

Churches of Christ 78th Annual "Historical" National Lectureship "Keeping the Ordinances of New Testament Faith" (2 Thessalonians 2:15)

There is a court that will convene one day within the precincts of eternity where every man will stand trial. According to the inspired writings contained in the Pauline corpus, he emphatically states: *"For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each of us may receive what is due us for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad"* (2 Corinthians 5:10 – NIV).

The cultured and the crude, the poor and the prosperous, the learned and illiterate, everyone must stand trial in that place where the hidden comes to light, where secrets are shouted, and where the real is revealed.

- Who you are will not be important or significant because the charges are correct.
- Who you know and what you know will not count because the evidence is irrefutable.
- Your good intentions will be of no value because the witnesses cannot be shaken.

Not only is there a divine court of jurisprudence where we must stand trial, but perhaps you ought to be acquainted with the Judge. The Judge of whom I speak is the Truth and He presides over the court of eternity. He is Creator of the universe and He cannot lie. He has always been the Judge because He was "before the beginning" and He will be "after the beginning." Nothing exists that was not made by His hands. He sees all, hears all, and understands all.

If you doubt His Omnipotence, His Omniscience, or His Omnipresence, allow me to inquire of David the "Sweet Singer." The Psalmist says: *"You know when I sit and when I rise; you perceive my thoughts from afar"* (Psalm 139:2 – NIV). He declares even further: *"If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there: If I make my bed in Sheol, behold, thou art there"* (Psalm 139:8 – ASV).

In an effort to construct a fictionalized court scene based upon imaginative composition and innovative characterizations (similar to Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man*), let us sit in the gallery during the arraignment proceedings of Man. I see that Satan is attorney for the prosecution and Mercy is attorney for the defense. Not only are each of the attorneys present, but I hear the Judge calling for the jury to be seated. Justification and Propitiation are seated side by side. Atonement and Fairness have assumed their seats with arms folded in pious strict discernment. Faith, Hope, and Charity have all arrived closely followed by Memory, Conscience, and Guilt. Goodness just entered the chambers and the last one to appear is Justice who closed the door.

Judge: Bailiff, read the charges that have been brought against Man.

Bailiff: Your Honor, there are numerous charges which are held against Man according the deposition filed by the prophets and the apostle Paul. First of all, Isaiah who is Dean of the Messianic prophets, he refers to Man as a "sheep gone astray" and has charged him with "turning to his own way." He also says that "the righteousness of Man is considered as filthy rags." Man is charged by Daniel as being "sinful and



rebellious. He has acted wickedly by turning away from your laws and commands." Man is charged by the apostle Paul with continuous sin and falling "short of your glory." Furthermore, Paul charges Man as the recipient of imputed sin due to the transgression of Adam. Your Honor, may it please the court, Paul also indicts Man on the charge of having a sinful and corrupt nature.

[As the trial of Man continues we listen carefully as the Judge speaks]

Judge: Satan, are you ready to present your argument for the prosecution?

Satan: I am Your Honor. In light of the charges brought against the defendant, I move for a summary judgment. I realize my motion is rather unusual considering the gravity of this case. But I also understand that no matter what the defense attorney might have to say, it will be lacking in substance and perhaps we could save the court some time by granting a summary judgment. Your Honor, make no mistake about it, Man is guilty on every charge. Even Man knows that he is guilty. There can be no alternative pleading or counter-claim. The preponderance of evidence is truly overwhelming not circumstantial. In point of fact, the evidence is *prima facie* and the guilt of Man is obvious. Therefore, Your Honor, I move for summary judgment.

[The court is visibly stunned and a great deal of tension mounts in the courtroom as Mercy begins to make his opening statement]

Mercy: Your Honor, I object to the motion of the prosecution. All we have heard so far are a lot of general claims. All we have heard thus far are allegations which as of yet have been unsubstantiated by any evidence introduced into this divine court of law. All we have heard to this point Your Honor, are assertions and egregious rumors. The prosecution has not offered or provided one witness in support of its claims. There is no preponderance of evidence. Man is on trial here for his eternal life and he is entitled to a trial. There is no value for a summary judgment at this point.

Judge: Objection sustained! Attorney Satan, call your first witness.

Satan: Your Honor, rather than call my first witness, may it please the court since the defense counsel is so concerned about tangible evidence, I would like to enter into evidence this Book called the Holy Bible. As you know Your Honor because you are the author, there are 66 books in the Bible. There are 929 chapters in the *TaNaKh* along with 260 chapters in the New Testament which commences in Genesis and culminates in Revelation. Let the record show that this Book of Books illustrates beyond reasonable doubt how Man has disgraced your Deity and he has reproached your righteousness. One of your own prognosticators has said: "The heart of man is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked." Even king Solomon whom You gifted with unsurpassed wisdom, he proclaims: "For there is not a just man upon earth, that doeth good, and sinneth not." That's why I know that the charges are true and the guilt is without question. There is no longer any reason to prolong these proceedings. Man is guilty and Your Book is here to prove it.

[The court listens intently to the opening statement of Mercy and the redirect of Satan who presents the Bible as "Exhibit A"]

Judge: Attorney Mercy, please call your first witness.

Mercy: May it please the court Your Honor, I don't have any witnesses to call. I don't have anything to enter as evidence. As a matter of fact, I informed my client that there was only one way to come into Your court.

Judge: How then does Man come before this court?

Man: Just as I am without one plea.

Mercy: May it please the court, the defense rests Your Honor. There is no plea bargain being sought, we rest our case. No long arguments about due process or being denied the right of life and liberty, we rest our case. No tactics of delay or courtroom drama, we rest our case. No surprise witnesses to be called or detailed defense, we rest our case. If Man is accused of being an accessory to sin, if he is arraigned for aiding and abetting to the practice of sin, without objection we rest our case. If Man is charged as an accomplice of sin and engaging with others in the commission of sin, without further objection and without further delay, we rest our case.

[The courtroom is astonished with this surprise maneuver by the defense attorney.

The jurors are dismissed and they have now retired to deliberate.

However, within just a few minutes they are already returning to their seats.

Justice who is foreman of the jury stands as the Judge begins to speak]

Judge: Members of the jury, have you reached a verdict about Man?

Justice: Yes, Your Honor we have.

Judge: What say ye?

Justice: We the members of the jury find the defendant guilty as charged on all counts.

Judge: Will the attorneys for both the prosecution and defense kindly approach the bench? This case is now closed. The verdict has been read and the work of the jury is done. In view of the fact that Man has been found guilty on all charges by the jury, it is now my responsibility to pronounce sentencing upon the convicted. Will the defendant please rise? Man, you have been found guilty on all counts by this jury. Satan the defense attorney has proven his case beyond any shadow of a doubt. My Book the Holy Bible does say that you are a sinner. But it also says: "Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." My Book the Holy Bible says: "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus." As a result, my sentence is CASE DISMISSED!

I am aware that there is no legal precedent for this unusual sentencing from the bench. But while the jury was deliberating and while Justice was busy interpreting the law, I had already sent Jesus down through forty-and-two generations so that He might adjudicate the sins of Man. I sent Jesus to Gethsemane. I sent Jesus to the judgment hall of Pilate. I sent Jesus to a hill far away called Calvary. Jesus died

so that Man might live. Jesus died on Friday, but He arose on Sunday morning. Jesus died so that I could tell you CASE DISMISSED! Yes, the bailiff quoted Isaiah who said Man is like a "sheep gone astray." Yet he failed to mention that it was this same Isaiah who also indicates that Jesus was "Wounded for the transgressions of Man and He was bruised for the iniquities of Man, the chastisement of Man's peace was upon Him and with His stripes Man has been healed." CASE DISMISSED!

Jesus Christ My only begotten Son, He was...
...pierced for the guilt of Man...
...tortured for the shortcomings of Man...
...beaten for the wrongs of Man...
...and crucified for the sins of Man... CASE DISMISSED!

At Calvary, He who is...
...precious, died for the worthless...
...forgiving, died for the revengeful...
...lowly, died for the proud...
...and He who is righteous, died for the rebellious... CASE DISMISSED!

In My closing remarks to this jury and to those who are present in this courtroom, let Me remind you that Jesus has not only been made as Man's righteousness and sanctification, He is also Man's redemption. All who are redeemed were once sold to Satan and sin. But the Lord Jesus paid the price of His blood to redeem man from the curse of the law. It is only through Christ, that Man can have union and communion with Me as the Judge... CASE DISMISSED!

Keeping the Ordinances of New Testament Faith

"Therefore, brethren, stand fast, and hold the traditions which ye have been taught, whether by word, or our epistle" (2 Thessalonians 2:15)



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General Theme:

**“Keeping the Ordinances
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(2 Thessalonians 2:15)**



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Wednesday Afternoon Open Forum Discussion
Daily Afternoon Lyceum Speaker Sessions
Daily “High Noon” Chapel Services
John O. Williams Memorial Banquet – Thursday

Mass Congregational Acapella Musical Workshop
Evening Vesper Service Speaker Sessions
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All Lectureship attendees must contact the Renaissance Montgomery Hotel individually to make their own reservations. The reservations department toll free number is 1-877-5450311.

You may also call the above number at (334) 481-5000.

As a friendly reminder, Lectureship attendees will need to make their reservations by no later than **Thursday, February 29, 2024**, in order to receive the Lectureship discounted group rate.

Attendees will be charged a one-night non-refundable non-changeable deposit for their room once they have booked their reservation. This deposit will be credited towards their individual reservations and will be reflected on their final bill when they check out.

“One Lord... One Faith... One Baptism”