

The Christianity Of The Apostles

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New Testament References

When the apostle Paul arrived at Rome, he had an interview with certain Jews there, who desired to hear what he believed; "for", said they, "as concerning this sect, we know that everywhere it is spoken against" (Acts 28:22). The members of this sect "were called Christians", a name which was first used - probably by their opponents - at Antioch (Acts 11:26). By their inspired leaders they were called "disciples" (Acts 20:7), "saints" (Rom. 1:7), "brethren" (Gal. 1:2), "brethren in Christ" (Col. 1:2), "joint heirs with Christ" (Rom. 8:17), "believers" (1 Tim. 4:12), "children of Abraham" (Gal. 3:7), "Abraham's seed" (Gal. 3:29), "a peculiar people" (1 Pet. 2:9), "children of light" (1 Thess. 5:5), "children of God" (1 John 3:10), "sons of God" (1 John 3:1), "the elect of God" (Col. 3:12), etc.

This "sect" was composed of two classes, Jews and Gentiles. The former had discontinued observing the abrogated Mosaic law, which was "a shadow of things to come" (Heb. 10:1), and had acknowledged that Jesus of Nazareth, whom they had crucified, was the Messiah for whom they had been looking (Acts 2:36). They had confessed that only through Him could remission of sins be obtained (Acts 2:38), and, in accordance with the predictions of their prophets, they looked for Him to sit upon the throne of David, and restore the kingdom of Israel (Acts 3:20, 21).

The latter class, the Gentiles, had "turned from idols to serve the living and true God, and to wait for His Son from heaven" (1 Thess. 1:9, 10) for the purpose of ruling the world in righteousness (Acts 17:31). They expected at that time to "reign with Him" (2 Tim. 2:12) "on the earth" (Rev. 5:10), in "His kingdom" (2 Tim. 4:1), to sit with Him in His throne (Rev. 3:21) and to have "power over the nations" (Rev. 2:26), in accordance with God's promises. Being but "heirs of the kingdom" of God (James 2:5) they had not begun to inherit it. They believed it to be a kingdom which must be entered "through much tribulation" (Acts 14:22), and, therefore, they patiently suffered persecution, that they might be counted worthy of it (2 Thess. 1:5). They did not believe this kingdom to be the Church, for they were told that no "unrighteous" persons should enter it, and even "flesh and blood" could not inherit it (1 Cor. 6:9; 15:50). They therefore looked forward to being changed from mortality to immortality (1 Cor. 15:51-53) at the Second Appearing of Jesus Christ (Phil. 3:20, 21).

Believing that "the wages of sin is death" (Rom. 6:23), and that "death passed upon all men" (Rom. 5:12), the members of this "sect" recognized the apostolic truth that eternal life, or immortality, is the gift of God, obtainable only through Jesus Christ (Rom. 6:23; 1

John 5:11). As enjoined by the apostles, they sought immortality (Rom. 2:7), and endeavoured to "lay hold on eternal life" (1 Tim. 6:12); consequently they did not believe that they were naturally immortal, or in the present enjoyment of eternal life. "The dead in Christ" they believed to be sleeping (1 Thess. 4:14), "in the dust of the earth" (Dan. 12:2), with no power to praise the Lord (Psa. 115:17) until the resurrection: an event necessary to prevent the faithful dead from perishing (1 Cor. 15:16-18).

This "sect" did not look for the conversion of the world before the Second Appearing of Jesus Christ, because they were told that "the mystery of iniquity", which was then working, would, when ripe, be destroyed by the coming of Christ (2 Thess. 2:7, 8). No greater proof of the extensive growth of this false system can be found, or is needed, than the denial of the foregoing truths throughout Christendom. There is a class of persons, however, who maintain the belief of the apostolic "sect everywhere spoken against". They do not adopt a name invented by the enemies of Christ, but they make use of a word synonymous with one of the names given by the spirit of God, that is, "brethren of Christ" (Heb. 2:11, 12; Col. 1:2), which, in its Anglicized Greek form, produces the name "CHRISTADELPHIAN". Amid indifference and misunderstanding, in a world which says, "Where is the promise of His coming?" (2 Peter 3:4), they try to bear witness to the truth. Having received the message themselves, they have the responsibility of a "watchman" (Ezek. 33:7-9) to pass it to others. It is their one desire to do this, for they are confident that they have the greatest treasure in the world, the Gospel, which is "the power of God unto salvation" (Rom. 1:16), and the way to eternal life.