

The **SCRIPTURE STANDARD**

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

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THE BOOK OF MORMON

TWO young members of the Mormon church are in the locality just now and I have had the opportunity of having a discussion with them on the differing views we obviously have on the message they bring. As expected they are clean-cut all-American boys pleasant of manner and immaculate in appearance. I have had discussions with members of the Mormon church before and am pleased to say that generally I like them as persons and find them to be reasonable, kind and very courteous. That is not to say, however, that I think much of the Book of Mormon or of Joseph Smith, its author. In conversation with a member of the church about the Mormons I discovered that some church members have only a hazy notion about the Book of Mormon and although my own knowledge of the book is far from extensive I thought it might be a good idea to sketch a very brief outline of what the Book of Mormon contains and how it came into existence. I don't claim any expertise on the subject and apologise in advance to any Mormons if I should misrepresent anybody. Most of what I know of any real interest has come not from the Book of Mormon but books written about it, some by Mormons themselves.

The Book of Mormon has been described as an epic novel and that description is probably a very fair one. The story begins about 600 B.C. in Jerusalem with a prophet called Lehi of the tribe Manasseh warning the people of their coming destruction if they do not repent. Ignored by the people Lehi went to the Arabian peninsula near the Arabian Sea with his family consisting of his wife Sariah, and sons Laman, Lemuel, Sam and Nephi. They are joined by one called Zoram and also by Ishmael and his daughters. The daughters provide wives for Lehi's sons. According to the Book of Mormon God told these faithful few to build vessels and take provisions, and brass plates containing part of the O.T. and set sail. Whatever the route, they eventually reached the west coast of America where they found horses, goats, cows and oxen (and some animals never heard of), gold and silver and even copper. After landing great predictions are made from chapters in Isaiah about what will happen in the future and regarding the coming of Christ. Not long after the death of Lehi the family split into two factions, one which followed Nephi (the righteous) and the other which followed Laman. Thus begins the main theme of the Book of Mormon, i.e. the continual conflict between good and evil (Nephites versus Lamanites).

The Nephites built great cities and were industrious. Sometimes however they fell from grace and lost their advantages to the invading Lamanites. God however, sent prophets amongst them causing their repentance and apparently converted the Lamanite nations several times. These peoples were highly skilled in the use of steel for weapons and great and bloody battles were frequent between the two camps. The Nephites found a city called Zarahemla which was originally inhabited by a people including the son of king Hezekiah who left Jerusalem just before its fall and came over to America at the command of God (similar to the way in which

Lehi had come). The Nephites joined themselves to these people and much of the action is played out near and around this city. Each time the people got ready for, or come back from, war they receive the teachings of the prophets and much of the book is taken up with sermons and little time is given to the narrative. Much of the sermon material comes directly from the O.T. and New Testament. A curse of dark skin falls on the fastly multiplying Lamanites (which explains colour) because of sin and these Lamanites eventually kill off all the white Nephites (thus explaining why American Indians can be of Jewish origin and still be dark).

Between Christ's death and ascension Jesus appeared to the Nephrites and chose twelve disciples from among them. He explained to them more fully than to others regarding the Lord's supper and repeated to them the Sermon on the Mount and many other New Testament teachings (all in the words of the King James version). The penultimate book of the Book of Mormon is called Ether (said to be very aptly named) which is actually a record added to the record of the Nephites. Ether tells of the Jaredites of whom the Nephites found the last survivor in about 122 B.C. and these Jaredites had come to America by boat in a similar way to the family of Lehi (they had come from the Tower of Babel at the confusion of tongues). The last book is Moroni, name of the author, written as he awaited death at the hand of the Lamanites who have just killed off the rest of the Nephites. Moroni, before he dies, gets in quite a few "Thus saith the Lord" on the doctrines of the Mormon church (in dispute at the time of Joseph Smith) covering such items as the bestowal of the Holy Spirit, mode of administering the loaf, baptising believing penitent adults only (and by immersion), church discipline and ordination of officials are all dealt with by Moroni just before he buried the plates in a hole in the ground near to the future home-to-be of Joseph Smith in New York State.

In 1820 Joseph Smith, at an early age, perplexed by the claims of all the usual denominations, had a visit from God and Christ (together) and God told Smith that all of the denominations were wrong and that he should not join them. Later Smith had a visit from Moroni, now an angel, and was shown the place where Moroni had put the metal plates so many years before. Joseph Smith unearthed the plates and a contrivance for deciphering the writing on the plates (the contrivance being called the Urim and Thumin) and so Joseph Smith was able to produce to the world the Book of Mormon. Joseph Smith gives his own account of the translation and visions, etc. in 'Pearl of Great Price' and says that in 1829 he met Oliver Cowdery (one of the witnesses' to the Book of Mormon) who became his scribe. Thus the Book of Mormon.

As far as I am concerned the book did not originate with God and is therefore a fraud upon mankind for whatever reason. If God did not want Joseph Smith to join a denominational body it is strange that He led Joseph Smith to add yet another one. Space here does not allow a mention of the many flaws and glaring inconsistencies in the Book of Mormon but they certainly exist and readers are urged to study the matter for themselves. To me, the most glaring incongruities of the book are the large chunks of it taken from the Bible, the Old Testament in particular. It is quite difficult to believe that Moroni, around the year 400 A.D. would leave golden plates in the ground, written in a language styled "Reformed Egyptian", and that when those plates are allegedly unearthed and deciphered (around 1820) that they produce large portions of the King James Version (1611) complete, I may add, *with the translators 'italic' words*. God certainly must think very highly of the King James version, notwithstanding those who prefer the modern translations. The young Mormon 'elders' with whom I have had conversation have not been able to explain this apparently strange circumstance but it does not appear to trouble them and if that does not worry them, what could? The Mormons claim to have restored to the world the 'officers' in the church missing for centuries, i.e. apostles, prophets, teachers, miracles, healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues, etc., (as per 1 Cor, 12:28) but surely this is, apart from anything else, re-erecting the scaffolding around a completed building. They claim that their 'apostles' have all the powers of the original ones including, believe it or not, the power to raise the dead. To my simple mind the Mormon cause could be furthered much more successfully by them sending one or two apostles to the local mortuaries here and raising a few loved-ones than by sending a few pleasant young men with coloured charts and picture books. If these apostles raise the dead the media, given to dealing with the trivial quite often, don't seem to have heard of it. What an impression they could make in this world by raising a few dead.

Anyone with a fairly superficial knowledge of the New Testament knows that the New Testament is a complete and final record of God's conversation with men. One can restore New Testament Christianity without the Book of Mormon and without any revelation from any angel. Indeed if Joseph Smith had carried out the apostle Paul's injunction in Gal. 1:8 he would have stopped his ears when 'Moroni' spoke to him. God *hath in these last days* spoken unto us by His Son and we have no need of 'latter-day saints' for nothing is more latter than last. Many other comments could be made but space has gone. However *you* may receive a visit from these young Mormon preachers one of these days and it might not do any harm to find out more concerning their doctrine and be in a position to try and exchange truth for error.

EDITOR.

RELIGION IN SCHOOLS

THE teaching of religion in day schools has always been a problem. One solution has been to have denominational schools, such as the Catholic and Anglican establishments, and another was simply to have the Bible read without the teacher giving any explanations,

Since 1944 the state schools have had what is known as the Agreed Syllabus, which it is now proposed to change. This syllabus was designed to suit most Protestants, and therefore had to avoid many controversial doctrinal points. The other drawback, which has prevented it from producing the Christian nation that some people hoped for, was that the beliefs of the teacher were bound to have an influence. One assumes that the arithmetic teacher relies on the multiplication tables and the geography teacher has faith in the accuracy of the atlas, but it is by no means certain that the religious instruction teacher believes in the Bible. Over twenty years ago, the writer can remember teachers being quite free to explain away all miracles as mere natural occurrences, and also to present a few lessons in comparative religion. If it is true that Christianity is caught rather than taught, then a teacher who is not a believer can pass on examination facts, but not a living faith.

What is now happening is that many schools are finding that in addition to the usual Jewish and Catholic children, Hindus and Moslems are also being excused from morning assembly and religious lessons, and the remaining Protestants are few in number. This has led to a demand for comparative religion to be taught and practised in morning assembly.

We should consider what the teaching of religion in schools is supposed to accomplish. Firstly, some folk argue that the children should be taught the different religions so that they can choose what to believe when they are old enough. However, the teaching of comparative religion would seem more likely to lead to regarding all religions as equal but contradictory.

Secondly, some parents wish their children to be taught religion for its moral value, hoping they will learn to be good citizens. But the morals of the various religions differ widely. For instance, the Mohammedan may have up to four wives at a time, and the Buddhist is forbidden to kill any living creature, even vermin, for fear it may contain a reincarnated human soul. The teaching of comparative religion is therefore likely to lead to moral confusion.

Moreover, it is not certain that the other exclusive religions, Jews, Catholics and Moslems, would agree to their children joining lessons in comparative religion, as they all assert that they have the only true faith. In that event, the class would still consist of the same few children of Protestant and uncommitted parents, and it would be mainly Protestants beliefs which were subverted by lessons on all the different religions, plus possibly atheism, humanism and communism. It should be remembered that Religious Instruction is a compulsory subject, too, unless the parents make special arrangements to have the child excused.

It may be that Christian parents will one day have to exercise their right to have their children withdrawn from such lessons if they come about. Also, if the Koran and other heathen writings, together with Marxist works, are to be read at morning assembly, alternately with the Bible, children are not likely easily to distinguish between them, so this is something we ought to oppose.

Let us affirm our position as Christians that the Bible should be taught fully and accurately, and idolatry and unbelief should be opposed because they cause souls to be lost. In reality, Christianity has nothing to fear from a fair comparison with false religions and ideologies, but the subject is beyond the understanding of small children. Parents are responsible for the religious upbringing of their families, and the teaching of the subject in school is but an expedient. Of course, those who come and build mosques and temples amongst us are not yet in a position to teach the truth to their children, but the solution to the problem is to reach those parents with the Gospel.

“For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus”
(1 Tim. 2:5).
Miss R. M. PAYNE, Reading.

CORRESPONDENCE CLASS

THE EARLY HISTORY OF THE CHURCH OF CHRIST or THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

Chapters 11:19-30 and 12.

- 1 Why does the writer here refer to the dispersed persecuted Church, and what connection has their work with the introduction of the gospel to the Gentiles?
- 2 How did Barnabas see the grace of God?
- 3 Was the name Christian given by the opponents of the way? Give reasons for your answer.
- 4 Where, do you think, did the translators get the name ‘Easter’ for the passover?
- 5 Describe Peter’s escape from prison, and compare this with Herod’s account of the same event.
- 6 Describe the death of Herod Agrippa.

Answers, which should be written on one side of the paper only, should be returned to Edward Jess, 34 Charles Street, Penicuik, Midlothian, Scotland.

SOLDIERS ARISE !

PAUL exhorts the “Man of God” to fight the good fight of the faith” 1 Timothy 6:12

I pose the question “who are you fighting?” I war against all who are not for Christ because, by defination, they are against Christ” Luke 11:23. Sadly, as I commune within Christian circles today it is tragic to witness christians waging internal battles. Names are branded about with apparent ease; this church is an “Old Path” congregation while that assembly is “liberal”. Similarly, this christian is a “Fundamentalist” while another is a “modernist”. We condemn religious bodies who utilise words and phrases which are foreign to the New Testament and yet we introduce an extensive vocabulary of Church of Christians with nonchalant arrogance.

When I embraced the gospel of Jesus I was added by the Lord to His church. I had waged war, God had already won the decisive battle so I was enlisted in the victor’s army. The army welcomed me as a new soldier in Christ... this was inevitable. Ten years elapse and the war still rages, old soldiers die as new soldiers join up. But how have we spent these years?

The church recognises that it is one army fighting a common enemy. On the other hand we have under-estimated the potential of the enemy and have failed to appreciate the gravity of the situation. Factions develop among our ranks. Platoons are too busy debating which strategy is best. Undoubtedly the gospel of Christ has been dominated by theological niceties and doctrinal opinions. The result has been regressive tendencies at worst and static tendencies at best. However the most serious consequence appears to be that we will not let history teach us.

Comrades let us once again unite under the banner of Jesus with Christ as Commander. The battle cry resounds ... we are not ashamed of the gospel: it is the power of God for salvation to every one who has faith. Let us attack ... if God is for us, who is against us? The victory is certain ... in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.

I accept that my brethren are anxious to "attain to the unity of the faith and of the Knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the Stature of the fulness of Christ, so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine by the cunning of men, by their craftiness in deceitful wiles". We all exclaim Amen. The point I wish to make is that unless we unite in the gospel of Christ then there will be no need "to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" ... the doors will be closed.

IAN K. PARKER, WIGAN

ASK

"At the feet of Jesus
Is the place for me;
There, a humble learner,
Would I choose to be".

"Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us" Ephesians 3:20.

ASK WHAT DO I ASK?

ASK WHAT DO I ASK?

ASK WHAT DO I ASK? for those of whom the Apostle Peter says:- "Ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light" 1 Peter 2:9. Last month our attention was turned to the masses of people who know not God, and mentioned our concern for those outside of Christ. This month we draw your attention to the Church our Lord Jesus Christ built, and for which He died.

The Builder of the Church of Christ

After Simon Peter had made the confession "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God". Jesus answered and said unto him, "Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven. And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven" Matthew 16:16-19. The apostle Peter, on the day of Pentecost used those keys, and the kingdom of heaven came to pass. He preached the Gospel so effectively that the Word of God was able to record:-

"Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls. And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers" Acts 2:14-47.

The Lord's church was in existence, and it is well to realize it is a building made not of bricks and mortar, but of men and women who have been redeemed with the precious blood of the Lord Jesus Christ, and who have responded to His terms of discipleship. "Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ" 1 Peter 2:5.

The Head of the Church is Christ

"And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the first-born from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence" Colossians 1:18. "And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all" Ephesians 1:22,23.

The Church must be subject unto Christ

"Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing. Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, that he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish" Ephesians 5:24-27.

The manifold wisdom of God is to be made known by the Church

"To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God, According to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord" Ephesians 3:10-11.

YE ARE THAT YE MAY

"But ye are an elect race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession, that ye may shew forth the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvellous light" 1 Peter 2:9 (RV).

ASK What do I ask? For this people who are for God's own possession.

Once more I turn your attention to that mighty man of God the Apostle Paul. It would seem that this slave of Christ was thrilled with the work and faithfulness of the brethren at Colosse, listen to his words:- "We give thanks to God and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you. Since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus, and of the love which ye have to all the saints" Col. 1:3,4. Then from verse 9 to 12 (RSV) he gives us this masterpiece:- "And so, from the day we heard of it, we have not ceased to pray for you, asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, to lead a life worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God. May you be strengthened with all power, according to his glorious might, for all endurance and patience with joy, giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified us to share in the inheritance of the saints in light".

The language of this bond-slave of Christ at times leaves one speechless, one can only marvel, and contemplate on the glory and majesty of this spirit filled message, and seek to drink from the stream of grace, mercy, love, peace, and joy, that the unsearchable riches of Christ brings to our yearning souls. One feels like taking one's shoes from off one's feet, because the very ground we stand on is holy. Paul's whole life was Christ, he yearned to be like Christ, he saw the glory of the Lord's church, and sought to encourage the brethren whose love and faithfulness was manifested. He certainly knew how to pray, you can almost imagine him hovering over the church at Colosse, extending his arms of love and compassion and breathing this Apostolic prayer on their behalf. When I consider my own very weak petitions, my constant ... give me... bless me ... bless mine ... how inward looking, how selfish, how trivial at times. One is reminded of the supposed Yorkshire man's prayer:-

"Lord, bless me and my wife, Are Jo, and his wife,
Us four and no more, Amen."

I am sure that many times my prayers have not ascended higher than the roof. "O wretched man that I am". Oft times has it been when it has seemed an effort to remember the brethren in different parts of the country. Listen to this man of God: "And so, from the day we heard of it, we have not ceased to pray for you". Oh, read and re-read this wonderful and glorious prayer, and allow its sanctifying influence enter into your soul, come to the spring, and drink from this living water, and let us make this prayer ours for those who we love and are faithfully striving to do the will of God.

ASK WHAT DO I ASK? "That you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all Spiritual Wisdom and Understanding"

FILLED ... how suggestive is this word, what does Jesus say:- "Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom" Luke 6:38.

FILLED ... "Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it" Mal. 3:10.

FILLED ... "And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God" Ephesians 3:19.

FILLED ... "With the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding" 1

Let these words be uppermost in our minds, and in our actions, "With the knowledge of his will". Filled...Filled...Filled...Filled. I have been proud over the years to belong to a people pleading for a complete return to New Testament Christianity, whose motto was where the Bible speaks we speak, where the Bible is silent we are silent. Back to Jerusalem was the clarion call, and we speak reverently when we say that if ever there was a need for that stand and that call, it is NOW. Do you think if men and women had been motivated by "the knowledge of his will", that the church of our Lord would be in the position she is today? Paul writing to the Ephesians said: "Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is" Ephesians 5:17. The word of God breathes out over and over again, that it is the will of God that is vitally important... "For whosoever shall do the will of God, the same is my brother, and my sister, and mother" Mark 3:35. "And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God" Romans 12:2. "Not with eyeservice, as men-pleasers; but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart" Ephesians 6:6. "And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever" 1 John 2:17.

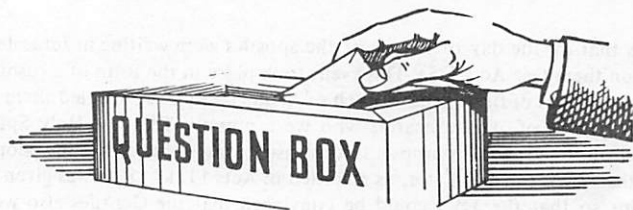
It is not my will that matters, what I think ... what I want, is of no importance, the word of God time and again, gives examples of men who did other than the will of God, and who had to suffer the consequences.

ASK WHAT SHALL I ASK? For the Church of Christ meeting in

"That you may be filled
With the knowledge of his will
In all spiritual wisdom and understanding,
To lead a life worthy of the Lord,
Fully pleasing to him,
Bearing fruit in every good work
And increasing in the knowledge of God.
May you be strengthened with all power,
According to his glorious might,
For all endurance and patience with joy,
Giving thanks to the Father,
Who has qualified us to share in the inheritance of the saints in light".

And May the Lord's richest blessing be your portion.

LEONARD MORGAN



Conducted by
Aif Marsden

"Why is not the gift of the Holy Spirit available to christians today, if they believe in HEB: 13: 8, I quote, "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever"? Does not this imply that if we trust, believe, and obey his teachings, his spiritual power is today exactly the same as when he first came to dwell here?"

THE saddest commentary on our understanding of the work of the Holy Spirit today is, I believe, that in many places and minds this work must be accompanied by a supernatural manifestation of some sort. The reason I say it is saddening is because the work of the Holy Spirit can be and ought to be vital and far-reaching in the life of every christian, without supernatural manifestation. God did not send the Holy Spirit so that men and women could go into ecstatic trances and talk gibberish, and such like; He was sent so that the life of every christian could be so enriched that he or she would blossom forth into the full maturity of

christian understanding and experience. If we see a christian life that mirrors only the glory of Christ then we are seeing the greatest miracle possible. What more do we need, or what more does God expect of us? Perhaps the questioner did not have supernatural work in mind but I know that many people do when they ask questions about the Holy Spirit. However, let us analyse the Question.

The Unchanging Christ

"Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and today, and forever" (Heb. 13:8). The student of the Hebrew letter will know that the new dispensation of Christ is far superior to the old dispensation of the law. The burden of the writer's message is that the relationship under the law, which could not save or endure, is replaced by the relationship in Christ, which is a saving relationship and which will endure. Therefore, if Jesus is the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey Him (Heb. 5:9), and if all who obey him are 'in' him; then he must be as eternal as the salvation which he brings.

Furthermore, the writer speaks of things which can be shaken, and things which cannot (Heb. 12:26,27), and then goes on to say. "Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably" (12:28). That kingdom came to us through the preaching of the word, which also endures; as Peter says, "But the word of the Lord endureth for ever. And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you" (1 Pet. 1:25).

So here we have the picture. An unchanging God; and unchanging Christ; an unchanging word; an unchanging kingdom. It is in this context that the writer says, "Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and today, and forever". The Law may pass away; leaders of the community may pass away; but Jesus Christ remains as ever. The text is a graphic way of alluding to past, present and future in order to affirm the unchanging nature of Christ. Therefore, we are warned not to be carried away by various kinds of strange and unenduring teachings.

So if a person is a christian then that person will believe in the unchanging power of Christ. Whether that power will always be dispensed in the same way is quite another matter and demands some study.

The Gift of the Holy Spirit

The questioner asks, "Why is not the gift of the Holy Spirit available to christians today if they believe in HEB. 13:8?" The short answer is, of course, that the gift of the Holy Spirit is available to christians today, but perhaps the questioner is a little confused about this so I will explain.

Acts chapter 2 records that on the day of Pentecost the apostles were waiting in Jerusalem for the Holy Spirit to fall on them (see Acts 1:5). This event took place in the form of a rushing mighty wind and the cloven tongues of fire sitting on each of them. This power enabled them to speak the gospel in the languages of all the hearers who were present. This was Holy Spirit baptism and it was always given for a specific purpose. In this case it was given so that the people could hear the gospel in their own tongue. Later, as recorded in Acts 11:17,18, it was given to the household of Cornelius so that the Jews could be convinced that the Gentiles also were now recipients of the grace of God through the Gospel.

When Peter had convinced the people of the enormity of their crime in allowing Jesus to be crucified they cried out, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" The answer which Peter gave under direct influence of the Holy Spirit was, "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2:37,38). To put it another way, Peter was saying to them, "If you obey, the Holy Spirit will be given to you". What did Peter mean by that statement?

If you remember the teaching of Jesus as John records it, you will be able to recall that Jesus said to Judas (not Iscariot) on one occasion, "If a man love me he will keep my words; and my father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him" (John 14:23). Here Jesus is saying that to the true believer there can be a gracious indwelling of deity; the Holy Guest. This is what Peter confirms on the day of Pentecost. Later on, when the

apostle Paul wrote a letter to Corinth, he made the point more sharply. "Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are" (1 Cor. 3:16,17).

So now we have it. When a person is obedient to the gospel and is cleansing from sin then the Holy Spirit will enter that person as a willing Guest, not to make that person a miracle-worker, but to assist in the greatest miracle of all, that is, to work within that person so as to enrich that life and to bring it into full spiritual maturity before God.

The Operation of the Holy Spirit

That the Holy Spirit operates is not in question; the important question is, 'how does He operate?' We have noticed that in the initiatory work of the gospel there was the baptism of the Holy Spirit. It is also true to say that in the confirmatory stages of the Church that special gifts were given unto christians, but when things had out-lived their usefulness God dispensed with them. For example, the Passover, the Sabbath day, John the Baptist, Holy Spirit baptism, Miracles, and other people and things. As John records, "Many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book: but these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name" (John 20:30,31). You will see, the important thing which is to remain is the love of God expressed in Christ in the gospel. When we have received the gospel we shall receive also the divine and enduring help of the Holy Spirit in our lives so that we can be fashioned to God's glory. Men must not get in the way by their so-called miraculous powers. The real miracle is in the power of the gospel.

The True Work of the Holy Spirit

I would not like to leave anyone with the impression that I think that the Holy Spirit has no power today; on the contrary, His power is illimitable in the life of the individual if that individual will not himself limit His power. Space does not permit to recount all the work of the Holy Spirit, but I will give some examples of the way in which He can and does help the child of God.

He:		
1.	Sheds love in our hearts.	Rom. 5:5
2.	Causes us to have hope.	Rom. 15:3
3	Justifies us.	1 Cor. 6:11
4	Seals us to the day of redemption.	Eph. 4:30
5	Sanctifies us.	2 Thess. 2:13
6	Gives us access to the Father, through the Son.	Eph. 3:16
7	Builds us for dwelling-place of God.	Eph. 2:22
8	Bears witness with our spirits that we are children of God.	Rom. 8:16.
9	Helps our infirmities.	Rom. 8:26
10	Makes intercession for us.	Rom. 8:26
11	Strengthens us in the inner man.	Eph. 3:16

It is wonderful to think that God knows what we can become; He gives us the Holy Spirit so that we may become what He knows we can become. I believe that people have looked so much for the external supernatural manifestations of the Holy Spirit that they have not realised what help He can give them. After all, what is the purpose in christian living? Is it to bring ourselves before the gaze of people, or is it to so live our lives, with the help of the Holy Spirit, that people will see in us the glory of God and be persuaded to give their lives to Him also? I think we know the answer to that.

Yes, Jesus is immutable. Yes, the Holy Spirit still has power today. I am convinced that this power is not to be seen today in the working or miracles, but in the far greater work of preparing us for that great and glorious day when we shall be with our God and Christ throughout the ages of eternity. May God help us so to let Him operate in our lives.

(All questions please, to Alf Marsden, 377 Billinge Road, Highfield, Wigan, Lancs).

SCRIPTURE READINGS

JUNE 1977

5-2 Chron, 24:13-22 Matthew 23:37 to 24:28
 12-Genesis 6:1-18 Matthew 24:29-51
 19-Psalm 34 Matthew 25:1-30
 26-Psalm 37:1-17 Matthew 25:31-46

ICHABOD

"Forty and six years" of hard work and craftsmanship had been spent in construction and beautifying the Temple, and we understand its grandeur was astounding to onlookers and visitors. It was revered too as a place of worship and the very presence of God. The words of Jesus at the beginning of our readings this month must have astonished the disciples though their experiences with Jesus there must have opened their eyes to the hollow nature of the spiritual profession it represented. Surely Jesus could not mean all this material splendour was doomed to desolation! He more than confirmed His statement to this effect, and we quote Josephus the Jewish historian "Titus ordered the whole city and the temple to be dug up" (Wars 7:1). The Saviour's warnings and prophecies were given "privately" to Peter, James, John and Andrew (Mark 13:3) as they sat on the mount of Olives probably within sight of the city. Their enquiry was threefold - When? What sign of His coming (presence)? What sign for the end of the world (age)? Replying, Jesus told of events which would NOT be signs of His coming - all kinds of worldly tumults, persecution, false prophets. Through all these endurances must be exercised for salvation. The 'end' will come when all nations have heard the gospel. Then an obviously local warning is given. The 'holy place' (24:15) must be temple or city of Jerusalem. Desecration will indicate the coming of disaster which is to be avoided by immediate flight 'unto the mountains'. Terrible times of trouble are forecast such as the world has never experienced, nor will. The final coming however will be recognisable by its universal character, and no heed should be paid to prophets. Here of course endurance of trials and readiness for the great event are the important things. The parables which follow this chapter do enforce these. There is difficulty in dividing what is related to the final coming and what

refers to the coming destruction of Jerusalem. We may regard verse 22 as concluding the latter until we have the parable of the fig tree where signs must relate to the local picture in view of verse 34. From that verse again thoughts return to the second coming, and so to the end of the chapter when the wise and unwise stewards are contrasted, and their rewards. We ought perhaps to quote somewhat concerning the siege. The city was taken on August 10th 70 A.D. It was the Passover season when the siege began. Jews from all parts were crowded in it. Factions fought one another fiercely within the walls but even more fiercely fought the Romans. Titus in charge of the operation is reported to have said 'We have certainly had God on our side in this war; it was God alone who ejected the Jews from these fortifications'.

Parabolic warning and teaching

Jewish marriage customs are used by the Saviour to fix upon the mind two points in particular - the uncertainty as to time (When) and the consequent need for readiness to meet Him. We view also a kingdom, obviously the church, composed of the wise and the foolish, the ready and the unready. We must recognise too the final nature of the reward. Carelessness and the expectation of having help from others at the last moment are fatal to eternal welfare, Surely in these days of comparative ease in christian profession we may too easily fall into careless ways. Are we giving sufficient thought to the COMING which is drawing nearer every day? The oil in the vessels which keeps the flame alight must represent the power which enables us to shine "in our small corner", and much more widely than it does. The incorruptible seed by which we have as christians been begotten again is the word of the gospel which has been preached to us (1 Pet. 1:25), and we need to be constantly feeding on it. There is in the picture of the ten virgins a most joyful occasion. One of the very happiest and most joyful events in the life of man is the wedding feast. The virgins chosen for the welcome home of the bridegroom and bride share their joy and are in fact there to increase it by their presence. The privilege and the joy were experienced by the wise. The unwise lost them through their carelessness - AND THE DOOR WAS SHUT! In the parable of the talents the emphasis is different. It is as though every christian has received a commission from the Lord. A precious responsibility is entrusted to each one according to ability. It may be this

kind of transaction would take place with masters and slaves in that country at that time. Jesus also told the parable of the pounds (Luke 19:12-28) with differences which are instructive. Then He was in the way going up to Jerusalem and His object was to discourage the idea that "the kingdom of God should immediately appear". He thus taught what He is now teaching His immediate and most trusted apostles that He is going away - to come again when their work has been done! That time of departure was indeed near - to morrow or the next day. Profound truths are here to be thought out. The parables and the predictions directly affect the apostles first, but they equally affect every christian. To each individual comes the warning that our calling involves consecration of heart and mind in a purposeful life with expectation of trial and danger of failure unless there is realisation of the eternal consequences. The virgins must sleep only when the lamps are quite ready, the slaves must use the 'talents' with which they are entrusted in such a way that their master will be satisfied when he returns. There is joy awaiting those who are ready - joy provided by the Lord, and shared with Him (25:10,21 & 23).

JUDGEMENT

We cannot regard this as a parable in the usual understanding. It is a forecast of God's dealing with humankind finally. Sheep, goats and shepherd provide a background. Sheep and goats graze together but separate in the fold. The term 'all nations' would be applied to Gentiles, and it is possible Jesus had them in mind who never knew the law or the gospel. This of course makes no difference to the force of the teaching for we are assured we shall all stand before the judgement seat of Christ (Rom. 14:10; 2 Cor. 5:10). We know of course that our good deeds (if any) cannot assure us of salvation. It is only through acceptance of the sacrifice of Christ we can hope for it. The truth brought especially to notice is that commendation or condemnation depends as much upon what we fail to do as upon doing right or wrong. The well-known prayer includes rightly "We have left undone those things we ought to have done". As Burns puts it we must see Jesus in 'the shoeless bairn'. We should examine ourselves in face of this very plain statement by Jesus. We remember how He identified Himself with the suffering christians to Saul - "Why persecuted thou Me?" With a

welfare state we are tempted to think all the items Jesus mentioned are being taken care of, but this is obviously not so, and there is much room for voluntary christian effort. Since Jesus lived, died and rose again the world has become increasingly conscious of brotherhood, something which had no existence in the world into which HE came. Even those who deny Christ unconscious of their total indebtedness to Him for the idea, tell us christians how we have failed in this respect. May the Lord forgive and help us not to forget! R. B. SCOTT.

CHANGE OF SECRETARY

Motherwell, Scotland: The new secretary will now be William J. Purcell, 28 Clyde Terrace, Motherwell, ML1 2NG Phone No. 64289.

Tranent: All correspondence to John Colgan, 8, Caponhall Drive, Tranent, East Lothian, Scotland. EH33 2HG.

THANKS

It was very pleasing the other day to receive a letter from a reader in Africa saying how much the 'S.S.' was appreciated out there and how even one copy gets passed around. One sometimes forgets how a small paper like the 'Scripture Standard' can keep a link between us all, dispersed though we may be, in differing parts of the world. The thought makes a lot of the effort worth while. Ed.

THANKS

Dear Brothers and Sisters in the Lord,

May the grace of the Lord be with you.

We would like to take this opportunity to thank all of our brothers and sisters in Christ who remembered Moyra before the throne of grace during her recent critical operation. We want to assure all of our brethren that Moyra was very conscious of the uplifting effect; even when she was dangerously ill, she truly felt the presence of the Lord and never felt alone at any time.

Moyra is now much improved and she is convalescing at home. The doctors have advised us that it will be a lengthy recuperation, but Moyra is now able to attend services.

Be assured of our eternal gratitude for your care and concern for us.

Alex. and Moyra Strachan

OBITUARY

Bathgate: We regret to record the passing of Sister Mary Banks (the widow of the late Bro. Richard Banks) in her 89th year. Owing to ill health she had to leave Bathgate, to live with her daughter Nan seven years ago, and died in Alexandria Hospital, Portsmouth on March 11th. For very many years she was a faithful member of the church meeting at Gideon St., Bathgate. She was a loyal supporter of the More Excellent Way, and even when infirmity kept her indoors, her home was a sanctuary where God's Presence dwelt, and many have found much blessing from visits paid. Ever ready with sympathy, and encouragement; she was the means of help and blessing to preaching brethren, and other workers in the Master's Vineyard. Her mortal remains were laid to rest at Bathgate Cemetery, on Thursday 24th March amidst many signs of deep respect and esteem.

"Asleep in Jesus! peaceful rest,
Whose waking is supremely blest!
No fear, no woe, shall dim the hour,
That manifests the Saviour's power".

To the family we express our sympathy, and commend them to the God of all comfort and consolation. The writer conducted a service at the graveside. D. Dougall

Blackburn, Mill Hill: On March 17th, sister Mariette Pritt passed away in hospital after a short illness, 'Ettie' as she was known to her brethren, was a constant member of the Lord's church and rarely missed a meeting. She was baptised over 60 years ago, and could give us many details of the history of the church here

in Blackburn. She was 88 years old when she died and now awaits her calling of her Lord who she served so well, Brother Roy Renshaw conducted a short service in our meeting place.
Tony Tyson, Sec.

Motherwell, Scotland: The church has lost, in the person of sister Amy Cater, a beloved sister. She had been ailing for some time but her desire has always been to be in attendance at the Lord's table with her brethren. We shall miss our sister but we rejoice in her witness for her Lord and Master. Bro. Hugh Davidson officiated at the service which was attended by many brethren. L. Purcell.

GROWING IN GRACE

Such as do not grow in grace, decay in grace. There is no standing still in religion — either we go forward or backward. If faith does not grow, unbelief will; if heavenly mindedness does not grow, covetousness will. A man that doth not increase his stock diminisheth it; if you do not improve your stock of grace, your stock will decay. The angels on Jacob's ladder were either ascending or descending. If you do not ascend in religion, you descend.

CORRECTION

Brother A. Ashurst asks me to point out that in his article in the March issue, on page 28 near the bottom "Selfishness" should have been 'Selflessness'.

Many readers would doubtless have guessed this, no doubt. Ed.

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