Testament? I believe that Jesus Christ is the God of the Old Testament and that the revealing of the Father is a gift that He came to give His followers. “*All things are delivered unto me of my Father: and no man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him.*” Matthew 11:27.

Also quickly, our Lord said that He witnessed Satan's fall. Luke 10:18.

John the Baptist said that Jesus was before himself, even though John was born before Jesus was ... “*John bare witness of him, and cried, saying, This was he of whom I spake, He that cometh after me is preferred before me: for he was before me.*” John 1:15.

Other key scriptures:

“*And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was.*” John 17:5.

"Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began." 2 Timothy 1:9.

"Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me: for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world." John 17:24 This seems to indicate a relationship between the Father and Son beyond the mere plan of God.

And lastly, the verse where Christ proclaims his pre-existent life but also his divine Sonship, *"Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I am."* The *"I AM"*, stating that Christ was indeed the God of the Old testament who interacted with the patriarchs. and by the scribes and Pharisees reaction, that is exactly what they understood our Lord was saying. Christ was the *"I AM"* who spoke to Moses out of the burning bush.

These are just a few indications that seem to indicate that the person who became Jesus of Nazareth, existed with the Father before the beginning of anything that the Father created, and was that creating agent that the Father used to carry out His vision for the entire human project.

Our Response

Dear -----,

First of all, in regard to the "pre-existence" of Christ, there are some preliminary difficulties with such a view.

1. The account of his conception and birth: There is no language provided to remotely indicate anything other than the birth of a child. Yes, it was miraculous in nature but a birth nonetheless. Christ was not spoken of as being "transformed" from a spirit being into a baby, or "incarnate" in any way. No mystery surrounds the account, but it is explained in clear, unambiguous terms. By the means of God's power on Mary a new person was created. If he "pre-existed", then how do we account for his development, where he *"increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God..."* In Hebrews 5:8, *"yet learned He obedience by the things which he suffered."* What purpose was there in his "pre-existence", if it was just to erase his previous existence and experiences to become incarnate in the form of a man?
2. If he pre-existed and lived side by side with the Father then he would have to be of a higher nature than man or of "spirit" nature (i.e. immortal). To come down in the form of a man would be to cast off the immortal nature in favor of mortality. But as mortality is the

result of sin, it would be an impossibility for that which is perfect to become imperfect.

3. 1st Cor. 15:46 (the "resurrection chapter") we are told that *"Howbeit that was not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural, and afterward that which is spiritual."* If Christ started off pre-existing then he started off first spiritual and then became natural - which would be the opposite experience of his brethren. So how could Christ be referred to as the *"firstborn among many brethren"* (Rom. 8:29) if his experience was just the opposite of theirs?
4. 15:21 tells us that *"by man [Adam] came death, by man [Christ] came also the resurrection of the dead."* This ties in directly with the previous points - Christ had to be a man, of the Adamic nature in order to be qualified to be a savior for the Adamic race. To once be of spirit nature (as mentioned before) to somehow be recreated, but of a corruptible nature, does not place him in the same circumstance as the brethren he has come to save.
5. If Christ was already in existence before the creation then he would actually have preceded Adam making the arguments of the apostle Paul in 1st Cor. 15:45 void - making Christ the "first man" and Adam "the last". This would also make Christ - the promised "seed" of Gen. 3:15 older than those he was supposed to be a descendant of. Jesus is also supposed to be the descendant or "seed" of Abraham (Gen. 22:17; Gal. 3:16) as well as the seed or "son of David". To make him pre-exist his fore-fathers is to create confusion out of plain and clear testimony as to the descent of Christ.

In order to understand more spiritualized language, it is important for us to approach such passages by first building a foundation upon plain and straightforward testimony. Jesus' lineage is clearly given to us, and in Luke 3:23 (lineage of Mary, though legally reckoned through Joseph who was the son-in-law of Heli) we are given a clear reckoning of Christ's lineage - going all the way back to Adam who was the first created, or "the son of God."

The verses you referenced:

- **Rev. 3:14.** - I don't believe that we can understand this as anything other than speaking of Christ's position as the beginning of a creation of new men and women through his resurrection. The language of The Revelation is symbolic in nature, and the message to the 7 ecclesias specifically is in regard to the state of the churches/ecclesias which represented this new creation. Looking at the previous ecclesias - in his introduction of himself, every time the language is symbolic in nature and representative of Christ's authority and headship over the believers. This being a spiritual creation that was accomplished through his sacrifice. Consider Ephesians 2:10 - "for

we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works". And also consider vs. 15. Col. 3:9,10 – "put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him." Also Gal. 6:15; James 1:18; 2nd Cor. 5:17.

- **Col. 1:16** -

1. It is God, not Christ, who is responsible for the literal creation. (Acts 17:24; Is. 44:24).
2. Psalms 89:27 tells us in regard to Christ that "Also **I WILL MAKE** him my firstborn, higher than the kings of the earth". This is speaking of Christ in prophetic terms to be accomplished many years after the words were penned by the Psalmist. If Christ "pre-existed" then he would have already been the "first born".
3. The Apostle Paul here draws upon the status and preeminence of the Firstborn as found in the O.T. - as it pointed forward to and fully applied to Christ. Such benefits: Set apart (Ex. 13:2; Luke 1:32,33,35); Double portion (Deut. 21:15-17; Heb. 1:4); Honored (Gen. 49:3; Is. 9:6); Appointed as ruler (2nd Chron. 21:3; Luke 1:32,33) and made a priest of his household (Num. 8:14-18; Heb. 7:17).
4. The context of Col. 1:16 is further qualified by vs. 18 that tells us that "he is the Head of the body, the ecclesia: Who is beginning, the Firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the pre-eminence".

Due to time constraints we left our correspondence at this point, picking up where we left off in a following note-

I left off with your thought that you believe that Gen. 1:26 is God speaking to Christ rather than angels/messengers. I believe that this is in fact speaking of the angels, tied in directly with what was put forward in my last message. God is the source of all power, and truly the creator of all things (Isaiah 44:24). But we also recognize that it is through His angels that He executes His will. The examples of this are numerous in the Scriptures.

- The LORD appeared to Moses at the burning bush, but Stephen tells us in Acts 7:35 that it was an "angel" that appeared unto him (Moses) at the bush, along with Ex. 3:2 itself. Likewise we are told in Exodus 33:11, that the LORD spoke to Moses "face to face", but like you referred to from John 5:37, and what is clearly stated in John 1:18 and 1 Timothy 6:16 - no man can see God. "There shall no man see Me and live." (Ex. 33:20).

- When the Ten Commandments were given to Moses, it is spoken of as God speaking the words to Moses. In Exodus 24:10; Moses, Aaron, Nadab, Abihu and 70 elders "saw the God of Israel". But in Acts 7:38 these interactions are spoken of as being the work of an angel. I believe this applies to the account further found in Exodus 33 when Moses saw the hind parts of God's "glory". He was not allowed to see His face, in that no man could see him and live. There is nothing here to imply, nor anywhere else in the Scriptures, that this was Christ. The implications are that this is an angel, reflecting the full glory of the Father's being. (The word "glory", according to Strong's Concordance, means "splendor".)
- Jacob stated that he had "seen God face to face..." (Gen. 32:30), but Hosea (12:3-4) tells us that Jacob wrestled with an angel. Again, the angels acting as the representatives and executors of God's will on earth.
- The word "God" is often a translation of the plural Hebrew word "elohim". It is used in various ways in the Scriptures (of judges (Ex. 21:6), of pagan idols (Judg. 16:23; 1st Kings 11:33), etc. The word means "powerful ones" or "strong ones". Where it is applicable to the angels, it is The Father Himself who is the source of this strength. This is a fitting description of angels as they are described in Ps. 103:20 – "Bless the LORD, ye his angels, that excel in strength, that do his commandments, hearkening unto the voice of his word." The word for "angel" is often from "the Hebrew "malak", but in Ps. 8:5, the word "elohim" is translated "angels". This passage is quoted in Hebrews 2:7, and the word "angels" is used - which indicates that the intended meaning is in fact "angels".

In Hebrews 2, Christ is spoken of as being created **lower than the angels**. If he pre-existed, then this statement would not be true. We know that now, as sitting on the right hand of his Father, he is higher than the angels.

Luke 10:18 - I think that I can safely assume that you would tie this with what is stated in Isaiah 14. Not to get too far off of subject here (as the subject of "Satan" is a different matter), but is in reference to "Lucifer", which we are told very clearly back in vs. 4 of Is. 14 that this passage is a "*proverb against the king of Babylon*". Lucifer means "morning star" and this was something that was worshipped by them (the Babylonians). This proverb prophesied of the destruction of Babylon at the hands of the Medo/Persians and the casting down of the Babylonian King from the political heavens of that time. Likewise, if we look just a few passages back we see Christ speak of Capernaum being thrown down "to hell" in the same manner. Capernaum eventually lost its exalted position of that time. Christ is speaking in response to the casting out

of demons (i.e., the healing of disease, infirmities), not of some kind of supernatural historical event that he witnessed thousands of years before.

John 17:5 - This same “glory” is spoken of as already being given to his future disciples (“them also which shall believe on me through their word” - those in the future, even up to this time that are converted by the teachings of the apostles) in verses 20-22 of the same chapter. If this is a proof of Christ's pre-existence then we would have to conclude that all who accept the Truth of God's word also pre-existed in “glory”.

- Jesus was in **God's plan** for the salvation of mankind since the Beginning, and it is only in this way that I believe that we can understand the language used by Christ. See *Rev. 18:8; 1st Pet. 1:20; Matt. 25:34*.
- There are others also spoken of as if they pre-existed: The Apostle Paul (Rom. 8:29; Rom. 9:23; Eph. 1:4; Jeremiah - Jeremiah 1:5)
- As a side note: The word "world" is from the *Greek* word "kosmos" and it doesn't represent the earth, but is in reference to *order or system of things*. It is not a reference to the natural creation, which is represented by a different Greek word. During the time of Christ, they were living in the Jewish kosmos. It was ever before the Mosaic Institutions (which was only a temporary system of worship to lead men to the salvation that Christ would offer) were established that there was a promise of a Seed to save mankind (Gen. 3:15). We see this hope clearly laid out in the promises made to Abraham as well - an Everlasting Covenant.

2nd Timothy 1:9 & John 17:24 This can be explained in close relationship with some of the points made in the previous reference. Again “kosmos” is part of the key here, and remembering that Christ was promised at the fall of Adam and Eve and his purpose was further detailed to Abraham (Gen. 22:17 and Gal. 3:16). This all preceded the establishment of the “*kosmos*” that Christ and all other Jews had lived under since the time of Moses and the establishment of the covenant at Sinai.

John 8:58 - Context, like anywhere else in the Scriptures, is of the utmost importance. Christ had been arguing with the Jews (rather, they with him) regarding his authority. They claimed their connection to Abraham as the highest mark of authority, and as Christ was promising life, they point to the fact that not even Abraham could promise life, in that he was dead. Who was Christ to promise such a thing? (Going back to vs. 52). So the context, though the Pharisees misunderstand him as usual, was that of pre-eminence and not pre-existence. Abraham was able to see forward to Christ's day as well as the promise of his future glory, for it would be the work of Christ that would bring Abraham and all other faithful out of the grave. Christ is the main subject matter of the Bible in relation to God's plan of salvation for this earth.

In regard to the phrase “I AM” there is no proof to support that this is in reference to Exodus 3. The phrase here in John can be rendered “I am he”, which leads to the question – who? Christ is the promised seed of the woman and the promised seed of Abraham, as well as David. The very seed who would provide the “life” and escape from death promised that he is talking about in previous verses. Even if it were in direct reference to Ex. 3, the phrase “I AM” is not a correct rendering. The phrase should read “I WILL BE what (or “who”) I WILL BE”. “I WILL BE” is from the Hebrew “*Ehyeh*” and is correctly translated back in vs. 12 of Ex. 3 as “*I will be*”. Same Hebrew word is used in both vs. 12 and vs. 14. This word is not related to the word “God” (rendered in the Hebrew as the plural word *Elohim*). There is a lot more to be said regarding Ex. 3 and the wonderful truths surrounding the giving of this Name, and suffice to say, it does point forward to Christ and his redemptive work - but Christ, in John 8, is making reference to the fact that he had authority that pre-empted Abraham, and that he was the one that Abraham was looking for, and they should have been looking to him as the promised Messiah as well.

As there are many members in one body, and many component parts in a living soul, and as none of these can be dispensed with or interfered with, without injury to the whole, so it is with the truth, everything is relatively essential, and so nicely adjusted by divine wisdom, that even a little dust thrown into the eyes of the Christ image formed in a man's mind by the gospel, seriously interferes with the comfort of clear vision, and, allowed to remain, creates mental inflammation, and, perhaps, loss of sight.

“Spray From The Water of Life”, 1874 Christadelphian, p. 163

GOD'S WAY

Words of exhortation from a young brother

“I T'S my way or the highway!” It is a phrase that we hear throughout our lives, from our parents, our teachers, our bosses, and anyone else who happens to have authority of some kind over us. It means that we can either do things the way they want them and abide by their rules, which means that we will receive the benefits that go with that (ie. we live in our parents' home, we keep our jobs, or we get an “A” on that history project); or we can choose the “highway option” and live by our own rules, and not receive said benefits.

Not only do the regular people in our lives give us this “My way or the highway” ultimatum, but God does as well. In Matthew 7:13-14, Christ lays

this out for us rather clearly, *“Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.”* And then we are told exactly what the results of following either path will be in Romans 6:23 *“For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.”* We can either follow the narrow path that God has set before us which follows His rules and receive the benefit of living in His Kingdom, or we can follow the broad way which follows our rules, however, as with all other “highway options” in life, we do not receive the benefits which God has offered us.

There are many fitting examples of this to be found in the Bible, but in the interest of space we will only examine two, the first of which is found in the very first few chapters of Genesis: Adam and Eve’s transgression in the Garden of Eden, in which case, God’s rules are laid out in Genesis 2:15-17, *“And the Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it. And the Lord commanded the man saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.”* And the account of the transgression of the rule found in Genesis 3:1-6, *“Now the serpent was more subtil than any other beast of the field which the Lord God hath made. And he said unto the woman, Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden? And the woman said unto the serpent, We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden: But of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, lest ye die. And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die: For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil. And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat.”*

The other example that will be examined will be the account given us in Numbers of the man gathering sticks on the Sabbath Day. The instructions of how the children of Israel were to keep the Sabbath are given in Leviticus 23:3, *“Six days shall work be done: but the seventh day is the Sabbath of rest, an holy convocation; ye shall do no work therein: it is the Sabbath of the Lord in all your dwellings.”* The children of Israel were to do no work on the Sabbath day, it was to be a day of rest in which they were to reflect on God’s plan and purpose; however, we find in Numbers 15:32-36 an account of one man who decided to take the “highway option”, *“And while the children of Israel were in the wilderness, they found a man that gathered sticks upon the Sabbath day. And they that found him gathering sticks brought him unto Moses and Aaron, and unto all the congregation. And they put him in a ward, because it was not declared what should be done to him. And the Lord said unto Moses, The man shall be surely put to death; all the congregation shall stone him with stones*

without the camp. And all the congregation brought him without the camp, and stoned him with stones, and he died; as the Lord commanded Moses.”

In both of these examples the Lord gives someone a specific set of rules by which He expects them to abide. However, in both cases, the person or people in question decide to do things their way thereby not receiving the benefits that had been offered to them. In the case of Adam and Eve, not only were they forced to leave the Garden of Eden, but they also became of a mortal nature, capable of death, since God had told them that they would die if they disobeyed him. Secondly, in the account found in Numbers of the man gathering sticks, one might, at first glance, think the punishment given to the man to be rather harsh, after all, he was only picking up a few sticks, not really working. However, the point is not to what degree did the man break God’s law, but the simple fact that he had broken God’s law; he had chosen the “highway option” and the consequences that went with it.

Many times throughout our lives we are faced with the same choice, God’s way or our way. Generally these choices pertain to things that we do concerning our faith, what Bible schools we go to each year, what ecclesias we attend. What ecclesias or bible schools do we choose to break bread? All of these situations have us making one of two choices, God’s way or our way. However, these choices don’t just come up with what we might consider to be our “religious lives”. These choices appear all throughout our everyday lives – from the bigger decisions we make to the seemingly insignificant. If we are considering moving to another town for a better job opportunity, do we consider whether or not there is an ecclesia there that can help us along the way to God’s Kingdom or do we just move according to what we think is best? If we make such a move, do we limit the company we keep (especially in regard to our associations in the world) to people who, if we are seen with them, can be an example of the moral values we claim to hold, or out of convenience do we mingle with people who might be less concerned with moral values (e.g., our neighbors and the people at work or school). All of these choices have two options, God’s way or the “Highway option” (our way). Considering how well the “highway options” worked for the above examples from the Bible we should consider carefully which option we choose.

Something else that should be noted about the options given us in this situation is that there are only two. There is no middle option, there is no way to follow God’s path and at the same time, stray a little here and there and still receive those benefits; as we are told in Matthew 6:24 *“No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon.”*

One final thing to consider is that, although we may stray from God’s path and end up on the proverbial “highway”, as we know we do throughout our lives, there is always a way to get back to God’s way. One of the best examples of this, one that actually pertains to all of mankind, not just the people directly

involved, is in the latter part of the account of Adam and Eve in which, although the man and the woman had strayed from His way and chosen their own for a moment, God provided both them and their descendants with His son, our Lord and savior Jesus Christ, as a way back to His way. This promise may be found in Genesis 3:15 *“And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.”* In this promise, God is referring to sin as the seed of the serpent; in other words, Christ would deal the fatal blow to sin, and shall in the Kingdom Age remove it entirely from this world, giving all of mankind the chance to leave the “highway” and return to God’s way.

In all things we do throughout our lives, and in all the choices that we make, we should always consider the two options that we have, God’s way or the “highway”, and we must work and try to mold ourselves so that we can make God’s way the way we would prefer, as we are told in Proverbs 4:26-27, *“Ponder the path of thy feet, and let all thy ways be established. Turn not to the right hand nor to the left: remove thy foot from evil.”*

Graydon Richardson

EDITORIAL FLYLEAF

INTERESTING MANEUVERING BY THE RUSSIAN BEAR

In the 2nd Quarter, 2010 S.K. we commented on the continued, and extremely significant discoveries of natural gas off of Israel’s shores – the “*Tamar*” “*Dalir*” and “*Leviathan*” fields – which will not only make Israel energy independent but also a major exporter of natural gas. It was noted that this was creating a great deal of angst by the Lebanese (especially Hezbollah) in that they were claiming that they themselves had rights to these discoveries. We also mentioned that for the time being Russia had been silent, but that there could be no doubt that this development would be a concern for Russia.

Well, as many of our readers are probably already aware, and as we would all expect, Russia has broken its silence and is attempting to position itself to be directly involved with the matter. In November the Lebanese prime minister was invited to Moscow and “*was granted the rare honor of an elaborate welcome by both Putin and President Dmitry Medvedev*”, as reported by *Debka*. Lebanon has claimed that Israel is “looting” Lebanese gas resources, despite the fact that the boundaries of water exploration had been previously set by Lebanon itself. It should be noted that Russia has not disputed this claim.



As part of this meeting Russia has promised to help Lebanon develop the off shore gas fields and necessary pipelines as an “energy partner”, by providing Russian investment, equipment and labor. We can see just from this that this puts Russia in head to head competition with Israel for the development of the region. We can be assured that Russia and not Lebanon will be in the driver’s seat.



Putin meets with PM Hariri

Lebanon walked away with an “unprecedented” amount of gifts for a country that has previously been of little interest to Russia. Along with an array of military armament and promised financial investment to restore the Lebanese economy, Russian firms backed by Kremlin financing will build gas-powered electricity plants in Lebanon; and The Arab Gas Pipeline Project Phase II, which is Russian built and designed to bring gas from Egypt through Jordan, Syria and Turkey would also include Lebanon as a major terminal point.

Playing the other side of the fence, as Russia has always done so very well, a Russian delegation had also been sent to Israel to propose significant Russian joint partnerships with Israeli energy firms in the development of the gas fields (keeping in mind that it was an American, Houston based firm that helped discover the reserves). Russia has also proposed edging itself into a partnership for laying a gas pipeline previously agreed upon as a venture between Israel and Greece. (Medvedev is to visit Israel in January.)

Russia certainly sees a “spoil” (Ezek. 38), something of extreme significance that should not be taken for granted by the Household.

PUTIN CALLS FOR A JOINT EU-RUSSIAN ECONOMIC SPACE

At the end of November Putin wrote an article for the German newspaper *Süddeutsche Zeitung* forcefully proposing the creation of a Russian-European economic space “from Lisbon to Vladivostok”, and is advocating the idea of a strategic partnership, along with calling for “progressive types of economic integration” with Europe. This seems to be a very strategically placed announcement as it immediately followed a Russian-NATO summit earlier in the month. It is no secret that Russia views NATO as a threat and desires to see Europe pulled away from strategic partnership with the U.S. and Great Britain.

As we understand that there must be close partnership between Russia and Europe (if not outright European submission to Russia) in the day of Gog’s “evil thought” against Eretz Israel, it is of great interest and excitement to see Russia so smoothly and gradually signal its intentions (intentions directed by the hand of Yahweh) to those who are paying attention. *“Watchman, what of the night? Watchman, what of the night?”*

Bro. Adam Kuipers, this past fall, provided a thorough write up in his "Messenger" e-mail newsletter regarding the threat posed to the Christadelphian C-O stand due to the running for political office (state representative) by a bro. Jimmy Bryant of the Good Hope, Arkansas ecclesia. Though he did not win his election, he is already an elected Justice of the Peace. As Christadelphians have rejected military service and the involvement in politics from our very beginnings (#35 of our "Doctrines to be rejected", and the very reason for our name) the fact that this individual is listed in our "Green Book", and that the ecclesia that counts him as a member is also included in the Green Book and still accepted in various Christadelphian circles is one of profound and severe consequence to our young people as well as a threat to all of us in regard to jury service, and any other governmental issues that may arise. This write up cannot be accessed on-line, but you can contact bro. Adam at standinthegaps@hotmail.com for a copy if you have not read his consideration of the matter.

Bro. Adam has also put together a compilation titled "Do They Believe It?" – which chronicles the "Judaizers"/"Shofar" heresies and the stated beliefs of its promoters in a clear, easy to follow format. It can be accessed on-line at:

www.christadelphianresources.com/password.html

RENEWAL NOTICE

The 2010 4th Quarter edition of the SK Magazine marks the annual end of our 6th year of publishing the magazine. If you would like to continue to receive these quarterly editions of the SK in 2011, please complete the enclosed subscription slip and mail to:

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Perfection

(Part 2)

A PERFECT MAN

A perfect man is one who so completely answers to the moral design of the gospel, as that he may be truthfully called a "living epistle."

A perfect man is one who keeps the commandments of God: one who makes himself a living sacrifice; not maimed, or torn, or halt, or blind, or deformed, or deceased, but holy and without blemish, in all parts of the spiritual man.

A perfect man is a saint in working order; one who gives just weight and full measure of dues to God and man, who renders to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things which are God's.

A perfect man is one having a conscience void of offense; one who behaves himself wisely, and eschews crooked paths; one clad with the whole armour of God, one thoroughly furnished to all good works by his self-application of doctrine, reproof, correction and instruction in righteousness as supplied in the inspired Scriptures.

A perfect man "keeps his body under," crucifies the flesh with its affections and lusts, mortifies his members upon earth.

A perfect man loves the Lord his God with all his heart, soul, mind and strength, and his neighbor as himself.

A perfect man is one who walks uprightly, worketh righteousness, speaketh the truth in his heart, backbiteth not with his tongue, doeth no evil to his neighbor, takes up no reproach against his neighbor, contemns a vile person, but honoureth them who fear Jehovah; one who sweareth to this own hurt and changeth not, who putteth not out his money to his brother upon interest, and who cannot be bribed against the innocent. – (Ps. xv)

A perfect man, remembering how scarcely the righteous are saved, will be found "looking for the mercy of God unto eternal life," "praying always that he may be accounted worthy to stand before the Son of Man."

A perfect man's confession before God will be, "Lord, we are all unprofitable servants; we have but done that which was our duty to do." – (Luke xvii. 10)

The more perfect a man is, the more humble will be his estimation of his own goodness.

When a perfect man gives thanks to God for mercies received, he does not, at the same time, forget to crave for forgiveness for possible dereliction of duty, or sins of ignorance due to the weakness of the flesh.

A perfect man is a faithful man. The end of a perfect man is peace.

F. R Shuttleworth, *The Christadelphian*, April, 1874, pp.160, 161