

“Know Ye Not?” (1 Corinthians 6)

2 Corinthians chapter 2, records for us the Apostle Paul’s state of mind when writing his first epistle:

“For out of affliction and anguish of heart I wrote unto you *with many tears*; not that ye should be grieved, but that ye might know the love which I have more abundantly unto you ...” (2 Cor. 2:4).

Here we see the example of Paul, the inspired Apostle. He was not writing a burdensome message in a detached manner, with indifference as to whether or not the ecclesia would heed his words: he was being inspired to write an epistle which grieved him greatly, “with many tears”. We must ask ourselves the question, How do we administer correction to our brothers and sisters in the Lord: is it to justify ourselves, that we might be seen to be right? Or is it out of a deep love for their wellbeing, with “many tears” and distress at the situation which needs rectifying.

This, then, forms the background to the first epistle to the Corinthians: a loving spirit of correction from the inspired Apostle Paul. In the sixth chapter, we have a series of 6 propositions, which the ecclesia ought to have known, and which they needed reminding of: each commencing with the words: “know ye not”, or other wording of similar meaning. As we desire to hear the Apostle’s instruction and admonition, we also must take heed to his propositions, and learn from them all.

Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world?

The context of this question is in verse 1:

“Dare any of you, having a matter against another, go to law before the unjust, and not before the saints? Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world? And if the world shall be judged by you, are ye unworthy to judge the smallest matters?” (1 Cor. 6:1-2). Here a point of doctrine is given a practical application. It seems that there were divisions in the ecclesia, where brethren had committed some sort of offence against their fellow brethren. Rather than to deal with the issue internally, they were going to law to the Gentile courts, to have their grievance heard and judged. The point is, if the saints are to judge, and bring the world into submission— then surely they ought to be able to judge minor disputes between brethren.

There are a number of other passages that speak of this exalted duty of the saints. Daniel chapter 7 speaks of how

“the Ancient of Days came, *and judgment was given to the saints* of the most High, and the time came that the saints possessed the kingdom” (Dan. 7:22).

And again, the Psalmist writes:

“Let the saints be joyful in glory: let them sing aloud upon their beds. Let the high praises of God be in their mouth, and a two-edged sword in their hand. To execute vengeance upon the heathen, and punishments upon the people; To bind their kings with chains, and their nobles with fetters of iron; to execute upon them the judgment written: *this honor have all his saints*. Praise ye Yahweh” (Psa. 149:5-9).

So it will be, that the immortalized brethren of Jesus Christ shall be given the task of judging the nations, and establishing divine rule in the midst of the earth. It will be their “honor”, to bind and subdue world rulers under the authority of Messiah. The Apostle John saw these immortalized armies marching in the political heavens, following the One called “the Word of God”:

“the armies which were in heaven followed him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean. And out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it, he should smite the nations, and he shall rule them with a rod of iron ...” (Rev. 19:14-15).

Wearing a uniform of white garments, the armies of saints shall declare war on the world’s mightiest forces, calling upon them to submit, or be destroyed. Not that we might suppose the saints will use literal swords to subdue the earth; their sword proceeds “out of the mouth” of their commander: that is, words which are sharper than any two edged sword. After the fashion of Ananias and Sapphira, who were slain by the words of Peter (see Acts 5:1-10), all that will be necessary will be to speak the word, and the adversaries shall fall. And as Ezekiel also indicates, the elements of weather shall also be employed: great hailstones and fire destroying the armies of the heathen. Bearing in mind the magnitude of the task that lies again, truly, as brethren of Jesus Christ, we ought to be able to resolve minor disputes between brethren in the ecclesia.

“Know ye not that we shall judge angels? How much more things that pertain to this life”

In addition to the judgments of God subduing the earth before the dominion of Christ, there will need to be a system of administration, judging national and individual affairs, to ensure a smooth running of things. There are hints as to how this will be implemented. Jesus promised his disciples:

*“Verily I say unto you, That ye which have followed me, in the regeneration when the Son of man shall sit on the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, **judging the twelve tribes of Israel** (Mat. 19:28).*

The prophet Isaiah provides a picture of how this will be in Jerusalem:

*“And I will **restore thy judges as at the first**, and thy counselors as at the beginning: afterward thou shalt be called, The city of righteousness, the faithful city”* (Isa. 1:26)

And being that the kingdom, thus constituted, shall extend globally, we would suppose a similar situation throughout the earth, with individual saints being given authority over varying number of cities, as per Messiahs’ parable (Luke 19:12-27). Again, the point is that if the saints are to administer justice in Divine rule, how much more then, should they be able to judge the affairs of the brethren in their mortal position?

“Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God...?”

What follows this proposition is a list of ten behaviors that could exclude brethren from the kingdom. In the epistle to the Galatians, there is a similar list concluding with the words: “they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God” (Gal. 5:21). Here is the natural disposition of the flesh to do evil: a carnal mind dominated with fleshly thoughts, which translate into fleshly works, and a mode of conduct unbecoming the High Calling that we are called to. Certain behaviors will exclude us from the kingdom: but we need not look down in a detached sense of superiority that others do these things, whereas we do not - the Apostle continues: “And such were some **of you**” (1 Cor. 6:11). This applies to all of us. We were all once dead in our sins, given over to a fleshly mind. Yet, we have been called from that position, to a higher plane of being: “if ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God” (Col. 3:1). There are those who forsake Christ, who turn back to the ways of flesh, like a sow returning to her wallowing in the mire, and a dog returning to it’s vomit (2 Pet. 2:22). We must always remember where we have been called from, lest we turn back to our old ways, and the filthiness of the flesh. Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom (1 Cor.15:50), but if we remain holy in the sight of God, we will be given a kingdom which has been promised from the foundation of the world (Mat. 25:34).

In connection with this, the Apostle describes how the believers, once ungodly, have been cleansed in Christ:

“but ye are *washed*, but ye are *sanctified*, but ye are *justified* in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the spirit of our God” (1 Cor. 6:11).

There is a washing, then, that believers are subjected to, to cleanse them in the sight of God. Ephesians 5 also describes this, in the context of marriage: “Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the ecclesia, and gave himself for it; that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word ...” (Eph. 5:25-26). We must continually immerse our minds into the things of the spirit. Sometimes we might suppose that we underwent a washing when we were baptized, and that is all-sufficient. But such a short-sighted view misses the point, that like the apostle Paul, we should “die daily” (1 Cor. 15:31), living out the spirit of our baptism each day that follows. We need to undergo a continual washing with the Word, cleansing our minds, and also our lives, that we might be presented to Messiah as a glorious ecclesia, without spot nor blemish, nor any such thing.

There are two other aspects to this cleansing: Sanctification, and Justification. We become sanctified through the effect of the Word. These were the words of Christ to his Father: “Sanctify them through thy truth: thy Word is truth” (Jno. 17:17). And we become justified, or made righteous by our faith in that Word. As the Scripture saith: “Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness” (Rom. 4:3). Both of these aspects are important, like two sides to the same coin.

“Know ye not, that your bodies are the members of Christ?”

The allusion is back to Genesis chapter 2, where we read of how Eve was a member of the body of Adam:

“And Yahweh Elohim caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and he slept: and he took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh instead thereof; And the rib, which Yahweh Elohim had taken from man, made he a woman, and brought her unto the man” (Gen. 2:21-22).

Being created from a member of Adam’s body, Eve would have had a unique affinity with her husband: the unity between a man and his wife. Hence the pronouncement of Yahweh was: “Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and they shall cleave unto his wife: **and they shall be one flesh**” (Gen. 2:24).

Back in 1 Corinthians 6, we find the Apostle again drawing upon a matter of teaching/doctrine, and bringing out a particular implementation of that doctrine in daily life. Just as Eve was to be the bride of Adam, so the ecclesia collectively becomes the bride of Christ. They were formed out his “deep sleep” of death, and are to be united with him like Eve to Adam. Being that they are formed as part of a New Creation, devoted to their husband, they ought to be holy in all ways of life.

There is an interesting detail in the Genesis account, which fits in with the verses that follow in 1 Corinthians 6. Genesis 2:22 reads:

“And the rib which Yahweh Elohim had taken from man, made he a woman, and brought her unto the man”

Here the word rendered “made” is given an alternative rendering in the AV Margin as Heb. *buildd*. Eve was *built* into a living, breathing woman, from the single rib derived from Adam. But the word “buildd” also conveys the idea of a building, or a city built up: and this is another aspect of the Lamb’s Wife. John was invited:

“Come hither, I will shew thee the bride, the Lamb’s wife. And he carried me away in the spirit to a great and high mountain, and shewed me that great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God ...” (Rev. 21:9-10).

Here, John was invited to see “the bride”, but what he actually saw was a city – built up upon the foundations laid by Christ and his Apostles.

Be that as it may, the point being drawn out by the Apostle is that if we are members of Christ, to become part of his multitudinous Bride, we should not become joined to another. So he continues:

“What? Know ye not that he which is joined to an harlot is one body: For two, saith he, shall be one flesh. But he which is joined to the Lord is one spirit”

There is evidently a double application to this verse. First there is the natural: a brother or sister should keep themselves pure, and ought not engage in relations with a prostitute. But then there is the spiritual aspect: there is a great spiritual religious system which is a harlot: “Mystery, Babylon the Great, the Mother of Harlots and abominations of the earth” (Rev. 17:5). Those who desire to be joined to Jesus cannot simultaneously be joined to either the Mother, or her harlot daughters. The overriding lesson is separateness, from both natural and spiritual harlots.

The exhortation is given in 1 Corinthians 6, and verse 18: “Flee fornication”. Our minds might go back to Joseph in Egypt. Being bought with a price from his brethren, he was taken to Egypt, and made to serve Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh. But Potiphar’s wife had designs on Joseph: “it came to pass after these things, that his master’s wife cast her eyes upon Joseph; and she said, Lie with me” but he refused (Gen. 39:7). She continued this from day to day, attempting to wear him down, until one day when they two were alone in the house, “she caught him by his garment, saying, Lie with me; and he left his garment in her hand, fled, and got him out” (Gen. 39:12).

Here, we find Joseph being tempted to become joined to another man’s wife, and commit fornication with her. Yet, he fled, and got him out of that situation – and in like manner, we must “flee fornication”, seeking to resist the desire to become joined to the Harlot religious system of our day, but also seeking to resist the wiles of the flesh both within and without.

“Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own?”

We have seen this dual aspect of the Bride also being “built”, and here, the building is a temple. Bro Robert Roberts wrote of this aspect as follows:

Every true son and daughter of the Lord God Almighty is a miniature tabernacle or temple, as saith Paul, "Ye are the temple of the living God. If any man defile the temple of God, him will God destroy".

Our minds should be a holy place lined with the gold of a tried faith, in which the one Christ-sacrifice for sins is continually offered, and the smoke of grateful incense, kindled by the fire of the altar, continually ascending, while deeply secreted in the innermost ark of the heart is the law of God in its remembrance, the scriptures in their affectionate study, the institutions of divine appointment in continual reverence, and the bread of God in its continual eating.

Thus shall we be the sons of God in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, misunderstood by all, hated by many, despised and rejected of men, persevering in a bitter probation that will end at last in life and light and joy everlasting. (Robert Roberts)

The Apostle concludes this section by bringing our minds to focus upon the Lord Jesus Christ, and the price that was paid for our redemption:

“... ye are not your own. For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God’s” (1 Cor. 6:20).

“Ye are not your own”. These words are very sobering, and should be remembered at all times. Are we tempted to do a particular thing that goes against the commandments of Christ? We are not our own. We are not at liberty to do that thing. This is the reason why we cannot pledge allegiance to the country in which we sojourn: we are not our own. This is why we cannot enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season: we are not our own and must remain true to our master.

These are issues that brought the Apostle much grief as he wrote to the Corinthian brethren and sisters, because of the earnest spirit of care that he had for them. But these things were written for our learning also. As we earnestly seek the kingdom to come, we must also seek Yahweh’s Righteousness, and His power to save. We must seek to please the One whose blood was shed for the remission of our sins: when he returns as our commander-in-chief, we need to be prepared be part of the means by which the world shall be subdued under His reign.

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