

The SCRIPTURE STANDARD

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

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NOR YET AT JERUSALEM

It is difficult to believe that there are *Christians* amongst the many who watch, day by day, with bated breath, the political comings-and-goings in Palestine, in the sure conviction that scripture is unfolding in that land in these times, and that the Jews will once more be "restored to their rightful place" in the Holy Land, and their enemies will be pushed back (as, for instance, in the "6-day war"). One has to wonder and ask: "What IS the rightful place of the Jews." What expectancy has the Jew more than the non-Jew, we wonder? Then there are those who are expecting the return of Abraham to Palestine any day now. They believe because Abraham was *personally* promised the Holy Land and did not receive it in his lifetime, that God (who never reneges on a promise) will resurrect Abraham and give to him, and his vast progeny, "The Promised Land," and that this looks likely to happen very soon: (anyone who has had discussions with Christadelphians, for instance, will appreciate the strength of this expectancy).

But is there any justification for any such expectation? What promise to the Jews has God not honoured? Is it not a fact that "the promise" made to Abraham has been fully implemented, and that nothing is left outstanding for the Jew to hope for. Let us look briefly at the promises made to the Jews through Abraham.

WHAT WAS PROMISED?

In dealing with the claim that Abraham never personally received the land promised by God, we would, first of all, be best to look at **exactly what** was promised to Abraham. The first mention of Abraham is in Gen. 11:27, and his death is recorded in Gen. 25. Between those two events, God made the same promise to Abraham about six or seven times (which was not often, over a lifespan of 175 years). Space precludes a verbatim quote of all the references but those that follow will suffice.

God instructed Abraham to leave his ancestral home in Ur of the Chaldees, and to move to a land that God would show him, with the accompanying promise, "I will make thee a great nation, and will bless thee and make thy name great, and thou shalt be a blessing. And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse them that curse thee; and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed." (Gen. 12:2). When Abraham reached this land (Canaan), after a long journey, God said, "Unto thy seed will I give this land." (Gen. 12:7). It is important to notice that the 'promised land' is to be given to Abraham's SEED, or progeny. In due course and years later, when Abraham and Lot separated, Abraham moved again to Canaan and God said, "Lift up your eyes and look northward, southward, eastward and westward. For all the land which

thou seest to thee will I give it, and to thy seed forever. And I will make thy seed as the dust of the earth. Arise walk through the land and in the length of it, and in the breadth of it, for I will give it unto thee." (Gen. 13:12). Still later, after Abraham had rescued Lot from captivity and paid tithes to Melchizedek God made a covenant with Abraham, saying, "UNTO THY SEED have I given this land, from the river of Egypt unto the great river, the river Euphrates, the Kenites and the Kenizzites, and the Kadmonites, and the Hittites, and the Perizzites, and the Rephaims. And the Amorites, and the Canaanites, and the Girgashites, and the Jebusites." (Gen. 15:18). Again we notice that the promise was to Abraham's SEED (his offspring) and we notice also that 'promised land' was larger than just Canaan. Much later, after Abraham's preparedness to offer up his only son Isaac, God declared, "By myself have I sworn, saith the Lord, for because thou hast done this thing, and hast not withheld thine only son. That in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of heaven, and as the sand which is upon the seashore; and thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies, and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed, because thou hast obeyed my voice." (Gen. 22:16).

Finally, when Abraham was sending his servant on a quest to find a suitable wife for his son Isaac, he said, "The Lord God which took me from my father's house, and from the land of my kindred, and which spake unto me, and that sware unto me, saying, UNTO THY SEED will I give this land: he shall send His angel before thee and thou shalt take a wife unto my son from thence." (Gen. 24:7).

It seems that, even in Abraham's own understanding of the promise, the land was to be given to his descendants: his seed. Obviously if the promise had materialised in Abraham's time, there would be no cause to reiterate it to his sons, but it was transferred to Isaac. God said to Isaac, "I will bless thee, for unto thee and THY SEED, I will give all these countries and I will perform the oath which I sware unto Abraham thy father." Thus, the fulfilment of the promise to Abraham was yet future, even in Isaac's day. (Gen. 26:2). Likewise the promise was still something in the future of Jacob's day (son of Isaac) for much later God transferred the same promise to Jacob, i.e. that his seed would be as numerous as the stars of heaven, that he would enlarge his borders in every direction and that the land he lay upon would be given to HIS SEED (Gen. 28:13).

From all this we surely see that although the promise was made originally to Abraham (and in turn, personally to Isaac and Jacob) its fulfilment was ever intended to be enjoyed by Abraham's offspring, well down the corridors of time.

SEVERAL PROMISES INVOLVED

Clearly, more than one promise was involved: there were several: vis. (1) God would make Abraham a great nation: (2) God would bless those that blessed Abraham and cursed those that cursed him: (3) and was promised: the 'Promised Land'; (4) Abraham's descendants would be numberless: as the stars of heaven, and (5) in Abraham would all the nations of the earth be blessed.

Promise No. 1 was certainly fulfilled for Abraham was father, not only of the Jews, but a large number of other races, including the Arabs. The Bible also shows that *promise No. 2* was fulfilled and that those who blessed Abraham were blessed of God, and vice-versa. *Promise No. 4* was also fulfilled for we read (after Israel's 400 years slavery in Egypt) in Deut. 10:22, "Thy fathers went down into Egypt with three score and ten persons: and now the Lord thy God hath made thee as the stars of

heaven for multitude." *Promise No. 5* is commented upon by Paul (in Gal. 3:8,16) and is fulfilled in Christ and the gospel. This leaves *Promise No. 3* (the land-promise) and is, of course, the point at issue. Has the land-promise been fulfilled to Abraham and his seed: or is it awaiting the 'millennium'?

THE PROMISE FULFILLED

As previously mentioned, the best commentators on O.T. prophecy are the N.T. prophets and writers. Stephen (in Acts 7) gives us a wonderful 'potted' history of the Jews (well worth another read) and at v.17 seems to indicate that the original promise given to Abraham was always futuristic and destined for his seed after their rescue from bondage in Egypt, for he says, "**BUT WHEN THE TIME OF THE PROMISE DREW NIGH which God had sworn to Abraham, the people grew and multiplied in Egypt.**" I'm sure we prefer the word of Stephen to that of any other pre-millennialist, and here Stephen says that the time of fulfilment of the promise made to Abraham was when the Israelites were multiplying in Egypt. It also follows that if the promise drew nigh at that time, it cannot draw nigh at the alleged millennium. Indeed, after escaping from Egypt under Moses, the land-promise was reiterated to Israel (the seed of Abraham) but was by this time conditional upon their loyalty and fidelity to God. God said, "For if ye shall diligently keep all those commandments which I command you to do them, to love the Lord your God, to walk in all His ways, and to cleave unto Him. Then will the Lord drive out all these nations from before you, and ye shall possess greater and mightier nations than yourselves. Every place whereon the soles of your feet shall tread shall be yours, from the wilderness and Lebanon, from the river, the river Euphrates, even unto the uttermost sea." (Deut. 11:24). We forget, I suppose, that all the many powerful nations already occupying the 'promised land' had to be dispossessed and driven out. This was to be contingent upon Israel's love and allegiance to God. Did it come to pass?

Joshua sums up the conquest by saying, "**And the Lord gave unto Israel ALL THE LAND which He sware unto their fathers, AND THEY POSSESSED it and dwelt therein, and the Lord gave them rest round about, according to all that He sware unto their fathers: and there stood not a man of all their enemies before them: the Lord delivered all their enemies unto their hand. There failed not ought of any good thing which the Lord had spoken unto the house of Israel; ALL CAME TO PASS.**" (Joshua 21:43). Christadelphians and others may claim that the promise to Abraham has still to be fulfilled but this passage contradicts them all. Joshua says that God gave to Israel ALL THE LAND that was promised to Abraham: and they not only dwelt in it but possessed it. *Respecting the promise; all came to pass.* This is confirmed in 1 Kings 4:21, where we read, "**And Solomon reigned over all kingdoms, from the river unto the land of the Philistines, and unto the border of Egypt: they brought presents and served Solomon all the days of his life.**"

In Nehemiah (9:7,8) the Levites, in praising God, said, "**Thou art the Lord, the God who didst choose Abraham . . . and foundest his heart faithful before Thee, and madest a covenant with him, to give him the land of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Perizzites, and the Jebusites, and the Girgashites, to give it I say TO HIS SEED and HAST PERFORMED THY WORDS, for thou art righteous.**" And so the Levites were also convinced that the land-promise to Abraham had been fulfilled. Indeed, the Levites go on to be more specific about the fulfilment, and to describe how Israel ultimately proved to be disloyal to God and lost in idolatry. "**Their children also multiplied Thou as the stars of heaven, and BROUGHTEST**

THEM INTO THE LAND, concerning which Thou had promised to their fathers, that they should go in to possess it. So the children went in **AND POSSESSED THE LAND** and Thou subdued before them the inhabitants of the land, the Canaanites, and gavest them unto their hands, with their kings and the people of the land, that they might do with them as they would . . . Nevertheless they were disobedient, and rebelled against Thee, and cast Thy law behind their backs, and slew Thy prophets which testified against them, to turn them to Thee, and they wrought great provocations. Therefore Thou delivered them into the hands of their enemies . . ." Israel certainly received all the land promised to Abraham, but eventually lost it again.

NEITHER JEW NOR GREEK

Bible students will invariably find that the O.T. prophecies offered in support of this "future return" of the Jews to Palestine refer, in fact, to the Jewish return to the Homeland **AFTER THEIR CAPTIVITIES** and therefore these prophecies have already been fulfilled. We should also keep in mind the fact that most of the O.T. prophets wrote either *before or during* the captivities of Israel and Judah, in Syria and Babylon respectively, and although prophets described the return of some remnants of Jews, their predictions came to pass under Ezra and Nehemiah, about 450 BC, *after which NOTHING* was ever said about Jews gathering around Jerusalem. Indeed, during the following 400 years (between the OT and NT) God was extremely mute and said nothing whatsoever - not a word.

As we can clearly see, nothing has been left over, or is still outstanding, from the promises made to Abraham and his progeny "**There failed not ought of any good thing which the Lord had spoken unto the House of Israel: ALL CAME TO PASS**" (Josh. 21:43).

Obviously the best interpretations and commentaries on the O.T. prophecy came from Christ and His inspired apostles. Did they ever lead us to suppose that the Jews would be given, some time in the future, a promise upon which God had previously defaulted? The (long-term) spiritual promise to Abraham: i.e. that in his seed "**would ALL the nations of the earth be blessed**", was surely in striking contrast to the other promises exclusive to the Jew. Paul tells us that long-term promise was fulfilled in Christ (e.g. Gal. 3:16) and that **ALL nations** now qualify for God's gifts and grace. Accordingly, Jesus charged His apostles (2,000 years ago) to preach the gospel to *EVERY Creature* (albeit to the Jew first, but **ALSO** to the Greek).

SIMULTANEOUSLY, Jewish religious institutions were gradually phased out (under protest, of course) but they were concluded and eventually ceased to have any relevance. Did not God do away with the covenant He had with the Jew, to replace it with a new covenant: a new covenant *inclusive of all nations*: and no longer the exclusive domain of the Hebrew? And was not the Jewish religion brought to a sudden and catastrophic end, around 70 AD? Did Jesus not lament the coming demise of the Holy City: "**O Jerusalem, O Jerusalem**" and declared it ". . . **left desolate**"? Did not all the Jewish religious institutions evaporate? The great Temple has gone and can never be rebuilt; their Sabbath has gone; their feasts and sacrifices have gone: (replaced, albeit, by the atoning sacrifice of Jesus, His Church and His day.) The Law and ordinances of Moses have all gone (nailed to the cross) and even circumcision is now of no consequence whatsoever. Does anyone suppose that God's dismantling of these Jewish institutions is ever likely to be reversed, even in part? The truth is that God no longer recognises any Jew as such: previous racial distinction has gone. Paul,

writing to Gentile and Jewish Christians, could say, "For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptised into Christ have put on Christ. **THERE IS NEITHER JEW NOR GREEK**, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female, for **YE ARE ALL ONE IN CHRIST JESUS**". And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise." (Gal. 3:26). Surely this says it all. And so the Jews lost their exclusive identity 2,000 years ago. Paul could also say "For he is not a Jew which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision which is outward in the flesh. But he is a Jew which is one inwardly, and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit and not in the letter." (Rom. 2:28). God has not abandoned the Jew. Perish the thought. But God has offered the Jew *something much better* than he ever had before, through Christ.

CONCLUSION

The K. of H. is no longer a geographical spot on an atlas, (either in the Middle East or elsewhere) but is a *spiritual institution* in hearts and minds. Jesus, Himself, said that the Kingdom could not be seen with the eye (Lo, here, or Lo there) but "**is among you, or within you**". Paul, referred to the fact that he stood trial (more than once) for "**the hope of Israel**" and Paul would never have been arrested for saying that the Jews would be restored to the Holy Land: No! his 'crime' was that he had been preaching of their hope in Christ. There is only ONE HOPE (Eph. 4:4) for Jews, and Gentiles, and that is ". . . **the hope laid up for you IN HEAVEN**" (Col. 1:5). The Jews DID receive the "Promised Land" but, by their idolatry and indifference to God, proved themselves unworthy of the honour and forfeited it. Any purpose in Jews "filtering back to Palestine" would now be *political*, certainly not *religious*. Indeed, someone has said that Jews would not return even for *business* reasons: since Jews don't make much money out of fellow-Jews, and prefer to stay and operate amongst the Gentiles. The only thing pleasing to God that a Jew can now do, is to become a Christian, and, as Christians, they can happily remain wherever they are in the world, and have no legitimate religious reason to head for Palestine. "**Woman, believe Me, the hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this mountain, NOR YET AT JERUSALEM, worship the Father . . . But the hour cometh AND NOW IS, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship Him.**" (John 4:21).

EDITOR.

GIVING MYSELF TO THE LORD

Do you enjoy being a Christian? Is "daily living" a rich and vibrant experience? Are there fewer struggles and is there contentment? Is there more satisfaction and less regret? Are you purposefully going somewhere and sensing that you are moving in the right direction? More and more do you feel that you are living a life of freedom rather than being suppressed by law? Questions like these speak for us - and they speak to us.

FULL SURRENDER

Behind all of those questions and whatever the answers, might there be yet another question. It is so primary, so fundamental, that if one can't answer it positively there is little likelihood that the Christian life can be that open, wonderfully happy and rewarding, ever-progressive way of living. The question: *Have you ever completely, totally, without reservation, surrendered your life of the Lord?* This is not to ask

whether or not at some given point you went through the "steps of obeying the gospel," or whether yours was a personal decision to accept "by the terms of the gospel" the salvation in Christ Jesus, or whether you understood at the time that you were being added by the Lord to his Church (not some denomination). All of those are in the picture - but the first principle involves a complete giving-up, a total surrender.

(1) *Self Denial*. When Jesus said, "If any man would come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me" (Matt. 16:24), he wasn't referring to the giving up of some sinful things in one's life. He was talking about *self-denial*. This was *His* life - and this is what He asked of His disciples. His pronouncement was preceded by, "From that time began Jesus to show unto His disciples, that he must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and the third day be raised up. And Peter took Him, and began to rebuke Him, saying, "Be it far from thee, Lord; this shall never be unto Thee" (Matt 16:21,22). Peter's reaction grew out of self-concern; Christ's whole life was one of self-denial. "Be it far from thee" was so far off the mark! The course of events outlined by Jesus was precisely consistent with the whole of His being.

(2) *Turn of 180 Degrees*. A hard saying that is - "Deny self - for it requires a turn of 180 degrees. This is no minor adjustment of attitude or correction of character. What a numbing shock this was to the rich, religiously dedicated young man who came to Jesus with the sincere question, "What good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life?" (Matt. 19:16). He was a keeper of the law, but how sure he wanted to be that he wasn't omitting something - "What lack I yet?" (vs. 17-20). "Jesus said unto him, If thou wouldest be perfect, go, sell that which thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, follow Me" (v. 21). How sad it is for us to see that eager young man rejecting the invitation. He was one "that had great possessions" - and total surrender, complete self denial, didn't match his, "What good thing shall I do?"

THE LIFE GIVEN TO GOD

(1) *The Repentance of Job*. It was a glorious day when the long-suffering Job completely surrendered his will to Jehovah. Hear him say, "I had heard of thee by the hearing of the ear; but now mine eye seeth thee: wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes" (Job 42:5,6). Of what was he repenting? Never had he denied his Lord. Patience was his strong quality (James 5:11). And at the conclusion of the entire episode Jehovah said to Job's two friends, "Ye have not spoken of me the thing that is right, as my servant Job hath" (Job 42:7).

Of what did he need to repent? Ah, he so much wanted to present his defence before the Lord. There was real presumptuousness in this. Though never expressed, here was a man of God who would reason with his Lord, evidently about the justness of what was happening - and of the scorn heaped on the sufferer who was viewed by the people (even his two friends) as a sinner being punished. Job knew that God knew he wasn't a sinner deserving of such suffering. Why, then, the suffering? Why, then, the permitting of people to have such obvious evidence of a secretly sinful life?

The opportunity of talking with God came, but Jehovah did most of the talking. "Who is this that darkeneth counsel by words without knowledge?" (38:1) was followed by a mind-staggering review of the Genesis story - God's wisdom, God's power. Moreover Jehovah answered Job, and said, "Shall he that cavilleth contend with the Almighty? He that argueth with God, let him answer it" (40:1,2).

By now Job was getting the point. He was beginning to see himself as he was, as God saw him - not as his friends saw him or as he had seen himself. "Then Job answered Jehovah, and said, Behold, I am of small account; what shall I answer thee? I lay my hand upon my mouth" (40:3,4). Yet Jehovah kept on: "Wilt thou even annul my judgement? Wilt thou condemn me, that thou mayest be justified?" (40:8) - until finally "Job answered Jehovah, and said, I know thou canst do all things, and that no purpose of thine can be restrained" (42:1,2). That's it. That's the first principle. This good man is now a so much better man; this great man is now a so much greater man. He can live a richer, happier, more rewarding life to the glory of his heavenly Father.

(2) *The Crucifixion of Paul.* It was a glorious day when Saul of Tarsus, and avowed opponent of Jesus and the Christian way, became a believer. Gushing from his accepting, surrendered soul was, "What shall I do, Lord?" (Acts 22:10). "and the Lord said unto me, Arise, and go unto Damascus; and there it shall be told thee of all things which are appointed for thee to do" (v. 10). There the penitent believer was baptized for the remission of his sins. ("Arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on His name" Acts 22:16; 9:18), and launched into the Christ-like life of self-denial.

Here is how it was with the apostle Paul: "I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I that live, but Christ liveth in me" (Gal. 2:20); "Howbeit what things were gain to me, these I have counted loss for Christ. Yea verily, and I count all things to be loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I suffer the loss of all things, and do count them but refuse, that I may gain Christ, and be found in Him, not having a righteousness of mine own, even that which is of the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith; that I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His suffering, becoming conformed unto His death" (Phil. 3:7-10). How beautiful, then, when he commended the Church of God in Corinth for having given themselves to the Lord (2 Cor. 8:5).

May we as brothers and sisters in Christ help and encourage each other to sing and live, "I Surrender All" and "I'll Live for Him." May we grow in the self-denial spirit, and may we be absolutely certain that we look back to a precise time when we fully, totally surrender our lives to the Lord. Yes, Jesus, I hear - "deny self," "take up my cross," "follow you."

C. ROGERS.

WHY PRAY?

It is no exaggeration to state that the hallmark of the Christian is his prayer life. There is hardly an occasion in his life that does not call for prayer. This is no doubt the reason Paul advised us to "pray without ceasing."

We pray because we are thankful. When we realise that most of the blessings of life God gives us every day cannot be obtained from any other source, it should make us want to thank Him who has given to us so bountifully. Counting our blessings is an activity calculated to make us aware of our debt of gratitude owed to God. In prayer, we praise Him for His majesty and might, for His love and grace, for His watch and care over us, for the health we enjoy, for the blessings of home, family, job - you name it. God wants to hear us acknowledge our gratitude. In His story of the ten lepers who

were healed, Jesus pointed out that only one of them had the grace to turn and say "Thank you!" **"Were there not ten lepers healed?"** He asks, **"Then where are the nine?"** Our praise and thanksgiving to God in Prayer are a part of the rare privilege we have in being able to pray.

We pray because we believe. **"He that cometh to God must believe that He is and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him."** If we did not believe that God exists, it would be foolish to pray, because we would have no One or nothing to pray to, or about. In believing, we trust that God is not only hearing our prayers, but is also able to deliver on these petitions we send up to Him.

If we did not believe in God's willingness to hear and grant our requests, along with His ability to perform, our praying, if done at all, would be no more than an exercise in superstition. The custom of saying grace before meals probably arose from the feeling of gratitude that God had provided us with another meal. We often become like the man who, for several days after the traditional thanksgiving meal, was served up with turkey in every imaginable way. When once he started to eat without praying, his wife asked, "Aren't you going to bless the food?" To which he replied, "I have a feeling it has been blessed several times already."

LOVE AND PURPOSE

We pray because we love. Love for God and love for fellow-man often prompts us to pray. On earth, the Christian is subject to all the ills the flesh is heir to, just like anyone else. Christians are involved in accidents with cars, trains, planes, buses and boats. When one of our loved ones, in the home or in the church, is involved in disaster, disease or accident, we pray. If the world poses a threat to their faithfulness, we pray. If they are merely on a short journey, we pray. If they leave home for school in another city or another country, we pray. This is potent therapy. It helps the soul to exult in the happiness of another or success of another, but not, of course, to the point of unpardonable pride.

In prayer we give thanks for the faithfulness of others, and Paul often expressed this thought in his epistles. **"I cease not to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers."** The faithfulness of other Christians is a powerful encouragement to us. Conversely, our own faithfulness is an encouragement to others to keep on keeping on in the faith. James tells us that the **"fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much in its working."**

We pray with purpose. It is not like sending a message out into a void, with little hope of receiving an answer, or like putting a note into a bottle and casting it into the sea, in hope that someone, somewhere will somehow find it and answer. Our prayers are to a **listening** Father: "For the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and His ears are open unto their prayers." Our prayers need not be filled with "vain repetition" as were the prayers of the Pharisees of old. Notice some of the prayers of the saints recorded in the New Testament, and find that most of them were brief and to the point. See Acts 1:24, for instance: "And they prayed and said, Thou Lord, who knowest the hearts of men, show which one of these two thou hast chosen to receive the lot of this ministry and apostleship, from which Judas, by transgression, fell, that he might go to his own place." Is it not brief, and directly to the point? There is no ritual form laid down for us to follow in prayer. We say at once what is in our hearts and minds, as if we were speaking with a loving and attentive father, which indeed we are.

A WORRY SHARED

We pray in almost any attitude of prayer. Many feel that we are not really

praying unless we are down on our knees; others feel that lying prostrate on the floor or ground is the only proper way to address ourselves to God. Whether standing, kneeling, lying prone, or any other stance, it is our prayer that matters, not how we dispose ourselves in order to do it. Many feel that our prayers must be offered after a certain "form" in the matter of content and expression. One of the most effective prayers in the New Testament had only these words, "Lord, have mercy on me, a sinner." Imagine a paratrooper about to land in enemy territory. Does he forego prayer simply because he is not on his knees? More likely, he is praying far more fervently than many of us do.

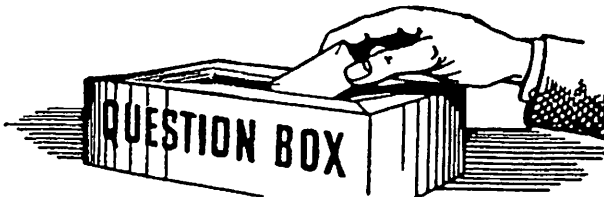
We pray as a balm for the soul. How many times in life have our worries and fears been dissipated simply because we talked them over with some sympathetic person? Psychiatrists and psychologists have found a gold mine in the knowledge that people would pay handsome fees for someone who would listen to them tell of their woes, and maybe even offer a suggestion of a solution to them. Yet, if they had studied their Bibles the psychiatrists would be out of business. James writes, "**Confess your faults, one to another and pray for one another.**" Having a brother or sister in Christ share your burden with you and pray for you is the best psychotherapy you could have, and it doesn't cost.

DIVINE INTERCESSION

Though we are weak humans, our prayers enjoy the most powerful help. "**Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities; for we know not what we should pray for as we ought; but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered**" (Rom. 8:26). The value of prayer in our life is often esteemed too lightly. Have you ever heard a Christian say, "Well, all we can do now is pray."? Does this sound as if prayer were sought as a last resort, and as a forlorn hope? With the Christian it should be his first resort! And his middle one, and his last one! "**Pray without ceasing** ." We have a direct hook-up to heaven and God's ear, and the line is never busy.

Moses went to God on behalf of the children of Israel, time after time. God heard him and granted his petitions. The burden of leading these growlers, moaners and complainers out of Egyptian bondage would have been too much for any man, except that God was with him. The power was on his side, as it is with us when we pray to our father. "**Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.**" (Hebrews 4:16).

E. BRYANT.



Conducted by
Frank Worgan

"The third verse of the hymn, 'Count your blessings', says 'Count your many blessings, angels will attend, help and comfort give you to your journey's end.'

Is there any scriptural evidence to corroborate this regarding angels in this context?"

So runs the question, a question, which, in essence, asks if the scriptures teach that there are '*Guardian Angels*' and I am pleased that it has been asked, because the very

existence of Angels is a subject that is rarely discussed these days.

We might be forgiven for suspecting that preachers and hearers alike are often reluctant to commit themselves where Angels are concerned.

(Note: the words for 'angel' - '*malak*' in the O.T., and '*angelos*' in the N.T. - occur 213 and 188 times respectively and both mean '*messenger*'. Whether a reference is to a human being, or to a heavenly spirit being, must be determined by the context.)

In the majority of instances, however, the words refer to a *definite and distinct order of spirit beings*, and therefore I am capitalizing the word to indicate that it is in this sense that I am using it today.)

As our question: 'Modern' theologians would not even spend time with it! One textbook used by theological students states:

"It might seem that there is little profit in attempting any discussion of the angels, those higher beings that have been traditionally recognised in Christian faith and theology. As they have usually been represented, they belong to the mythology and poetry of religion, rather than to theology . . ." (John MacQuarrie, *Principles of Christian Theology*, p.215.)

The Sadducees are certainly with us still! Acts 23:8.

Apparently, in a world as sophisticated as ours Angels simply do not fit! They appear to be an embarrassment to many people - including, I am sorry to say, even to some Christians. There are people who are willing to concede that Scriptures mention such heavenly beings, but who then suggest that, since the Lord Jesus became our Mediator, there is no longer a need for the ministry of Angels. Thus, with a stroke, Angels are taken out of circulation or have been made redundant! They belong to an age long since past and have been put into moth-balls!

Is it not strange that 'modern man' is prepared to consider the possibility of 'alien visitors' from outer space and 'U.F.O's'; is fascinated by 'The X Files' and 'Star Trek'; takes seriously so-called 'astrological forecasts' the 'occult' and 'star-signs', and is happy to discuss 'out of the body experiences' - the list is almost endless - but mention *Angels* and one instantly becomes some sort of religious freak?

But I must restrain the urge to say more on the subject and return to the question!

What DO the Scriptures reveal about Angels and their relationship to human beings? Well, there are some quite clear statements, which should help us in our search for the answer to the question.

Angels have an interest in what happens on Earth. This is a truth which runs right through the scriptures, from Genesis to the Revelation. For example:

1st In the Old Testament

Gen. 18:10 Angels brought Abraham the promise of a son;

Gen. 19:1 They warned Lot of the impending destruction of Sodom.

Gen. 32:1 They met Jacob, on his way home from his uncle Laban's territory.

Num. 20:16 Moses believed in Guardian Angels. He told the people that God '*sent an angel and brought us forth out of Egypt*'.

Dan. 6:22 Daniel believed in this ministry of Angels, because he said, "*My God has sent His Angel and has shut the lions' mouths*".

Dan. 6:28 Even Nebuchadnezzar believed in Angels! "*Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, who has sent his angel and delivered his servants.*"

2nd Coming over to the New Testament:

Angels were intimately involved with the Lord Himself, all through His life and

ministry.

- i) Angels foretold His birth to Mary and Joseph. Matt. 1:20.
- ii) Angels announced it to the shepherds in the fields. Luke 2:8ff.
- iii) An Angel instructed Mary and Joseph to go to Egypt. Matt. 2:13 (see also ch. 2:19).
- iv) Angels ministered to Him after His fast and temptation in the wilderness. Matt. 4:11.
- v) An angel strengthened Him in Gethsemane. Luke 22:43 a.v.
- vi) Angels stood ready - 12 legions of them! - to respond to His call, if He required them! Matt. 26:53.
- vii) An angel rolled the stone, from the mouth of the tomb. Matt. 28:2.
- viii) Angels met Mary Magdalene when she came to the tomb. John 20:11.
- ix) Angels were present at His ascension. Acts 1:10.
- x) Angels will accompany Him when He returns. II Thess. 1:7.

An examination of the Scriptures will easily extend this list.

In Matt. 18:10, the Lord Himself warns against despising (*treating badly, or harming*) 'little ones' who believe in Him (v6), '*For I say to you, their Angels always behold the face of my Father who is in heaven*'. The plain meaning of His statement is that there are heavenly beings to whom is entrusted the special duty of the care and guardianship of believers.

I might add that those words, '*for I say to you,*' are tremendously significant, because that is the formula used by the Lord, when He introduced new truth or illuminated truth not previously understood. (Compare **Luke 15:7,10**, and note, also, that he uses the same formula no less than seven times in **Matt. 5**).

Angels are interested in the conversion of sinners.

Luke 15:7,10 reveal that '*there is joy among the angels of God*', when the lost is found and when the sinner repents.

In the next chapter, **Luke 16**, Jesus tells us that, when he died, Lazarus '*was carried by the angels to Abraham's bosom*' - another example of Angelic involvement with the faithful.

They have an interest in the faithful preaching of the Gospel.

In 1 Tim. 5:21, the young evangelist, Timothy, is urged to exercise his ministry with care, '*in the sight of God, and Christ Jesus and the elect angels*'.

An angel directed Philip the evangelist, to meet the 'Ethiopian' **Acts 8;26**.

And Cornelius was told by an angel to '*send to Joppa for Peter*.' **Acts 10:5**.

Angels will be the Lord's agents at the time of the Judgement.

Matt. 13:41, '*The Son of Man will send his angels, and they will gather out of his kingdom all causes of sin and all evil-doers . . .*'

In the Church, Angels are concerned with the Woman's subjection to the Man. **1 Cor. 11:9-10**. Notice the phrase '*because of the angels*'. It means that her acceptance of the divine order, constitutes an example to the angels.

Heb. 1:14 reveals their ministry to be two-fold.

They are '*ministering spirits = ('liturgical' or worshipping spirit), sent forth to serve for the sake of those who are to obtain salvation.*'

The word '*leitourgika*', rendered '*ministering*' or '*worshipping*', speaks of their service to God Himself. The word '*diakonia*' which is rendered '*to serve*', describes the nature of their service to believers. They are to serve those who inherit salvation - and that means you and me!

1. Satan certainly believes in them!

When trying to tempt Jesus to dramatically cast himself from the pinnacle of the Temple, as recorded in Matt. 4:5-6, Satan quoted Psa. 91:11, '*For he will give his angels charge of you, to guard you in all your ways, lest you dash your foot against a stone*'.

2. Peter believed in them! Acts 12:11. Having been released from prison Peter said, '*Now I am sure that the Lord has sent his angel and rescued me . . .*'

3. Paul believed in them! Acts 27:23. During the storm, on his voyage to Rome, he said, '*This night there stood by me an angel of the God to whom I belong and whom I worship . . .*'

4. In fact, ALL the apostles *must* have believed in them! Acts 5:19. After having been arrested by the Sanhedrim, '*An angel of the Lord opened the prison door and brought them out*'.

Conclusion

Do I believe in Guardian Angels? Yes! Emphatically!

And if you ask if I can recognize a 'Guardian Angel', I answer, No! But that does not constitute a problem for me. After all, on several of the occasions to which I have already referred - (e.g. Abraham in the O.T. and Peter in the N.T.) - *they* did not recognize them either! In any case, the recognition of God's children is the job of the Angels, since he is to minister for those who inherit salvation.

It is not necessary for *me* to be able to recognise *him*, but he is commissioned to recognise *me*!

How do the Angels go about their work? That is for *them* to know. *We* are to have faith in our heavenly Father's promised care for His people.

(Questions to: Frank Worgan, 5 Gryfebank Way, Houston, Renfrewshire, PA6 7NZ Scotland. E-mail: fworgan.freeserve.co.uk)

SCRIPTURE READINGS

Sept. 5	Ezra 6:1-18	Luke 21:1-19
Sept. 12	Daniel 12	Luke 21:20-38
Sept. 19	Exodus 12:1-20	Luke 22:1-23
Sept. 26	Micah 6:1-8	Luke 22:24-38

SIGNS OF THE END OF THE JEWISH AGE

A key verse in Luke chapter 21 is 32: "**Verily I say unto you. This generation shall not pass away, till all be fulfilled**". The destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans in A.D. 70 was a horrific event. Jesus also said of it: "**For then shall be great tribulation such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be. And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved:**

but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened" (Matthew 24:21,22). The Master gave the clearest of warnings: "**And when you shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies, then know that the desolation thereof is nigh**" (21:20).

Severe persecution of the saints was to precede the destruction of the city. I do not think we shall ever fully appreciate, this side of heaven, all the tribulations the early disciples endured. They must have been made of sterner stuff. God was with them and, despite all the hatred directed towards them, even from their own family members, they came through it triumphantly. Their gain was eternal life (21:12-19).

There were certain wonders and signs evident in the last days of Jerusalem and of the Jewish state. In Acts 2:19-20, we read: "**And I will show**

wonders in heaven above, and signs in the earth beneath: blood and fire and vapour of smoke: the sun shall be turned into darkness and the moon into blood, before the great and notable day of the Lord come . . ."

Alexander Campbell liked to quote the great Philip Doddridge on this subject. "This undoubtedly refers to the prodigies and signs which preceded the destruction of Jerusalem, (such as the flaming sword hanging over the city, and the fiery coronet pointing down on it for a year; the light that shone upon the temple and the altar as if it had been noonday; the opening of the great and heavy gate of the temple without hands; the voice heard from the most holy place, 'Let us depart from hence'; the admonition of Jesus, the son of Ananias, crying for seven years together, 'woe, woe, woe'; the vision of contending armies in the air, and of the entrenchments thrown up against a city there represented; the terrible thunderings and lightnings, and the dreadful earthquake which everyone considered as portending some approaching evil). All which, by the singular providence of God, are recorded by Josephus . . ."

We read: "and then shall they see the Son of man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. And when these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draws nigh" (21:27,28). A lot of saints read these verses and think they have to do with Christ's so-called second coming. But do they? Please keep in mind verse 32. James Macknight has written: "This figurative expression, 'coming in the cloud or clouds of heaven', in several other passages of Scripture, signifies God's interposing evidently and irresistibly, to execute vengeance on a wicked generation, and to effect His own government over the world". Certainly, many unbelieving Jews perished at the

destruction of Jerusalem. (Josephus gives us a figure of 1,100,000.) All faithful followers of Jesus escaped death because they heeded the Master's warning and fled the scene.

I was in Rome a few years ago and stood beneath the Arch of Titus, which is sited at the eastern end of the old Roman Forum. It is the oldest surviving triumphal arch in the city and was erected in A.D. 81 to commemorate the capture of Jerusalem eleven years earlier. The reliefs represent the spoils of the temple, including the seven-branched golden lampstand and the silver trumpets. A tourist booklet says: "Even today, many Jews refuse to walk through the arch, built to glorify their tragedy". Near the Arch is the massive Colosseum, built by slaves, many of whom were Jews captured in the siege of Jerusalem. (Josephus gives us a figure of 97,000.) These great edifices especially brought home to me the reality of the Roman victory over the Jews.

THE LORD'S SUPPER

Gilbert Young Tickle (1819-1888) was one of the great Church of Christ hymn-writers. He especially liked to pen hymns centred upon the Table of the Lord. For example, he wrote:

Then, dearest Lord, draw near,
Whilst we Thy table spread;
And crown the feast with heavenly
cheer,
Thyself the living bread.

O what a feast ineffable is this,
Thy table spread with more than
angels' food —
Angels the highest never taste the bliss,
The dear communion of Thy flesh and
blood.

When to Thy table, blessed Lord!
Thy saints draw near with joyful feet,
To celebrate around the board
Thy wondrous death in emblems meet,
Thou, in the midst, art there to bless
With more than earthly happiness.

O Jesus, till we hence remove,
 May this sweet token of Thy love,
 This antepast of joys above,
 Still bring us near to Thee.

The Lord's Supper is a memorial feast. Jesus said: "This do in remembrance of me" (22:19). It is easy to forget, so Jesus instituted the feast so that we might remember Him each first day of the week - remember His suffering and His death for us on Calvary's tree - remember the sacrifice He made for all mankind everywhere.

Paul wrote: "For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, that the Lord Jesus the same night in which He was betrayed took bread: and when He had given thanks, He brake it, and said, Take, eat; this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me. After the same manner also He took the cup, when He had supped, say, This cup is the new testament in my blood: this you do, as oft as you drink it, in remembrance of me. For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you do show forth the Lord's death till He come" (1 Corinthians 11:23-26). So from this passage we can say also that the Feast is declarative and anticipative of the Lord's return. Personally, I think men have said too much and written too much about the Lord's supper. It was Bob McDonald who once remarked to me: "Let the feast speak for itself".

There is another supper about which we read in the Scriptures: the marriage supper of the Lamb (Revelation 19:9). What a spiritual feast this will be! I have experienced many great wedding feasts, but nothing compares or will compare with this. G.Y. Tickle looked forward to it. He wrote:

Thou, blessed Lord, a feast shall spread
 Whose living wine and living bread
 Shall lift with endless joy each head

That sits and feasts with Thee.

SIMON PETER

Jesus, of course, foresaw His suffering and death. He also foresaw the betrayal by Judas and the denial by Peter. I do not think this foreknowledge made matters any easier for the Master during this difficult period. The Lord knew Satan was out to destroy Him by using those close to Him as instruments for his diabolical plans. "Simon, Simon, behold, Satan has desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat; but I have prayed for you that your faith fails not: and when you are converted, strengthen your brethren" (22:31,32). Jesus knows exactly what is going on and works to help and strengthen His own against the machinations of the evil one. Peter, in the end, overcame his weaknesses and the wiles of Satan to become the outstanding apostle we know and love. A study of Acts and his two epistles reveals a changed man and a martyr for the cause of Christ. He indeed grew to strengthen his brethren. I look forward to meeting him one day in that "land this is fairer than day". We have a lot to discuss and time will be no object!

IAN S. DAVIDSON
 Motherwell

TEST YOUR BIBLICAL KNOWLEDGE

1. For how many months did Moses' mother hide her baby boy?
2. What licked up the blood of king Ahab?
3. Which prophet was commanded by God to go stripped and barefoot for three years?
4. How many Israelites died because they worshipped Baal of Peor?
5. Who schemed the death of Naboth?
6. What ceremony took place on the eighth day of a Jewish boy's life?
7. How many men in Ephesus received the Holy Spirit when Paul

- laid hands on them?
8. What criminal was released in Jesus' place?
 9. Where did John receive the Revelation?
 10. What was Tabitha's Greek name?

NEWS FROM THE CHURCHES

Argyle Street, Hindley, Wigan: On Lord's day, 23rd May, 1999, Helen Ghani expressed her desire to be baptised into Christ. This was just prior to the Breaking of the Bread and so was an unexpected but joyful experience for everyone present. Helen has attended the meetings from childhood and we pray that she will be used by the Lord to bring others to a knowledge of Him.

COLIN HILTON (Sec.)

WANTED

FULL-TIME WORKER

The Church here in Zoar Street, Morley is seeking a man to work in the full-time ministry of the word in Morley.

We are looking for someone who is mature in age and has empathy with the young and old and able to help the Church move forward into the new millennium (DV) in an area expanding rapidly as a sleeper town of Leeds.

We are able to offer substantial support to the right person.

Contact: Bill Jones, 2 Zoar Street,
Morley, Leeds. LS27 8JD.
Telephone: 0113 252 9165.

COMING EVENTS

PETERHEAD

ANNUAL SOCIAL WEEK-END

OCTOBER 2nd & 3rd
SATURDAY at 3.00pm

*Speakers: Frank Worgan
Bob Eckman*

Sunday meetings as usual.

SPECIAL WEEK-END MEETINGS

OCTOBER 30th & 31st
SATURDAY at 7.00pm
Speaker: Mitch Vick

Sunday meetings as usual.

SPECIAL WEEK-END MEETINGS

NOVEMBER 13th & 14th
SATURDAY at 7.00pm
Speaker: Ian Starrs

Sunday meetings as usual

SPECIAL WEEK-END MEETINGS

DECEMBER 4th & 5th
SATURDAY at 7.00pm
Speaker: Adam Barr

Sunday meetings as usual

ANNUAL SOCIAL NEWTONGRANGE

SATURDAY, 9th OCTOBER, 1999
at 4.00pm

*Speakers: John Kneller, Tranent
Graeme Scobbie, Dennyloanhead*

A warm welcome is extended to all.

TRAGIC DEATH

At going to press we have been receiving sketchy reports of the very tragic death of brother Brian Hawley. Dr. Hawley, was educated in Edinburgh but became a U.S. citizen and practised in Forrest City. He also had real-estate interests in the US but spent many months in Scotland, each year, renovating a small castle near Duns (Nisbet House). Indeed it was while leaving the US to come to Scotland that his personal plane crashed in the George Washington National Forest in Augusta, his body not yet having been recovered. While in Scotland our brother used to meet on Lord's Day with the small group at Kelso: and will be greatly missed by them: as indeed he will be greatly missed by all those who knew him. We offer our sympathy and condolence to all his family and friends, and to all the brethren who knew him.

ED.

GHANA APPEAL

Again we sincerely thank those who have contributed to the growth of the Lord's Kingdom in Ghana and encourage the contribution of the vital work. The results have been extremely encouraging and the number of congregations continues to grow. This as we have said before has been a combined operation for our Ghanaian brethren have an outstanding zeal and enthusiasm to spread the word, bring others to Christ and extend God's Kingdom.

Our appeal has now been running 10 years. From the 17th July to 14th August 1989 Bill and Ann Cook (Ann Price) made a journey to Ghana to see if we could help our brethren. Ten years ago a £1 = 440 cedis today a £1 = 3,995 cedis.

10 years ago Bill began his report by saying "we believe this to be the most useful undertaking we have ever achieved". The work began by assisting eleven congregations. Today we are assisting sixty.

Bill and Ann conclude that we should assist in the building of meeting places, help with medical funds, supply spectacles, send Bibles and send clothes. We have been single minded for 10

years, because we continue to send these same articles every month.

Brethren, so much has been achieved in this joint effort and on behalf of our Ghanaian Brethren we thank you for your love and concern for this work.

Please make cheques payable to "Graeme Pearson (Ghana Appeal)" and send to Graeme Pearson, 13 Fairways, Dunfermline, Fife, KY12 0DU. Tel: (01383) 728624.

P.S. We received an anonymous donation of £500 on 1st July, 1999 - Receipt No. 1194. Whoever sent this, thank you. We have allocated this to the purchase of TWI Hymn books.

-
- 1. Three (Exodus 2:2).
 - 2. Dogs (1 Kings 22:38).
 - 3. Isaiah (Isaiah 20:3).
 - 4. 24,000 (Numbers 25:9).
 - 5. Jezebel (1 Kings 21:7).
 - 6. Circumcision (Genesis 17:12).
 - 7. Twelve (Acts 19:7).
 - 8. Barnabas (Matthew 27:26).
 - 9. Isle of Patmos (Revelation 1:9).
 - 10. Dorcas (Acts 9:36).
- ANSWERS**

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