

**Knowledge Is  
The Basis Of  
RESURRECTIONAL  
RESPONSIBILITY**



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## KNOWLEDGE IS THE BASIS OF Resurrectional Responsibility

*"It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment."*

"As many as have sinned without law shall perish without law: and as many as have sinned under law shall be judged by the law . . . in the day when God shall judge the secrets of men according to my Gospel" (Romans 2:12-16).

"There shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust" (Acts 24:15).

"The times of ignorance God winked at, but now commandeth all men everywhere to repent, because He hath appointed a day in which He will judge the world" (Acts 17:30-31).

"The hour is coming in which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice and shall come forth: they that have done good unto the resurrection of life, and they that have done evil unto the resurrection of condemnation" (Jn. 5:28-9).

"We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that everyone may receive according to that he hath done, whether good or bad. Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men" (2 Cr. 5:10-11).

OUR consideration is the resurrection and judgment of the dead at the return of Christ to the earth, with especial reference to the fact that it is *knowledge of God and of His will* that will determine who will be called forth from the grave to that dreadful day of account.

As far as applying this scriptural principle to any particular individuals, it is not for us to say, and the less we speculate the better. Only God knows the hearts and minds and understandings. He alone knows what capacities and opportunities and responsibilities He has given each, and what He will require of each. He alone knows who are sufficiently responsible to be called to account at the last day.

We are concerned with defining the *clear scriptural principles* on which He declares He works, that we may faithfully declare His counsel, and that each may search his own heart. Paul's words in this very connection, both to the Romans and to the Corinthians, are terribly searching—

"Thinkest thou, O man, that thou shalt escape the judgment of God?" (Rm. 2:3).

And v. 16 speaks of this judgment as—

"The day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ, according to my Gospel."

Note that this is part of the Gospel that must be believed for salvation, and which in faithfulness we must preach and not hold back.

And to the Corinthians he said (2 Cr. 5:10-11)—

"We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ . . . Knowing therefore the *terror of the Lord*, we persuade men."

How is it the 'terror of the Lord, if the 'men' to whom he preached were at liberty to refuse to become responsible? It may be argued he is only talking about baptized men, but is not this a groundless & dangerous limitation of his words?

We note that both contexts speak of a specific future day of judgment. They are clearly not referring to judgment in this life. To know God's commands and neglect to obey them is wilful rebellion against the supreme majesty of the universe, and will be called to account.

For those who *have* submitted to God's commands, does this point about knowledge being the ground of resurrectional responsibility really matter? Is it essential we understand and believe it? Yes: very much. A false foundation will affect all our thinking, and our faith-

*ful teaching of others.* Wrong views on this matter are disastrous, for they create a false and presumptuous idea of self and of God. They teach a man that he can decide for himself whether or not he will be called to Christ's judgment seat. They blur and obscure the great basic fact of God's supreme authority to *command*, and man's inescapable responsibility to *obey*. And we have noted Rm. 2:12-16 that this principle of responsibility to light is part of the Gospel Paul was sent to preach to the world (as we see again in Acts 17:30-31).

God knows the flesh. He knows what instruction and discipline and warning it needs. He is the Father: we are the children—bound to obey, as all children are. The flesh hates and fights against the idea of subjection and obedience and being called to judgment. Therefore any theory that obscures or belittles this vital principle encourages the pride and wilfulness of the flesh, and is destructive and evil.

Let us first consider the basic scriptural principles involved, then look more fully at some passages that illustrate these principles.

1. First & foremost is the SUPREME MAJESTY & AUTHORITY of God: Lord of the Universe: Creator and Possessor of man.

When God commands, man must obey, or be called at last to give account and be punished. Man cannot escape this, and it is not kindness to tell him he can. God's authority must be unquestioningly accepted before God can extend love and mercy. *This is the great lesson of Christ's sacrifice.* God is everything: man is nothing. Whatever in any way obscures this principle is deadly. God's very first dealings with man illustrate it vividly:—

God created Adam. Adam was God's work, God's possession: completely subject to God, bound to obey. God gave Adam a command. He did not invite him to enter into a voluntary mutual agreement, if it pleased Adam to do so. This would be dishonoring to God. He gave Adam no choice of accepting or rejecting with impunity. The fleshly idea of Adam being free to disobey with impunity and not be called to account never entered the picture.

God *commanded*. Adam disobeyed: and was called directly, personally, face-to-face, to give account; and was condemned, and punished very severely.

Is there any hint, or room for suggesting, that God asked Adam if he would like to negotiate a covenant? Adam made no covenant: he simply received a command. Was he 'under law,' or 'without law'?

This is the whole responsibility question in a nutshell: wholesome, healthy, reasonable, scriptural, sound.

2. The call of the Gospel is a COMMAND, from God to men: to ALL men that hear it.

"God COMMANDETH all men everywhere to repent" (Acts 17:30).

"Go ye into all the world, & preach the Gospel unto every creature. . . He that believeth not shall be condemned—*katakrisis*—judged against" (Mk. 16:15-16).

"My Gospel. . . the COMMANDMENT of the everlasting God, made known unto all nations for the *obedience* of faith" (Rm. 16:25-26).

Truly the Gospel is a glorious invitation to love and mercy, but it is first and foremost a *command* to submit and obey. All the mercy

must be built on that sound foundation that glorifies God and humbles man. God asserts His authority FIRST. Where that sovereign, immutable authority is humbly and intelligently recognized, He offers His love and mercy. It could not soundly be any other way.

A child nurtured in the false atmosphere that God cannot or will not raise him to judgment and punishment as long as he is careful not to step within God's reach, has an entirely false conception of his relation to God's majesty and authority. He sees himself distortedly and inflatedly as being free to enter into an agreement, rather than humbly submitting to a command.

3. There is a great last day of personal, individual calling to account—AFTER death—at the END of life.

"It is appointed unto men once to die: after that, THE judgment" (Heb. 9:27).

"Judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come" (1 Cor. 4:5).

4. Light, knowledge, understanding, opportunity to know God and His will—are the basis of accountability at that great day.

"They that sin without law shall perish without law: they that sin under law shall be judged by law at that day" (Rom. 2:12-16).

5. Judgment in THIS life is something entirely different, on different principles, for different purposes, from the final calling-to-account judgment at the last day.

It cannot be allowed to divert or obscure the clear teaching on last day judgment. Judgment in this life is related to God's dealings with nations or groups of people; or it is related to God's current purposes rather than individual guilt or merit.

A nation is punished, and the good suffer with the bad—as in the carrying away of Israel to Babylon. Again, one man, as Uzzah<sup>2 Sm. 6:7</sup> is struck dead for a single inadvertent sin. Another, like the wicked king Manasseh, is allowed a 55-yr. reign filled with cruelty and abominations, and a later generation received the retribution for his sin.

6. In this life, the general rule is that wicked prosper, righteous suffer. This is the testimony of both Scripture and experience.

"There is a just man that perisheth in his righteousness, and there is a wicked man that longeth his life in his wickedness" (Eccl. 7:15).

"Wherefore do the wicked live, become old, yea, are mighty in power? They spend their days in wealth, and in a moment go down to the grave: They shall be brought forth to the day of wrath" (Job 21:7, 13, 30).

7. The ONLY exception the Scriptures ever make to final, universal accountability at the last day judgment is IGNORANCE—helpless ignorance for which the individual is not responsible.

There is never the slightest hint of excusing any who are knowingly rebellious from the universal calling to account, simply because their rebellion against God's command has been total. It is a strange theory that teaches that partial disobedience will be called to account and punished, but total rebellion will not—

"All that are in the graves shall hear his voice and come forth . . . they that have done evil unto the resurrection of damnation" (Jn. 5:28-29).

The Scriptures put only one restriction on this universality, and that is ignorance. None with knowledge of God's will have any scriptural ground for presuming they will escape that dread day.

8. The expressions used by the Scriptures to describe the rejected at the judgment seat of Christ not only NEVER give any hint that the great class of enlightened and wilful rejectors will not be there, but on the contrary these expressions specifically INCLUDE them, if words have any meaning at all.

The Scriptures tell us plainly that at the judgment seat will be those who: are wicked, are disobedient, are unjust, do evil, obey not the Truth, sin under law, obey not the Gospel, speak evil of the brethren, reject, deny, refuse to listen, believe not, refuse to have Christ reign over them—Rm. 2:5-16; 2 Th. 1:7-10; Acts 24:15; Jn. 3:19-20; 5:28-29; 12:46-48; Mk. 8:38; 16:16; Job 21:30; Eccl. 3:1; 1 Pt. 4:3-5; Dt. 18:18-19; Lk. 19:27, etc. We are not justified in excluding any from resurrectional judgment who fit perfectly into the description of those who will be subject to that judgment. Ignorance is the *only* thing that shields men from being called to give account to their Maker at that day—

“It is appointed unto men once to die: *after this the judgment*” (Heb. 9:27).

9. The Scriptures often speak with ONLY THE RIGHT-EOUS in view, completely ignoring the wicked.

This leads some to conclude rejectors won't be at the judgment seat, because some passages do not mention them. But this principle of only considering the righteous is very obvious and inescapable in some passages, as in 1 Cr. 15, which is a long chapter entirely about the resurrection, and yet the rejected — baptized or unbaptized — are never mentioned at all. Taking this chapter *alone* (as some do), it could be argued that *all* who are raised will be immortalized, and that there is no 'resurrection to condemnation' at all—even for the unfaithful baptized. This is obviously wrong. And yet the whole argument for the non-resurrection of enlightened rejectors is largely based on the fact that in *some* places they are presumably not *specifically* mentioned.

This complete ignoring of any but the righteous redeemed, which we encounter in many passages of Scriptures, is very reasonable and understandable. In God's sight, the righteous are everything, the wicked are nothing. We are told that God's eyes are *ever* on the righteous but that the nations of the world are to Him as a drop in the bucket, and as *less than nothing* Jb. 36:7; Ps. 34:15; Is. 40:15-17.

God deals with eternal realities; not passing shadows. The righteous *are* an eternal reality: they will live forever with God. To God, to Whom a 1000 years is as a day, the passing existence of the wicked is the briefest flash of a shadow in the great sweep of eternal time.

10. The Scriptures often speak of the resurrection of the dead as a COMPLETE PROCESS, including immortalization & glorification.

This is the 'resurrection of the dead' that Paul agonized for, and sacrificed everything to attain to—

“I count all things but dung . . . if by any means I might attain to the resurrection of the dead” (Phil. 3:8-11).

—not just the coming out of the grave—he *knew* he would ‘attain’ to that: but the ‘*resurrection of life*’ Jn.5:29, as opposed to the ‘resurrection of condemnation.’ This is the ‘raising incorruptible,’ the being ‘made alive in Christ’—clearly not just the coming out of the ground.

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If we can get these 10 basic scriptural principles clearly in our minds and understandings, we shall have no doubts or difficulties with the question of who are responsible to the judgment seat of Christ at the last day. And of these 10, the 3 we would like especially to re-emphasize as the heart of the question are—

1. The SUPREME AUTHORITY of God as Creator and Owner of man, COMMANDING obedience, and calling all wilful, enlightened rebellion to personal account.

When God, Who will not suffer Himself to be mocked or rejected, speaks to any of His creatures, the latter is bound to obey, or must answer for his disobedience, in the great day of judgment, when life is completed. This is a fundamental principle of man’s relation to God. This is wholesome, healthy, and reasonable. All flesh is His. Technicalities of partial obedience cannot obscure the broad law covering all mankind.

2. KNOWLEDGE of God’s commands is the basis of responsibility and accountability.

There is never a statement suggesting baptism is necessary for resurrectional judgment.

There is never a statement exempting the disobedient from judgment, except for ignorance.

There is never a statement implying that a man can decide for himself whether or not he will stand at the judgment seat.

*All the warnings of Scripture are ALWAYS the other way.*

3. The BASIC judgment of responsible man is the last-day, after-death standing at the judgment seat of Christ. Incidental judgments in this life do not obscure this.

Judgment in *this* life is a relatively secondary matter, on a different basis, for a different purpose. It does not in any way supersede or replace the one great last-day calling to account.

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WE have, in the foregoing, referred to many passages of Scripture. We would like now to look more thoroughly at some of them, and at some new ones. Jesus said (Jn. 3:19)—

“This is the condemnation (*krisis*: judgment), that *light* is come into the world.” This expresses, in its simplest, briefest terms, the basic issue involved—

“THIS IS JUDGMENT, THAT LIGHT IS COME.”

James says (4:17)— “To him that *knoweth* to do good, and doeth it not, *to him it is sin.*”

Again, a very clear and unmistakable statement of responsibility and accountability, based on knowledge. Again Jesus said—

“If I had not come and spoken to them, they had not had sin: but now they have no cloak—no covering—for their sin” (John 15:22).

The ones of whom he spoke had made *NO movement toward obedience*. Their sin and responsibility lay in the fact that they had been

TOLD, and given evidence.

Jesus said to his disciples, as he parted from them (Mk. 16:15-16)—

“Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature. He that believeth not shall be damned (condemned: *katakrino*: judged against).”

What *do* these words mean, if they do not mean the judgment of rejectors of the Gospel? How could it be more plainly stated?

Rom. 2 deals with obedience and disobedience and the judgment seat of Christ. It speaks of Jew & Gentile as standing equally before God in the matter of responsibility. The instruction begins with a very significant statement— “Thinkest thou, O man, that thou shalt escape the judgment of God?” (v. 3).

Many indeed *do* think so. He is speaking to the man who (v. 5)—

“After thy hardness and impenitent heart treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the *day of wrath* and revelation of the righteous judgment of God.”

Note this clear reference to a certain coming ‘day of wrath and judgment’ to which such are related. He says that *at that time*—

“God will render to every man according to his deeds” (v. 6).

V. 7 describes the reward of the *accepted* in that day. V. 8 describes those who will be *condemned* in that ‘day of wrath.’ They are those—

“Who do not obey the Truth . . . who do evil” (v. 9).

Do wilful, enlightened rejectors of God’s commands who refuse to repent and be baptized as commanded, come under the heading of those who ‘do not obey the Truth’? How can we exclude them? How dare we tell them they are safe from this righteous judgment of God?

Note vs. 9-10 it is Jew and also Gentile, without respect of persons<sup>v.11</sup>. There are those in the non-responsibility camp who teach that Jews were *commanded*, and under a national covenant with God, & therefore Jewish rejectors *will* be at the judgment seat; but that the Gentiles were merely *invited*, and can decide for themselves whether they will be there. Note especially v. 12—

“As many as have sinned without law shall also perish without law: and as many as have sinned in (RV: under) law shall be judged by law.”

When?— “In the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ *according to my Gospel*” (v. 16).

Note that this teaching of Paul concerning the resurrectional responsibility of the enlightened is spoken of as *part of the Gospel he preached for salvation*. Therefore belief of it is necessary for a full belief of the Gospel, and consequently necessary for salvation.

Summing up this passage in Rom. 2: Do evil in ignorance, simply perish like the beasts. Do evil in face of known divine law, be judged and punished in the day of judgment. Crystal-clear. Unmistakable—

*Times of ignorance, God winks (Acts 17): Light is come, condemnation (Jn. 3).*

If we really want to learn the truth about the wilful rejector’s responsibility to the judgment seat, this chapter can plainly tell us. How then do the proponents of non-responsibility and man’s free choice to evade the judgment seat, escape the force of these teachings?

A truth is often strengthened in our minds by considering the weakness and fallacies of the arguments against it. The opponents of these truths *have* arguments against these verses, and these arguments are

very revealing as to the unsoundness and weakness of their position.

In this case, they rely on a very unsound and artificial interpretation of 'under law.' Paul says that they who sin without law shall perish without law, and they that sin under law shall be judged at the last day. When is a man 'without law' and when is he 'under law'?

Is a man under law when God has communicated a command directly to him to repent and be baptized, and he is fully aware of it?

Or is he under law *only* when he himself decides to start to obey that command? Who puts man under law: God, or man himself? Who is the authority in the case? Note what this theory does to God's authority. If Adam had chosen not to accept God's jurisdiction, and to completely defy God's commands, would he have escaped being called to account? Could he have said he was not 'under law'?

We believe the answer is obvious and inescapable; but to defend a false idea, some have to take the opposite & God-dishonoring view.

And when Christ said: "He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, the same shall judge him in the last day" (Jn. 12:48).

—it is argued that he was speaking only to and about the Jews, & that the 'last day' was when the Romans destroyed Jerusalem 40 years later. But Christ's 'words' were sent to all nations, and we are told that Jew and Gentile are alike before God in relation to the Gospel, and that God is no respecter of persons in His treatment of these 2 classes.

And when Felix the Gentile, who had a knowledge <sup>Ac. 24:22</sup> of the Truth, 'trembled' at Paul's preaching of the Gospel and of '*judgment to come*' it is argued that Felix, because he had a Jewish wife, was trembling at the prospect of God's judgment on Jerusalem. This is terribly weak. Where does Paul preach even to Jews—let alone to Gentiles like Felix—that the '*judgment to come*' of which he forewarned in his Gospel was the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70? Clearly Felix trembled (RV: was terrified) because of Paul's searching and consistent message of coming *personal* judgment at the last day.

But if Paul was just gently presenting the love and invitation of God as a free option Felix could ignore without being called to account, there was nothing in the message to 'terrify' Felix.

Likewise it is argued that Jesus' words to his disciples—

"Go into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature: he that believeth not shall be condemned" (Mk. 16:15-16).

—applied only to the Jews. Such arguments just strengthen the truth.

Sometimes the arguments used against the truth on this question reveal a complete missing of the real import and depth of Scripture, and a shallow, surface, cramped, mechanical interpretation of powerful passages, as when— "In Christ shall all be made alive" (1 Cr. 15:22).

—is used as perhaps the key passage to try to prove that only the baptized will be raised from the dead—completely missing the true and deep and beautiful meaning of both 'in Christ' and 'made alive.' It is completely out of harmony with the context and Paul's reasoning to take this in the pitifully small, legal sense of just being restored to mortal life for the purpose of judgment.

If we are truly 'in Christ' and 'abide in him' faithfully to the end, we shall indeed be 'made alive' in all its glorious eternal beauty. But



all this has nothing to do with just coming out of the grave as such. The context of the whole chapter, *which completely ignores the rejected*, shows that 'in Christ' and 'made alive' are used in their full eternal sense.

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Heb. 9:27—"It is appointed unto men once to die, but *after* this THE judgment."

This rules out the argument of judgment in this life as fulfilling the meaning of the many passages where the Scriptures speak of calling men to account, and judging them for their whole life's course.

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Acts 17:30-31 is absolutely conclusive in itself, if we are willing to humbly seek the true teaching of Scripture, and give it its full weight. Here again, the arguments used against it reveal the falseness of the position being advocated. Paul is speaking *of* Gentiles, and *to* Gentiles—

"The times of this ignorance (Gentile darkness) God winked at" (v. 30).

Here clearly is a time when the Gentiles were permitted to go their own way in their natural darkness, and will *not* be called to individual last-day account. Here are long ages illustrating the Scriptures—

"The man that understandeth not is as the beasts that perish" (Ps. 49:20).

"As many as have sinned without law shall perish without law" (Rm. 2:12).

God did indeed judge them from time to time as nations or groups of people, or even as individuals as His purpose at the time required, like the plagues on Egypt, or the destruction of Babylon by the Medes and Persians, or the humbling of Nebuchadnezzar's pride. But this had nothing to do with last-day individual 'giving of account' and final judgment. "But," Paul continues, God—

"NOW *commandeth* all men everywhere to repent, because He hath appointed a day in which He will *judge the world*" (Acts 17:30-31).

—not a change in basic principles, but a development in operation.

We are still in this dispensation, when *this* COMMAND is going forth. God, through His people and His Word, is *commanding* all men everywhere to repent, because He has appointed a day—now very soon to come—when He will *judge* the world. And, like Paul, 'knowing the *terror* of the Lord (when He is mocked), we persuade men.'

When this command of his sovereign Lord reaches a man, and is comprehended as such, he is 'under law,' and *will* be called to account.

When analyzed, the way this scripture is treated by those who deny the resurrectional responsibility of enlightened rejectors very much strengthens its power & truth. Two words are attacked: 'command' & 'judge.' Command is changed to 'invite,' and judge is changed to 'rule.'

But this is not faithful interpretation. The word here translated 'command' *does* mean command, & *nothing else*. It occurs 34 other times. In 33 of them it is translated 'command,' and in most if not all of them, it would make an absurdity to substitute 'invite,' as when the rulers of the Jews said to the disciples (Acts 5:28)—

"Did we not straitly COMMAND you not to teach in this Name?"

In the one other occurrence, the AV translates it 'declare,' but RV rightly corrects this to 'charge,' and NR to 'instruction' <sup>1</sup>Cr. 11:17. Consider all the 35 passages where this word occurs, and it will be clearly perceived that if we destroy the meaning of this vital word 'command'

just to bolster an unscriptural theory, we shall have destroyed much of the New Testament's authority as a divine rule of life.

If we deny it means 'command' here, we deny it means 'command' *everywhere*. THAT IS WHY THIS THEORY IS SO HARMFUL IN ITS CONSEQUENCES. It changes solemn, authoritative, divine commands to mere watered-down invitations, pleasing to the flesh truly, but fearfully dishonoring to the majesty and authority of God.

And 'judge' (*krino*) DOES mean 'judge'—*and nothing else*—no matter how much the flesh dislikes it, and squirms under the idea of being called to account.

It occurs 113 times, and is *always*—ALWAYS—translated by the word 'judge,' or a word of similar meaning, as: condemn, damn, determine, call in question, etc.—*never* by 'rule' or any such word.

And there are also 4 derived words: *krima, krisis, kriterion, krites*, that together occur 95 more times, and they are without exception rendered judge, judgment, damnation, condemnation, accusation, etc.

Again, destroy the meaning of this word 'judge,' and you destroy from the New Testament the entire teaching about the judgment seat of Christ, or the judgment of God on sin at all.

Error is always dangerous; and error that undermines God's authority, and weakens His commands, and cruelly misleads men into a false sense of security and immunity, and inflates puny man with the proud conceit of being an equal partner with God in a voluntary contract—*such* error is especially destructive and pernicious.

"Fear God . . . keep His commandments . . . for He shall bring every work into judgment" (Eccl. 12:13).

Is 'repent' a command? Is 'be baptized' a command? Is not rejecting these commands deliberate rebellion against the Majesty of the Heavens? Who dare tell a man he will escape answering for it?

God said through Moses Dt. 18:18-19 (and here again it is brushed off as simply an out-dated warning to Jews only)—God said:

"I will raise them up a prophet like unto thee, and will put My words into his mouth . . . and *whosoever* will not hearken to My words which he shall speak in My Name, *I will require it of him.*"

The Prophet came, and proclaimed God's Word: and he sent his disciples to preach it to *every creature* (Jew and Gentile). And we have that Word in our hand today, the Word that shall—if we reject it—judge us at the last day. Paul said of that last-day judgment, as we have seen:

"To the Jew first, and also to the Gentile, for there is no respect of persons with God" (Rom. 2:10-11).

Some say many of these passages apply only to Jews: *they* will be raised and judged because they were technically 'in the Covenant.' Let us not be among those who brush off these solemn warnings of calling to account as simply applying to Jews. The churches of the world apply all the condemnations of the Old Testament to the Jews, & all the future promises and blessings to themselves. We recognize their folly. Let us not fall into the same error.

There is a great danger whenever an attempt is made to limit the meaning of any divine warning, or to exclude certain classes from what appears—in its simplest meaning—to be a general statement. When

we encounter this type of argument, we must be on our guard.

Let us just grant for a moment it means Jews only. Well, will ALL Jews that ever lived be raised for judgment—including those who by their condition or circumstances were helplessly ignorant of God's commands: Jewish babies, Jewish insane? All will say No. What then will determine *which* Jews will be raised, & which will not? On what principle will the decision and distinction be made? Do we not—in attempting to give a scriptural answer to this, immediately come face-to-face with the principle of *responsibility through knowledge*?

Finally, let us think upon Jesus' words in Mt. 12:32-36. The context clearly shows that he includes out-and-out rejectors, for the warning arose from the fact of some charging that he did his miracles by the power of an evil spirit. He said in reply vs. 36-37, not to baptized believers, but to a group of rejectors he called v. 34 'vipers'—

"Every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in THE *day of judgment*" (Mt. 12:36-37).

*"It is appointed unto men once to die, but AFTER that the judgment."*

## The Work of the Pioneers

### THE DOCTRINE OF FELLOWSHIP

IT IS very heartening, in these difficult days, to hear a brother speak with clarity and certainty of the First Principles of the Truth, & exhort us to strictly adhere to those Principles, & to unswervingly follow the precepts laid down in the 'writings of the pioneers,' namely, Dr. Thomas and bro. Roberts. Their writings were sound, their counsels in ecclesial matters have never been successfully contradicted, nor have they been proved to be unwise or unworkable.

But it is evident that we cannot take only a part of those writings, and reject other parts. Among these writings, none have been more forthright than the position that they took on 'Fellowship.' We think it helpful, especially to the young, to rehearse a few quotations from the 'works' to remind ourselves of the true Christadelphian position on this vital matter, with year and page for each quotation:—

"We do not propose to accuse anyone. We propose to rally to the right doctrine, and then step aside from those who refuse to do this, or (which is the same thing) who refuse to repudiate the error and those who teach it. The community as a community has become corrupt. We propose to cease our connection with it on this account. . . It is the only course that can extricate us from the false position in which we have been placed by the reception of a false and destructive doctrine by so many in our midst. It will inflict hardship on no one who is prepared to be faithful to the Oracles of God. It will only exclude those who hesitate, and the exclusion will be their own act." —Christadelphian, 1885, page 303

"Many have been inclined to leave it as 'an open question.' This is a result of a dim and faulty perception of the *apostolic doctrine of fellowship*, which requires agreement on fundamentals as a first condition of walking together, cooperating, associating or fellowshiping together. . . It arises partly from ignorance, and partly from over-anxiety to increase numbers, and keep together divergent elements. This must inevitably result in serious trouble or general declension." —Chdn. '85:386

"Paul nowhere recommends us to receive those who are in doubt as to first principles. On the contrary, he indicates jealousy & faithfulness as to these." —Ch. '85:305

"We are not at liberty to receive anyone who refuses to believe any of the first principles, because the receiving of such would open the way for the currency of their principles among us, with a tendency of leavening the whole community. The elements of the Truth are so mutually related that the displacement of one undermines the foundation of the whole." —Christadelphian, 1885, p. 388

"If others who believe with us are not strong enough to stop with us, but who

prefer to remain with those who corrupt the Truth by uncertain doctrines, we cannot be responsible for them. They say 'God speed' to that which they condemn, and by John's rule make themselves partaker of the evil." —Chdn. 1885, p. 305

"It is well to recognize the fact that the principle that isolates us from popular communion, isolates also from the fellowship of all who reject *any part* of the Truth. Some accept the Truth in part, but are either unable or unwilling to receive it in its entirety. . . Such persons are generally what is called 'very charitable'; that is, they are willing to connive at any amount of doctrinal diversity so long as friendliness is maintained. They are lovers of peace. Peace is certainly very desirable when it can be had on a pure foundation, but the charitable people referred to are not particular about the foundation. They will compromise the Truth in some one or other of its integral elements for the sake of harmony. This is spurious charity altogether. We are not at liberty to relax the appointments of God. . . We have no jurisdiction in God's matters. What God requires is binding on us all; & the faithful man *cannot consent to accept any union* that requires a jot or tittle to be set aside or treated as unimportant. Such a man cannot consent to be part of any community that is not the pillar & ground of the Truth. —Seasons of Comfort, p. 12

"It is the duty of the friends of the Truth to uphold it as a basis of union among themselves by refusing to receive either those who deny any part of it, or those who would receive those so denying." —Christadelphian, 1885, p. 388

"Many of you say you do not hold this doctrine. At this we are glad; but your determination to *abide by those who do hold it or uphold those who teach it*, makes it impossible for us in our action to make any discrimination between you and them. It is a scriptural principle that commends itself to reason that he that biddeth God-speed in an evil course *makes himself responsible* for that course!" —85:307

"A man himself believing the Truth, but willing to wink at its denial among those in fellowship, in any of its essential elements, *becomes—by this willingness—an offender against the law of Christ*, which requires the faithful maintenance of the whole. Faithful servants of Christ *cannot unite with such*; on the ground that though he hold the Truth himself, such a man is responsible for the error of those he would admit, & therefore becomes the channel of a similar responsibility to those who may endorse him in fellowship: 'He that biddeth him Godspeed is a partaker of his evil deeds.'" —Christadelphian, 1885, p. 388

"An ecclesia is responsible for the doctrine of its members. . . If a man bring a doctrine into the House of God contrary to those which it has received it must steadfastly yet kindly withstand it. It cannot tolerate evil in any form. If it does, it becomes a partaker in the evil, and will not be held blameless by him who walketh in the midst of the golden candlesticks. 'Purge out the old leaven' is the order in such a case." —Christadelphian, 1885, p. 437

"'Fellowship with one another' depends entirely upon our conformity to this first & necessary principle of all fellowship—'walking in the Light'—which John so emphatically lays down in 1 Jn. 1:6-7. —Christadelphian, 1885, p. 386

"How were false prophets to be treated? Moses says 'They shall be put to death.' *Communities were to be dealt with on the same principle as individuals* (Dt. 30:5-15). The comparison in Peter's epistle (2 Pt. 2) between false teachers in fleshly Israel & spiritual Israel is evidence that this Mosaic enactment contains a lesson for us. Use of the sword is out of the question. A practical protest by *refusing to fellowship* is the full extent of permitted action. When therefore it is reported that any brother or *ecclesia* is following false doctrine, it is not only permitted, but it is obligatory on other brethren & ecclesias to 'enquire & make search & ask diligently,' to see whether it be true & the thing certain. If it is, the responsibility of their position leaves no option but that of repudiating complicity with the evil. . . The repudiation of responsibility for the false teaching of those at a distance shows a defective appreciation of the unity which should exist between all the members of the One Body (1 Cor. 12:25-26). —Christadelphian, 1886, p. 317

"We do not say you are not brethren, or that Christ will refuse you at his coming. We leave that. We do not judge you: we judge ourselves. We say that we cannot be implicated in the position you feel at liberty to hold toward this new doc-

trine which has been introduced. We desire to regard you with feelings of friendship & brotherly love. But so long as you retain connection with a false doctrine of so dangerous a character, you compel us to step aside, in the spirit of Paul's recommendation, which, while telling us not to regard you as enemies, at the same time directs us to *have no company* while on a footing which doesn't allow of it?"

—Christadelphian, 1885, p. 308

"It is insinuated that withdrawal from errorists is an evil thing. This is a fashionable sentiment, but it is not in accord with the mind of Christ as expressed thru the apostles. Love & union are beautiful. They are the most exquisite manifestations of intelligent life possible upon earth; and the earth will yet see their universal triumph when the Purpose of God is finished. But meanwhile, there are other duties. The loving John says concerning those who 'bring not the doctrine of Christ' that the faithful are to 'receive them not into their house' (2 Jn.10). And Jesus, in his message through the same John, commends our ecclesia for acting on this discrimination, and condemns one for not—

"Thou (Ephesus) *CANST NOT BEAR* them that are evil, but have tried them that say they are apostles, & hast found them liars" (Rv. 2:2)

"Thou (Thyatira) sufferest that woman Jezebel, who calleth herself a prophetess, to teach and seduce my servants. . ." (Rv. 2:20).

Schism is the result of acting out these principles, & it is a good thing, if intelligently & faithfully done. It is a painful & apparently unfriendly process, but there is no choice with those who would be friendly to God first." —Chdn., 1891, p. 67

"He that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds' (2 Jn.11). This applies to all without distinction, & erects a barrier to fellowship with even some who hold the Truth. For tho they may hold the doctrine of Christ themselves, if they keep up a 'God speed' connection with those who don't, by John's rule they make themselves partakers with them, & therefore cut themselves off from those who stand for the doctrine of Christ." —Christadelphian, 1873, p. 552

"Belief of the Truth is not a sufficient basis of fellowship if it be allied with wrong-doing or nullifying doctrine. We are commanded to withdraw when that is the case, & from those who would countenance the wrong, even if they would not themselves perpetrate it." —Christadelphian, 1892, July, p. ii

"While their own belief may be unexceptionable, they refuse to withdraw from those with whom it is otherwise. Consequently there is a barrier. —Ch. '92, Sep. ii

"Paul argued against the various corruptions in doctrine & practice (at Corinth). But he did not mean that these corruptions were to be disregarded in fellowship. Tho he argues with some who denied the resurrection, we are not to conclude that he regarded such a denial as compatible with a continuance in fellowship if persisted in. We must judge on this point by expressions directed expressly to the question of how error persisted in is to be dealt with. On this, he does not speak ambiguously: see 1 Cr. 5:13; 4:21; 2 Cr. 13:2, 10; 1 Tm. 6:5; 2 Th. 3:14; Tit. 3:10; Rm. 16:17. John speaks plainly to the same effect (2 Jn.10). And the messages of Jesus to the 7 Asian ecclesias are all more or less in the same strain!" —Chdn. '90, p. 173

To determine these fundamental truths, a basis was set up nearly 100 years ago, well known to everyone as the *Birmingham Amended Statement of Faith*, which not only outlines the first principles of the Truth, but has appended a statement of 'Doctrines to Be Rejected.' It has stood the test of time. It has never been successfully contradicted or disproved. (We'll send a copy to anyone who wishes it).

Our present basis for fellowship is that Statement, *vigorously defended by strict application of rules of fellowship clearly outlined above*. As stated in the Jersey City Resolution, and re-affirmed many times since then, it says—

"We believe the B.A.S.F. to be a true exposition of the first principles of the Oracles of God as taught by Christ and the apostles, and that they are to be believed and taught *without reservation*."

We see no reason for a change from that position.