

What will you do when someone lovingly tells you that your ship is fast at anchor in the stormy sea and no longer moving toward the Promised Land? Will you listen carefully and ask them to show you what the "*Great Book of Navigation*" really says? Or, will you chide them about how they are on dangerous ground and encourage everyone else to loudly sing, "*We have an anchor....*"?

* Some churches claim the *Bible* as their only creed, yet they publish a statement of beliefs which is in practice used as a creed and test of membership though they adamantly deny it to be such. Though you give it some fancy deceptive name and dye its hair another color, a skunk's odor will still give its true identity away!

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The Great Journey An Allegory

There once was a people that set out on a voyage for a distant promised land. They built a great ship, though they were few, because of the uncertainty of how long the voyage would take. It was a sturdy ship and capable of weathering great storms. Yet, when a skilled crew were operating the sails and helm she moved with great speed.

As they began their journey, they went from port to port taking on supplies and passengers. Then the Captain said that they must head out into the deep, across the great and stormy sea toward their final destination. At first the ship moved swiftly and smoothly on its way. Then a great tempest overtook the ship from behind. The Captain ordered the sails to be reefed and a small storm sail to be put up at the bow of the ship so that they would continue on their way and lose no time.

But the original crew was no longer with the ship. The current crew did not know the ship and how well it was built. They began to fear and question the Captain's wisdom. He showed them "*The Great Book of Navigation*" and explained to them what they should do. But in fear of the fierce storm, they decided to cast out a great stone anchor and wait out the storm.

This anchor was so large that they did not know if they could safely cast it overboard without capsizing the ship. With great effort over many days, they managed to cast this great anchor overboard. The anchor line began to zip off the bow with

frightening speed. It seemed the anchor would never hit bottom. Would the rope hold? With a sudden snap, the whole ship shuddered and the bow plunged beneath the waves. Slowly the bow came back up. Some had been washed overboard never to be seen again. The ship had taken on much water and the raging sea was much deeper than the sailors had thought. They drifted wherever the wind blew.

At last the anchor caught firmly and the ship swung around to face into the storm. A great meeting was called. The Captain's most trusted sailors explained how they must cut loose the anchor and sail through the storm if they were to safely reach their destination. The inexperienced crew, full of fear, rebelled at such a "foolish idea". They began to loudly sing, "*We have an anchor that's strong and true....*"

The inexperienced crew did not understand that this part of the sea was in a perpetual storm that would not clear. Many ships had passed this way before and fell to the same fate once the original crew was no longer on board. Time passed. Supplies began to run low. People were hungry and wanted to know when they would reach their destination. The stormy winds continued to toss the ship giving the sensation of movement. The passengers did not realize that the ship had ceased to move.

The crew continually encouraged the people to earnestly sing, "*We have an anchor that's strong and true....*" to keep them from asking too many questions and finding out the truth. Occasionally, a restless passenger would discover "*The Great Book of Navigation*" and study it

carefully. After much reading, they would decide to go up on deck for some fresh air. Curious to see if perhaps they might be able to be the first to spot land, they would discover that the ship was fast at anchor in the stormy sea!

When they would question the crew as to why they were fast at anchor instead of sailing on to their destination, the crew would sternly rebuke them and warn them of the great dangers of doing such. When they would reply that the Captain's "*Great Book of Navigation*" says that this sea is always stormy and that you must sail through it, the crew would tell them that they weren't a sailor and they didn't know what they were talking about! If they began to talk with the passengers about their discovery, the crew would pull them aside and attempt to convince them they were wrong. If they persisted the crew would make a big fuss and rally the passengers to throw them overboard. Some were lost, some were rescued by small boats also heading to the Promised Land.

Over time the people were convinced that the ship was more important than the destination. They began to worship the ship, the anchor, and the ship's original crew instead of the One who invited them on the journey to be with Him.

Many of those who were thrown or jumped overboard often wondered if the rope would ever break, or if the ship would rot and sink first. Some came back many times trying to rescue friends and family members, but were often rejected as the whole ship loudly sang, "We have an anchor that's strong and true...."

My friends, brothers and sisters in Messiah, since the reformation began, many movements (ships) have begun the journey out of Babylon toward the Promised Land. Each one, after the passing of the original leaders, has been caught in stormy seas (doctrinal conflict) and in fear and panic that the ship would break apart and sink, has cast out a great stone anchor (doctrinal creed*), and ceased to move forward any further, often turning the ship to face the location from where they first came (Babylon).

Because the stormy winds continue to blow and the waves toss the ship to and fro, the passengers (church members) believe that they are still moving toward their original destination. Occasionally someone will be inspired to study the "*Great Book of Navigation*" (*the Scriptures*) carefully, and will have the eyes of their understanding opened to see the truth of the situation. If they dare to say anything about their discovery, they will at best be ignored, or more likely rebuked, if not disfellowshipped (thrown overboard), while the leadership encourages everyone to loudly sing, "*We have an anchor that's strong and true....*" ("*We don't need any new light! We have all the light we need! What we need is the Holy Spirit!*")

Brethren and Sisters, we either need to cut loose the anchor and get the ship sailing again (admit that we are fast at anchor and there is much new light to be found in the *Scriptures* – preferred), find another boat that truly is heading to the Promised Land, or as a last resort jump overboard and start swimming.