

In 1701, Asano Takumi-no-Kami Naganori, Lord of Ako Prefecture, was ordered to appear at the Shogun's palace to perform a couple of ceremonial duties. Lord Asano was a most honorable and devout Confucian who stood on precepts very similar to those in the Bible. But an edict by the Shogun in 1635 kept Christianity out of Japan so it was impossible for Lord Asano to have even heard of Jesus.

Lord Asano was to be instructed in court etiquette and protocol by the Shogun's Chamberlain, one Kira Yoshinaka, a greedy and lecherous court official who expected to be bribed for everything he did. Lord Asano hated court corruption and refused, so Lord Kira continually browbeat Lord Asano, who kept his temper until Lord Kira insulted him publically. That was something the proud Asano could not allow so he drew his sword and attempted to kill Kira. He was prevented from doing so by nearby retainers.

This was no minor misdeed; drawing a sword in the Shogun's palace, regardless of provocation, was an automatic death sentence by seppuku (the ritual and public slitting of one's own stomach). Lord Asano knew he would die, be dishonored, his lands seized, his family disgraced and his samurai made homeless, but his honor allowed him to do nothing else so he accepted the judgment of the Shogun and committed seppuku.

Well, forty-seven of Lord Asano's samurai knew this had been an unjust judgment and they really honored their liege lord so they bound together in a blood oath to avenge their master's unjust death and restore his honor. It took them two years of planning, but in 1703 they stormed Lord Kira's palace, took his head, stuck it on a pole, and marched it through the capital city. They then laid Kira's head at the grave of Lord Asano and surrendered to authorities.

From the beginning, these forty-seven samurai knew they would be ordered to commit seppuku for killing the Shogun's Chamberlain, but they did it anyway because, from their doctrinal position, this was the most honorable thing they could do. All forty-seven gave their lives for their friend's honor.

Now let's cut to 2013 and any church in the land. Here we find Alfonzo Schmidlop or the like. And man, does he have his doctrine down. Alfonzo believes in the seven-year tribulation, election, knows the four spiritual laws, has said the sinners prayer, goes to church every Sunday, takes communion and debates all the above ad nauseam. But Alfonzo also sleeps with his neighbor's wife on Monday, steals from his employer, is a closet drunk, and is judgmental and unforgiving. So let me ask two questions:

1. Is Alfonzo going to heaven because he has his doctrine right?
2. Are those 47 samurai who did what was right going to hell because they didn't have any doctrine at all?

Those samurai didn't know anything about Jesus, but "greater love hath no man than this, that he lay down his life for his friend." And as the Lord told Samuel, "The Lord doesn't see as man sees. Man looks on the outward appearance (i.e., the doctrine), but the Lord looks upon the

heart.”

It appears that God is not looking for people with the right doctrine, but people with the right heart. There were plenty who had the right doctrine in Jesus’ day, but He chose to be with the no-pretense types, the publicans and sinners. Point being: We can know a lot about doctrine and debate our individual positions endlessly, but to know a little about the heart of God, ah, that is something worth striving for.

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