

The SCRIPTURE STANDARD

*Pleading for a complete return to Christianity
as it was in the beginning*

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* **A HAPPY NEW YEAR TO ALL OUR READERS** *

ALL THINGS NEW

In the months leading up to our new millennium there has been much excitement: including street-parties; firework displays; public holidays; new public buildings; dining out and the splashing out of large quantities of money by the government, local-authorities and individuals. Certainly it's not often that men see the start of a new millennium. The media have, for months, been encouraging all kinds of reviews of the last thousand years, and speculating upon the question as to who has been the most influential politician, monarch, scientist, artist, composer, soldier, architect, inventor, etc., and also pondering on what has been the most significant discovery or invention: i.e. was it electricity, radio, telephone, combustion engine, anaesthetics, X-rays etc. etc. **I don't propose to add to those cogitations** (even if I could). To me, this New Year feels the same as any other. More to the point would be the consideration of what we can *learn* from the last thousand years, and, of course, what we learn from history is that we never learn from history.

Man is still the same as ever he was, and seems to have made no moral progress *since time began*, let alone in the last thousand years. We've still got wars everywhere, violence, treachery, cruelty, robbery, murder, rape, deceit, debauchery, prostitution, abortion, drink and drugs, with very little sign of any change. Yet the world lives in hope. There is always a new tomorrow. In spite of man's dismal record in the past, man, strangely enough, continues to look forward to every New Year with great optimism, expecting better things. He even goes as far as to make New Year resolutions. A new Year beckons and if it's *new* it must surely be propitious and promising. Man is always attracted by that which is "New".

THE QUEST FOR THAT WHICH IS NEW

The world lives and thrives on that which is new. Indeed the central theme of media advertising (from junk foods to soap powders) is that "**It's new!**" We have, therefore, to apply a little intelligence in discerning exactly what is actually new, and what is just something old but in a new wrapper. There is, in fact one accredited school of thought that says that **nothing** is really new. One of the very wisest of men said, ". . . the eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor the ear with hearing. The thing that hath been, is that

which shall be, and that which is done is that which will be done; and there is no new thing under the sun. Is there anything whereof it may be said. See, this is new? it hath been of old time, which was before us." (Ecc. 1:9). This was Solomon's findings and is certainly largely true of the general levels of human endeavour.

As long ago as early in the first century Paul in Athens, came across philosophers and religious pundits who used to gather (like Speaker's corner in London, I suppose) to be enthralled or titillated by some new thing ("For all the Athenians which were there spent their time in nothing else, but either to tell, or to hear, some new thing") (Acts 17:21). So, even in the realms of religion, that which is new is exciting and widely sought after today. Consequently the cults are flourishing. Also popular are those whose meetings are punctuated with banging of tambourines and dancing in the aisles. We are back to the state of the Athenians and are only 'turned on' by the spectacular new thing. At one time men used to "search the Scriptures", to find God's truth. Nowadays people are searching the churches, hopefully to find one that will prove suitable to their taste. What are people looking for? Surely we should all be looking for the Church that Jesus built, and not merely one suitable and convenient to our plans and our lifestyle. Yes, people are looking for something "New."

OLD, YET EVER NEW

I am sure that a feeling predominates in the world that the Bible is an old book (which it is) and is, therefore, a thing of the past: a closed history of a derelict nation written in a dead language. The Bible certainly records ancient history but it has always been ahead of its time (even stating scientific facts before men discovered them). It is not dead, it is dynamic. It is full of "things old and new" (Matt 13:52). God's last testament is called the NEW testament and is so dynamic and futuristic that it will never age. It can never get out of date. The N.T. abounds in new concepts and new revelations and contains the very last word of God to man, and so it can never get old. It will never be added to, or subtracted from, and will usher mankind into the next world. God's word is not only perennial, it is eternal, and although heaven and earth are destined to pass away, God's words will abide and prevail. God, in His unlimited grace, has opened up a new and living way in the reconciliation of man to Himself: not just New but living (dynamic).

A NEW AND LIVING WAY

There are, of course, "new" things in the N.T. It introduces us to a whole variety of 'new' concepts, quite unknown to the Jews.

The Jews had had many minor Covenants, and a National (Mosaic) Covenant, but today, since Christ, there is a NEW Covenant which embraces everybody (not just Jews but all other races of men) and which is offered to the world, entirely free of charge, as the gracious gift of God. All that is asked of men is that they accept it.

The gospel of Christ is also 'new' for it offers "a new and living way" (Heb. 10:12) back into fellowship with God.

There is also a completely unique and 'new' opportunity for men and women to be reborn. This truth not only astounded Nicodemus as being something quite impossible, but has had a similar effect on every generation since. However, it must be true to say that most men and women, have, at some point in their career, surveyed the mess they have made of their own lives, and sometimes the wreckage they have made of the lives of others, and have longed for the opportunity to cancel all that has gone before, and to start again from scratch. To start life again with a clean sheet. This desire is not just some kind of forlorn pipedream: it is eminently possible. Indeed it is one of the many

basic elements of the 'good news' of the gospel: i.e. the forgiveness of sins, and the opportunity to start life again with a clean sheet. Upon acceptance of Christ, and upon our resolve (or repentance) to conform our lives to Christ's will, we can literally wash away our past lives in the bath of regeneration, and **arise to walk in NEWNESS of life.** (Rom. 6:4). As Paul himself was urged by Ananias, "**Why tarriest thou? Arise and be baptised (immersed) and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord.**" (Acts 22:16). Old ways must be dispensed with, and a new way of life be embraced in Christ. Paul said, "**PUT OFF all these: anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication out of your mouths. Lie not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the OLD man with his deeds. And put on the NEW man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of Him that created him: Where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free: but Christ is all and in all. PUT ON therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering. Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye.**" (Col. 3:8-13).

Thus followers of Christ will become "New creatures" by the "New birth" (for we must be born again John 3:3-7) and adopt new knowledge, new thoughts, new standards, new attitudes, new aspirations, new hopes and new conduct. Many aspects of our old lives must be "Put off" and many better patterns of behaviour must be "Put on".

"NEW" ATTITUDES

To become a follower of Christ, and to take Him at His word in faith, would certainly transform our lives and make for a **very happy new life.** Our attitudes would most certainly change.

Our Attitude to LIFE would change: and our lives would take a completely new direction. We would seek to consider others, and live unselfish lives. Jesus came to give men life and to give it more abundantly. In seeking to copy His life we would become like Him: happy within ourselves and harmless to others. Instead of being **conformed** to this world, we would endeavour to be **transformed**, by the renewing of our minds under the influence of the Spirit of God.

Our attitude to PEOPLE would change: We would seek their good (not their goods) at all times. We would not lie to them, or steal from them, or slander them, or cheat them, or exploit them in any way: but rather we would seek to help them along life's way. Jesus taught that we should "**love our neighbours as ourselves**" and that we should do unto others as we would want them to do unto us. If everybody followed this golden rule what a happier world it would be.

Our attitude to MONEY would change: Everybody needs money and we would still have to work to get it, but it would never become our God. Indeed the richest men are usually the most unhappy. Paul reminds us that just as we brought nothing into this world, it is just as certain that we shall take nothing with us when we leave it: except our good works. There is nothing wrong with money: it is **love of money** that is the root of all forms of evil. Human greed certainly causes all kinds of evil, unhappiness, cruelty and death.

Our attitude to WORRY would change: It is difficult not to worry in a troubled and stressful environment, but at least Christ's followers have the resources of Christ behind them. They can lean upon Him. The apostle Peter says that we should "**cast our**

cares upon Him, for He careth for us" (1 Peter 5:7). Paul urges us **"In nothing be anxious, but in everything, by prayer and supplication, let your requests be made known unto God."** Jesus also pointed out that although sparrows are cheap in the market-place, the death of one does not go un-noticed; **"Fear ye not therefore, ye are of more value than many sparrows."** And the very hairs of your head are all numbered.

Our attitude to DEATH would change: and we would see it not so much as the end of existence, but the gateway to a higher and happier life. The cynic says that if Christians think so highly of heaven why do they seem so reluctant to die and go there. We have, I suppose, a natural fear of death and our sense of self-preservation makes us avoid ill-health and dangerous situations. The Lord has also given Christians **work to do** and they are supposed to be engaged in it during their life-time. Paul says that Jesus took upon Himself our flesh, and blood, that He might die a physical death, and in the process, **"destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil. And deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage"** (Heb. 2:14) And so Jesus, by conquering death, has removed that fear, and released us from a life-time dread of death. **"Oh death where is thy sting: O grave where is thy victory"**. **"Blessed (happy) are those who die in the Lord."**

Our FUTURE OUTLOOK would change: and instead of uncertain and fairly aimless lives, we would have new purpose and hopes. Christ's followers are **"looking for that blessed HOPE and the glorious appearing of the Great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ."** (Tit. 2:13) **"Which HOPE we have as an anchor to the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which entereth that within the veil"** (Heb. 6:19) Jesus said, **"I go to prepare a place for YOU"** . . . and Paul assures us that we can look forward each day to **"the HOPE which is laid up for you IN HEAVEN, whereof ye heard before, in the word of truth of the gospel."** (Col. 1:15).

Obviously upon becoming Christians our attitude to **nearly everything** would change, and **"new creatures"** would have **"new"** values.

BEHOLD I MAKE ALL THINGS NEW

Not only is the N.T. full of new and wonderful things but it can also effect great works of personal re-newal in those who embrace it. God says, **"Behold I make all things new"** (Rev. 21:5). That's a promise, ever in the present tense, and one which can never lapse or age. And on a very personal level, man also can be **"born anew"** and experience a rebirth: the **new birth**. Born of water and the spirit. **"Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a NEW CREATURE: old things are passed away: behold all things ARE BECOME NEW"** so says Paul (2 Cor. 5:17). No matter how low we may have sunk into sin: no matter how deep-dyed and tainted with evil we may become, there is always the opportunity for us to arise (like the prodigal son) and return to our heavenly Father. We cleanse ourselves in the watery bath of regeneration and arise, as new creatures, to walk in a completely newness of life. As Paul says, **"old things are passed away, behold all things are become new."**

For those who have already become 'new creatures' and who are 'in Christ' there lies a responsibility to **"walk in newness of life."** (Rom. 6:4). Old things are passed away and all things are become new. The old style of life must go, and a new and better must begin and continue. We must serve God, not in the oldness of the letter but in the **newness** of spirit (Rom. 7:6). Each new day gives us **new** opportunities to live better lives than we did the day before: for God's mercies are **"new every morning"** (Lam. 3:23). Each year, likewise, is one of those milestones on life's journey, where by we can

pause awhile, reflect upon the year gone past, and gaze upon the new year stretching out before us. As the challenge of this brand new year beckons to us may we make a really determined effort to make 2,000 a very prosperous and profitable year in the Saviour's service.

Jesus offers YOU; a "Happy New Life".

EDITOR.

JESUS HAD A REASON

Why did Jesus conduct His life in the character-pattern that He did? Why did He say the things He did? Why did He establish His Church with the patterns of worship and organization that He did? Was He merely suiting His message to the needs and situations of the first-century people, or was it more fundamental than that, i.e., a message for all generations in all lands? All of these questions - plus hundreds of others like them - eventually merge into the realization that our conjectures about *why* Jesus chose to do as He did must give way to sincere allegiance to what He *did teach* for His followers. The *why* results in varied and conflicting answers - so much so that very often the will of the Lord is ignored and/or disobeyed.

Time and again in the first century the hearers of Jesus were disturbed and were in disagreement over His statements. He just didn't say what they thought He should have said. And they heard him say things they thought He should not have said. Sometimes they, because of their own conditioning, heard him say things He really didn't say. Often they were incapable of grasping what He did say. It would seem that we have the advantage of the full gospel record to be read in the New Testament, making possible correct conclusions concerning *what* the revealed will of the Lord is. We may never know *why* Jesus made the choices He did, but we can commit ourselves to learning *what* He ordained for His followers.

JESUS CHOSE TO DO THINGS A CERTAIN WAY

His Life-Style. That Jesus chose in attitude of life to give little emphasis to things, that the highly materialistic view of so many of the religionists of His time was not part of His personality, must surely be something upon which all of us agree. His "**The foxes have holes, and the birds of the heaven have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay His head**" (Matt. 8:20) pictured His life-style as He chose it to be. Then in His statement He enunciated it as relating to His followers (vv. 18,19). This very quality of His life, therefore, was intended to tell us something. He could have chosen to live with a different emphasis - *but* this is the non-materialistic character He portrayed. Was He but fitting into the life-style in which He had been reared, and was He thus demonstrating that from any background true leadership is possible? Or was He fitting into the social order of the great majority of His fellows, and thereby making possible an empathetic hearing of His message? (1 Cor. 9:19-22). Though those conclusions may have resulted, the basic truth is that He purposely chose this life-style - one entirely consistent with His "**Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon the earth**" (Matt. 6:19-34). At this point we may argue about degree and extent *but not* about the heart of the message.

His Father's Will. The very spirit of the Christ was that of ever doing the will of His Father. So to say that "Jesus chose to do things a certain way" was to say that "certain way" was God's way. That's how it was when Jesus submitted to John's baptism. "**Suffer it now: for thus it becometh us to fulfill all righteousness**" (Matt.

3:13-15). Said He.

"The Son can do nothing of himself, but what He seeth the Father doing: for what things soever He doeth, these the Son also doeth in like manner . . . I can of myself do nothing . . . I seek not mine own will, but the will of him that sent me (John 5:19,30).

So He could say, **"If ye knew me, ye would know my Father also"** (John 8:19), as well as **"I am the way, and the truth, and the life: no one cometh unto the Father, but by Me"** (John 14:6).

CHRIST'S REVEALED WAY

Not Social Conscience. In our "modern" today we often hear this kind of reasoning: "When the words of the New Testament were written they were ideally suited to meet the needs of the people of that time. But there have been many changes since that day, and the Lord expects us to apply the general principles of the book to the needs of people in their current circumstances. There is no other way for the Bible to be relevant today." Think. Ponder. Reason. People of the first century were very different from each other, culture mores varied from one nationality to another, from one community to another. Yet the Jews *and* Gentiles, the rich *and* the poor, the educated *and* the uneducated, the masters *and* the slaves, the old *and* the young all were called upon to accept *one* Saviour, in *one* faith, by *one* baptism, and to be part of *one* body of believers. The one and only gospel was not suited to the circumstances of the people - rather, all the people were brought into a oneness (Eph. 4:1-6). That is a possibility now as it was then, but "possibility" or "practicality" is not the criterion for coming to the conclusion that Christ's will and His will alone must be obeyed - without modification, substitution, addition, deletion. Here is the key:

"And Jesus came to them and spake unto them saying, All authority hath been given unto me in heaven and on earth. Go ye therefore, and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I command you: and lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world." (Matt. 20: 18-20).

Hear: **"And hereby we know that we know him, if we keep His commandments"** (1 John. 2:3); **"Whosoever goeth onward and abideth not in the teaching of Christ, hath not God: He that abideth in the teaching, the same hath both the Father and the Son"** (2 John 9).

Not Traditions of Men. Had disciples of the first century been granted the privilege of "adapting" the gospel message - including the worship, government, and morals of the early Church - to the "understood" needs of the people, the Church of our Lord would have been far different from what it came to be under the direction of divinely inspired teachers who proclaimed the will of their Master (John 14:26; 16:13; Mark 16:20). How their personal concepts and community customs would have varied from the high standards of the Lord (see Matt. 19:9-12). How their family and religious backgrounds would have led to an adulteration of Christianity with Judaism and paganism (see Col. 2:8-33). Let's ever heed the warning:

"Take heed lest there shall be any one that maketh spoil of you through His philosophy and vain deceit, after the traditions of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ". (Col. 2:8).

The words of Christ constitute **His will** - not simply recommendations - to His followers.

PROPOSED ANT-MISSIONARY LEGISLATION IN ISRAEL

Brother Brian J. Boland sends the following information about recent pre-proposed legislation in Israel's parliament (The Knesset) to curb missionary work in Israel and the conversion of Jews. He feels that readers should be aware of "the way the wind is blowing" in that country with regards to missionary work.

Bro. Boland received the following from L. Jacobs of the "Messianic Action Committee" (as abridged by me to restricted space - Ed.).

SUMMARY OF PRE-PROPOSED BILL

Unfortunately, we need to inform you of a proposed new legislative initiative. Below is a synopsis of the pre-proposed bill being circulated for support by various members of Knesset.

Anyone convicted of soliciting or persuading another person, even indirectly, to change his religion would receive a 5-year prison sentence. This includes anyone who gives or promises another person to benefit (in any form) to persuade him to convert, and also includes a person who agrees to receive such benefit, even if it is through another person. This 5-year sentence would be doubled to a 10-year sentence if: a) the one who was persuaded is a minor or needy person, or b) the one who was persuaded did change his religion, or c) the one doing the soliciting used deceptive or misleading means.

It is immaterial for the purpose of the proposed criminal prison sentence if, to the religion or religious testimony of the person persuaded, there is no validity to such conversion, or if the violation occurred outside of the country, provided that the person whose religion is to be changed resides in Israel.

A 3-year sentence would be conferred upon anyone who solicits through advertisement. A person would receive a 1-year prison sentence simply for holding such an advertisement, without lawful justification.

A 1-year prison sentence would be imposed upon anyone who receives or brings a minor or a needy person to a location in which prayer or other religious activities occur (which are different from the religion of such person) or upon one who holds such activities.

A minor or needy person will not be allowed into an educational institution, youth hostel or club in Israel that is under the auspices of another religion. "Another religion" is defined as a religion that is not the religion of the religious community to which the individual belongs according to Israeli Law.

KNESSET INTERNAL AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

On November 10, 1999 a meeting was held at the Knesset Internal Affairs Committee to discuss new anti-missionary legislation. Precipitating this gathering were reports of widespread baptism being performed upon Jewish people. In particular, the activities of *Grace and Truth* Congregation, a long-established congregation founded and led by Baruch Maoz.

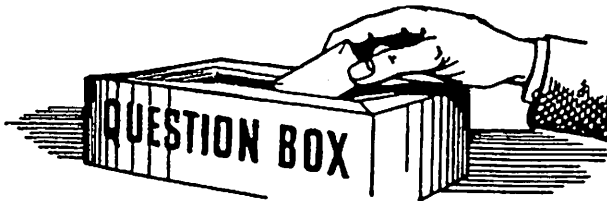
Leading the drive for introduction of legislation was MK Rabbi Porush (National Religious Party). The Chairman of the Internal Affairs Committee is David Azoular (Shas Political Party), who stated that the Committee had gathered to study, discuss and find ways to deal with the "missionary menace threatening our people". Although some

political parties signed government coalition agreements precluding private member legislative bills, MK Porush indicated there would be no problem passing a Preliminary Reading (first of four votes) introducing a proposed law and obtaining the necessary votes, even without support from the Barak Government. Individual member votes would be solicited beyond the religious parties.

A film was shown by one of the anti-missionary societies dramatizing the perceived danger of baptism. According to Baruch Maoz, the purpose of the meeting "was to discuss two subjects: 1) the efforts on the part of missionaries to baptize 400 Jews and 2) police obstruction of efforts to restrict missionary activity in Israel. (The actual number of baptisms at issue was 12.)"

Police Inspector Yosef Cohen, who had been asked to infiltrate Messianic groups, was asked why there was not more vigilance against the baptism menace. He related that twenty years ago the United Christian Council in Israel secured an agreement that no investigation of Messianic activity could take place without the prior approval of the Attorney General. He also stated that, in recent years, there have been sixty complaints against the Orthodox for aggressive religious persuasion, and only thirty against Messianic groups. No evidence was found of attempted bribery by Messianic believers, except a single occasion of the parents of a child who gave hearsay of 30,000 NIS allegedly being offered to their child to convert.

Any further information can be obtained from Bro. Boland, The Croft, 1 Chapel Lane, Midgley, Halifax, HX2 6XG.



Conducted by
Frank Worgan

"Would you please comment on the vexed question of giving or refusing the Lord's supper emblems to those (who are) non-members of the church? e.g. those visiting from other denominations?"

Let me begin by saying that I am not comfortable with the questioner's use of the term 'other denominations'! I would like to believe that it is a 'slip of the pen', so to speak, and that he knows that the Church of which we read in the New Testament scriptures is not a denomination among the denominations.

THE PENTECOSTAL EXAMPLE

As for the question itself; the scriptures themselves, in Acts 2:41-42, make it very clear for whom the Lord's Supper is intended, since the passage informs us who sat at the Lord's Table when the Church was first established.

It tells us that, on the Day of Pentecost, after Peter's presentation of the Gospel and after his answer to the question asked by those who were convicted by what they had heard, (v.37), those who believed and accepted his message were baptized (v.38) and, ***"they continued steadfastly (literally, 'they kept going on') in the apostles' doctrine and the fellowship and the breaking of the bread and the prayers,"*** (v.42).

You will notice that I have placed the definite article before each of these four items, because that is where it belongs. We should read, ***'the . . . doctrine, the fellowship, the breaking of the bread, the prayers'*** because each item has its own

special significance and importance.

You will also notice *who 'kept going on'* in these acts of worship. "*They*" - that is, those who, having been convicted by the Gospel, and repenting, had been baptized and who, in this manner, had been '*added that day*' (v.41).

TO WHAT HAD THEY BEEN 'ADDED'?

Look at the last verse in the chapter, for there is the answer. The literal rendering of the latter part of v.47 reads, "*And the Lord added those who were being saved daily to the assembly.*"

The word which is rendered '*assembly*' is the word '*ekklesia*', which, as every Bible student knows, is the word describing the '*called out*', and which, in our English translations, gives us the word '*Church*'. So, this is what we find,

1. Those who received Peter's word and were baptized were added, by the Lord, (v.41), to the Church.
2. The Church is the '*house of God*' (1 Tim. 3:15).
3. And in '*the house of God*' is where the Lord placed what Paul describes as '*the Lord's Table*' (1 Cor. 10:21).

There were many devout, religious people present that day, when Peter preached the Gospel, but only those who responded to his message steadfastly continued in obedience to the Lord Himself in '*the breaking of the bread*'.

AN IMPORTANT DISTINCTION

It may be as well, at this point, to correct a fairly common misunderstanding.

That term, '*the breaking of the bread*' in v.42, must not be confused with '*breaking bread*' in v.46. The expression, '*the breaking of the bread*', in v.42 is used to refer to the Lord's Supper, whilst '*breaking bread*' in v.46, is a '*present participle*' referring to the eating of the daily meal.

I point this out because sometimes an attempt is made to use v.46 as an argument in favour of the *daily* celebration of the Lord's Supper, and that is a mistaken use of the verse and is not what the passage teaches.

THE CORINTHIAN TEACHING

In 1 Cor. 11:23, Paul reveals that the instructions which he delivered to the Church at Corinth concerning the celebration of the Lord's Supper, were given to him by the Lord Himself, to be delivered to the Church and obeyed by the Corinthians who had already been '*baptized into the name of Christ*', (chap. 1:13). Note that in this verse Paul uses the word '*eis*' = '*into*', and not '*en*' = '*in*'.

That is to say that the Corinthians had, by their baptism, entered *into* a relationship with Christ. They had been '*baptized into the one body*' (chap. 12:13), which is the Church (Col. 1:18).

Remember that, according to 1 Cor. 10:16, the drinking of the cup and the breaking of the bread constitute a '*communion*' - a '*koinonia*' - a joint-participation or fellowship - in the body and blood of the Lord.

It follows, therefore, that, unless a person has confessed a personal faith in the Lord Jesus, with all that the confession of faith involves, and has died with Christ and been '*buried with Him in baptism into death*' rising to walk with Him '*in newness of life*', (Rom. 6:4-5), no matter how '*religious*' or '*morally good*' he might be, he cannot, with scriptural approval, take the bread or the fruit of the vine, which represent the blood of the perfect sacrifice offered for sin.

If one does not come, by faith, to the blood of Christ when being '*united with Him in a death like His*' (Rom. 6:5-6), I confess I do not know when we do come to it.

THE LORD'S COMMISSION

Notice, also, that in Acts 20:7, it was *'the disciples'* who came together on the Lord's Day to *'break the bread'*. These were people who had become 'disciples' according to the Lord's Commission, found in Matt. 28:19, "*Go, make disciples, baptizing them into the name . . .*" There it is again! - that word '*eis*' = 'into' - the preposition of movement, which indicates a change of position.

In this verse also, the word '*baptizing*' is a 'participle of manner', which tells how the thing commanded is to be accomplished. For example, we might say, '*Go, make soldiers, swearing them in*'. The phrase '*swearing them in*' indicates how men are to be made *soldiers*. It is a 'participle of manner'.

Similarly, '*Go, make disciples, baptizing them into the Name of . . .*' tells how believers become '*disciples*' in the true sense of the word.

It follows, therefore, that if a person has not been baptized:-

- a) '*in the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ* - ('*en*' is the static participle, which here means '*by the authority of the Name of Jesus Christ*') and,
- b) '*into the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit*', that person is not a 'Christian' in the scriptural sense, since, as we see in Acts 11:26, it was those who had become '*disciples*' who were called '*Christians*'.

WHAT ABOUT THE 'VISITORS'

If the 'visitors' to whom the question refers, have submitted to the Lord Jesus, by belief of, and obedience to the Gospel, they have the right to sit at the Lord's Table, because they are invited by the Lord Himself.

If they come as members of a religious body which does not acknowledge the Lord's Commission, or which denies the importance or necessity, of obedience to Him in baptism, we are compelled to say, with great regret, that the Lord's Table is not the place for them.

"HARD TO APPLY!"

I realize, of course, that whilst the *teaching* of the Word on this subject is so plain that it cannot be misunderstood, congregations do sometimes find difficulty in applying it when a visitor (stranger) enters the worship-meeting. This has meant that,

- 1) in some places, the situation has been dealt with, by conveniently turning a blind eye to his presence,
- 2) or by going to the other extreme and treating his presence in a manner which has given offence.
- 3) And it has also been known for a visitor to find the emblems actually being passed to him, so that he takes the Lord's Supper without anyone realizing at the time, that he is, in fact, not a 'baptized believer'.

1. In the first case; the presence of ANY visitor to the worship-meeting - whether baptized or unbaptized - should never be ignored. It is surely out of keeping with spirit of Christ for anyone to enter our services without being made to feel the warmth of a friendly welcome.

2. In the second case; if we have reason to think that the visitor is not a baptized believer, it is the responsibility of whoever is leading the Church in the celebration of the Feast, to point out, in a simple and dignified manner, for whom it is intended. A few well-chosen words are infinitely more appropriate than the irrelevant 'sermonettes' that are sometimes presented before the emblems are distributed.

3. To speak meaningfully about the Supper is not difficult, when we take the occasion seriously. When this is done, the visitor understands whether he should

partake or refrain, and it also serves to prevent the recurrence of the insensitive and hurtful behaviour of 'servers' which some of us have witnessed in the past, which contributes nothing to the solemnity and dignity of the Lord's Supper, when the bread and fruit of the vine have been unceremoniously snatched out of a visitor's hands.

4. Whilst I am absolutely convinced that the scriptures teach that an unbaptized person has no place at the Lord's Table, I am also sure that, if he *does* partake, his action is not powerful enough to *desecrate* the Supper, or harm those who rightfully sit at the Table. The harm that is done, is done to himself, just as it is in the case of a *baptized* person who '*eats and drinks unworthily.*' (1 Cor. 11:29).

I imagine that, if we were able today to put our question to Paul, he might reply, "*What! Is there not among you someone wise enough, discreet enough, and kind enough, to show to the visitor Acts 2:38, and verses 41 and 42, and to explain that this is how it was done when the Church began, and how we are seeking to do it today?*"

I suggest that, when we are truly convinced about the *principle* governing participation at the Supper, the *practice* becomes less of a problem.

In this connection, please read **1 John 5:3**.

(Questions for the "Question Box", to Frank Worgan, 5 Gryfebank Way, Houston, Renfrewshire PA6 7NZ. Scotland.)

SOLOMON'S MINES (OF WISDOM)

Someone has said that the book of Psalms teaches us how to get along with God, while the book of Proverbs teaches us how to get along with people.

The Psalms bring us into the "heavenliness" while **Proverbs** sets our feet in the grassroots of human life. If we take a look at these books of scripture in this light, a new insight into the word of God will be ours.

It is said that the Proverbs were mostly written by Solomon, 'the wisest man who ever lived'. He enjoyed great material wealth and a rich spiritual heritage, passed on to him from his father King David.

His advice on daily living is the solid practical advice of someone who has fathomed the problems, and solved all the enigmas of life. Solomon begins by listing **the benefits** of studying the same Book of Proverbs. "**The Proverbs of Solomon, the son of David, King of Israel: To know wisdom and instruction, to discern the sayings of understanding, to receive instruction in wise behaviour. Righteousness, justice and equity; to give prudence to the naive; to the youth, knowledge and discretion.**" (Prov. 1:1-4).

Few books can make this claim. A study of the Book can only make us better and much wiser, persons. One benefit is that we will "**know wisdom and instruction.**" Wisdom is looking at life from God's point of view. Too often we look at life from our own rather selfish point of view, and consequently fail miserably.

A second benefit, is that we will learn "**to discern, the sayings of understanding.**" If wisdom is looking at life from God's view-point, **understanding** is responding to life from God's view-point. As a benefit, we receive instruction in wise behaviour, righteousness, justice and equity. The term "receive" suggests action, or mobility, and clearly involves making some effort to get into the mind of Solomon.

Another benefit is that we will gain "**Prudence, knowledge and discretion**"; surely something we could all profit by. Solomon puts no age limit on the beneficiaries of his wisdom, albeit verse 4 is directed mainly at the young. But grey hairs do not

always go hand in hand with wisdom. We are constantly bombarded with the world's wisdom and so it is doubly essential that we can identify the real thing.

Towards the end of chapter one, Solomon takes the abstract principle of wisdom and personalises it, and from this we can make three important observations.

1. **Wisdom is available** (v. 20,21,23).

"wisdom shouts in the street, she lifts her voice in the square; at the head of the noisy street she cries out at the entrance of the gates in the city, she utters her sayings . . ."

"Turn to my reproof, behold I will pour out my spirit on you. I will make my words known to you."

Thankfully God did not empty His supply of wisdom solely upon Solomon. Not a bit of it. It is still there and available to us every time we open our Bibles and read Proverbs.

2. **Wisdom can be spurned** (v. 24,25).

"I called and you refused; I stretched out my hand, and no one paid attention and you neglected all my counsel and did not want my reproof."

Our problem is not over-exposure to wisdom. Our problem is in not experiencing it! We walk daily by that out-stretched hand, yet many of us still prefer to go our own way ignoring that wisdom which is from above (James 3:17).

3. **When Wisdom is rejected the results are always bitter** (v. 26,32).

We reject God's admonition at our peril for **"When they call upon Me I will not answer: and though they seek Me early they shall not find Me. For they hated knowledge and did not choose the fear of the Lord. They would have none of My counsel: they despised all My reproof. Therefore shall they eat the fruit of their own way, and be filled with their own devices."** Man is certainly the victim of his own foolishness, the martyr to his own indiscretions. All the world's problems can be traced to a rejection of God's counsel and reproof. We all have to lie on beds of our own making.

Quite often in our search for wisdom, understanding and human discretion we overlook the fact that this wonderful Book of Proverbs is crammed absolutely full with the profundities of such a sage as Solomon, and his marvellous sayings go largely ignored. The education of any man is quite incomplete without a working knowledge of this matchless Book. **"The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge: but fools despise wisdom and instruction."**

A.P. SHARPE, Newtongrange.

PERSONAL COMMITMENT

During the days of the infamous American Civil War, a humourist named Artemus Ward boasted. "I have already given two cousins to the war, and I stand ready to sacrifice my wife's brother." Needless to say that Ward's name is not remembered alongside the names of Grant and Lee as a major figure in that conflict.

Jestingly Ward admitted the same lack of commitment which characterises so many of us in the Church. We are willing to go anywhere, do anything, give all - just so long as no effort, no expense, no sacrifice is required. We talk much and do little, which brings us shamefully close to the hypocrisy of the Pharisees who said and did not.

The world is dying without Christ, yet we stand ready to sacrifice our brothers-in-law, our cousins, the elders, the preachers - anyone but ourselves - to the cause of evangelism. The philosophy which says "Let George do it" suits us just fine, so long as our name is not George. We rationalise, we make excuse, procrastinate - and all too

often, that's all we do. Knowing what is right and doing what is right are two different things.

Try as we might, we can't serve the Lord by proxy. We can't excuse our lethargy by hiring men to do the Christian works for us that we ought to be doing ourselves. To save the souls of men, God saw the need to become personally involved with them through the incarnation, life, and death of His Son. If we, through Christ, hope to help to save the souls of men, we too must involve ourselves personally.

Your next door neighbour may not listen to a preacher, but he just might listen to you. You can't teach? I think you can. But even if you can't, you can at least invite your neighbour, your friend, your classmate, your loved one to come with you to worship services where teaching takes place.

The question is not, "Can you?" but "Will you?" You see, it all depends upon the level of our commitment.

D. KEYES.

SCRIPTURE READINGS

Feb. 6	Ezekiel 3	Revelation 10
Feb. 13	Ezekiel 40:1-19	Revelation 11:1-18
Feb. 20	Job 1:6-22	Revelation 11:19 to 12:17
Feb. 27	Daniel 7:1-14	Revelation 13

CHAPTER 10

We read in this chapter of "a little book or scroll open" (2). These words speak to me of a revealed message i.e. the gospel of Christ. The "rainbow" (1) is a symbol of the fidelity of God's promises and the "feet as pillars of fire" (1) speak of God's trampling judgment. The "seven thunders" (4) have reference to opposition to God's plans and purposes. The Reformation was all about giving the world an open book - the Bible - and the opposition came from Rome, the seven-hilled city. "1) *The angel holds in his hand an open book.* 2) *He calls attention to it in a loud voice.* 3) *The seven thunders launch their thunderbolts against the reception of the open book by the world.* 4) *John is about to record their words, but is forbidden.* 5) *The angel affirms with an oath that the duration of the power and terror of the seven thunders shall be short and that soon the seventh angel shall sound universal redemption and triumph.* 6) *John is bid-*

den to take the book. 7) *He receives it and is told to eat it or to receive and devour its contents.* 8) *Its words are sweet like of honey.* 9) *There are bitter effects that follow"* (B.W. Johnson).

We read also of the "mystery of God" in this chapter (7). John mentioned it at a time when the world was in pursuit of mystery religions. But we have to be very careful here. The "mystery of God" has to do with the hidden wisdom of God now revealed. It does not have to do with things mysterious. In his epistle to the Colossians, Paul wrote: ". . . even the mystery which has been hid from ages and from generations, but is made manifest to His saints: to whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory . . ." (1.26-27). To the Ephesians he wrote: "If you have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which is given to me for you: how that by revelation He made known unto me the mystery; (as I wrote before in few words, whereby when we read, you may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ) which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto His holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit that the Gentiles should be fellow heirs and of the same body and partakers of His promise in Christ by

the gospel . . ." (3:2-6).

CHAPTER 11

It is important in this chapter to identify the two witnesses (3). Many suggestions have been made by commentators - the Law and the Prophets, Enoch and Elijah, Elijah and Moses, John the Baptist and Jesus, Peter and Paul, etc. Personally, I see the two witnesses as God's two covenants revealed in the Old Testament Scriptures and the New Testament Scriptures, which constitute God's word. The reference to the two olive trees and the two lampstands (4) immediately brings to mind Zechariah chapter 4. The two witnesses are, like the lamp fed with olive oil, sources of light. The period of forty two months or one thousand two hundred and sixty days are again mentioned here (2,3). Remember, a day stands for a year in prophecy (Ezekiel 4:6). So God's word was hindered and restrained for this period, which probably ran from 532 to 1792 A.D. By 532 A.D. the Papacy was completely established and by 1792 A.D. the French Revolution was underway. For all those years men were generally not allowed to read and understand the Bible for themselves. The three and a half days or years (9,11) has reference, I believe, to a period when the word of God was under a most determined attack by its enemies. It should be noted that the Reign of Terror began in France in 1793 A.D. The next three years, especially, produced a savage war against the Bible and God. I recall reading about this in Thomas Carlyle's famous book *The French Revolution*. In it, he wrote of the rise of atheism and the destruction of Religion itself. But the two witnesses could not be killed off. They ultimately triumphed. Voltaire and Rousseau are dead, but the Bible is alive and energetic. Praise God!

CHAPTER 12

I think this is one of the great chapters of the Bible. "the woman" (1) is a symbol of God's people; "the moon" (1) refers to the Jewish dispensation; "the

sun" (1) symbolises the light of the Son of Righteousness; and "a crown of twelve stars" (1) has reference to the twelve apostles. Verse 2 sees us in heaven's delivery room. Satan is waiting to destroy any increase in the Lord's Church (4). We read of the Church being in the wilderness for twelve hundred and sixty years under God's protection. I must point out here that the Church never went out of existence. There was a remnant (17) that remained faithful. I know some people who think that Alexander Campbell restored the New Testament Church. He did no such thing. What the great man did was to restore the ancient order to the Church. God has always had His faithful witnesses on earth. Their struggle against Satan is similar to that which once took place in heaven itself (7-9). I love these words: "And they overcame him (Satan) by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death" (11). The dragon (the powerful persecuting personality or Satan) never gives up in his war against God's followers or those who "keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ" (17). He is a deceitful foe (9), but he is not an invincible one. His days are numbered, as we shall clearly see in future verses of this great book. Meanwhile, brothers and sisters in the Lord, let us continue to "be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walks about, seeking whom he may devour: whom resist steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world" (1 Peter 5:8-9).

CHAPTER 13

We read in this chapter of a beast that had seven heads and ten horns (1). In chapter 17 verses 9 & 12 we have these words: "And here is the mind of wisdom. The seven heads are seven mountains on which the woman sits . . . And the ten horns which you saw are

ten kings, which have received no kingdom as yet; but receive power as kings on hour with the beast". What is this beast which is like a leopard, with feet like a bear and a mouth like a lion? (2). There is an undoubted reference to Rome here. But what is the other beast which "exercises all the power of the first beast before him, and causes the earth and them who dwell therein to worship the first beast, whose deadly wound was healed"? (12). I see in this second beast the Holy Roman Empire, which manifested many of the characteristics of the Pagan Roman Empire. Actually, the Holy Roman Empire survived for over one thousand years and was finally abolished by Napoleon and the French Revolution. Friedrich Heer's book on the subject is a great read. He starts with the coronation of Charlemagne in Rome on Christmas day 800 and ends with the illegal suspension of the Empire by Francis II in 1806.

The number of the beast is given as 666. 30=L, 1=A, 300=T, 5=E, 10=I, 50=N, 70=O and 200=S. The letters spell LATEINOS, the Greek method of spelling the name of Latinus, the reputed founder of the Latin race. Please note that Rome is the ancient capital of the Latins and the Roman Catholic Church is also known as the Latin church.

IAN S. DAVIDSON, Motherwell.

TEST YOUR BIBLICAL KNOWLEDGE

1. Who refused to pay honour to Haman?
2. Who were Shiphrah and Puah?
3. What protected Daniel from the lions?
4. How many sons did Haman have?
5. Whom did Jephthah sacrifice following a promise to God?
6. What did Jonah do during the storm?
7. Who taught Apollos?
8. Who was Caiaphas's father-in-law?
9. Who said: "What I have written, I have written".

10. Who had warned Pilate not to have anything to do with righteous Jesus?

NEWS FROM THE CHURCHES

Slamannan District: The Quarterly Mutual Benefit Meeting took place on the 4th December, 1999, at Tranent Meeting-house. The question for discussion was "Why did God send John The Baptist and what was the significance of his work?", and the speakers were Bro. John Kneller, Tranent, and Bro. James McGinn, New Cumnock. In the Chair was Bro. Mark Plain, Tranent. After the two speakers had very capably opened up the subject, the usual hour-long period of discussion followed, and much emerged from the other speakers and general discussion.

Our next meeting, God willing, will be on 4th March, 2000, at Dennyloanhead, when the subject will be "Is the head-covering for sisters necessary during worship, or is the 'long hair' of 1 Cor. 15 the covering required? Would failure to use a head-covering reflect upon a congregation as a whole."

Our speakers will be Bro. David Chalmers, Ayr, and Bro. John Colgan, Tranent; and the Chairman will be Bro. Peter Sneddon. Again we thank the sisters at Tranent for their excellent refreshments.

HARRY MCGINN (Sec.).

COMING EVENTS

GLENROTHES MENS' DAY

on MARCH 12th, 2000
Second Coming of Christ

BUCKIE SOCIAL MEETING

D.V. to be held
on SATURDAY 28th APRIL, 2000
Details Later

GHANA APPEAL

The Church continues to grow in Ghana. We are learning about the parcels recently sent, the glasses, clothes, books and Twi Hymn Books posted in October are now arriving.

This month I would like to remind readers of the work going on in Bolga, the villages which lost their crops because of the flood waters. They will soon be needing seed to plant for this year. Loraine and I witnessed these floods. Also Upper Volta, in particular the area of Kete-Krachi, an area of Ghana where there are no roads to the villages. In this area there are villages where young churches are growing, Dambai, Akwebae, Kotokugyani, Osamani, Tokorano and Yarigah. The leaders in these congregations have appealed to me to request in the Scripture Standard for some money for meeting places as these congregations are rapidly growing. They intend to build a traditional meeting place with "Swiss walls" which I understand to be bamboo cane framework with a mud brick infill. This they will do themselves but the appeal for money to put a tin roof on their meeting places and some bags of cement to render the mud brick to ensure that the building will last and not be washed

away. This would not be an expensive project and I know that it would not only give great encouragement it would also be very much appreciated. I am aware that I have already appealed for this and money received was personally given to the churches during our visit. It averaged about £200 per church. We have been greatly encouraged with the continued gifts for this long running appeal and once again we thank everyone who is helping our brethren in Ghana. For those who wish to continue helping in this new century please make cheques payable to "Graeme Pearson (Ghana Appeal)" and send to Graeme Pearson, 13 Fairways, Dunfermline, Fife, KY12 ODU. Tel. (01383) 728624.

10. His wife (Matthew 27:19).
9. Pilate (John 19:22).
8. Annas (John 18:13)
7. Priscilla and Aquilla (Acts 18:26)
6. Slept (Jonah 1:5).
5. His daughter (Judges 11:31,34).
4. Ten (Esther 9:10).
3. An angel (Daniel 6:22).
2. Hebrew midwives (Exodus 1:15).
1. Mordecai (Esther 3:2).

ANSWERS

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