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Mid-Atlantic Christadelphian Bible School - 2001

THE HOUSE OF ASAPH - FAMILY OF FAITH AND MASTERS OF MUSIC

Speaker: Bro. Roger Lewis

Study #2: The Psalms of the House of Asaph

Reading: 1 Chronicles 16

Well thank you, brother chairman, and good morning my dear brethren and sisters.

In our opening study yesterday, we looked at the story of the founding of the house of Asaph and that moment of time when Asaph was appointed by David, that he might lead the responsibility for matter of worship in Israel. You'll remember in 1 Chronicles chapter 16, we read of that special psalm that was delivered to the house of Asaph, that they might lead the children of Israel in praise to the heavenly Father. You'll remember also that we suggested yesterday, that there were five key things, five key principles by which this family governed their music of praise to the Father. Now, unfortunately in our study yesterday, we didn't have time to look at the first of those, so I'm going to take the first few moments this morning just to take you through that first of those five key principles.

That idea was that their singing always focused on the supremacy of God. We made reference to that in our closing remarks yesterday. Now, I'd like you to come back to 1 Chronicles 16 and just to see again the spirit of this idea in the great psalm that was given to this family. 1 Chronicles 16 and reading from verse 8, (Now, I'm just going to read the psalm to you), and as we read the psalm I want you to just capture this idea, that the whole thing is focused on the Father and not on man.); so, 1 Chronicles 16 and verse 8:

Give thanks unto Yahweh, call upon His name, make known His deeds among the people.

Sing unto Him, sing psalms unto Him, talk ye of all His wondrous works.

Glory ye in His holy name; let the heart of them rejoice that seek Yahweh.

Seek Yahweh and His strength, seek His face continually.

Remember His marvellous works that He hath done, His wonders, and the judgments of His mouth; O ye seed of Israel His servant, ye children of Jacob, His chosen ones.

He is Yahweh our God; His judgments are in all the earth.

Be ye mindful always of His covenant; the word which He commanded to a thousand generations; Even of the covenant which He made with Abraham, and of His oath unto Isaac;

And hath confirmed the same to Jacob for a law, and to Israel for an everlasting covenant, Saying, Unto thee will I give the land of Canaan, the lot of your inheritance.

When ye were but few, even few, and strangers in it, And when they went from nation to nation, and from

one kingdom to another people; He suffered no man to do them wrong: yea, He reproved kings for their sakes, Saying, Touch not mine anointed, and do My prophets no harm.
 Sing unto Yahweh, all the earth; show forth from day to day His salvation.
 Declare His glory among the heathen; His marvellous works among all nations.
 For great is Yahweh, and greatly to be praised; He also is to be feared above all gods.
 For all the gods of the people are idols: but Yahweh made the heavens.
 Glory and honour are in His presence: strength and gladness are in His place.
 Give unto Yahweh, ye kindreds of the people, give unto Yahweh glory and strength.
 Give unto Yahweh the glory due unto His name: bring an offering, and come before Him: worship Yahweh in the beauty of holiness.
 Fear before Him, all the earth: the world also shall be stable, that it be not moved.
 Let the heavens be glad, and let the earth rejoice: and let men say among the nations, Yahweh reigneth.
 Let the sea roar and the fullness: let the fields rejoice, and all that is therein.
 Then shall the trees of the wood sing out at the presence of Yahweh, because He cometh to judge the earth.
 O give thanks unto Yahweh; for He is good; for His mercy endureth for ever.
 And say ye, Save us, O God of our salvation, and gather us together, and deliver us from the heathen, that we may give thanks to thy holy name, and glory in thy praise.
 Blessed be Yahweh Elohim of Israel for ever and ever.
 And all the people said, Amen.

Now you know, b&s, when you really think about that psalm, where is man in these words? He's not there! The absolute focus of this psalm is on the complete supremacy of God in all things! You know, b&s, we live in a world of rampant humanism, we live in a world that tells us every day that it's what we think, what we feel, what we want that's the most important. What's in it for #1, and the whole focus of this psalm of the family of Asaph was that the world does not revolve around man, but around Almighty God and His purpose! Now you see, we say that we understand the principle of God manifestation, that we understand the idea of the supremacy of God, but we live in an age, b&s, that denies this principle, day by day, and even though we say we understand this principle, I think sometimes, well, maybe we don't understand it as much as we should. You may have heard of this saying before, where it has been said and justly so, 'that the strength of ecclesial life is measured in attendance at the bible class'. Well, here's another saying, 'You can tell whether an ecclesia understands God manifestation, by its prayers'.

Now let me give you just one key word in 1 Chronicles 16 and in this psalm that's absolutely vital in terms of the spirit of truly seeing the supremacy of the Father. Have a look at verse 35. In this particular psalm it says, 'And say ye, O save us, O God of our salvation, and gather us together and deliver us from the heathen, so that we may give thanks to thy holy name'. Now you see, that little word is so desperately important in that psalm, for those who truly understand the principle of God manifestation will never pray the fatal prayer of unconditional deliverance. The basis of the prayer here is not that they should be saved, not that they should be delivered, but that they should be saved so that they might give thanks to the Father. That's a proper understanding of God manifestation.

Now, you see, this particular family understood that principle! We haven't got time to look at their psalms, but you find that they understood that principle; I think we ought to apply the so that rule to our prayers! Now, have you ever heard of expressions like this in our prayers? 'we desire to be there in the kingdom'; and, 'Father, we pray that Thou wilt grant us all a place in thy glorious day, so that'. 'We pray that though wilt bless us with the strength and the joy of immortality so that'. Now you see, b&s, you know what I'm saying. I'm not saying that we have to even use that word every time, and yet if you listen to the prayers, you'll find that so often we pray for things that we want and we desire from the Father, that He should give us those things but that little word, 'that' is never there! and, the reason why we should pray for the kingdom is so that we might praise Him in that day! And the reason why we should pray for immortality is that we might serve Him without the wearying of our powers. That's understanding the supremacy of God!

Now, in our hymns of worship, this has to be one of the key things that we, therefore, take up that our songs of praise ought to truly celebrate our understanding of that principle, that the truth revolves around the Father and the greatness of His purpose.

Now, in the time that we have left to us this morning, we're going to look briefly at the story of the psalms of the house of Asaph. We haven't got time to investigate these in detail, but we do hope to look at one or two principles that may be helpful in the development of our story over the course of this coming week.

Do you know that there are 12 psalms in the book of Psalms that are attributed to Asaph? One of them is in book II, which is Psalm 50, and all the others, which are psalms 73 to 83, are found in book III. Perhaps, because there are 12 psalms attributed to Asaph, we might conclude that they are representative of all Israel; but, the interesting thing about the psalms of Asaph is this, that when we come to look at their composition, well, I think we draw several conclusions: the first is this, that the psalms attributed to the house of Asaph may certainly have been written by Asaph by himself, but on the other hand, they may have been written by successive generations of the same house.

The reason why we say that is this, that when we look at those psalms in greater detail, you'll find that they appear to span many centuries of time; they refer to several great epochs in the history of the nation. Now, if those psalms were written by Asaph in his own day, yet reached forward to other periods which yet lay in the future, those psalms would not have had great relevance in the day of Asaph himself, in fact, some of those psalms would have been absolute mystery and a puzzle. One of the things about these psalms is this, that the very writing of these psalms echoes the language and the incident of historical events down through time. The language is fresh and urgent as if it is written by someone who was really there at that moment of crisis in the history of the nation. The strange thing about it is this, that of all the times, we believe, the psalms of Asaph refer to, we have on each occasion a historical reference to tell us, that, why at

that very moment of time in the history of the nation, the house of Asaph was spiritually active amongst the children of Israel.

Now, by the way, don't forget, you're going to get a summary of all these overheads at the end of the bible school, so if you're worried about keeping up with these as I turn them off, please do not fear, you'll see them all at the end if you wish to have a copy.

Let me give you an illustration of what I mean! Now take for example the 78th Psalm. I believe that the 78th Psalm was probably written at the time of Rehoboam. Now, let's just take this particular one as illustration, and because we haven't got much time, I'm just going to draw a couple of things to your attention out of several psalms. So, here's the first one, Psalm 78, and a couple of interesting things about this psalm. You'll notice this, we're told in this psalm that there is considerable judgment against the children of Ephraim. Notice verse 8, 'That they might not be as their fathers, a stubborn and rebellious generation; a generation that set not their heart aright, and whose spirit was not steadfast with God. The children of Ephraim, being armed, and carrying bows, turned back in the day of battle. They kept not the covenant of God, and refused to walk in His law'. Now, over the page, you'll notice this in the 67th verse at the end of the psalm, it says there, 'Moreover He refused the tabernacle of Joseph, and chose not the tribe of Ephraim: But chose the tribe of Judah, the mount Zion, which He loved'. So, the first interesting thing to notice about Psalm 78 is that there is comment upon the unfaithfulness of the tribe of Ephraim, and the second strange thing about this psalm, which appears to relate the history of the nation, is that it stops abruptly in the 70th verse, with reference of the ascension of David to the throne. At that point the psalm stops abruptly in the story of Israel.

Now, where would be the appropriate circumstance for the writing of a psalm which celebrates two things: that firstly says to Israel that David is the chosen man, and Judah is the chosen tribe, to be ruler over the nation? and, the second thing is that Zion is the chosen place, not the tribe of Ephraim, not the capital of Ephraim and not the king of Ephraim. You see, I think the moment for the writing of this psalm, was when the kingdom had divided and the 10 tribes to the north, who cumulatively were known as Ephraim, had separated from Judah and from the house of David and had established a rival kingdom to the north. I think it brought forth this psalm as a warning to the ten tribes, that they ought not to forget that David and Judah and Zion was God's proper choice. Now, if that's so, then it may be that Psalm 78 was not composed by Asaph himself, because there's every chance that Asaph may have been, in fact, probably was, dead by that time.

Oh, you might say, 'well, yes, but he could have been alive! Aha, aha, but yes, have a look at this one, if you come to the 83rd Psalm we have a very famous psalm about the enemies of Israel assembled in their confederated strength against the nation. I just want to show you one circumstance out of Psalm 83 because we haven't got the time to dwell on these, but you notice just one thing about Psalm 83: firstly, it says in verse 5,

that there was a great confederacy and then it proceeds to list all the nations that were assembled together; in verse 6 it says there were the Edomites, and the Ishmaelites, and the Moabites, and so forth, but when we come down to the end of verse 8 it says by summary, 'these all have holpen the children of Lot'. So who were the leaders of this particular campaign against Israel in the 83rd Psalm? and the answer is, the children of Lot and a great confederacy with them. Now who were the children of Lot? Moab and Ammon, only those two! Now, come back to the historical record because, you see, in 2 Chronicles chapter 20, we're told this in the time of Jehoshaphat: I think this is the very moment when this psalm was composed, and God willing, in our study tomorrow morning we may have occasion to look at this in a little further detail. But it says in 2 Chronicles 20, verse 1, 'It came to pass after this also, that the children of Moab, and the children of Ammon, (and who's that? why that's the children of Lot, isn't it?) and with them other beside came against Jehoshaphat to battle'. In verse 2 it says, 'There was a great multitude'. In verse 12 it says, there was a great company; in verse 15 it says, there was a great multitude, but the leadership of the confederacy was Ammon and Moab. You see, this answers exactly to the story of Psalm 83, the children of Lot and the great confederacy of enemies with them who came against Israel on this occasion. Do you think Asaph was still alive in the days of Jehoshaphat? I think not! and yet it says of Psalm 83 at the head of the Psalm, that it was a psalm of Asaph. How so?

Come and have a look at this one! In Psalm 76 we're told in the first verse, 'In Judah is God known: His name is great in Israel. In Salem also is His tabernacle, and His dwelling place in Zion. There brake He the arrows of the bow, the shield, and the sword, and the battle'. The 5th verse says, 'The stouthearted are spoiled, they have slept their sleep, and none of the men of might have found their hands. At thy rebuke, O God of Jacob, both the chariot and horse are cast into a dead sleep'. Now, where was it, or when was it, that a great battle was waged outside the city of Jerusalem, where God brake the arrow and the bow and the shield and the sword and the battle, so that both the chariot and the man of the chariot were cast into a dead sleep? and the answer is, why the time of Hezekiah when the watches went out and on the morning they saw the whole host of the Assyrian strewed across the plain outside and, as the record says, 'behold, the 185,000 of them were all dead corpses', and they were all in the sleep of death of which Psalm 76 refers. Some of you may know that over the head of Psalm 76 in the Septuagint translation are these words, it says, 'with reference to the Assyrian', so Psalm 76 is a psalm that celebrates the miraculous overthrow of the house of Sennacherib in the days of Hezekiah. But it's described as a psalm of Asaph — was Asaph still alive? I think not!

Come and have a look at this one. The 81st Psalm has a couple of strange features about it that are worth study. Two of the great features about the 81st Psalm are these, that there are a number of references that take us back to the book of the Law, and in particular, not just to the book of the Law, but to Deuteronomy over and over again — Psalm 81 has a number of allusions to the book of Deuteronomy. Now not only are there allusions to the book of Deuteronomy, but there are clearly allusions to a special

feast day that Psalm 81 celebrates, because we're told in the third verse, it says, 'Blow up the trumpet in the new moon, in the time appointed, on our solemn feast day'. Do you know that there were two feast days, two special feasts of God that began on the new moon; the feast of Passover and the feast of Tabernacles. But I think that of those two, the indications of Psalm 81, if you read verses 5, 6 and 7, is clearly telling us that the feast that the psalm has in mind is the feast of Passover. We won't go into the teaching of the psalm, it's a wonderful lament for things that might have been, if only the nation had listened to Almighty God. But I ask you this one simple question, b&s, what king was famous for these two notable incidences in his life: (1) the discovery and the reading of the book of the Law?; and (2) the celebration of a special feast of Passover, to bring the nation back into covenant with their God? Why, that's good king Josiah, isn't it, of Judah? Yet Psalm 81 is a psalm of Asaph!

Now, have a look at this one! In Psalm 74 we're told this concerning the circumstances of this particular psalm. It says in the 7th verse, 'They have cast fire into thy sanctuary, they have defiled by casting down the dwelling place of thy name to the ground'. When Sennacherib came against Jerusalem in the days of Hezekiah, did he burn the sanctuary with fire? The answer is, 'No, he didn't'. In fact, there appears to be only one reference to one occasion historically that the sanctuary was burnt with fire, and that's in 2 Kings chapter 25. You might like to come and have a look at that. We're told there in verse 8, 'In the fifth month, on the seventh day of the month, which is the 19th year of king Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, came Nebuzaradan captain of the guard, a servant of the king of Babylon, unto Jerusalem. And he burnt the house of the LORD, and the king's house, and all the houses of Jerusalem, and every great man's house burnt he with fire'. I think that Psalm 74 is commemorating the day of that most tragic overthrow of the sanctuary of God by the burning of fire. That can only take us to the time of the Babylonian captivity and beyond. This psalm, Psalm 74, is a lamentation of those faithful of Israel who had seen the desecration of the temple by the Babylonian in that day. It takes us into the very realm and time of the captivity, but Psalm 74 is described as the psalm of Asaph.

Now, you see what we're suggesting, what we believe is, that when we have a description in the book of Psalm of the 'psalms of Asaph', that these psalms were actually composed by successive generations of the same family. These are the psalms of the house of Asaph, but Asaph was their family-name. So, down through the history of the nation, on successive occasions, these psalms were brought into being by the very circumstances and the extremities of the time into which the nation found themselves; and, at that moment of time, whenever it might be, one of the sons of Asaph stood up and gave forth a psalm.

Now let me tell you something interesting in terms of why we think that that is so? Do you know this, if we come to the time of Rehoboam, or to the time of Jehoshaphat, or to the time of Hezekiah, or to the time of Josiah, or to the time of Ezra and Nehemiah, on each of those major epochs in the history of the nations, we will find an historical

reference that tells us why the house of Asaph were spiritually active at that very moment in the history of the nation. It's almost as if we're being given a clue that these, indeed, were the psalms of a family faithful in their successive generations.

You remember that yesterday, b&s, we suggested that this family was the most remarkable family that Israel ever saw in their history. I think that this is one of reasons why we can justly say that this is so. You think of the implication of these psalms. You see, God revealed His Word, did He not? to many faithful men down through time; but if this be true about the writing of these psalms, then, what we're being told is that Almighty God was pleased to grant successive revelations of His mind to the same family down through time.

What must that family have been like? that God was pleased to reveal Himself over and over again, to a father, to a son, to a grandson, to a great, great grandson. What unique relationship did this family have to Almighty God, b&s, that there was no family like this in the history of the nation? What these psalms will reveal to us is that that family had the same spirit and the same attitude through many generations.

So, what was their spirit? Well, it was related to the idea of the ark of God's presence amongst His people. That's what David had asked them to celebrate. Remember, in 1 Chronicles 16, he asked them to stand before the ark, and to celebrate the presence of that ark in Israel. Well, let me show you what happened!

If you come to 1 Chronicles 6, we're told this in terms of the circumstances of this family immediately after David had appointed them. In 1 Chronicles 6 and reading from verse 31, 'These are they whom David set over the service of song in the house of Yahweh, after that the ark had rest. And they ministered before the dwelling place of the tabernacle of the congregation with singing, UNTIL Solomon had built the house of Yahweh in Jerusalem: and THEN they waited on their office according to their order'. Do you know what that verse is telling us, b&s? Firstly this, when David came to Jerusalem, he brought the ark of God to Zion. Does anyone know how long David reigned in Jerusalem, not in Hebron, but in Jerusalem? Thirty-three years, absolutely correct. Do you know how many it took before Solomon completed the temple from the beginning of his reign? Eleven years we're told in 1 Kings 6 verse 38. Now, even if we deduct the first three or four years for the reign of David before he managed to bring the ark of God to Zion, what we can say from 1 Chronicles 6 verses 31 and 32 is this, that David left the house of Asaph in front of the ark and there they remained until Solomon had built the house, and then they waited in their successive orders. You see, I believe that verse is telling us that the house of Asaph sang alone before the ark for 40 years. For 40 years this family sang all by themselves before the ark of God's presence; and, I can tell you, b&s, that during that time, they thought long and hard about what it really represented. They had a crucial leap in their understanding. They understood, b&s, that the ark was only the physical token of a principle, that the ark symbolized an idea: that here between the cherubims was the manifestation of the divine Presence, but that the

Father's physical being was in the heavens. And this family, the house of Asaph, they came to understand the paradox of the ark and the paradox was this: this family learned that it was possible to physically approach the symbol of God's presence, and yet not find Him spiritually. But that the converse was also true, that they could spiritually enter into the very presence of God, and yet physically be unable to approach the One who dwelled in heaven above; and, even though they sang before the ark which, of course, they never saw, they learned, b&s, that whether they were with the ark or whether they were separated from it, that they were so imbued with the majesty of God as to live constantly in His presence, they learned the secret of how to draw near to God in their music of praise!

Our music, b&s, whatever it is that we sing to Almighty God, must help us to enter into the presence of God. That was the secret that this family had, in fact, discovered. So, the key to this idea was that the catalyst to drawing near to God was the principle of spiritual thought, not emotion, but spiritual thought. Their music was based upon divine principles.

So, here's the second of the great themes of the music of the house of Asaph, which is to do with the idea of the preeminence of principle. The songs of the house of Asaph revealed the genius of Hebrew poetry which lies in its rhythm of ideas, rather than in the rhythm of words or sounds. Although we haven't got time to look at it now, the whole of that psalm in 1 Chronicles 16, is a declaration of divine principle; oh, and do you know what the key word is in 1 Chronicles 16? Let's have a look at this. Here's the key word, you see, in the whole psalm that they used to sing before God, it's in verse 11: 'Seek Yahweh and His strength, seek His face continually'. See the word 'face' in that verse, it's the word 'paniyim' (6440). Now, some of you might know that the word 'paniyim' literally means 'the presence of God', you see, this is what the ark was all about, it was the presence of God amongst His people. Well, there's that word, in verse 11, it's also in verse 27, 'Glory and honour are in His paniyim'; it's in verse 29, 'bring an offering and come into His paniyim (the words 'before Him)'; it's in verse 30, 'Fear (in His paniyim) in His presence, 'before Him'; it's in verse 33, 'the trees of the wood shall sing out at 'the presence' (paniyim) of Yahweh. You see, this is the key word of their psalm. This psalm celebrated the truth of the presence of God amongst His people, and this family understood that principle more than any other family.

Now, you see, this is important in terms of our own songs of worship, because when we compare the biblical basis of songs of worship, the songs that the house of Asaph sang, and we look at modern spiritual music, or modern religious music, modern Christian music, we find in fact, there is a very great difference between the two. You see, the biblical idea of worship is where the emphasis falls on the words, not the music. The thoughts and ideas expressed are crucial, the music is an adjunct, but only an adjunct to infuse the words with feeling and power. The emphasis of the words, in turn, falls on the noblest ideals and the deepest truths found in the holy writ, where thought and sound thus combined, the effect is to quicken heart and mind, to the

exhilaration of the true worship of the Deity. It's spiritual principle, b&s, that will cause us to come into the presence of God with our singing.

But modern gospel music is fundamentally a corruption of this principle. Here, the emphasis falls on the music and not the words. That being so, the essential elements are, melody, rhythm and beat, whilst the words become subservient to the music itself. Feeling is a matter of heart and not mind, the words themselves, whilst not necessarily untrue, are often shallow, repetitious, banal, and disturbingly empty of hearty and vigorous declaration of doctrines, which form the very foundation of our love for God. We don't need, b&s, the music of the churches, because they don't know the secret of the house of Asaph, that it is spiritual thought that brings us into the presence of the Father and not merely the beating of emotional hearts unrelated to an appreciation of divine principles. That's not the heritage that we ought to be following!

Some of you may have seen this article before, but it's an intensely interesting one (if I can just but find it). It's an article written by a professor of a university here in Kentucky about 3 or 4 years ago, and he said this, (so this is a non-Christadelphian): 'Hymnody was an important part of Christadelphianism from its very beginning; and along with the journal, The Christadelphian, gave independent ecclesias a broader fellowship. Hymns reflected the essential doctrines and principles of their faith. These principles were anti-Trinitarianism. They also believed that God would establish His kingdom on earth through the return of Jesus to reign a thousand years in Jerusalem. Considering the scope of hymnic literature by Christadelphians, we might conclude that few branches of Christianity can claim such a close relationship between hymn writing and their own religious development and such a high percentage of hymnists in their membership. As their hymns become better known, this close relationship will reveal that the heritage and faith of Christadelphians has been enhanced by a strong emphasis on hymnody from their beginnings, to the present day'. Do you know what that article is saying, b&s? It's saying that the hymns that we sing from our Christadelphian hymn book express the truths we believe, and the doctrines we understand, and that those hymns have helped us preserve the heritage of the faith that we have. We ought to treasure that! We ought never to underestimate the power and the majesty of those hymns to help us to enter into the presence of God. We ought to be wary of modern gospel music which does not illustrate those principles of the truth.

Just by way of illustration let me give you one of those by way of conclusion. This is a modern hymn on the Atonement, it's a modern Christian piece:

See my Jesus on the cross the people crying
 Looking on a man who'd think that such a tragedy
 but what the world could not see
 is when they nailed Him to that tree
 it broke the chains of sin and set me free.

Love grew where the blood fell

Flowers of hope sprang up for men in misery
 Let me tell you sin died when the blood fell
 Oh, I'm so glad His precious blood covers me
 Thorns of violence, thorns of hate were growing wildly
 and through the pain that sin had caused
 you know it was so very plain to see
 but when the blood came streaming down the cross
 when my Saviour bled and died
 it broke the chains of sin and He set me free.

Love grew when the blood fell

Those flowers of hope sprang up for men in misery
 Oh sin died when the blood fell
 Oh I'm so glad His precious blood covers me.

Now let me tell you just a couple of interesting statistics about that particular piece. This is a hymn about the Atonement. Guess how many times God is mentioned in the hymn? Answer - Never! Guess how many times the Lord Jesus Christ is mentioned in the hymn? Answer - 6 times! Guess how many times 'I'm' mentioned in the hymn? Why 9 times! Well, after all, we should get our priorities right! and the whole focus of this hymn is what Christ can do for me! that He set me free, or I'm so glad what's been done for me; He paid the price and I'm free. That's the doctrine of substitution, isn't it? Do you know what's really sad about that? b&s, that's on a Christadelphian CD; that's not the heritage of Asaph. That's not divine principle taking us into the presence of the Father! we won't draw near to God with hymns that are very emotional but lack the substance of divine truth.

Now compare that with this piece that we know and love and sing heartily all around the ecclesial world and just look at the difference.

We praise thee Heavenly Father
 We thank thee, Lord, that still
 The Word of thy salvation
 Works out thy sovereign will.

Oh, where's the emphasis of this hymn, but on the majesty of the purpose of the Father being fulfilled. A hymn, b&s, that is saturated, in its successive verses, with scriptural allusions. Verse 1 tells us that the sovereign majesty of God's purpose has touched us, that we might manifest Him both now and in the age come. Verse 2 says we need to practice the positive and negative aspects of the Atonement in our own lives, death to the flesh and life to the Spirit. Verse 3 says, that the representative nature of our

Lord's offering means that we must identify with Him fully to share in the victory. So, here is a hymn that celebrates what we really believe about the Atonement. No other Christian church understands the Atonement as we do, b&s. Why would we want the hymns of the churches to celebrate this? We have our own! Who wrote that hymn, by the way? Bro. Charles Ladson. It's expressive of the truth, and when I sing that hymn, I come into the presence of God. Now this family, b&s, understood that secret, and God willing, in our subsequent studies, we will try to understand how they imparted that secret to their family.