

The SCRIPTURE STANDARD

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

Vol. 68 No. 7

JULY, 2001

A PROMISING TIME

By the time you read this, another General Election will be over and, as things look at the moment, we will have another five years of "New Labour" and Tony Blair as Prime Minister. For the present, however, this is the time for **promise-making**. In the last days of the run-up to the election, each political party is gradually becoming more and more strident, shouting down the opposition and making all manner of beguiling (not to say rash) **promises** to all and sundry. Time, of course, will tell what will become of all these weird and wonderful promises, but if the past is anything to go by, we shall live to be greatly disappointed (if we are foolish enough to believe the promises of politicians). Perhaps it's unfair to single out politicians as being promise breakers; I suppose we have all been guilty of making a promise we have not kept. Certainly in the world of business, and amongst nations, breaches of promise are part of the stock-in-trade. Thus the need for contracts, lawyers, and an ability to understand the 'small print.' But this is not so with God's promises. Paul says, that God's promises, in Christ, are not "Ifs and buts" (Yea or nay) but are Yea, and Yea again. **"For the Son of God, Jesus Christ, who was preached among you by us, even by me, and Silvanus and Timotheus was not yea and nay, but in Him was Yea. For all the promises of God in Him are YEA, and in Him Amen, unto the glory of God by us."** (II Cor. 1:17). Truly God's Promises, by contrast with man's, are completely sure and steadfast.

GOD'S PROMISE

Solomon could say to the Jewish people, **"Blessed be the Lord that hath given rest to His people, according to all He hath promised, there hath not failed one word of all His good promise, which He promised by the hand of Moses"** (1 Kings 8:56). Joshua said, **"There failed not ought of any good thing which the Lord had spoken unto the house of Israel; all came to pass"**. God's promises to man began in the Old Testament times embodied mainly in statements principally to Abraham and to the early Fathers. Paul continually prayed for his kinsmen in the flesh. **"Who are Israelites: to whom pertaineth the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of law, and the service of God and the promises . . ."** (Rom. 9:4). Gentiles were of course, at that time **"without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise . . ."** (Eph. 2:12). But God's promise to Israel derived specially from Abraham. The promises to Abraham were three-fold (a) land - (hence the 'Promised Land') (b) a son and a progeny as numerous as the sand on any sea shore, and (c) blessings which would accrue to ALL nations, through the Messiah. These were **'the promises'** to which Paul makes constant

reference. Abraham 'staggered not' at the promises of God, "through unbelief, but was strong in faith, giving glory to God. And being fully persuaded that what God has promised *He was able also to perform*" (Rom. 4:21). In some of Paul's references to the promises he makes the point that Christ was the true and complete fulfilment of all God's promises, viz "Now to Abraham and his seed were *the promises made. He saith not. And to seeds as of many, but as of one, which was Christ*" (Gal 3:16). When God made the promise to bless all nations through Abraham's *seed* he did not mean 'children' or 'descendants' but meant 'seed' in the singular and in the person of Christ. ALL nations (Jews and Gentiles) were to be thus blessed, and so, in effect, the gospel was being preached in that very promise (given 430 years before the Mosaic law) to Abraham.

BETTER PROMISES

Thus Paul says in the same Chapter (Gal. 3) "And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, in thee shall all the nations be blessed. So then, they which be of faith, are blessed with faithful Abraham." (v8) and "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law . . . That the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ; that we might receive *the promise of the Spirit* through faith." (v13, 14). This latter verse not only confirms that the promises made to Abraham have accrued to the Gentiles through Christ, but also introduces us to one other momentous promise - *the promise of the Holy Spirit*. The 'Spirit' here represents all the blessings connected with the Christian religion, and includes the miraculous agency of the Holy Spirit: and all His influence in renewing the heart, in sanctifying the soul and in comforting the people of God (For He is the Comforter). These influences of the Spirit were obtained by virtue of the sufferings and death of the Saviour and were the sum of all the blessings promised by the prophets. Thus, says Paul, "If ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the *promise*" (Gal 3:29). Is that not truly wonderful? Jesus then, in the consummation of all Jewish hopes and dreams of the past (could they but see it) but Jesus not only fulfills the promises of old but He surpasses them with even better promises. The writer to the Hebrews claims that Jesus has obtained a more excellent ministry than Moses and that He is the mediator "of a better covenant which was established upon *better promises*". (Heb. 8:6). Clearly these better promises come to us through the gospel and indeed *the gospel itself* was an age-old promise as Paul points out (in Rom 1:2) "Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ called to be an apostle, separated unto the gospel of God (*which he had promised* by His prophets in the holy scriptures) concerning His Son Jesus Christ our Lord". Again, in Paul's speech in the synagogue in Antioch, he said, "And we declare unto you the glad tidings how that *the promise* which was made unto the fathers God hath fulfilled the same unto us their children in that He hath raised up Jesus again, as it is also written in the second psalm, Thou art my Son. This day have I begotten Thee." (Acts 13:32).

GREAT AND PRECIOUS

The apostle Peter describes these 'better' promises as "*great and precious*". Talking of God's power and our calling he says, "Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust." These great and precious promises are numberless and some are probably impossible to identify. James ranks the kingdom of God amongst these. He says that God hath chosen the poor of this world, albeit rich in faith, and made them "heirs of *the kingdom* which God hath

promised to them that loved him" (2:5). In the previous chapter the same apostle says, "Blessed is the man that endureth temptation for when he is tried, he shall receive the *crown of life*, which the Lord *has promised* to them that love him". (1:12) John says, "And this is the promise that he hath promised us, *even eternal life*." (1 John 5:25). Paul says this promise of life eternal was made "before the world began but God hath in due times manifested his word through preaching which is committed unto me according to the commandment of God our Saviour." (Titus 1:2).

And so the 'great and precious' promises of God, in these latter days, include *the gospel; the kingdom of God; the crown of righteousness* (eternal life) *the holy Spirit and Jesus Himself*. From those basic promises numberless others are derived and in day-to-day transactions God promises to the faithful the umbrella of His love; His succour in sickness; exaltation to the truly humble; courage to the fearful; abundance to the generous; forgiveness to the penitent; tranquillity to the peacemakers; strength to the feeble; final victory to the oppressed; assurance to the perplexed; light for dark days; sufficiency of His grace; protection from dangers seen and unseen; satisfaction to those who hunger and thirst after righteousness; rest to all those 'who labour and are heavy laden'; and resurrection to the dead and the slain.

WORTHY TO RECEIVE THE PROMISES

As previously mentioned, God's promises are conditional but the conditions are not onerous, or asking anything unreasonable. God simply asks us to be faithful and true. Paul (in 2 Cor. 7:1) says, "**Having, therefore, these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.**" "What promises" we ask ourselves. The promises outlined in the few verses previously.

The undoing of old Israel was, of course, their constant preoccupation with idolatry; (the sad history of the kings of Israel and Judah illustrate this), wherein they were unfaithful partners with the covenant they had with God. God, the "innocent party" of this "rocky" marriage, forgave the erring partner countless times before the eventual parting of the ways. No greater insult to God could exceed that of a Jewish preferment to bow down to a carved piece of wood or a golden calf. Thus, Paul in recalling this O.T. scenario, warns Christians at Corinth (and elsewhere) not to repeat the mistake of the Jewish past. He asks, (chap. 6:14-18) - "**What concord hath Christ with Baal: or light with darkness: or what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness: or he that believeth with an infidel; and what agreement hath the temple of idols with the temple of the living God?**" Assuming the answer to be obvious, Paul follows with the promises (gleaned from Ex. 29:45; Lev. 26:12: and Ezek. 37:27) - "**Wherefore come ye out from among them and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing, and I will receive you. And I will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be My sons and My daughters, saith the Lord God Almighty . . . As God hath said, I will dwell in them and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people.**"

And so, Paul, re-applying these O.T. promises, from O.T. Jews to N.T. Christians, says that we, today, can enjoy these sublime pledges, and should make ourselves fit to receive them: "**Having, therefore, these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.**" We are not, therefore, as Israel of old, to dismiss lightly these awesome promises. God, in effect, pledges to be a Father, protector and a friend to us: that He will not only dwell with us but in us, and that He will regard us as His true sons and daughters. God, in return, asks that we should strive to be worthy members of His

household, and that we should purify our lives and spirits, and in time, gradually become more like unto God Himself. "Be ye holy as I am holy", says the Lord.

SLACKNESS - OR YEA AND NAY

God's promises are free and are available to all. God is kind, compassionate and most gracious, and all His great and precious promises are based upon His infinite grace. No one prompted God to make them, or could have forced God to make them by arm-twisting or holding a pistol to the head. Many promises made by men have been extracted from them by threats and coercion, but not so with God. Whereas many deserve death and disgrace God gives them Life and Sonship. Nor is God *slack concerning His promises* albeit they are based entirely upon His generosity. The apostle Peter assures us that **"The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some men count slackness, but is longsuffering to usward, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance."** (II Peter 3:9). In making the point (That God's promises are sure and steadfast) Peter also warns us in this verse that some will perish and "will not come to repentance." Thus God's promises are conditional. The crown of life and the kingdom of God mentioned in the quotations from James are, we notice, for those "that love Him", and to those who "endure temptation and are tried". "Let us therefore", says the writer to Hebrews, "beware lest a promise being left us, of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it." (Heb. 4:1), and again, "For ye have need of patience, that after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise." (Heb. 10:36).

We should, perhaps, regard promises as sacred things and treat them with the gravity that God does. To breach them does not show us in very good light and often reflects badly upon the Church. In the passage at the beginning of this article (from II Cor. 1:7) Paul hoped that he would not be regarded as one of those 'yea and nay' individuals, whose promises or undertakings might be carried out, but just as surely might *not* be. Concerning promises may we be like our heavenly Father - i.e. not 'yea and nay' but decidedly and most definitely Yea, and YEA again. "For all the promises of God in Him are YEA, and in Him, Amen, unto the glory of God . . ."

Alger Fitch in his interesting book "Claiming God's Promises" quotes 'Deacon Jones' as saying "Some folk who sing that song 'Standing on the Promises' are really just sitting on the premises" and that if we are to stand on God's promises, as individuals and congregations, we need to consider again each of the divine pledges made to us by the Heavenly Father, and consider it as if we were hearing the words for the first time. Quite a thought.

There are said to be 1,018 promises in the N.T. alone (although I have not tried to count them) and the good thing is that, unlike the promises of men and politicians, they are sure and certain. The gospel is "good news" because of what it promises (through Christ). Yes, there are commands, exhortations and warnings, but also great and precious (valuable) promises. What would the world be without promises.?

EDITOR.

IN CHRIST, GOD REDEFINES

Communication always requires a medium. Some people, for instance won't dare write a letter until they have secured the proper stationery. The wrong paper or the improper envelope would distort the message.

God also is particular about the medium of his final, complete revelation to man. He chose a *person*, his Son, Jesus Christ to reveal himself. If God is a person then you

would expect the best revelation of God to be in another person. The apostle John tells us that, although no one has ever seen God, the only begotten Son, who comes from the intimacy of the Father's bosom, has declared him (John 1:18). The word "declare" that John uses here is *exegeomai*, which means "to declare, make known, rehearse, or show." We get the English word "exegesis" from the same root. Just as a commentator gives an exegesis of a passage, so also Christ gives the world an exegesis of God, his Father.

Once God has the correct medium through which to speak, he could define certain things in his will and his nature that were difficult to explain before. Through Christ, God finally gives us a thorough explanation of some key concepts in his scheme of redemption. For example,

(1). *In Christ, God redefined sin and guilt.* Most people don't feel like sinners or don't feel guilty when they hear the Law recited - "**Thou shalt not kill,**" "**Thou shalt not commit adultery.**" They say to themselves, "Oh, I'm fine, I've never done any of those things. The Law must be talking about real bad guys, you know, like criminals."

But then, along comes Jesus and drives the definition of sin deep into the thinking self. You say you've never murdered? Listen to Jesus: "**Every one who is angry with his brother shall be liable to judgment**" (Matt. 5:22). "**Any one who hates his brother is a murderer**" (1 John 3:15). You say you've never committed adultery? Listen to Jesus: "**I say unto you that every one who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart**" (Matt. 5:28).

Many people in the world are basically moral. They have never committed murder, theft, adultery, or lying. But Jesus poses the nagging question: "Have you ever *thought* of doing it, planned it, hoped for it, intended it?" If so, then you're not entirely free from sin. This was what threw some enemies of Jesus into a frenzy. They had managed to avoid overt sin, but they too had thoughts! After God redefined sin, how could anyone possibly claim to be sinless?

(2). *In Christ, God redefined love and grace.* Before Christ many people claimed that love stopped with one's own people. Love your neighbour and hate your enemy - that is the common code of mankind. Most everyone will work for the good of his/her own family, clan, tribe, or nation.

But Jesus insisted that love go farther than these social groups. "**If you love only those who love you, what reward can you expect? Surely the tax-gatherers do as much as that. And if you greet only your brothers, what is there extraordinary about that? Even the heathen do as much**" (Matt. 5:46,47. NEB). The Jewish leaders roundly despised our Lord because he kept company with "publicans and sinners," with the "untouchables" of society: women, lepers, Romans, Samaritans, children, common people.

Many people have the attitude, "I'll love you if you'll just be worthy of my love." But Jesus commanded us to love like God the Father, without reservation, just as sun and rain fall on all humans without distinction (Matt 5:45).

Jesus told an unusual parable to correct the legalistic notion of God's love and mercy. We call it the Parable of the Labourers in the Vineyard (Matt. 20:1-16). It seems that a certain householder hired men at various times of the day to work in his vineyard. Yet at the end of the day he paid them all the same wage. Naturally those who had worked all day complained that those who had worked only one hour didn't deserve the

same wage. The householder replied that he had kept his part of the contract and that he had a right to what he wished with his property. Instead of grumbling, the workers should be glad that he was so generous.

Interesting as it is to note that this story was also known among the Jewish teachers, but with a different ending. The Jewish version had the householder replying to the complaint, "Oh, but this man who worked only one hour did as much work as you have done all day."

Notice that the Jewish version of the story ended with the notion of *equal pay for equal work*. Jesus deliberately changed the ending of the story to mean *equal pay for unequal work*. The Jewish version exalts the worker, while Jesus' version dramatizes the generosity of the householder, God. This small detail speaks volumes about the difference between Judaism and Christianity.

(3). *In Christ, God redefined forgiveness.* Peter illustrates the old definition of forgiveness when he asked the Lord, "**How often shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? As many as seven times?**" Peter must have thought himself especially permissive. The Babylonian Talmud says you should forgive a brother who repeats his sins only three times. But Jesus answered Peter, "**I do not say to you seven times, but seventy times seven**" (Matt. 18:21,22).

While Peter was busy computing $70 \times 7 = 490$, Jesus drove home this shocking new definition of forgiveness with the Parable of the Unmerciful Servant (Matt. 18:23-35). A certain king forgave a certain servant the astronomical sum of 10,000 talents. Scholars of antiquity tell us that this sum was five times the annual tribute of Galilee and Perea.

But this same servant went out and threw into jail a fellow servant who owed him about five pounds. His colleagues informed the king of this dastardly act and the king punished him severely, just as he had punished his brother. "So also," concluded Jesus, "my heavenly Father will do to every one you, if you do not forgive your brother from your heart" (Matt. 18:35).

You get the distinct impression that God's mercy is the kind of thing you can't reduce to terms of money, or the precise, legal measurements. His rewards can't be broken into twelve hourly units. His forgiveness has no numerical stopping point.

(4). *In Christ, God redefined man.* Paul rejoices in his letter to the Ephesians that Christ has broken down "**the dividing wall of hostility,**" the law, the barrier that had once separated Jew and Gentile, thereby bringing peace to the human race and making it one (Eph. 2:13-16). From now on, we know that God is the Father of all men, the one who gives his name to every family on the face of the earth (Eph. 3:14).

What this means, in other terms, is that Christ abolished ethnocentrism, tribalism, parochialism, provincialism chauvinism, nationalism. Arnold Toynbee aptly defined nationalism as "a worship of a fraction of the human race." Jesus died to show us that there are no more fractions of the human race. Racists often speak of people from "the other side of the track." Our Lord died to abolish that track. "**Let him who boasts, boast of the Lord**" (1 Cor. 1:31).

Albert Schweitzer experienced the clash of the old definition and God's new definition of mankind. When he first went to Africa he had a terrible time with the ingrained tribalism of the natives. One day a man came to his hospital bleeding to death, but when Schweitzer asked a man nearby to help him carry him, the man

refused. When Schweiter asked why, the native replied: "He's not from my tribe!" Fortunately, this problem got better around the Schweitzer hospital as the good doctor began to teach people of the indiscriminating, unconditional love of the Biblical God.

Thus, after God finishes redefining some key notions in his son, Jesus, we find that sin is worse than we thought, love is wider than we thought, forgiveness is longer than we thought, and mankind is bigger than we thought.

Naturally, some people can't stand these new definitions. "This is impossible!" they exclaim, or, like Nicodemus, "**How can this be?**" (John 3:9). If you're the kind of person who says, "I like the old definitions," then you may be the very person that Christ is wanting to address.

A. HOOVER.

INDEPENDENT FAITH

A faith that is anchored solely in the word of God can truly be called an independent faith. If it is derived through other sources, it is misbegotten. Faith comes only by hearing God's word (Rom. 10:17). Faith obtained by God's word will stand under every condition to which it is subjected. It cannot be altered by circumstances, emotions, public opinions or other factors.

When faith is based on *circumstances*, it may be strong as long as the circumstances are good. Here a person is faithful and believes he has a great trust in Jesus, but what happens when the circumstances change from good to bad? What happens when a tragedy occurs? Suddenly things are not working out just as he had them planned. As his life falls apart, so does his faith! If his faith is founded totally on the Bible, then no matter what temporal disappointments come along, his faith will be present to sustain. A person with Bible-based faith cannot be separated from the love of God by circumstances.

Job is an important character in the Bible for illustrating this point. When everything in life was wrecked for him, he held on to his faith in God. Satan believed that Job's faithfulness was linked to the good circumstances surrounding him. The devil suggested that if conditions were otherwise, then Job would curse God to his face. God allowed every tragedy possible, short of the taking of his life, to happen to Job. Still his faith stood! His attitude was, "**Though He slay me, yet will I trust Him . . .**" (Job 13:15a). There is no doubt about Job's faith, it was independent of circumstances.

And then, consider the **three Hebrew children** of Daniel 3. They refused to bow to Nebuchadnezzar's image and were threatened with the fiery furnace. Even as they faced the flames, they declared, ". . . **Our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and He will deliver us out of thine hand, O king. But, if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up**" (Dan. 3:17, 18). Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego had confidence that God could deliver them, but even if He did not, they still believed everything would turn out right for them. That's faith above circumstance!

When our faith is strong only when the circumstances are favourable, we are walking by sight. Paul said Christians "**walk by faith, not by sight.**"

FEELINGS

Some people base their faith on their *feelings*. The thing that feeds their faith is an emotional experience. If they have an emotional "high" they feel sustained by their faith. These individuals are often heard to say, "I can just feel the presence of Jesus in

my life," or statements similar. Again, this is not the way God intends for us to obtain faith. An all-sustaining faith comes only by hearing the word of God.

When these people experience an emotional "low" their faith fails them. But a faith based on what God's word says is independent of our feelings. This way when we are feeling low, the word of God can elevate us. The man who gets his faith through his emotions cannot be strengthened through the word; he must have another emotional experience.

Those who endeavour to build through emotional experiences are labouring under a delusion because faith comes only by diligently poring over the word. Paul wrote that many would be deluded into believing lies and thus be condemned. Hence, it is clear that our faith must be independent of our emotions.

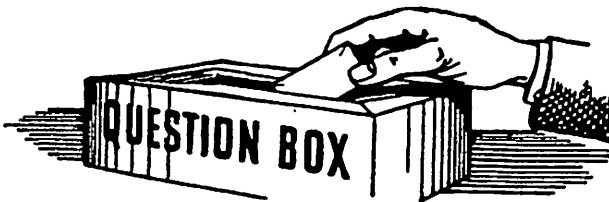
PERSONALITIES

Finally, sometimes people base their faith on personalities and human opinions instead of Jesus and the word. Paul wrote a reproving letter to the Corinthians because some were founding their convictions on different preachers. Some were followers of Peter, others of Paul and some of Apollos. Too many today rely on "big name preachers" with their popular doctrines instead of God's word for faith. But Paul told the Corinthians not to rely on human props. He asked them, "Is Christ divided? was Paul crucified for you? or were ye baptized in the name of Paul?" From this first chapter of Paul's letter to Corinth we conclude that it is the message of the cross and not the doctrines and personalities of men that provides a saving faith.

CONCLUSION

We must realize that the Christian life is wholly founded on faith in Jesus Christ as God's Son. Many Christians, instead of "overcoming," are being overcome. Some are weak and others are falling away. Perhaps more of us need to examine the source of our faith. Maybe your trust in Jesus has been predicted more on circumstances, or your own feelings, or popular opinion than solely on what God has said in His word. If so, then you need to return to the real source of faith. Spend some time praying, meditating and study over the word. This is the only avenue through which your faith in Jesus Christ as God's Son can be sustained!

C. COOK.



Conducted by
Frank Worgan

GOD . . . AND THE 'GODS'

This month we have a two-part question to consider.

"In the first Commandment, Exodus 20:3, God states, 'You shall have no other gods besides Me', and then in verse 5, He says, 'I, Yahveh, am a jealous God'.

In Psalm 82:6, we read 'I said, Ye are gods'.

1. In what sense is God 'a jealous God'?
2. Who are the 'gods' mentioned in the Psalm?

1a) With regards to the passage in Exodus 20, we have to admit that it is easy to see how some readers - (and some who, at school, had to learn to recite the Ten

Commandments, as I did!) - might gain the impression from that verse that God is not only a jealous God but is also a vindictive God, who punishes the children for the sins of their fathers. And that is an entirely erroneous impression.

If you look up the word '*jealous*' in a concordance you will also come across the word '*jealousy*', and you will be led to that striking verse which states, '*Yahveh, whose name is Jealousy, is a jealous God*' (Ex. 34:14).

The problem arises because these two words today do not mean what they meant in Old Testament times; and sustain a meaning which is different, even, from 1611, when the Authorized Version was produced. I am sure that we have all discovered, in reading the older version, that problems arise because, over the years, many words have acquired very different meanings. If we had the space to spare, this fact could very easily be demonstrated.

Today we list '*jealousy*' among such sins as '*envy*', '*malice*' and '*pride*'. In fact, the Oxford Dictionary defines the word '*jealous*' as, '*resentful towards another on account of known or suspected rivalry; envious*'. Because of this, jealousy is the motivation behind a great many of the sins that people commit.

The biblical meaning of 'jealous'

But the Old Testament word at which we are looking is '*quanno*' and its basic meaning is, quite simply, '*zealous*' or '*enthusiastic*' or '*passionate*'.

It is in this sense that the prophet Elijah uses the word when he declares his enthusiasm for God, in 1st Kings 19:10. Similarly, when God declares that He is '*jealous*', He tells us for what it is that He is jealous. Several times He states, "*I am jealous for Jerusalem and for Zion*". There is no '*resentfulness*' in His '*jealousy*' for Jerusalem, but the expression of a deep and wonderful love and concern for the city in which He '*caused His name to dwell*'. This means that when, in Ex. 20:5, He says, '*I am a jealous God*', He is declaring His zealousness for the protection of His own honour as the one True God. In Isa. 42:8, He states, "*I am Yahveh; that is My name; My glory I give to no other, nor My praise to graven image.*"

Visiting the Sins of the Fathers'

1b) As for the supposed vindictiveness of God, which some think they see in that verse; it should be noted that the verse does not teach that children bear *guilt* of the iniquities of their parents. The word '*aven*' = '*iniquity*', mean '*perverseness in error, or waywardness*'.

If God had wanted His people to understand that children bear the '*guilt*' of the sins of their parents, He could have caused that very word. '*Asham*' is the word for '*guilt*', and there is a world of difference between the *guilt* of sin and the *consequences* of sin'

The Bible does not teach the errors of '*inherited guilt*', or '*total inherited depravity*'. The truth is much simpler than that, and something which faces us every day of our lives.

The truth is that children *suffer* because of the sins of their parents. It is a sad fact that all too often the innocent have to suffer the consequences of the sins of the guilty.

Within the last few days, as I write this, the world has been saddened by the news of the death of a small, courageous African boy, who died of AIDS, the scourge of our modern world. It is a disease with which he was born because of the sin of others.

The Stain of Sin Spreads

The reality is that sin always brings appalling consequences and its effects are borne, not only by those who are responsible for committing it, but also by their children and their children's children.

And, remember also, that since children learn from the behaviour of their parents - whether it be good or bad - *'the sins of the fathers'* are very often reproduced and copied by their offspring. There are families in which criminality, lawlessness, immorality, violence and addiction have become a way of life and accepted as normal. And, sooner or later, they bear *consequences* of such a life style. But, as for the matter of *guilt*, the prophet Ezekiel has the definitive word, in Ezek. 18:20:

"The soul that sins shall die. The son shall not suffer for the iniquity of the father, nor the father suffer for the iniquity of the son; the righteousness of the righteous shall be upon himself, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon himself".

2. *The second part of our question asks, "Who are the 'gods' mentioned in Psa. 82:6?"*

The O.T. passage, in the Hebrew text, reads, *'I Myself said 'Ye are gods''*, and it is important to notice that the pronoun, *'I'*, is emphatic. The stress should be placed on the *'I Myself'*, because the speaker is God Himself and He is addressing those whom He calls the *'elohim'*.

That word is used very frequently in the Old Testament, and, although it is used in a special way as the first of the three primary names of God, it is also used in a more general sense. (The other two names being *Adonai* and *Yahveh*).

'Elohim' in Creation

We first encounter it in Genesis chapter 1, when God's action in Creation is described. You will find it used 27 times in the 31 verses of that chapter, and it is used because its root meaning is that of 'strength', 'power', 'might' or 'authority'. The word, of itself, does not imply deity, yet it is a very fitting title when used of the Almighty in His creative activity, *'Yahveh Elohim'* - is the Strong One.

So, the answer to the question 'Who are the 'gods'?', is that, because the root-meaning of the word is 'might' or 'power', the *'elohim'* to whom God speaks in the psalm, are Judges.

They are *'mighty ones'* who are to be recognized as His representatives, His agents, because they have been appointed in accordance with His law, to execute judgment among His people, Israel.

Into this category of *'gods'* were placed not only the judges, but also the priests and prophets, because they also had a divinely appointed ministry.

The Lord's use of 'elohim'

It is interesting to note that, in John 10:33-36, the Lord Jesus uses this passage in a discussion with the Jews, knowing that they would have no problem accepting this use of the term *'elohim'* and would see the strength of the argument he was making, because they knew that their Rabbis taught that the word was applied by their Law to men who had been called and appointed by God to undertake special service.

The Lord's argument runs like this:

"The Father Himself called certain people *'elohim'* when He called them to undertake certain duties among the people. In the exercise of their ministry they represented Him, and acted with His authority. They were therefore called, *'the elohim'* - the mighty ones.

Do you, then, call the One whom the Father *actually and directly sanctified - consecrated, set apart and sent into the world*, a blasphemer, because I said that *'I am (the) son of God?'*"

Since the Jews accepted that God had called certain of His servants *'gods'*, they had no reason for accusing Jesus of blasphemy when he called himself *'son of God'*.

I think we should also notice that, in this passage the emphasis should *not* be placed on the word '*the*', because the argument is not about the Lord's *uniqueness* as '*the only begotten*' son, but about the fact that His *relationship* with God is that of *son-ship* and not merely that of *servant-hood*, no matter how elevated that service might be. (In fact, the definite article is not used in the original text).

But, compared Hewbrews 1:13. "*To which of the angels (angelon = messengers) said He at any time, "Thou art my son?"*"

This distinction between Christ and all previous servants of God is brought out most clearly in Heb. 3:1-6. For instance, Moses, whom the Jews regarded as God's greatest servant, is declared to have been faithful '*as a servant*' in God's house; that is, among God's people. And the people to whom the Lord was speaking would certainly regard Moses as being among the '*elohim*'.

Yet, even though the service of this great man of God was of the very highest kind, so that he is described by the word '*therapon*', a word for '*servant*' which indicates '*one who renders service voluntarily*', as distinct from '*doulos*', the word that indicates a '*bond-servant*', there remains a world of difference between Moses and Jesus.

In God's house, Moses was faithful '*as a servant*'. '*But Christ as a son*'. Heb. 3:6.

A Deeper Significance

I must point out that this confrontation between the Lord and the Jews has a significance which goes far beyond this discussion about the '*elohim*' - the '*gods*'.

At a much deeper level, it concerns his deity. We are told that the Jews took up stones to stone him, accusing him of blasphemy because, they said, '*You . . . make yourself God*'.

During that particular discussion Jesus had not, at that point, *explicitly* claimed to be *The Son of God*, but he had most certainly implied it when he said, '*I and the Father are one*', v.30, and the Jews had certainly understood what he claimed.

It is astonishing, then, that there are so-called religious leaders living today - almost two thousand years later - who presume to declare that Jesus *never* claimed to be Deity, when the Jews with whom he discussed face to face during his personal ministry had enough intelligence to understand that this is *exactly* what he claimed!

(*Questions to:* Frank Worgan, 5 Gryfebank Way,
Houston, Renfrewshire, PA6 7NZ. Scotland)

CHILDREN IN PRISON

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Nepal is a fundamental Hindu country, sandwiched between China (Tibet) and India. With major political troubles. Maoist infiltrators are rioting and many are victims. The country is terribly poor and corrupt, the Christian minority is less than 1% they have faced horrific torture and persecution over the years, but are small strong and faithful. Please pray for them.

The Health care is so poor that there is only one doctor per 17,000 people. The Health expenditure per capita is 4 pounds.

Initially I decided to go to Nepal as a self funded volunteer to nurse Tibetan refugees who are all Buddhists, a wonderful way to teach Jesus.

While there I helped in Leprosy Hospitals, Health Clinics, orphanages, Aids homes, Drug rehab, and with handicapped and street children. There are so very many needs.

God Blessed me richly.

My second stay included helping Christians who rescue little ones from Prison. 47 children have been brought in to a loving Christian home, "The Peace and Loving Home". These are Christians but are not using the name Churches of Christ. They have also started the first drug rehabilitation programme in Nepal, funded and run by Christians. The Prison Fellowship International give advice and guidance where needed. The organiser for all of the far eastern region of the PFI is Partic Chong (pchong@pfi.org) who can vouch for the home as he was there when I was, and he also is a good contact if anyone wants to start prison visiting, and he has contacts in all countries.

The care of the children is for God and in His loving Spirit.

God-willing when my hospital treatment is finished in the Autumn I plan to return, to live with a local Nepali farming family in a village teaching the community English and Health care, also learning Nepali so I can teach Jesus.

In my spare time I will help with caring for the little ones in the home in Kathmandu valley. In response to the latest urgent letter the Christians here at Stretford decided to send money to get 2 babies out of Bhadrol Prison, they are in a very critical condition, their mother died when the youngest was 3 months old and the father is serving a 20 year sentence for murder.

There are 73 prisons in Nepal, with many children suffering mental and physical abuse. Most families will not have contact at all with the prisoner, wife and children. They do not help them, so they all live in the prison. Because of the culture and class system there is almost no chance of supported fostering and adoption. So a large home is the only way at the moment.

My appeal is on behalf of the children, that individuals, families or churches will make it possible to bring out and care for children. The support necessary to care for all their needs is 30 pounds a month. The commitment would be high because the children need at least 3 years of care, and also my prayer is that there would be a loving Christian relationship between the child and the supporter, maybe even a visit?

There are other needs, TB children funding for the extra 6 months of medicine they need to recover full from TB, homeless children who need to be in residential school. Money for Nepali and Tibetan Bibles. If you want to know any more, please contact me.

Carole Ashurst, 60 Kenwood Road, Stretford, Manchester M32 8PT.

Telephone: 0161 865 4242. E-mail: groashurst@aol.com

I thank God for all my loving Brethren, for your prayers and help in the past.

In Jesus, CAROLE.

SCRIPTURE READINGS

| | | |
|---------|------------------|------------------|
| Aug. 5 | 2 Samuel 5:1-12 | Matthew 20:1-19 |
| Aug. 12 | Proverb 16:1-19 | Matthew 20:20-34 |
| Aug. 19 | Zechariah 9:1-13 | Matthew 21:1-22 |
| Aug. 26 | Psalms 118:1-24 | Matthew 21:23-46 |

LAST COME, FIRST SERVED!

We read here of the Parable of the Labourers in the Vineyard (20:1-16). It

reveals something of the economic state of Palestine in Jesus' time. Joachim Jeremias has written: "Day labourers were much more numerous than slaves . . . On an average their services earned one denarius a day with keep. The poor man who lived by trapping doves caught four doves a day, two of which he offered each day as a sacrifice. Since the price of doves was an eighth of a denarius in Jerusalem, his earnings were a quarter of a denarius a day, which was

considered as exceptionally small. It was very serious if a day labourer found no work, as happened on one occasion to Hillel in Jerusalem". Many who read this parable will think that the householder's generosity was unfair to those who had worked all day in the heat of the sun for the same wage as those who laboured for only an hour (9-12). "It is fortunate for most of us that God does not deal with us on the basis of strict justice and sound economics . . . God's love cannot be portioned out in quantities nicely adjusted to the merits of individuals. There is such a thing as the twelve part of a denar. It was called a *pondion*. But there is no such thing as a twelfth part of the love of God" (T.W. Manson).

ON THE JERUSALEM ROAD

Jesus prophesied His betrayal, condemnation, mocking, scourging, crucifixion and resurrection. Did this foreknowledge make it any easier for Him to take the road to Jerusalem? I think not. Jesus showed unique courage, fortitude and bravery in all the circumstances. It was sad and tragic that the disciples' minds were not sufficiently attuned to His at this time of crisis.

James and John had an ambitious mother. She wanted them to have pride of place in the kingdom of Jesus - seated at His right hand and left hand (21). These positions were of the highest honour. But Jesus spoke not of their being honoured, but of their sharing in His suffering (23a). It was down to the Father Himself to assign them eventually to places of His choosing (23b). The other disciples responded in indignation to this request (24). The feeling was that James and John had stolen a march on them. It was an appropriate time for Jesus to teach them about true greatness. As one writer put it: ". . . their pattern must not be the Gentile

rulers who command service but the Son of Man who gives lowly service. And the place of honour is not a reward or compensation for the service: the service *is* the honour. Is there any greater honour than to be allowed to serve God - and our fellow men?"

For Jesus, the way to glory was through the cross. I often think of the words of the Hebrew writer: "**Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God**" (12:2). What a wonderful example He is!

BLIND MEN OF JERICHO

Nicodemus once said to Jesus: ". . . for no man can do these miracles that you do, except God be with Him" (John 3:2). Peter on the day of Pentecost declared: "**You men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by Him in the midst of you, as you yourselves also know . . .**" (Acts 2:22). There have been a lot of books written to explain the miracles of Jesus. There have also been books published to explain them away. I would suggest that we all just simply accept them and above all, accept Him who performed them.

We read here of the encounter between Jesus and two blind men (20:29-34). All these men wanted was the restoration of their sight. Jesus had compassion on them and did what was asked. It was surely the most unforgettable day of their lives. They followed Him to Jerusalem. The Master's subsequent arrest, trial and execution must have broken their hearts.

THE ENTRY INTO JERUSALEM

The entry of Jesus into the city of

Jerusalem upon an unbroken colt was the fulfilment of the prophecy in Zechariah 9:9: **"Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: behold, your king comes unto you: he is just, and having salvation; lowly and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass"**. We must remember that a horse was a symbol of war; an ass, a symbol of peace. Jesus came in peace. He came to save, not condemn. He came in humility, not in pomp and circumstance. He came in the name of the Lord (21:9).

It is interesting to note that **"all the city was moved"** (10) by his coming. The cry went up: **"Who is this?"** (10). **"And the multitude said, This is Jesus the prophet of Nazareth of Galilee"** (11). Were all of that mind? Would all the city recognise Him as the Shepherd of Israel and the Saviour of the nation? These questions were soon to be answered.

ACTIVITY IN JERUSALEM

Jesus cleansed the temple and healed the blind and the lame there (21:12-14). These were dramatic events indeed. Again prophecy was being fulfilled (Jeremiah 7:11; Isaiah 56:7; Psalm 8:2). The reaction, as usual, from the chief priest and scribes was a hostile one. They **"saw the wonderful things that He did"** yet, **"they were sore displeased"** (15). There is none so blind as he who will not see!

The withering of the fig tree (18-22) has caused many comments. Suffice to say that "the tree may well represent Jerusalem, so unresponsive to Jesus' overtures" (Bruce). Having **"leaves only"** (19) meant that it was fruitless. Jesus used the incident to give a lesson on the power of faith. Faith can move mountains. Everest, however, and all the rest are safe. The Master, of course, spoke of other mountains. **"An Oriental**

would not take these words about a mountain in a literal sense, but as figurative of removing anything that seemed impossible to do" (Edwin W. Rice).

BY WHAT AUTHORITY?

The authority of Jesus was questioned by the chief priests and elders of the people when He returned to the temple. He answered them with a question. **"The baptism of John, whence was it? from heaven, or of men?"** (25). The question placed them on the horns of a dilemma. In the end they could not answer it because whatever they have condemned them. (Here we see the importance of Jesus having subjected Himself to John's baptism.)

Authority is an interesting subject with regards to Jesus. We read: **"For He taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes"** (Matthew 7:29; Mark 1:22). He is unique. **"Never man spoke like this man"** (John 7:46). I like the verse later on in Matthew which reads: **"All power (authority) is given unto me in heaven and in earth"** (28:18).

THE PARABLE OF THE VINEYARD

This is a powerful parable (21:33-46). The chief priest and the Pharisees knew Jesus had spoken of them (45). The son, whom the lord of the vineyard sent, is obviously Jesus. In the parable, they slew the son of the owner; in reality, they slew the Son of God. They condemned themselves in their own words: **"They say unto Him, He will miserably destroy those wicked men, and will let out his vineyard unto other husbandmen, who shall render him the fruits in their seasons"** (41). Their destruction may anticipate the disaster of A.D. 70.

IAN S. DAVIDSON,
Motherwell.

TEST YOUR BIBLICAL KNOWLEDGE

1. Who in the Bible had most wives?
2. Where did Jacob wrestle with God?
3. Who died giving birth to Benjamin?
4. Name a river mentioned in the book of Daniel.
5. Who was the son of Shealtiel?
6. What did the dove bring back to the ark?
7. In this city Paul healed a man who had been crippled since birth.
8. Who saw a large sheet full of animals coming from heaven?
9. Who was the father of James and John?
10. At what time were Paul and Silas singing in the jail at Philippi?

NEWS FROM THE CHURCHES

Slamannan District: On 9th June, 2001, the Quarterly Mutual Benefit meeting of the churches took place at Haddington Meetinghouse when the subject discussed was "For the Churches of Christ, what are the lessons of the past 50 years? If there are another 50 years, what do you predict will happen to the Church?"

The subject was very ably handled by the two Speakers: Bro. Bill Cook and Bro. Jim McGinn: and Bro. Mark Plain was the Chairman. The meeting then divided into four groups and discussed the matter, and thereafter a representative from each group summed up.

Our next meeting, God willing, will be at Motherwell on 1st September, 2001, when the subject will be "How do we define worship?". The Chairman will

be Bro. James Grant and the speakers will be Bro. John Kneller, Tranent, and Bro. James R. Gardiner, Haddington. Once again thanks is due to the sisters at Haddington for the lovely refreshments.

HARRY MCGINN (Sec.)

TIME CHANGE

The church at Slamannan has changed its time of meeting on a Sunday morning: i.e. the Breaking Of Bread will now be at 11 a.m. and not at 12 noon as previously.

GRACE SNEDDON (Sec.)

APOLOGY

Sister Moncrieff and I take as much care as possible to keep the contents of this magazine free from typographical, spelling and grammatical errors, and we apologise to readers when these appear.

EDITOR.

COMING EVENTS

PETERHEAD:

Special Weekend:

Saturday 15th Sept. - 7pm

Sunday 16th Sept. - 10am, 11am, 6pm.

Speaker: G. Gorton

Special Weekend:

Saturday 29th Sept. - 7pm

Sunday 30th Sept. - 10am, 11am, 6pm.

Speaker: F. Worgan

Special Weekend:

Saturday 6th Oct. - 7pm

Sunday 7th Oct. - 10am, 11am, 6pm.

Speaker: D. Langdon (Glenrothes)

A warm welcome awaits all.

ANNIVERSARY MEETING

Kentish Town Anniversary Meeting

will, God willing, take place on:-

Saturday 6th October, 2001

Afternoon 3pm & Evening 6pm

Tea at 4.45pm

Speaker: John Morgan
(also Speaker on Sunday).

All welcome.

GHANA APPEAL

The zeal of our Ghanaian brethren to serve the Lord and extend his kingdom is ever present and we thank those who have participated through this appeal.

It is a legal requirement in Ghana that if an area of ground is purchased with intention to build on it, construction must begin within a specified time, otherwise ownership of that land is taken away. There is one congregation which purchased a plot in order to build a meeting place but due to shortage of funds has so far been unable to start building. As the time-limit will soon expire they are in danger of losing this plot and contributions to avert this happening are urgently requested.

However, the most important asset of the Lord's Church is her people and in tropical climates the disease rate is high. Your donations have enabled cures to take place and many lives have been saved. What is the price of the life of a brother or sister in Christ? We especially feel for the children and can well

imagine the feelings of parents in such cases. Medical attention is needed promptly before a sickness is too far advanced. Recent cases include mental illness, suspected stomach ulcer, a girl requiring an operation for navel hernia and a brother recovering from a heart attack. Malaria is a constant problem. Snake bites must be treated very quickly and a family of children have lost their mother through this ever present danger.

Those wishing to help please make cheques payable to:

Dennyloanhead Church of Christ
Ghana Fund and send to the treasurer,
Mrs. Janet W. Macdonald,
12 Charles Drive, Larbert, Falkirk,
Stirlingshire. FK5 3HB.
Tel: 01324 562480.

1. Solomon (1 Kings 11:3).
2. Peniel (Genesis 32:30).
3. Rachel (Genesis 35:16-20).
4. Uai (Daniel 8:2,16).
5. Zerubbabel (Haggai 1:1).
6. Olive leaf (Genesis 8:11).
7. Lystra (Acts 14:8).
8. Peter (Acts 10:11-12).
9. Zebedee (Matthew 4:21).
10. Midnight (Acts 16:25).

ANSWERS

THE SCRIPTURE STANDARD is published monthly.

PRICE PER COPY— POST PAID FOR ONE YEAR

| | | |
|-------------------------------|--------|---------------------------|
| UNITED KINGDOM..... | £9.00 | |
| OVERSEAS BY SURFACE MAIL..... | £10.00 | (\$16.00US or \$20.00Can) |
| OVERSEAS BY AIR MAIL..... | £14.00 | (\$22.00US or \$28.00Can) |

PLEASE MAKE CHEQUES PAYABLE TO "SCRIPTURE STANDARD"

DISTRIBUTION AGENT & TREASURER:

JOHN K. KNELLER, 4 Glassel Park Road, Longniddry, East Lothian. EH32 0NY.

E-mail: john@kkneller.freeseerve.co.uk

Telephone: (01875) 853212 to whom change of address should be sent.

EDITOR: JAMES R. GARDINER, 70 Avon Street, Motherwell, Lanarkshire,
Scotland. ML1 3AB. Telephone: (01698) 264064