

# The SCRIPTURE STANDARD

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

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## IS ANYBODY THERE?

SOME months ago I watched, with great interest, a documentary programme on T.V. which described mans' ongoing quest to establish whether there is any form of life in outer space. Apparently, on every 'space-probe vehicle' sent out into space there is fixed a metal plaque briefly describing the earth (and also including a drawing of a man) so that should the plaque fall into the hands of any green little extra-terrestrial creatures they may be interested enough to pay us a visit. It also emerged from the programme that we continually project radio messages out into space inviting a response, and that scientists are manning radio telescopes 24 hours per day, of every day, of every week, of every year, listening to the constant crackle of the 'static' in the continuing hope of receiving some kind of message, regardless of how faint or unintelligible. This field of interest has existed for a long time, probably since radio waves were discovered, but is heightened, these days, with every alleged sighting of U.F.O's. As I watched those men, purposefully huddled over their panels of instruments, and watched the facial expressions of great concentration under the headphones, I thought of mans' long obsessive desire for information and messages from sources outwith himself.

For centuries man has been furiously digging to expose history or, better still, to unearth evidence of events regarded as *pre-historical*. The spade has indeed brought to light countless items of pottery, furniture, buildings, monuments, and all kinds of other artifacts of bye-gone civilisations. Anything in written form has been eagerly seized upon. Messages and statements from past human cultures are of consuming interest to mankind today. Tomb of Tutankhamen is just one example.

For centuries man has also contemplated the baffling mysteries of the hieroglyphic picture-script of the ancient Egyptians, doubtless wondering about the rare knowledge encapsulated in these writings. As we know however, man had to wait a long time 'to crack the code' and it was not until one of Napoleon's Officers found the 'Rosetta Stone' in the Nile delta that translations could ever begin, (in the early part of the 19th Century). This stone gave the long awaited 'breakthrough' and must have caused high excitement amongst the scholars (and also probably caused a certain Joseph Smith of Palmyra, U.S.A., to couch his 'Book of Mormon' in a language he styled 'Reformed Egyptian').

Similarly there are those who scour the tombs and caves of the world in the search for primitive graffiti. Cave drawings have of course become a study in their own right by now, and such etchings (of bison, cattle, horses, etc) of early man are to be found in caverns in France, Spain, Italy, Australia, and elsewhere, the Lascaux caves in Southern France being especially important. It seems that we are extremely interested in those who wrote on walls before 'Kilroy' got there.

It might seem strange, but I am told that it is largely true, that the page in the morning paper that many read first is the one containing the 'Horoscope For The Day'. Newspaper horoscopes are, of course, of necessity, composed of vague and usually fairly banal predictions which can mean anything or everything, and are an insult to anyone of average intelligence. There are however professional astrologists who make a good living by giving consultations to the gullible rich. It is not new, of course, and was practised by the Babylonians, Assyrians, Greeks, etc. when Priest, General, or Statesman would not make any move until he had considered the position of the heavenly bodies, and talked things over with the astrologer. The practice continues, I understand, and even Adolf Hitler was not averse to giving some weight to such matters. Again the *desire for a message* is behind the practice, as suggested by the derivation of the word 'Astrology' - 'Astro' Greek for a star: and 'ology' from Greek 'logos' (speech). Thus those who consult astrologers are looking *a message* from the disposition of the planets and stars at any given time.

There are also those who look for information and messages from beyond the tomb and resort to those who 'mutter and peep'. They want information or a message, and so they resort to a clairvoyant, or medium, and try and contact 'the other side'. The practice of spiritism is as old as astrology and was engaged in, as we know, in Old Testament times, and was condemned as such by God (see 1 Sam. 28). It is, however, still widely practiced today and takes many forms. Relatives of mine used to end most of their family-gatherings with a ouija board session, using the time-honoured question, "Is anybody there?"

### Is Anybody There?

Yes, yes, there is somebody there. It is a point of worthless information that in the derivation of 'Ouija' (Ouija Board) 'oui' is the French for 'yes'; and 'Ja' is, of course, the German for 'Yes'. Strangely enough, then, the answer to the question is "Yes, Yes". The simple truth is that *God is everywhere*. The Psalmist could say, "Whither shall I go from thy spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there; if I make my bed in hell, behold, thou art there". The evidences of God are all around us, in nature; in the seasons; in the world of insects, birds, beasts, reptiles; in the jungles; in the deserts; in the seas; in weather phenomena; and in the skies. Again, the Psalmist could say, "The heavens declare the glory of God: and the firmament showeth his handy-work. Day unto day uttereth speech and night unto night sheweth knowledge".

Is anybody there? Isaiah says, "Have ye not known? Have ye not heard? Hath it not been told you from the beginning? Have ye not understood from the foundations of the earth? It is he that sitteth upon the circle of the earth, and the inhabitants thereof are as grasshoppers; that stretcheth out the heavens as a curtain, and spreadeth them out as a tent to dwell in.... Behold, the nations are as a drop in a bucket, and are counted as the small dust of the balance: behold he taketh up the isles as a very little thing. And Lebanon is not sufficient to burn, nor the beasts thereof sufficient for a burnt offering.... He hath measured the waters in the hollow of his hand, and meted out heaven with a span, and

comprehended the dust of the earth in a measure; and weighed the mountains in scales, and the hills in a balance." (Isaiah 40). "Is anybody there" Yes, I think we can safely say, "Yes, Yes, there is, there is." He who made the heavens and the earth *is everwhere*.

### God Has Spoken

But man does not merely want an assurance that somebody is there, he wants also *a message*. Here again God satisfies for, far from being mute (like the planets seem to be) *God has spoken*. "God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, Hath in these last days spoken unto us by His Son..." - so says the opening words of the epistle to the Hebrews. In past ages God spoke to the world through His prophets, but in these latter days has spoken unto us by His Son. Man slew the prophets and also slew God's Son but God's message remains intact, and the years can not dim its power or affect its relevance. When God speaks man must listen. They say that man cannot see because of the various 'blinkers' he wears, and perhaps neither can he hear because of the headphones he wears - listening to instructions from other sources. Why should we worry too much about messages from outer space when *God* who made the space *has spoken*? Nor did God's message come as a faint crackle on a 'headset' but God's Son brought it personally - He brought the message, lived the message; explained the message and finally died for the message. Why should we bother to consult the astrologer and worry about the conflux of planets when *He who 'stretched out the heavens as a curtain'* has spoken to us, and spoken to us for the last time? Should we not be more concerned with *what God is saying to us* than with the twelve houses of the Zodiac? When the Jews and Greeks of Ephesus heard the evil spirits acknowledge Jesus and Paul "Fear fell on them all, and the name of the Lord Jesus was magnified. And many that believed came, and confessed, and shewed their deeds. Many of them which used curious arts brought their books together, and burned them before all men: and they counted the price of them, and found it 50,000 pieces of silver." Pity that all those who engage in curious arts today would not do the same thing. Simon The Sorcerer also recognised the real thing when he saw it. And why should we be anxious for messages from *the past* when *God hath spoken 'in these last days'*? And why should we be anxious to get messages from beyond the tomb when we remember that God's Messenger actually came back from the dead? Isaiah had '*a message*' for those who consult the clairvoyants - he said, "And when they shall say unto you, Seek unto them that have familiar spirits, and unto wizards that peep and mutter: should not a people seek unto their God? for the living to the dead? To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them." (Isaiah 8:19). Thus we can be sure that messages from whatever source; whether from 'outer-space', or from the past, or from the stars, or from the 'other side' can never be as important as the message from God the Creator, in these latter days, through His Son. The Jews were so incensed at God's good tidings that they 'stopped their ears' and murdered Stephen the bringer of the message. Paul predicted to Timothy that men would heap to themselves teachers of their own, having itching ears "And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables" (II Tim. 4:4). May our ears ever be free of the worldly wax which deafens.

Perhaps it is God who should be asking "Is anybody there?" He asks, "Who will go for Me - Who will work today in My vineyards - Who will follow Me - Who will put their trust in Me - Who will do My bidding - Who will worship Me - Who will obey Me". He waits for the loud burst of mans' acclamation. He awaits our

ready answers - "Here am I, Lord, Send me, Send me." But in the ear-shattering silence which follows, God gently asks again, "Is anybody there?" God has been asking this question from the dawn of time, from the time, in fact, that He had to search for Adam and ask "Where art thou".

When God speaks do we really listen? When God asks - do we ever answer? "Where art thou?" Is anybody there?

EDITOR

## WE NEED HANDS

EVERY day, in various walks of life we see how hands play an important part. Hospitals and 'old-age' homes could not exist unless hands were there. When we consider life within the walls of hospitals we think of the hands of the nurses and doctors, HANDS are indeed important!

Let us consider this matter from a Spiritual aspect, suggesting first of all *CLOSED HANDS*. These depict selfishness, anger, temper, and vile-ness. They even express covetousness and self-centredness. A closed hand is a very poor exhibit of willingness to attend to the sick, the needy, and the distressed. "He that giveth to the poor shall not lack" (Proverbs 28:27). "Withold not good from them to whom it is due, when it is in the power of thine hand to do it" (Proverbs 3:27). God *shares* His mercy and love, (both material and Spiritual) with ALL who are prepared to love, fear and obey HIM. "To him that knoweth to do good and doeth it not, to him it is sin". (James 4:17). God does not expect us to live our lives with *CLOSED HANDS*; they must be *WILLING* hands.

There is also a *WITHERED hand* (Mark 3:1-2). This type of hand depicts helplessness, uselessness, and inability to do anything. Figuratively, withered hands are those which have become unable to do anything pertaining to the Lord's church. YOU, dear Christian, once saw the need of a Saviour when you were lost in sin, and now God wants you to prove your appreciation. You have hands to do it; pray that they may not be withered hands. Such hands are of no use to God and Christ. There is much for you to do.

Then there are *CLEAN HANDS*, as is conveyed by Psalm 24:3-4 "Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord? or who shall stand in His Holy place? He that hath clean hands and a pure heart; who hath not lifted up his soul in vanity, nor sworn deceitfully". (See also Job 19:9, and Isaiah 1:16 & 52:11). Clean hands exhibit a clean and exemplary life, a life of integrity.

A City that is set on a hill cannot be hidden, but is there for all the world to see. The best expression of the gospel message is YOUR life, and mine. Clean hands are willing, working, open hands, doing that which is honest, pure, just and true, and ever ready to obey the Master's will. Are we as Christians fulfilling our obligation to worship, to continue steadfastly, to lay by in store upon the first day of the week as God has prospered us? Are we willing to lift the weak and the fallen, ever conscious that "we who are strong" are also subject to life's limitations and allurements? Clean hands never allow adversity, discouragement, persecution distress to discourage them, but exclaim with our beloved Paul "For to me to live is Christ and to die is gain" (Phillipians 1:21). If we are in Christ, HE and HE alone will have the pre-eminence in our lives at all times and under all circumstances.

Finally, let us consider and conclude with the most important: the *INCOMPARABLE HANDS*. These are the untiring hands of Jesus our Saviour, the pierced hands that suffered on the cross of Calvary. Long before Christ's judgement in Pilat's hall, those hands showed sympathy and love for the blind, the sick, the deaf, the maimed and the dead. Those hands were never, in any fashion, withered or closed hands, they were kept busy by an inward love and compassion for all.

Many of us so often fail miserably to "follow in His steps". Jesus proved His identity to Thomas when he said: "Behold my hands". Yes, these were the hands by which Jesus hung suspended on that cruel tree, when He gave testimony in these words: "Father, I have glorified thee on the earth, now I have finished the work thou gavest me to do" (John 17:4). Those pierced hands will be a living witness in the DAY OF ACCOUNTABILITY. Those of us who have been aware of our obligations to Him may hang our heads in shame, but then it will be too late. We must have hands busy in God's service.

Will your song be: "Must I go empty handed, thus my dear Redeemer meet, not one day of service give HIM, lay no trophy at His feet?" Dear friend would you like to meet Jesus that way? Won't you place your hand in that nail-pierced hand which at this moment knocks at the door of your heart? "If any man will open the door I will come in and sup with him and he with me". "If any man will hear my voice" (Revelation 3:20).

In hearing His voice through His written word, we are called upon to believe in Him, and "Faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the word of God" (Romans 10:17). We must also repent of our sins (Acts 17:30) "Confess Christ with our mouth" (Romans 10:9,10), and be "baptized into Christ for the remission of our sins" (Acts 2:38). Then we can "Arise to walk in newness of life" (Romans 6:4). Yes, *newness of life* means to have willing hands, not withered, closed, or unclean hands.

Perhaps we can see how important hands are, not only in the natural life, but more especially in the Spiritual life. Christ requires clean hands and busy hands. Only then can we sing:

"Triumphant through grace I shall someday stand,

With Jesus at home on the golden strand,

His face in its beauty at last to see,

MY HANDS IN HIS HANDS, THAT WERE PIERCED FOR ME".

Thomas W, Hartle

11 Killarney Mansions, Gorge Road, Oranjezicht, Cape Town, 8001 Republic S.A.

## GLEANINGS

"Let her glean even among the sheaves." Ruth 2:15

### THE EYES OF THE LORD

"The Lord seeth not as man seeth." I Samuel 16:7

"And how does the holy Lord look on things? Have we any guidance as to what it is that distinguishes His sight from that of the children of men? Yes, certain hints have been given to us about the character of His discernment. Here is one. "Man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart." The Lord's eyes survey the secrets of the inner life. That great truth has frequently been taught as though it were only a fearful thing and clothed in unrelieved

gloom. We have thought of those searching eyes as the eyes of a policeman and not the eyes of a lover. We have regarded them as intent on looking for unlovely things and not for things that are lovely. They are eyes of suspicion rather than of trust. They are dross-finders rather than gold-finders. And so the great truth has been perverted. Certainly there are aspects of the truth which ought to move us to serious disquietude. But there are other aspects which should inspire us with joy. The Lord looks upon the heart and He sees the hidden fault. But he also sees the precious things which He puts among His jewels. A poor widow drops a coin into the treasury and human observers see only a mite. But the Lord looks upon the heart, and He sees untold millions in the gift. All the movements of the soul are known unto Him. He sees the desire that has never yet found fulfilment. He sees the hidden heartache which never hangs a black flag out of the window. He sees the prayer before it had uttered itself in words. He sees the love which has no adequate means of expression. The Lord sits over against the heart, and He knows every silent, stealthy thing that moves across its floors. He knew what was in man.”

J. H. JOWETT

### Quotes - from Lincoln

“I believe, that I shall never be old enough to speak without embarrassment when I have nothing to say.”

“‘A house divided against itself cannot stand.’ I believe this government cannot endure, permanently, half slave and half free.”

### Humanity Implies a Body and a Soul

“Accordingly, in the life of Christ we find two distant classes of feeling. When He hungered in the wilderness - when He thirsted on the cross - when He was weary by the well at Sychar, - He experienced sensations which belong to the bodily department of human nature. But when out of twelve He selected one to be His bosom friend:- when He looked round upon the crowd in anger:- when the tears streamed down His cheeks at Bethany:- and when He recoiled from the thought of approaching dissolution:- these - grief, friendship, fear, -were not the sensations of the body, much less were they the attributes of Godhead. They were the affections of an acutely sensitive human soul, alive to all the tenderness, and hopes, and anguish with which human life is filled, qualifying Him to be tempted in all points like as we are.”

F. W. Robertson

### The Toiling Slave

“Paul, a servant (doulos) of Jesus Christ.” (Romans 1:1).

“It is not suggested that the title “slave of Jesus Christ” may be used without qualification to describe the Christian’s relationship to his Lord; in His service there is nothing that corresponds to the compulsion of the lash, in His army there are no pressed men, all are volunteers (Psalm 110:3). The word “slave” has been degraded by its use, and we cannot now employ it without thinking of “Man’s inhumanity to man”. But everything depends upon the character of the Master whom we serve; Ruskin says, “To yield reverence to another, to hold ourselves and our lives at his disposal is not slavery; often it is the noblest state in which a man can live in this world;” certainly it is not slavery when we know that the sceptre of despotic rule is in the hands once pierced for us, and that “the thorn-crowned brow now wears that crown of power”. ”

J. G. Tasker

### There Was A Day When I Died

“There was a day when I died, utterly died, died to George Muller, his opinions, preferences, tastes, and will - died to the world, its approval or censure - died to the approval or blame even of my brethren and friends - and since then I have studied only to show myself approved unto God”.

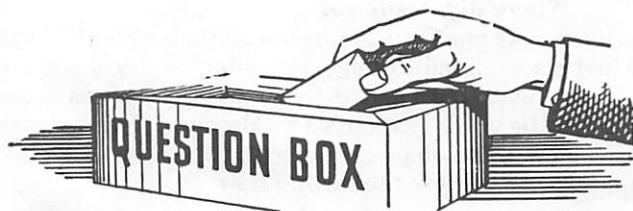
George Muller

### The Key To The Life Of Blessedness

"The Christian life, when it is being lived at its best, is essentially a life of obedience. "Blessed are they that hear the word of God, and keep it". Blessedness, you see, consists in hearing God's word and, when you hear it, obeying. Obedience, then, is the key to the life of blessedness."

Kenneth Prior

Selected by Leonard Morgan




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Conducted by  
Alf Marsden

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**"Jesus and one of the thieves went to Paradise (Luke 23:43). What do we know of Paradise?"**

The word 'paradise' has been borrowed by Hebrew and Greek from the old Persian, where it signified a royal pleasure-park, enclosed by walls and liberally planted with trees. It was also well stocked with game. The gardens of Babylonian houses, unlike ours, were also planted with trees, and not with flowers and vegetables. So we learn at the outset that in its original usage 'paradise' referred to a place on earth.

#### The Earthly Paradise

This is referred to in English as the 'Garden of Eden' (Gen. 2:8). This Garden, similarly planted with trees, like the gardens of the Babylonian houses, had been planted by Yahveh Elohim 'eastward' in the land of Eden, and Adam, the first man, had to tend it and to keep trespassers out (Gen. 2:8-15).

There has been great controversy as to where the Garden of Eden was situated. It has been placed by different people in Armenia, in the region of Damascus, in Southern Arabia, India, among other places, but detailed study by scholars of Cuneiform inscriptions have settled it, in their own minds anyway, in Babylonia. It seems that the early dwellers of Babylonia referred to that region as 'Edin', which literally means 'the plain'. It is said that the tides flowed up the mouths of the Tigris and Euphrates and other rivers, and so inundated the plain with water, hence its fertility; not unnaturally these waterings were known as 'inundations' (This would explain the 'mist' of Gen. 2:6). Further interesting data could be uncovered relative to this, but for our purposes for now, suffice it to say that the word 'paradise' has been used to describe an earthly region, and that this region is known as the 'Garden of Eden'. (The reader may wish to explore the use of the word 'garden' in the O.T. in the following scriptures, Eccl. 2:5; S. of Sol. 4:13; Isa. 1:30; Jer. 29:5; Ezek. 31:8-9.)

#### The N.T. Paradise

I suppose the statement most remembered in this context is that made by one of the malefactors crucified with Jesus and as recorded by Luke. You will recall, of course, that John makes no mention of the ones crucified with Jesus, and Matthew and Mark both record that the thieves reviled the Lord, as did some of the people and the Jewish rulers. Nevertheless, Luke *does* record a dialogue which reads like this, "Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom. And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, Today shalt thou be with me in

paradise" (Luke 23:39-43). Therefore, taking the words quite literally, we notice the following facts; (i) the thief would go to paradise, (ii) it would be on the day of the crucifixion, and (iii) Jesus would be with him. We now need to look for scriptural evidence as to where Jesus went, because where Jesus went is referred to as paradise, and this is the subject of our question.

### Where did Jesus go?

In order to be truly objective we must bring into view all the events and facts as we know them. In the first place it is quite evident that after the crucifixion the *body* of Jesus was placed in the tomb. The length of time that His body was in the tomb seems to be governed by His words as recorded by Matthew, "For as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale's belly; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth" (Matt. 12:40).

As regards the *soul* of Jesus, we have to look at Acts of Apostles. In his speech on the Day of Pentecost, Peter quotes freely from David the Patriarch, "Therefore being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn an oath to him, that of the fruit of his loins, according to the flesh, he would raise up Christ to sit on his throne; he seeing this before spake of the resurrection of Christ, that his *soul* was not left in hell (Hades), neither his flesh did see corruption" (Acts 2:30,31). Hades literally signifies 'the all-receiving'; it is generally looked upon as the region of the departed lost, but up to the time of the Ascension of Christ it seemed to include the souls of the blessed dead. So we are now able to state two points quite clearly, (i) the *soul* of Jesus was not left in Hades, and (ii) His body was not to see corruption. It seems to me that whatever else Jesus may have divested Himself of when He left heaven, He *did not* divest Himself of His Divine nature; He was Son of God and Son of man. If we hold, as I do, that the spiritual life, emanating from the life-source of the Eternal Spirit, is indestructible, then at the death of Jesus that part of Him *must* have returned to the Father.

When we consider the resurrection of Jesus we are thinking of a unique event. He was the first-born from among the dead, i.e., He lived *never to die again*. So we cannot press too closely the similarity between Christ and ourselves. Evidently, the resurrection of Jesus, and His appearances subsequently, were in order to work out the determinate counsel of God.

### The Heavens

We must now turn our attention to the Ascension of Christ. The writer to the Hebrews says, "Seeing then that we have a great high priest that is passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession" (Heb. 4:14). The same writer says, "He was made higher than the heavens" (7:26). Paul says, "He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens, that he might fill all things" (Eph. 4:10). So here we have a word picture of Jesus ascending *through* the heavens and according to Paul ascending to a place *far above all heavens*. These aerial heavens are the ones mentioned in Acts of Apostles, "Nevertheless he left not himself without witness, in that he did good, and gave us rain from *heaven*, and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness" (Acts 14:17). These, I believe, are the heavens mentioned in Heb. 1:10,11, where the writer says, "And, Thou, Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the earth; and the heavens are the works of thine hands: They shall perish; but thou remainest; and they shall wax old as doth a garment". Taking up this theme Peter tells us, "But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are



therein shall be burned up" (2 Peter 3:10). These are *not* the heavens to which Jesus ascended. These are the aerial heavens.

The heaven to which Jesus ascended is the uncreated, eternal sphere of God's abode. Because it is God's *eternal* abode, it follows that it cannot suffer the same fate as the *heavens* in the Peter passage. This is the place where Jesus came from, and to which He has returned, and from whence He ministers for the saints. We must not be confused by the gradation of heaven in some of the Rabbinical teaching. Some held that there were two heavens, some three, some seven. We are not to suppose that Paul is giving credence to the Rabbinical teaching when he gives his experience in being caught up to the third heaven (2 Cor. 12). In this passage the word 'third' is used as an adjective and is *descriptive*, not *nominative*, of the heaven to which he refers. What Paul means is that he was caught up - seized by force, literally - into the *highest* heaven that he could envisage, i.e., the dwelling place of God. It is interesting to note, and very specific to our question, that he refers to this place as paradise (v4).

What do we know of paradise? Well all the evidence seems to suggest that it is the eternal dwelling place of God. It is heaven 'itself'. It is Abraham's Bosom. It is the place from which the light shone on Paul on the Damascus road. It will be the home of the saints in glory. It will excel every brilliant descriptive phrase used of it in Revelation. There we shall be enfolded in the everlasting arms.

*(All questions, please, to Alf Marsden, 377 Billinge Road, Hayfield, Wigan.)*

## TREASURERS REPORT 1983

THERE are a number of points I would like to draw your attention to in this year's report.

First of all I have simplified the balance sheet by incorporating the petty cash into the main balance sheet. Petty cash covered the postage and stationery expenses incurred in posting out the 'Standard' and was shown in a separate balance in previous years.

I am pleased to report that no change in subscription rates is planned for 1983. This is not due to any improvement in our financial position but an awareness that every increase reduces circulation. Obviously we shall need extra income in this coming year to pay our bills and hope to achieve this by increasing our circulation. As an incentive to encourage new readers we are offering any additional copies to last year's order at half-price. We hope you will assist us in this endeavour by encouraging a friend to subscribe through you. A larger circulation will help us reduce the cost to all readers. We send approximately 30 copies each month to brethren in third world countries free of charge. Perhaps you would like to 'adopt' one of these subscriptions for a year.

I would like to say a word of special thanks to all those brethren who already give generously to help keep the 'Standard' in print. We were greatly helped last year by the Legacy of £345.19p from the Samuel Woods Trust shown in the balance sheet and a once-only gift of £150.00.

Finally, please make cheques payable to the 'Scripture Standard'. Cheques from overseas subscribers in their own currency are quite acceptable and readily converted to sterling by the bank.

Thank you for your continued support.

<u>INCOME</u>		<u>EXPENDITURE</u>	
Bank Bal. b/f	£ 424.56	Printers	£2269.06
Cash in hand	£ 198.50	Postage	£ 413.29
	£ 623.06	Stationery	£ 2.91
Subscriptions	£1871.60		£2685.26
Gifts	£ 372.09	Balance Dep A/C£	312.81
Bank Interest	£ 40.67	Balance Cur A/C£	153.08
Legacy	£ 345.19	Cash in Hand	£ 101.46
	£2629.55		£ 567.35
	<u>£3252.61</u>		<u>£3252.61</u>

Treasurer J. K. Kneller

Auditor J. McLuckie

## SCRIPTURE READINGS

APRIL 1983

- 3—Isaiah 23                      Luke 10:1-24  
 10—Deut. 6:1-15                Luke 10:25-42  
 17—1 Sam. 28:5-25            Luke 11:1-26  
 24—2 Chron. 24:15-25        Luke 11:27-54

### THE SEVENTY

THERE are so many important points to be noted from this passage. Here are some:

- 1) The Lord appointed these seventy (verse 1).
- 2) He sent them ahead of Him (verse 1)
- 3) They faced dangers (verse 3).
- 4) They were to travel light (verse 4).
- 5) They had to concentrate fully on their work (verse 4).
- 6) They were to be satisfied with the hospitality given (verse 7).
- 7) They were to heal the sick in the cities that received them (verse 9).
- 8) "The Kingdom of God" was to be their message (verse 9).
- 9) Where the message was not received, a warning of divine judgement was to be uttered (verse 10 f).
- 10) They had full authority from God (verse 16).
- 11) They had to rejoice above all in the fact that their names were written in heaven (verse 20).
- 12) The disciples were an honest and humble group (verse 21).

### The Parable of the Good Samaritan

We should carefully note the context of the parable. It was given by Jesus in answer to the lawyer's question: "And who is my neighbour?" Immediately prior to this, the lawyer had been commended for his understanding of the essence of the law. He had said: "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart (affection), with all your soul (emotion), with all your strength, and with all your mind (intellect); and your neighbour as yourself" (See Deuteronomy 6:8,9 and Leviticus 19:18).

The force of this particular parable is lost if we do not appreciate the hatred that then existed between the Jews and the Samaritans. E. M. Zerr, for example, has written: "The Samaritans were a mixture of Jew and Gentile blood, the origin of which is recorded in 2 Kings 17:24-33. The Jews had no dealings with them (John 4:9), and thought that very little good ever came from them". We should note from verse 37 that this lawyer could not even bring himself to say "the Samaritan!"

That compassion shown by the Samaritan was a practical one. And what Jesus said to the lawyer, he says to us — "Go *YOU* and do the same".

### Martha and Mary

Martha and Mary were sisters who lived in Bethany. Their brother was Lazarus whom Jesus raised from the dead (John 11). Jesus loved them deeply. Martha on this visit of Jesus

rushed and fussed and cooked. Because of the excessive concern for the practical details of the meal and her impatience with her sister, she was gently rebuked by the Master. Mary, in contrast, understood and had chosen on this occasion the most important thing.

### PRAYER

The hymn writer, James Montgomery, wrote:

Prayer is the soul's sincere desire,  
Uttered or unexpressed,  
The motion of a hidden fire  
That trembles in the breast.

Prayer is the Christian's vital breath  
The Christian's native air,  
His watchword at the gates of death;  
He enters heaven with prayer.

It was Alexander Campbell who said: "Concerning prayer and praise, we cannot imagine a religion without them". Thomas Hartwell Horne has stated: "Prayer is the voice of faith". And another commentator once wrote: "Prayer is the true thermometer of the spiritual life".

We can learn from the Jews on this subject. In reading a Jewish newspaper, I discovered from an interesting article that the Hebrew word for prayer, *TEFILA*, is derived from *HITPALLEL*, to examine or judge oneself. The English word implies entreating the Almighty, from the Latin *PRECARIA*, to beg (similar to the German *GEBET*). Judaism thus teaches that prayer is a means of reaching greater heights, a way of judging oneself in the light of lofty truths and ideals.

"Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples". So asked one of Jesus' disciples who must have been moved at the sight of the Master in prayer. Jesus' response was to voice what is commonly called "The Lord's Prayer" - known by heart to many I am sure. In the parallel passage in Matthew, Jesus prior to the prayer

said: "But when you pray, do not use vain repetitions as the heathen do: for they think that they will be heard for their many words. Therefore do not be like them: for your father knows the things you have need of before you ask him" (Matthew 6:6,7). But that is just what "The Lord's Prayer" has become - a vain repetition. Surely it was given to the disciples not as a prayer for endless recital but as a pattern for their prayers. And it is a pattern which is very simple but very comprehensive.

Jesus went on to speak of the need of persistence in prayer. How can we forget his words! "Ask, and it shall be given you; Seek, and you shall find; Knock and it shall be opened unto you". These letters spell *ASK*.

### Beelzebub

This is a title of the Devil. *BEELZEBUB* or *BAAL-ZEBUB* or *BEELZEBUL* was originally a Philistine deity (2 Kings 1). The name means "lord of flies".

I must point out again that there is one devil but many demons. The term "devils" should not be in the scriptures. The accusation that Jesus cast out demons by the chief of the demons was a preposterous one. In fact, it was more than that, it was a blasphemous one. It was blasphemy against the Holy Spirit. In the parallel passage in Mark we have these words. "Verily I (Jesus) say unto you (the scribes), All sins will be forgiven the sons of men, and whatsoever blasphemies they may utter; but he who blasphemes against the Holy Spirit never has forgiveness but is subject to eternal condemnation' — *BECAUSE THEY SAID, 'HE HAS AN UNCLEAN SPIRIT'* " (Mark 3:28-30).

W. Carl Ketcherside in his book *HEAVEN HELP US* deals well with this subject. He writes: "Without speaking it is impossible to commit the sin of blasphemy. Blasphemy is a sin of the tongue and not merely of the heart.... To blaspheme is to speak

injuriously of that which is high or holy.... What is the unforgiveable sin? According to the context, it is accrediting to Satan the power by which Jesus performed His wonderful works. It is saying that Jesus possessed an evil spirit rather than the Holy Spirit.... Why is there no forgiveness for this malign act? The simplest answer is that God has placed it outside the pale of divine forgiveness. It is beyond the limit set for grace. It is the one crime against the divine Majesty that is outside the circle. This does not exhaust the subject, however. The kind of heart that would engage in such reprehensible conduct will not repent. It is the heart of stone or flint that would willingly see the world of mankind destroyed to justify its own cruelty and gratify its own inhumanity".

#### **A Greater than Jonah and Solomon**

Jesus said of the people in his day: "This is an evil generation". They were sign-seekers and wanted some special miraculous demonstration to attest the message of Jesus. A sign would be given - the sign of Jonah the prophet. The risen Jonah was a sign unto the Ninevites, and the risen Jesus would be a sign unto His generation. Matthew 12:40 reads: "For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so will the son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth".

When you have some time, dear reader, please read the Old Testament accounts of Jonah and Solomon. You will profit by it. Then consider the Master's words: "And indeed a greater than Solomon is here.... a greater than Jonah is here". Jesus' generation would be condemned by the Ninevites and the Queen of the South (Sheba). Why? because the men of Nineveh responded to the preaching of Jonah, and yet the Jews failed to respond to the preaching of Jesus; the Queen of Sheba made great efforts to hear

Solomon and yet the Jews were not impressed by one greater than Solomon.

#### **Woe to the Pharisees and Lawyers**

The Pharisees were condemned by Jesus because they concentrated on two things - externals and details. William Barclay has said: "So long as the externals of religion were carried out that was all that mattered. Their hearts might be as black as hell; they might be utterly lacking in charity and even in justice; but as long as they went through the correct motions at the correct time they considered themselves good in the eyes of God.... Compared with love and kindness, justice and generosity, the washing of hands and the giving tithes with mathematical accuracy were unimportant details".

The Legalists were no different. They claimed to be experts in the Law but did not keep it themselves; they professed to have an admiration for prophets but persecuted them; they declared a love of truth but obscured God's revelation and kept men out of His kingdom. They were hypocrites. They professed to be something they knew they were not. Woe to them indeed and all like them!

IAN DAVIDSON, Motherwell

### **BELIEF : (7)**

WE have examined the possibility of keeping or obeying God's words as revealed in the Scriptures (Hebrews 1: 1-2). We have discovered that we can reasonably be expected to do so. The question is where to *begin*, and will this lead to sanctification of the Spirit and thereby the salvation of the soul, which is what came to the Thessalonian believers? These are the third and fourth of the questions we set out to answer when we started our investigations.

#### **The Beginning of the Christian Life**

The only way to discover this is to see

how the Thessalonians began to believe the truth, which led to their sanctification and so to their being chosen by God to be saved (2 Thessalonians 2:13). This is revealed *indirectly* by Paul's first letter to the Thessalonians (1:1). We purposely say "indirectly" since Paul in his letters does not in so many words explain what the beginnings of belief are.

This is not so strange, since those he addressed had already become Christians, so his remarks take this for granted. The same thing would happen if we were to write, say, to a brother-in-law. We would not say, "Dear brother-in-law who became so by marrying our dear sister before witnesses, etc., etc.!" The very use of the words "brother-in-law" reveals the means by which he became such a relative of ours.

So with Thessalonians, Paul addressed his letter to "the church of the Thessalonians". Now this word "church" is from the Greek word *ekklesia*, which means "chosen". It was translated by the word "church" because King James, on the translation of the Bible into English, insisted that this term be used among others. This was a pity, to say the least, since it has hindered many from rightly understanding the word "belief". Belief involves not the mere formal acceptance of statements, but a true appreciation of their real meaning. The Thessalonians then had already been chosen by God! Why? Was it not because *they had already received the gospel and obeyed it?*

### Obeying the Gospel

It is clear from 1 Thessalonians 1:5 that it was the *gospel* that Paul had preached to them and which led to their becoming the *ekklesia* or chosen of God. Paul wrote, "For you yourselves, *brethren*, know our entrance in unto you, that it was not in vain, but even after that we had suffered before and were shamefully treated at Philippi, we were bold in our

God to *speak unto you the gospel of God...*" (1 Thessalonians 2:1-2).

So we see that it was as a result of preaching the gospel to them, and their acceptance of it, that Paul was able to call them the "ekklesia" or "chosen" of God. That it was *God's* good news, not man's, is clearly shown by the words: "But as we were allowed of God to be put in trust with the gospel, even so we speak; not as pleasing men, but God, which trieth our hearts" (verse 4). Verse 13 makes this even clearer: "For this cause we thank God without ceasing, because, when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but *as it is in truth, the word of God*, which effectually worketh also in you that believe" (see Article 1).

Notice also that the use of the word "brethren" indirectly shows that they had entered into a relationship, consequent upon the preaching of the gospel. Could not this relationship be connected to the relationship with Christ and God referred to in our last article?

Note also the authorship of the gospel or good news. It was the *gospel of God*. It is also called "the gospel of Christ" (2 Thessalonians 1:8). It was the same gospel, spoken through the Christ, who came to do his Father's will (John 5:30; 6:38), and to speak what his Father had taught him (John 8:28).

### What was this Gospel?

It is natural to enquire what was this gospel (or good news), preached by Paul and the other apostles, obedience to which brings the promise of salvation.

Surely it involved belief, as we saw in previous articles—belief in a *risen Christ*. This is clearly shown by the words, "For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again..." (1 Thessalonians 4:14). Could anything be clearer than that this is the good news, and the main object of the Christian belief? Not only that, but the words

that follow (verses 14-18) give the answer to our fourth question: "What is the salvation to which Paul refers?" More about this and other soul-searching questions in our next article. In the meantime, here are some more

### Exercises in Belief

Matthew 24:31; 36-44; 1 Peter 3:18-22;  
1 Thessalonians 5:9-10; 2 Thes-  
salonians 1:7-10; 2:8-14.

W. BROWN

(To be continued)

## AM I TRULY GRATEFUL?

Bible Thought: "Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts to the which also ye were called in one body; and be ye thankful!" (Col. 3:15).

How pitiful the sight of a leper with his body slowly decaying. But how much more pitiful the spectacle of the ungrateful soul. Is not this story a tremendous challenge to all of us? Then, ask yourself the question, "Am I truly grateful?"

"Am I truly grateful for eyes to see and ears to hear?" - Remember Helen Keller, who could neither see nor hear!

"Am I truly grateful for hands to work with?" - On my desk there is a calendar with pictures painted by artists who have no hands! They work with feet or mouth.

"Am I truly grateful for my legs that will take me wherever I want to go?" - Think of the cripples that cannot walk for seemingly endless years.

"Am I truly grateful for my daily bread?" - There are many millions of hungry people in our world!

"Am I truly grateful for the night's rest?" - Consider the men and women who are unable to sleep for many nights!

Questions without end. Who can look into the mirror of God's Word without blushing? How much do we just take for granted?

"Count your many blessings, name them one by one,  
Count your many blessings, see what God hath done!"

Let us unite to thank God for the innumerable gifts of His love, for the small and the great, the earthly and the spiritual. Let us pray for an ever-grateful soul. -Selected.

He couldn't speak before a crowd;  
He couldn't teach a class;  
But when he came to Sunday school,  
He brought the folks *en masse*.  
He couldn't sing to save his life;  
In public he couldn't pray,  
But always his 'jalopy' was  
Just crammed on each Lord's Day.  
And though he could not sing nor teach  
Nor could he lead in prayer;  
He listened well, he had a smile,  
And he was always there-  
With all the others whom he brought  
Along from near and far.  
And God's work prospered greatly  
Through that consecrated car.

Can this be said of your car, or mine?

## THE CHURCH AND ITS MISSION

"He that winneth souls is wise"  
(Prov. 11:30)

WE plead for the original apostolic gospel and its positive institutions. If the great apostles Peter and Paul - the former to the Jews and the latter to the Gentiles - announced the true gospel of the grace of God, shall we hesitate a moment on the propriety and the necessity, divinely imposed upon us, of preaching the same gospel which they preached, and in advocating the same institutions which they established, under the plenary inspiration and direction of the Holy Spirit? Can we improve upon their institutions and enactments?

What means that singular imperative enunciated by the evangelical prophet Isaiah (Isa. 8),

"Bind up the testimony, seal the law among my disciples?" What were its antecedents Harken! The prophet had just foretold. He, the subject of this oracle, viz.: "The desire of all nations," was coming to be a sanctuary; but not a sanctuary alone, but for a stone of stumbling and a rock of offence (as at this day) to both the houses of Israel - for a gin and for a snare to the inhabitants of Jerusalem.

The Church, therefore, of right is, and ought to be, a great missionary society. Her parish is the whole earth, from sea to sea, and from the Euphrates to the last domicile of man.

ALEXANDER CAMPBELL (extract) of speech to the American Christian Missionary Society, Cincinnati, 1860).

"THE thoughtless are rarely wordless."

"COMMON sense is the most uncommon thing in the world".

## FAULT FINDING

PRAY don't find fault with the man

Who limps or stumbles along the road,

Unless you have worn the shoes he wears

Or struggled beneath his load.

There may be tacks in his shoes that hurt

Though hidden away from view,

And the burden he bears, placed on you now,

Might cause you to stumble too.

Don't sneer at the man who is down today,

Unless you have felt the blow

That caused his fall, or felt the shame

That only the fallen know.

You may be strong, but still the blows

That were his, if dealt to you

In the self-same way at the self-same time

Might cause you to stagger too.

Don't be too harsh with the man who sins

Or pelt him with words or stones,  
Unless you are sure, yea doubly sure,  
That you have no sins or your own.

For you know, perhaps, if Satan's voice  
Should whisper as softly to you  
As it did to him, when he went astray,  
'Twould cause you to falter too.

## NEWS FROM THE CHURCHES

### CHANGE OF PREMISES

THE church at Haddington have had to vacate the Town House for February and March (due to renovations), and during that period will be meeting at the rear of The Corn Exchange, Haddington (a stone's throw from the Town House).

Ruth Nisbet, Sec.

**Zaire:** We visited Zaire (formerly the Congo) in January 1983. There are now some 300-plus congregations trying to be churches of Christ. The work-load of teaching the way of the Lord more perfectly is phenomenal. Really, we could benefit from another missionary, to help out, who is an experienced Bible teacher.

Chester Woodhall  
Box 22297,  
Kitwe, Zambia.

## OBITUARY

**Kirkcaldy:** On 17th January, 1983, our beloved sister Peggy Darroch (Watters) went to be with her Lord. During her lifetime she was a tireless worker, helping and teaching people in a loving Christian manner. Despite health problems in her last 15 years, or so, she laboured on as best she could and has earned her rest. Although we will miss her we know that she will receive the reward of the faithful.

Robt. Hughes

**THANKS**

Sister Betty Gardiner of 87 Main Street, Pathhead, would like to thank all those who sent kind letters, cards, and made telephone enquiries, during her recent spell in hospital, and since.

**ANNIVERSARY MEETING**

The church at Brighton intend holding (God willing) their Anniversary Meeting at Brighton on 9th April, 1983, at 6.30 p.m. Tea is at 5 p.m. No other details.

**ANNUAL SOCIAL**

God willing, the Annual Social of the church at Buckie will take place in the meeting-place on:

JUNE 4th at 3 p.m.

Chairman — W. Strachan

Speaker — A. Marsden (Wigan)

All Welcome

**THE WORTH OF A SOUL**

GO and try to save a soul and you will see how well it is worth saving, how capable of the most complete salvation. Not by pondering about it nor by talking of it, but by saving it you learn its preciousness.

**ANNUAL SOCIAL**

The Tranent Church intend holding their Annual Social, God willing, on 19th MARCH at 4 p.m. in the Dining Hall of Tranent Primary School.

Speakers on this occasion will be Ian Davidson, Motherwell, and John Dodsley, KIRBY-in-Ashfield.

Come and join us for a time of rich fellowship.

**WAR MAKES SIN APPEAR RIGHT**

PEOPLE accept the theory that "all things are fair in love and war," Every advantage is taken in war to whip the enemy. All kinds of deception are practised; anything to put the enemy off guard.

Is this what the Lord wants His children to do? If so, what is the good of listening to what the New Testament says? In time of peace we would not dare to do what is done in war. Sin is sin, whether in war or in peace.

H. M. Phillips

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