

The SCRIPTURE STANDARD

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"Let us run with perseverance the race that is set before us looking unto Jesus the pioneer and perfecter of our faith"

Be encouraged

...by this reflection on the words of the apostle Paul recorded in Philippians 1:3-10.

"I thank my God every time I remember you. I always pray with joy because of your partnership in the Gospel from the first day until now, being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ. It is right for me to feel this way about all of you, since I have you in my heart;... And this is my prayer: that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight, so that you may be able to discern what is best and may be pure and blameless until the day of Christ, filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ – to the glory and praise of God."

I thank my God every time I remember you.

Even the great apostle Paul needed others. When he was ill he needed Dr. Luke. When he was in prison he needed Titus. For his travels he needed Silas. For his future he needed Timothy.

How important are others? More than you think. What good is the cracker maker without the cheese maker? Paderewski's genius wouldn't have amounted to anything if the piano tuner hadn't shown up. Rogers needed Hammerstein and you also need people.

The other side of the coin is – somebody needs you too. The young need your experience and the old your care. The foolish need your wisdom and the hurting your compassion. Any time you withhold or withdraw what God has given you, others suffer and you shrivel.

Looking back over my life, I see where I've connected with specific people at every crossroad and milestone. Most of them the world will never know, but to me they were absolutely vital. Each helped me to clear a hurdle, accomplish an objective or reach a goal. Without them I wouldn't be where I am today.

How about you? God is all-powerful, all-knowing and all-sufficient. That's what makes it all the more significant when he uses people like us. Almost without exception, His favourite plan is a combined effort, all of us working for Him, and each one of us loving one another in the process.

(Extracted from 'The Word for Today')

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God and the Nation of Israel

(Stephen Woodcock, Wigan)

A thematic approach will be taken in this study rather than a purely historical one because we should be familiar with Jewish history from BOTH the Old and New Testaments.

The major themes that will be covered are: -

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| (1) CREATION | (2) SIN |
| (3) PROMISES | (4) COVENANTS |
| (5) EXODUS | (6) THE PROMISED LAND |
| (7) WILDERNESS AND EXILE | (8) ELECTION |
| (9) REMNANT | (10) LAW |

(1) CREATION

Why start here? Because the Jews believed that God controlled history. To the enlightened Jew creation spoke of two things – the POWER of God AND the power of God demonstrated in His love for mankind, (Genesis 1:26-28; Psalms 8 and 136:5-9). The record clearly demonstrates that God created mankind for loving fellowship.

Jewish history really begins with the account of creation because the Holy Spirit inspired Moses to start there and not with Abraham. Throughout the Old Testament the Jews constantly referred to God as their Creator, a theme that is repeated in their writings (see Job 38 – 41; Isaiah 40; Psalm 8; 19:1-6; Proverbs 8:22-31). The Jews recognised that the Creator not only set the universe in motion but that He sustains mankind within it.

(2) SIN

Soon after the creation SIN entered into the world, which caused the breakdown of man's fellowship with God (Genesis 3) Therefore we see sacrifice as a means of restoring fellowship being introduced. The enlightened Jew would recognise that God's love had provided a way in which man could commune with Him, by covering man's shame (Gen.3: 21). However God set the terms, as we can see from the account of Cain and Abel (Genesis 4).

The account also reminds the Jew that mankind lost his glory because God placed a curse over Creation (Genesis 3:17-18). When man fell short of God's glory then the area of his dominion lost its glory too. Eventually God destroyed the world by the Flood. The whole creation suffered as a result of sin. Later on this theme would recur because when the Israelites turned away from God, not only did the nation suffer but the land suffered as well (Deuteronomy 28:15ff; Judges 6:1-6; 1 Kings 17:1; 2 Chronicles 36:20-21). Paul picks up this theme again in Romans 8:18-25. We cannot appreciate that passage unless we understand Old Testament teaching about the effects of sin on creation.

The Jews realised that it was the innocent that suffered for the guilty. Animals were offered to make them realise the awfulness of sin and its effects.

(3) PROMISES

Within the account of Genesis 3 there is a promise (verse 15). This is the first

recorded Messianic promise in the Bible. This should tell us something about God. He did not turn His back on mankind. However this promise was recorded in Jewish scriptures. This is because the Jews would be instrumental in bringing that promise to fruition. Its fulfilment did not depend upon man's faithfulness but on God's. He chose the line through which it would be fulfilled and so we go back to the idea that God is in control of history. Throughout scripture He made key promises to certain individuals and to the Israeli nation. All the other promises that He made are ultimately based upon the promise He made in Genesis 3:15. Jesus made a significant statement in John 4:22 "for salvation is of the Jews". He knew the promise He had made to Adam and Eve. His statement is ultimately based on it.

If you carefully read Genesis then you will be able to trace the line through Abram (Abraham). It is to him that God made the great sevenfold promise (Genesis 12:1-3). This key promise established his place in God's ultimate promise to save mankind through the seed of the woman. However let us list what God promised to Abraham:

- (a) A great nation
- (b) Blessings
- (c) A great name, (Jews, Christians and Muslims recognise him).
- (d) He will be a blessing.
- (e) Bless those that bless him.
- (f) Curse those that curse him.
- (g) In him all the families of the earth will be blessed.

It was upon this promise that the Israeli nation developed. Also it formed the basis of the relationship of the Israelites with God. It is repeated in various forms to Isaac (Genesis 26:1-5) and to Jacob (later renamed Israel) (Genesis 28:10-17; 32:12; 35:11; 46:3). It is this promise that formed the basis of the covenant that God made with Abraham. Ultimately that covenant is based on Genesis 3:15.

(4) COVENANTS

The central idea of a covenant is "to cut". Animals were cut in halves and the two parties would walk between them, in order to make an agreement or strike a deal that would be binding on both parties. So eventually the word "covenant" meant an agreement. This distinguishes covenants from promises. Covenants may include promises but promises did not necessarily involve covenants. There are three main types of covenants in the Bible: -

- 1. Royal Grant (R.G.) (Unconditional)** A king's grant (of land or some other benefit) to a loyal servant for faithful or exceptional service. The grant was normally perpetual and unconditional, but the servant's heirs benefited from it only as they continued their father's loyalty and service.
- 2. Parity:** A covenant between equals, binding them to mutual friendship or at least to mutual respect. Participants called each other "brothers" (Gen. 21:27; 26:31, 31:44-54; 1 Kings 5:12; 15:19; 20:32-34; Amos 1:9)
- 3. Suzerain-Vassal (SZ) (Conditional)** A covenant regulating the relationship between a great king and one of his subject kings. The great king claimed absolute right of sovereignty, demanded total loyalty and service (the vassal must "love" his suzerain) and pledge protection of the subject's realm and dynasty, conditional on the vassal's faithfulness and loyalty to him. The vassal pledged absolute loyalty to his suzerain - whatever service his suzerain demanded - and exclusive reliance on the suzerain's protection. Participants called each other "lord" and "servant" or "father" and "son".

COVENANT	REFERENCE	TYPE	PARTICIPANT	DESCRIPTION
Noahic	Genesis 9:8-17	RG	Made with "righteous" Noah (and his descendants and every living thing on earth - all life that is subject to human jurisdiction).	An unconditional divine promise never to destroy all earthly life with a flood: the covenant "sign" being the rainbow.
Abrahamic (A)	Genesis 15:9-21	RG	Made with "righteous" Abram (his faith was "credited to him as Righteousness") and to his descendants.	An unconditional promise to fulfil the grant of the land.
Abrahamic (B)	Genesis 17	SZ	Made with Abraham as Patriarchal head of his household	A conditional divine pledge to be Abraham's God and the God of his descendants.(cf. "As for me", v.4; "As for you" v.9); The Condition: total consecration to the Lord, as symbolised by circumcision.
Siniatic	Exodus 19-24	SZ	Made with Israel as the descendants of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and as the people the Lord has redeemed from bondage to an earthly power.	A conditional divine pledge to be Israel's God (as her protector and the guarantor of her destiny); the condition: Israel's total consecration to the Lord as His people (Kingdom) who live by His rule and serve His purposes.
Phinehas	Numbers 25:19-31	RG	Made with the zealous priest Phinehas	An unconditional divine promise to maintain the family of Phinehas in a lasting priesthood (implicitly a pledge to Israel to provide her with a faithful priesthood).
Davidic	2 Sam. 7:5-16	RG	Made to David	An unconditional promise to establish and maintain the Davidic dynasty on the throne.
New	Jer. 31: 31-34	RG	Promised to rebellious Israel before the exile.	An unconditional promise to her to forgive her sins and establish a new relationship on a newbasis by writing His Law "on their hearts".

(To be continued)

Word Study **Schoolmaster**

Ian Davidson (Motherwell)

We read in the Authorised Version: **“Wherefore the Law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster.”**

(Galatians 3:24-25). “Schoolmaster” is a translation of the Greek word *paidagogos*, hence our English word pedagogue. *Paidagogos* has been translated “instructor”, “slave”, “tutor”, “tutor to discipline”, “strict governess”, “custodian”, “attendant”, “guide”, “wards in discipline”, “tutor-slave”, etc., Are all of these translations accurate?

The role of the ‘schoolmaster’

The *paidagogos* was not the instructor of the child. He had another role to fulfil. He was the slave, who exercised a general supervision over the child and was responsible for his moral and physical well being. In ancient Greece, a boy was usually committed to a *paidagogos* at the age of seven. The boy left him when he attained the age of puberty. The duty of the *paidagogos* was to guard the child from evil; accompany him to school; guard him out of doors on all occasions; take care of his personal safety; and keep him from bad company. William Barclay has written: “He must see that the boy walked modestly with downcast head in the streets; he must see that he gave place to older people and was becomingly silent in their presence; he must teach him to be well mannered at table and to wear his clothes with grace. He had to teach him all the Greek meant by *eukosmia*, good manners, good deportment, pleasantness of life”. “He was really a mixture of nurse, footman, chaperon and tutor”. (K.J. Freeman). I know a lot of schoolchildren who could do with the likes of him today.

The importance of slavery to the ancient Greek and Roman worlds should not be underestimated. There were many kinds of slaves, including the pedagogues. The pedagogues were probably better placed than most because they were “white-collar” slaves. However, all slaves in Roman times were regarded as chattels, things inventoried, for example, with oxen and wagons. Slaves could be given, let, sold, exchanged or seized for debt. The lives of all slaves were in the power of their masters. The power was absolute without legal or moral restraint. Consequently, the maxim of slaves was: “Love one another; love robbery, love licentiousness; hate your masters; and never tell the truth”. Thankfully, some slaves were treated well and eventually freed.

Christianity, undoubtedly, overthrew slavery in the end without creating economic chaos. One writer has commented: "This was done by altering the attitude of men toward one another until the worth and the dignity of every individual was known and respected". Another writer put it this way: "From the day that it became known that every man bears the image of God within, human slavery was doomed".

Law leads to Christ

Brother Wardrop of Motherwell often said: "The Law diagnosed the disease, but Jesus provided the remedy". The Law of Moses had a purpose – to bring us to Christ. It could not justify itself, because it was a law, a written code. W. Carl Ketcherside has written; "So long as man is in the flesh, in his human nature, he cannot be justified by such a written code, regardless of its origin. The weakness is not in the code, but in the flesh". If man could have been saved by perfect adherence to a law then there would have been no need for Jesus to enter the world and die on a cross at Calvary for the sins of the world. The teaching of the Bible is very clear: we are not justified by law, but by faith in Christ Jesus, who was the fulfilment of the law.

So the Law had its part to play in God's plan of redemption. It was perfect for its purpose (a perfect God does not give an imperfect law). It was given to lead us to Christ. Now, the Law has been superseded. Now, we are no longer under the law, but under grace (Romans 6:14). Now, we are justified, sanctified and saved by Christ Jesus, our heavenly master. The trouble is that some Christians think that Jesus is another "schoolmaster". In other words, they think that the Christian system is simply another system of law and not grace. Legalism has no place in Christianity. The righteousness of God is not based upon legal conformity. Truly, the legalistically minded are trying to live BC lives in an AD world.

Our hope now lies in conformity to Jesus and not in conformity to a code. But what of Christ's commandments? We do not love Christ because we keep His commandments, but we keep His commandments because we love Christ. In Christ, we have attained a position of maturity. That maturity means freedom that no Jew ever experienced under the Law. It is a great paradox, I know, but true freedom is found in enslavement to Jesus. We are not our own, we are His. How then could any Christian be lazy or idle? Our service to our heavenly Master should be a daily, disciplined, loving service – and it should be to His honour and glory. Jesus, of course, knows all about service. His whole life was one of service. He is our supreme example in all things, and He is our example in service. He once said to His disciples: **"You know that in the world, rulers lord it over their subjects, and their great men make them feel the weight of authority; but it shall not be so with you. Among you, whoever wants to be great must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be the willing slave of all – like the Son of Man; He did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give up His life as a ransom for many."** (Matthew 20:25 –28, N.E.B.). Are we all willing to give up our lives for Him?

Reflections on Hosea 4:6

(Sis. Bethia Davidson, Dennyloanhead)

“My people are destroyed for the lack of knowledge.”

The hustle and bustle of Christmas is now well behind us. We are back to normality. According to the English Dictionary, Christmas is the Christian festival commemorating the birth of Christ. And although the celebrations for Christ's birth are set by convention rather than history, one can't help feeling glad that some teachers found time to teach children the story of the birth of Jesus and to have them re-enact the wonderful occasion of the entry of God's Son into the world. It really is lovely to see the joy, innocence (all too soon lost) and faith in the children's faces.

They will continue to hear the name of Jesus often through the year but sad to say it will more often than not be in blasphemy from the world at large. And some will not hear of Jesus again for another year. Too few children will be brought up, as Paul instructed the Christians at Ephesus, “in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.” (Eph 6:4) The inn in Bethlehem, at which there was no room for Jesus, can be likened to the hearts of men – no room for Jesus!

In Genesis 6:5-7 Moses writes of God's reflection on the state of mankind. **“The Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. And the Lord was sorry that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him to his heart. So the Lord said, “I will blot out man whom I have created from the face of the ground, man and beast and creeping things and birds of the air, for I am sorry that I have made them.”** And the record says that only eight people were saved.

So what about the present world? When Jesus comes back again, how many will he find faithful? It's a question the Lord himself asked at the conclusion of one of his parables. **“Nevertheless, when the Son of man comes, will he find faith on earth?”** (Luke 18:8) If Jesus returns today will we be ready. It is our choice. The invitation has been offered now for 2002 years. If you have read your New Testament you will not be without knowledge. You will know your destination. Heaven or Hell. God is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to Him and live.

(In her covering letter, our Sister, who is wheelchair bound and 91 years of age, says, “It's really hard to get anyone to listen now. Whenever Bible, Jesus or God is mentioned, they are off! So I write what I want them to know, because knowing human nature they will not put the letter in the bin without reading it first.” Thank God for Christians with that kind of determination to make the Gospel known. Editor)

Editorial

Purpose and Selflessness

I recently listened to a radio interview with Craig Johnstone, an Australian who, during the late 70's/early 80's was a footballer in an extremely successful and dominant Liverpool team. He wasn't an automatic first team choice but was a very valuable member of the squad and picked up 5 championship medals during his time with Liverpool. Two parts of the interview stood out for me. Craig Johnstone retired unexpectedly at 27,

an age when most footballers are in their prime. There was a lot of speculation at the time about the footballing reason for this, but apparently he retired to care for his younger sister who had been very seriously injured in an accident and was in a coma from which she never recovered. To give up a successful, high profile and no doubt lucrative career seemed to me to be an act of commendable selflessness.

As the interview progressed it was also revealed that Craig himself had been told, at the age of 12, after an illness of his own, that he would never play football and certainly not professionally. He also admitted that he had not been born with much in the way of natural football talent. However he had taken the view that, as a football is not itself capable of making mistakes, the answer to his football ambitions lay within his own capacity to control the football, so he set about the task of practice, practice and more practice to develop his skills. In determinedly overcoming two major obstacles he struck me as a man with a great sense of purpose. Selflessness and purpose – two characteristics that are rarer than they ought to be. And it reminded me that all the blessings of the Christian life are as a result of the selflessness and purpose of God and Jesus the Christ.

God's selfless love

Love is not easy to define especially when we try to explain how Christian love, which we justifiably consider to be of a higher order, is different from the common understanding and practice of love. However I come increasingly to believe that at the heart of Christian love lies selflessness. I can think of no recorded action of Jesus that enhanced his own well-being or comfort; no instance where he put himself first or made others wait whilst he tended to his own needs and desires. I can think of nothing in the incarnate life of Jesus that enhanced his status beyond that which he enjoyed in heaven with the Father. Rather Isaiah records that he was 'despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief'. **"He was in the world, and the world was made through him, yet the world knew him not. He came to his own home, and his own people received him not."** (John 1:10,11) Imagine that. The Agent of creation was, and is today, rejected by that which he created; even more, as Paul says, this rejection was in his own home, by his own people. Is there any more compelling example of the arrogance and folly of mankind?

Sometimes in the inevitable repetition of the truths of the Gospel we lose sight of the magnitude of what has been achieved for us. We know that with sin came enmity from God and that mankind was exposed to the wrath of God. Reconciliation could not be achieved until that wrath had been appeased (propitiated); that is until God was once again disposed to be gracious to, and look favourably upon, mankind. How was this to be achieved? Certainly there was no individual or collective act of mankind that was sufficient to win our way back into God's favour. So God, the one who had been so grievously hurt by the defection of His creation offered a sacrifice on our behalf, to make that reconciliation possible. And that sacrifice was the life of His Son, our Saviour. Yes, God Himself offered the sacrifice to appease his own wrath. Isn't that the most extraordinary act of selflessness imaginable. W E Vine

expresses it like this. 'Through the propitiatory sacrifice of Christ, he who believes on Him (Jesus) is **by God's own act** (my emphasis) delivered from justly deserved wrath, and comes under the covenant of grace.' The apostle Paul wrote about the selflessness of Jesus in another way when he reminded the Christians in Corinth about how their salvation had been won. **"For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for our sakes he became poor, so that by his poverty you might become rich."** (2 Cor. 8:9)

God's eternal purpose fulfilled in Jesus

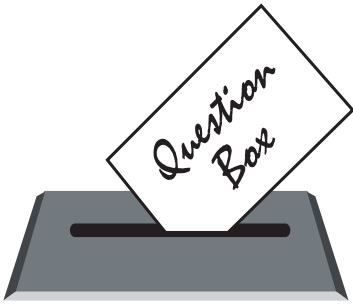
I'm sure that even as God created man he knew that sin was just around the corner and that the restoration of man would only subsequently be achieved by a supreme act of selflessness. From before the foundation of the world God's purpose has been to provide to every person the opportunity to be reconciled to him. The desired end, God's eternal purpose, is that all should come to repentance and it remains one of the great mysteries that so few people even acknowledge God, let alone go on to allow his love to transform their life. But even as we find fulfillment in our understanding of that love let us never forget the cost of God's purpose. **"Yet it was the will of the Lord to bruise him; he has put him to grief."** (Isaiah 53:10). How selfless and purposeful is our God? **"Men of Israel, hear these words:.....this Jesus, delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men."** (Acts 2:22,23) **"But what God foretold by the mouth of all the prophets, that his Christ should suffer, he thus fulfilled."** (Acts 3:18)

Does it sound too emotional to say that even as I sit here and read again the overwhelming outcome for us of God's purpose, I get a shiver up my spine? Paul tells us through the letter he wrote to the Church at Ephesus, that, according to the purpose of God, a purpose which he set forth in Christ as a plan for the fullness of time, he has:

- destined us in love to be his sons through Jesus Christ
- made known to us in all wisdom and insight the mystery of his will
- destined and appointed us to live for the praise of his glory (all Eph 1:3-14)
- predestined us to be conformed to the image of his Son (Romans 8:29)

And there is still more for each of us to embrace. When Paul set out to re-energise the work of Timothy, he inspired him with these words: **"Do not be ashamed then of testifying to our Lord, nor of me his prisoner, but share in suffering for the gospel in the power of God, who saved us and called us with a holy calling, not in virtue of our works but in virtue of his own purpose and the grace which he gave us in Christ Jesus ages ago, and now has manifested through the appearing of our Saviour Christ Jesus, who abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel."** (2 Tim. 1:8-10). What a wonder it is to contemplate that God's eternal purpose has ensured that, through Jesus, the life of God that is from everlasting to everlasting is the present possession of each Christian.

I respect greatly a man who is able to set out his purpose and having achieved it then demonstrate his selflessness by foregoing his career. But I stand in awe and wonder before our God who purposed in his heart to save us through His Son and achieved that through his selfless devotion to our eternal salvation. **"He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him. Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God – children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God."** (John 1:11-13)



The Question this month is: "What did Paul mean in 1st Cor. 5:5, 'Deliver this man to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus'?"

This question, asked by one of our sisters, is well worth considering, not only because the verse she quotes is often misunderstood, but also because it raises a subject about which, in these days, sadly, we hear far too little. That subject is discipline in the Church.

The context.

The first verse of 1st Cor. 5, deals with the case of the man in the Church in Corinth, who was involved immorally with *'his father's wife'* (v.1). It seems clear that the father had married a second time and the son was having an affair with the woman who was now, legally, his *step-mother*. This is why Paul expressly and carefully describes her as *'his father's wife'*, rather than *'his mother'*.

The seriousness of this situation is revealed and stressed when the apostle points out that, as immoral as Greek society was in those days, conduct of this kind was despised even by the pagan Corinthians. He does not go into great detail to explain why the congregation had neglected to take action to deal with the situation, apart from to rebuke them for their indifference, but he *does* say is that their failure to act constituted a danger to the entire body (v.6).

In v.2 he lays down the course of action that they must adopt. Asserting his apostolic authority, he commands that the guilty man must be *'removed'* from among them – excluded from their fellowship. (Since nothing is said about the woman involved in the offence, we must assume that she was not a member of the Church, and the congregation therefore did not have the authority to deal with her).

What Paul orders is, effectively, *the excommunication of the guilty man*, and he describes this course of action as, *'delivering the man to Satan'*. Outside of the Church, which is the kingdom of the Lord Jesus - (see Col. 1;13) - this man, cut off from the people of God, will again be in the domain of Satan, and, consequently, in grave spiritual danger.

The Church's responsibility

This action by the Church has a purpose. It is designed to bring the guilty man to his senses, so that he opens his eyes and recognises the seriousness of his position and comes to repentance. This is what is meant by *'the destruction of the flesh'*.

It means that the man must recognize and acknowledge the sinfulness of his

conduct, and, with the help of God, 'put to death' (Col.3:5) his sinful physical desires. He may then ask to be restored to fellowship. Failing to do this he stands in danger of losing his soul

Excommunication is not necessarily final.

It is important to recognize that this act of 'excommunication' is not meant to be 'amputation'. Serious – and painful – as it undoubtedly is, it is a course of action intended only for the good of the offender. In other words, it is not meant to be 'terminal', but to be *remedial*.

When a congregation excommunicates an offending person, it is taking the final step in its endeavour to bring him to recognize his sin and to change his life. The door must always be kept open for the offender to repent and desire to return.

The outcome in this case

In 2nd Cor. 2:5-11, Paul reveals that Corinthian Christians acted on his advice, took action and banished the man from the fellowship. And the action was effective. The guilty man repented, and in his second letter the apostle tells the Corinthian church that they should restore him to fellowship, and, since he was evidently heart-broken and sorrowful because of his sin, they must comfort him and be gracious to him. 'Reaffirm your love for him', they are told.

If the congregation neglected to respond to his obvious repentance in a positive manner, and did not take the man back, Satan would make the most of what would undoubtedly be looked upon by enemies of the Faith as lovelessness and self-righteousness in the Christians, and the man himself might be 'overwhelmed with excessive sorrow'.

This teaching continues to be relevant.

An interesting fact is revealed in v.6. Evidently there were some in the Corinthian church, who influenced by a misguided sense of charity, or by the desire to show tolerance, who did not agree with the excommunication of this immoral man, and the decision to disfellowship him is described by Paul as 'punishment by the majority', with which, we should note, he was in full agreement

Very little has changed! Congregations still find that they have among them, members who shy away from the exercise of scriptural discipline. Nevertheless, if we consistently followed the teaching of the Word in the matter of Church-discipline, not only would our assemblies be stronger both spiritually *and* numerically, they would also be happier and more loving.

*(Questions to:- Frank Worgan, 11, Stanier Road, Corby, Northants.
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Biblical Archaeology 3

Ian Davidson (Motherwell)

Ancient Ashkelon was a major Canaanite and Philistine seaport. The city played a prominent role in the history of the children of Israel. The tribe of Judah captured it (Judges 1:18), but it was retaken by the Philistines and frequently denounced by the prophets. Robert Young has pointed out that, "it fell successively into the hands of the Egyptians, Greeks and the Romans". Ashkelon is, of course, associated with Gaza, Ashdod and Ekron (Amos 1: 6-8) and sometimes with Gath (2 Samuel 1:20). Ashkelon was the birthplace of Herod the Great, who embellished the city with many buildings and colonnaded streets

Archaeological excavations began here in 1921. They recommenced after a nine-year gap in 1985 under the directorship of Lawrence E. Stager, Doret Professor of the Archaeology of Israel at Harvard University and Head of Harvard Semitic Museum. Findings in Ashkelon have included the World's oldest arched gateway; Canaanite ramparts and monumental buildings; remains of the late Philistine city destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar in 604 BC, which included "a seaside bazaar, a royal winery and formidable fortifications. Amid these ruins were discovered bronze figurines and vessels from Egypt; beautiful imported pottery from Greece, Iona, Cyprus and Phoenicia; and a tiny calf fashioned from bronze and silver "(Biblical Archaeology Review). Professor Stager has produced articles such as: "When Canaanites and Philistines ruled Ashkelon". Why Were Hundreds of Dogs Buried in Ashkelon?" and "Eroticism and Infanticide in Ashkelon". His article in 1996: "The Fury of Babylon – Ashkelon and the Archaeology of Destruction" I found particularly fascinating. He wrote: "One thing is clear: this large, sophisticated Philistine metropolis of the late seventh century B.C. was thoroughly destroyed. Archaeology cannot be precise as to date the destruction of Ashkelon to 604 BC. but the Babylonian Chronicle leaves little doubt that the late seventh-century destruction we found all over the site, followed by a 75- to 80-year gap in occupation until the Persian Period, was the work of Nebuchadnezzar in 604 B.C.

"Lachish (modern Tell-ed-Duweir) was an important fortified city which occupied a strategic position in the Shephelah, or Lowlands, of Judah, thirty miles south-west of Jerusalem." (Thomson's Chain Reference Bible). The city is mentioned in the books of Joshua (chapters 10, 12 & 15), 2 Kings (14,18 & 19) and 2 Chronicles (11, 25 & 32). (See also Nehemiah 11:30; Isaiah 36:2; 37:8; Jeremiah 34:7; and Micah 1:13). The Assyrian king Sennacherib celebrated his capture of Lachish with a series of relief's in his palace at Nineveh. The siege of the city involved the construction of an assault ramp, which is visible to this day.

Lachish was first excavated between 1932 and 1938 by J. L. Starkey and his associates. Their greatest discovery was of twenty-one letters (now known as The Lachish

Letters), which date to the last days of the prophet Jeremiah (c.588 B.C.) and just before the fall of the city itself. These letters were addressed to one Joash, the commanding officer of Lachish and written by a certain Hoshaiiah, who was a subordinate military officer stationed at some outpost near Jerusalem. W.F. Albright has written: "In these letters we find ourselves in exactly the age of Jeremiah with social and political conditions agreeing perfectly with the picture drawn in the book that bears his name".

Modern excavations at Lachish were under the directorship of David Ussishkin of Tel-Aviv University, Israel, who led the dig for eleven seasons between 1973 and 1987. He continued at the site until 1994, working with Israel's National Parks Authority on restoring the city's gate. At its peak, the dig by Ussishkin at Lachish involved 150 people – undoubtedly the busiest dig in the country. In fact, Lachish is one of the largest ancient sites in Israel with a summit of 20 acres. It is bigger, for example, than Megiddo, though far smaller than ancient Jerusalem, which encompasses around 150 acres.

John Woodhead, assistant director of the British School of Archaeology in Jerusalem gave our group a conducted tour of the tel. This individual was highly praised in a personal letter I received before my departure from D. J. Wiseman, Emeritus Professor of Assyriology, University of London, and an outstanding Biblical scholar.

Woodhead reminded us of the use of fire signals in ancient times (Jeremiah 6:1). The Lachish Letters reveal that the citizens of Lachish knew they were in trouble because they had lost all signals from the nearby town of Azekah (Jeremiah 34:7).

We read: **"And the Chaldeans that fight against this city (Jerusalem) shall come and set fire on this city, and burn it with houses, upon whose roofs they have offered incense unto Baal, and poured out drink offerings unto other gods to provoke me to anger."** (Jeremiah 32:29). At Ashkelon, Sager and his team found a collapsed roof of a building. Sitting on top of the roof debris was a small incense altar. This was the first time anyone had found stratified evidence for roof top altars. Jeremiah obviously knew what he talking about, and we now have an example of a roof top altar from Ashkelon" (Stager).

In the great struggle between Egypt and Babylonia, the kings of Judah vacillated between them half a dozen times or so. But Ashkelon and Ekron always sided with Egypt. This judgement eventually brought destruction upon them from Nebuchadnezzar. Archaeological discoveries help confirm the facts. They also highlight the trustworthiness of the Biblical record.

The sorrow of knowing that there is evil in the best of us is far out-balanced by the thought and joy of discovering that there is good in the worst of us.

- *Belvedere Church Bulletin*

Some facts about the life of Charles Darwin

(Bill Cook, Dunfermline)



In our second letter from Paul to Timothy he wrote: **“For the time will come when men will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear. They will turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths.”**

One of the myths which is being promoted in recent times is that of evolution – that the world in which we live is not a divine creation, but just evolved as an accidental sequence. The fact that this contradicts a law of thermodynamics, and is therefore unscientific, is ignored. It also contradicts common sense when we consider the complexities of even just the human body, particularly the brain.

Perhaps the greatest source of evolutionary propaganda is the Origin of Species written by Charles Darwin, so let’s consider his life.

Charles Darwin lived from 1809 until 1882 and was born into a generally agnostic family. His mother died when he was only eight years old. His father was a respected physician and would have liked his son to follow in his footsteps, but Charles’ sensitivity, with his intense dread of blood and human suffering, put an end to that ambition.

It has been proclaimed in the media that Charles Darwin was still an unbeliever when he died, but that is not true. There is substantial evidence to support the claim that he was converted to Christ a year before his death and regretted what he had written.

Lady Hope who claimed to have visited him and read the New Testament to him reported his conversion. Lady Hope was the daughter of General Sir Arthur Cotton and was married to the First Admiral of the Fleet, Sir James Hope.

The catalogue of the British Library tells us that she was a well-known author of 37 books and pamphlets, mainly on evangelism and temperance. As Charles Darwin was a strong temperance supporter, largely because both his grandmother and great-grandmother had died through drink, it is not surprising that they became acquainted.

The following is an account by Lady Hope of a visit by her to Charles Darwin. It appeared in the English Churchman and was at a time when he was nearly bedridden:

‘What are you reading now?’ I asked as I seated myself at his bedside. ‘Hebrews!’ he answered, ‘still Hebrews, the Royal Book, I call it. Isn’t it grand?’ Then placing his finger on certain passages he commented on them. I made some allusion to the strong opinions expressed by many persons on the history of the Creation, its grandeur and then their treatment of the early chapters of the Book of Genesis. He seemed greatly distressed, his fingers twitched nervously, and a look of agony came over his face as he said ‘I was a young man with unformed ideas. I threw out queries, suggestions, wondering all the time over everything; and to my astonishment the ideas took like wildfire. People made a religion of them.’

Mr. A.H. Nicholls was closely acquainted with the servants of Charles Darwin's household who had nursed him through his final illness and the following report by him was published in the Bromley and Kentish Times:

This lady who had been in attendance on Darwin prior to his death had informed him that he requested her to read the New Testament to him and asked her to arrange for the Sunday school children to sing 'There is a green hill far away.' This was done and Darwin, who was greatly moved, said, 'How I wish I had not expressed my theory of evolution as I have done.'

Darwin had married Emma Wedgwood, daughter of the famous pottery manufacturer, Josiah Wedgwood, in 1839. She had a strong Christian faith and read her Bible daily. Eventually her influence helped Charles Darwin to come to a true faith so that, towards the end of his life, he and his wife could share their Christian faith together.

As well as information from Lady Hope, Dr. Croft of Salford University published a book containing considerable evidence that Charles Darwin was converted to the Christian faith about a year before he died.

I would like to commend an excellent organisation which, on a scientific basis, promotes divine creation as opposed to evolution. Its chairman is Dr. Rosevear PhD, C Chem., FRSC and the address is: Creation Science Movement, P O Box 888, Portsmouth. PO6 2YD.

News and Information

Ghana Appeal

Thanks to donations to this appeal many lives have been saved over the years. Good medical attention is available and, although Ghanaian churches help as much as they can, this does not always cover the whole cost of the treatment.

A congregation has been contributing as much as possible towards the cost of treatment for a sister with epilepsy but needs help to make up the full amount. Another church has paid as much of the medical costs as they can for a sister who gave birth by caesarian section. Any help towards meeting the full amount of the costs would be greatly appreciated. These are two recent examples and the need is ongoing. As well as the normal ailments common to people everywhere, there are those specifically due to

tropical conditions.

Your donations have also enabled brethren to travel longer distances to establish new congregations. To help nurture these infant churches, arrangements are being made for their leaders to receive teaching and Bible study from mature brothers.

Several years ago a brother who travels in a remote area to visit different congregations was given a bicycle for this purpose. As this involves travel over rough ground the bicycle is now beyond repair and needs to be replaced. Can we help this brother to continue these important visits to remote village churches? It's important to encourage children and we have had a request for children's books about Jesus. If anyone has such material we would be pleased to receive it and send it to where it is most needed.

Let us not forget either, the continuing need for study material for new Christians as well as those more mature

in the faith. This would be gratefully received by those hungry for an understanding of the Word.

Those wishing to contribute, please make cheques payable to:
Dennyloanhead Church of Christ Ghana Fund and send to the treasurer:

**Mrs. Janet Macdonald,
12 Charles Drive, Larbert, Falkirk,
Stirlingshire. FK5 3HB.
Tel: 01324 562480**

Change of Address

Richard Gilmour has advised a new address: **73, Church Street
Glenrothes, Fife,
KY7 5NQ**

Baptism

Glenrothes, Scotland

It is with great joy that we report that Ross Starrs, aged 12, was baptized into Christ on the evening of 30th January 2003. Ross was baptized by his father. Ross is the son of Ian and Barbara Starrs. Please keep him in your prayers as he begins his new life in Christ. To God be the glory.

Richard Gilmore.

Coming Events

Peterhead Annual Social 12th & 13th April 2003

Saturday 12th April
3.00 pm and 6.00 pm

Speakers: Joe Nisbet, Aberdeen
Graham Gorton, Manchester

These brothers will also speak on Sunday 13th at the times noted above.

Sunday 15th - Sunday 22nd June 2003

Meetings at 7.00pm each evening
(including Sunday meetings)

Speakers: Bruce MacLart

Tranent Social Meeting Saturday, 15th March 2003

Speaker: James Grant, Wallacestone
All welcome

Buckie Social Meeting Saturday, 3rd May 2003

@ 3.00pm

Speaker: Bro. M. Glover, Birmingham
who will also speak on following

Lord's Day, 4th May

A warm welcome is extended to all.

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