

The SCRIPTURE STANDARD

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

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GOOD LISTENERS?

ANY incorrigible bore will tell you that good listeners are hard to come by these days and perhaps this is true. To be a good listener calls for as much skill and effort as does being a good speaker. We hear people described as 'good speakers' but nobody seems to worry about whether the hearers will be 'good hearers' and yet, when we come to think of it, there is little point in the speaker being 'good' if the hearers are of indifferent quality. I think it was Spurgeon (or was it Henry Ward Beecher, or neither) who said that all the baldy old men who sat snoozing through his sermons were bald because of his sermons bouncing over their heads. Again, some say that there is a definite corollation between the speaker and the hearer and the better the speaker the more attentive the hearer. Certainly it seems true that Alexander Campbell could preach for two or three hours at a time without undue flagging of attention amongst his hearers, but, on the other hand, we remember that a certain young man named Eutychus "being fallen into a deep sleep: and as Paul was long preaching, he sunk down with sleep, and fell down from the third loft, and was taken up dead" (Acts 20:9). Comparisons are odious and it is certainly not my intention to draw comparisons involving Christ's apostles, but I am, in any case, convinced that there are many hearers who are alive with interest in what is said *regardless* of the identity of the speaker. Many of us are not good listeners - we constantly interrupt those speaking with us, and we are so busy thinking about what *we* are going to say next that we are *not really listening*.

God has Spoken

It is conceivable that the Creator of the world could have remained mute and watched the activities of His creature, man, with silent interest. But not so. God conversed with the first man, Adam, and has in all ages (virtually all) communed, and even reasoned, with successive generations of sinful men. The writer to the Hebrews sums it up very well (Heb. 1:1-2) when he says, "God, who at sundry times and in diverse manners, spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by His Son, whom He hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also He made the worlds." Truly God has spoken and it is man's duty to listen; to truly *hear*. God is the Creator; man is but the creature. God is the potter; man is just the clay. Thus when God speaks *man must listen* and (as our American cousins would say) "Listen good". God's words must not be allowed to fall to the ground or descend upon deaf ears - if they do,

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Someone somewhere will be sorry for it. At one time God spoke directly to man but man was so terrified by the experience that he asked God to speak through a human intermediary and God has done so ever since. They said to Moses, "Go thou near and hear all that the Lord our God shall say; and speak *thou* unto us all that the Lord our God shall speak unto *thee* and we will hear it and do it." (Deut 5:27). These were very fine words on the part of the Jews, of course, but history shows that if they did *hear* the words of God through Moses, they certainly didn't often *do them*. Thus as requested God has spoken to man through human intermediaries and man, having accomplished this, has shown much less respect for the human intermediary than the healthy respect he had for the fire and God's voice. Indeed man soon latched on to the simple expedient of physically stopping the mouth of God's spokesmen, so that the martyr Stephen could ask his Jewish audience, "Which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted? and they have slain them which showed before of the coming of the Just One; of whom ye have been now the betrayers and murderers; Who have received the law by the disposition of angels and have not kept it". In keeping with Jewish reaction to God's prophets the Jews fell also upon Stephen, because of his word, gnashing their teeth and *stopping their ears* - and they stoned him to death. Only occasionally today do those who bear God's word die violently - man nowadays has to content himself with either avoiding opportunities of hearing God's word, or with decrying the integrity of those who bring it. The Jews have not therefore been able lately to pursue their traditional practice of killing those who bring unpalatable messages from God, for God has not been sending any. Indeed God will not be sending any further prophecy or prophets - "He *has spoken*" (past tense) in these last days unto us by His Son. He will not be speaking again. God has spoken - man must listen, and 'Listen Good'.

The Hard-Of-Hearing

Much of what we hear from day to day is eminently forgettable, it goes in one ear and out the other and that is how it should be. Much of what we hear is fit only to be quickly forgotten, and much of what we hear (on T.V. etc) serves only to corrupt the mind. We should readily hear God, however, for all that God says is very wholesome and for our eternal good. "Incline your ear and come unto Me, hear and your soul shall live." (Isa. 55:3). To '*incline our ear*' to God is a very descriptive term and depicts one (apparently intent on hearing) with his hand cupped behind his ear in case he should miss anything - rather like the slightly deaf (or those in bye-gone days with an ear-trumpet). This then is the degree of attention we should give when God speaks - with the hand cupped behind the ear lest we should miss any syllable. We must 'incline our ears' - let God 'bend our ear' for our good. Whereas the blind rightly receive help and compassion from their fellowmen, the deaf will vouch for the fact that they receive scant sympathy; indeed a great deal of impatience from others, notwithstanding that they struggle to hear, 'inclining their ear' and even trying to lip-read. That represents *the effort* that man should take to hear God.

With Purpose

There are those who listen to us out of politeness, idle curiosity, or of academic interest only, but we must pursue *a purpose* in listening to God.

(1) Firstly, we should hear (or listen) with a desire to understand what we hear. There is such a thing as hearing *with understanding*. We read, "And Ezra the priest brought the law before the congregation both of men and women, and all that could hear with understanding." (Neh. 8:2). Elihu urged the wise men to "Hear my words, O ye wise men; and give ear unto me, ye that have knowledge.

For the ear trieth words, as the mouth tasteth meat." (Job 34:2). Solomon advocated that we "incline our ear unto wisdom, and apply thine heart to understanding". (Prov. 2:2). Just as the mouth recognises the taste of the various foods, so the ear tries (or proves) the words it hears. We do not believe everything told us by men but our ear filters the words and we make the effort to understand. We must make even better efforts to understand the words of God. Jesus said, "If any man hath ears to hear, let him hear. Take heed *what* ye hear.." (Mark 4:24). Jesus warned against the leaven (or doctrine) of the Pharisees and of Herod - and said "Take heed *what* ye hear" or give great care to the *source* of what you hear, whether it be from men or from God. We must evaluate what we hear and seek to understand it aright. Such understanding may come to us quickly or relatively slowly and Jesus, we read, in the case of His very own disciples could only speak "the word unto them, as they were *able to hear it*." (Mark 4:33).

(2) Secondly, we ought not only hear it to understand it, but should hear it so that *we might do it*. In addition to warning us about *what* we hear, Jesus after explaining the parable of the sower, said, "Take heed therefore *how* ye hear..." Just as He uttered these words some in the crowd told Him that His mother and brothers wanted to talk to Him. His answer was, "My mother and My brethren are these which *hear* the word of God, and *do it*." Thus the onus on us to hear the word must consummate itself only in our obedience to it. "Take heed *how* ye hear" said Jesus. All those in the parable of the sower 'heard' the word of God, one as well as the other, yet some ended up being choked by the cares, riches and pleasures of this life and only a few "having heard the word, kept it, and brought forth fruit with patience". (Luke 8:15). A lot, therefore, depends on *how* we hear - indeed it *all* depends on *how* we hear. The only valid kind of hearing is that which leads to our obedience - which motivates continued service to God. "Whosoever therefore heareth these sayings of mine and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock." The only proper outcome of hearing aright is action and obedience. James explains the converse "But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves; for if any be a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass: For he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was." No matter how many times in the day we look in a mirror and see all our blemishes, spots, scars, wrinkles and warts (I am speaking for myself, of course) we straight-away forget what we look like. When the word of God is preached to us, say in a gospel meeting, it is as if a spiritual mirror is held up in front of us and we see our spiritual condition, with all the soul's blemishes, warts, scars, wrinkles etc. and we are greatly saddened and convicted. But if we rush out of such a meeting, and do nothing about it, we shall soon get over the shock and eventually become quite hardened to any call to repentance. We shall indeed 'forget what manner of man we are'. "But", continues James, "Whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, AND CONTINUETH THEREIN, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed." (James 1:25). That phrase 'looketh into' means to *stoop down* to examine something closely on the ground, and means *earnest enquiry* and investigation. The apostle Peter says that these things preached unto us through the gospel are things which the very angels desired to 'look into' (same word as in James 1:25). We should, therefore treat God's word with an intensity of interest commensurate with the kind of interest which would cause us to stoop down to examine something. The kind of rivetting interest, for instance, shown by Peter when he "ran unto the sepulchre: and *stooping down*, he beheld the linen clothes laid by themselves, wondering in himself at that which was come to pass." ('Look into'

and 'Stoop down' are both from the Greek *parakupto*.) Hearers of God's word must therefore have the time and inclination to *stoop down* and *look into* the perfect law of liberty, and *continue therein*, being not forgetful hearers, but doers of the work - they shall be blessed in their deeds. We are all, I suppose, to some extent, to be numbered with the thousands of 'forgetful hearers' in the world. "Take heed *how ye hear*", said Jesus.

Let Others Hear

Disciples of Jesus have a responsibility not only to be hearers themselves but also to let as many others as possible be hearers of God's word. Perhaps we should think more in terms of *taking the word to others* but traditionally we have encouraged the world to *come to gospel meetings* (so that they might be *hearers* of the glad tidings.) While this continues I think that we should all take great care that whoever comes along to our meetings to *hear* the gospel should be given every encouragement to treat it with respect and due gravity. How often has the atmosphere during gospel preaching been ruined by back row whispering, sweets being unwrapped, noisy heaters, a door being banged, squeaky seats, or even someone quietly dozing. Many years ago, after much effort and persuasion I managed to get a work-mate of mine to come with me to a gospel meeting. The speaker was excellent (the late Will Steele) and the meeting-house was packed (and we were towards the rear of the hall.) For the duration of the gospel address the gentleman immediately in front of my friend vainly tried to prevent himself from falling asleep, and his head kept dropping and jerking back. This caused mild amusement in the back rows, and my friend had great difficulty in keeping from laughing aloud. Needless to say, my friend 'heard' nothing of the gospel message and was never again persuaded to come to our gospel meetings. All he remembered was the sleepy church member. I am fairly sure that that member was quite unaware of the damage he had done. If sleep overcomes us (even when God's word is being preached) surely it would be preferable to leave the hall. Sleeping in gospel meetings is not perhaps the 'unpardonable sin' but it must come close.

Edinburgh has some very fine art galleries, and there is, in the National Gallery, a truly wonderful painting entitled "The Reading Of The Will". The picture is Robert Burns vintage and shows an old Scottish lawyer sitting in the midst of all the interested parties; all the beneficiaries of the deceased. The artist has skilfully captured the undisguised interest on every face, the hushed silence, all agog with suspense; all waiting with scarcely controlled anticipation to see what the Will may hold for them. (Where a deceased is rich, and has a lot to leave, there is little likelihood of anyone dozing off during the reading of the Will.) This then is the *kind of interest* we should bring to the hearing of God's word - this is the *measure of the enthusiasm* we should have in "looking into the perfect law of liberty." After all, when we sit listening to the preaching of God's word, we are, in effect, privileged to be hearing "The Reading Of The Will" - the last Will and Testament of our Lord Saviour, Jesus Christ. Jesus said, "Take heed *what ye hear*" (there are many false prophets) and "Take heed *how ye hear*" (indifference and boredom is commonplace).

God said, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased, Hear ye Him". Are we good listeners? Do we really hear?

THE LOVING GOD

OFTEN Muslim friends claim that the message of love given by the God of the Bible is also given by the Allah of the Quran in a far better way. There are some friends who totally reject this factor or attribute of God and say that they cannot expect God to be a loving God. He can only be merciful.

The Quran itself rejects these ideas. In its two places Allah has been mentioned as "Al wadud" - the loving one (Surah 11:90; 85:40). Two other places the Quran gives a conditional reference. It says, "if ye love Allah... Allah will love you.." (Surah 2:195 and 3:31). Therefore those who say that God cannot be a loving God, their idea is rejected by their own Quran.

Now we turn to those who believe that the message of love given by God in the Quran is better than the Bible. In this case we quote some verses from the Torah and the Injil (the Gospel).

In the Torah it is said:...the Lord your God ask of you... to fear the Lord your God, to walk in all his ways, to love him, to serve the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul...". Further it is said, "Love the Lord your God and keep his requirements, his decrees, his laws and his commands always." And again it was ordered, "...obey the commands I am giving you today - to love the Lord your God and to serve Him with all your heart and with all your soul." (Deut 10:12; 11:1 and 13).

The Injil says, "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind". (Matt. 22:37).

By comparison we do not find in the Quran the command to love God with "*all your heart, soul and mind*". We find that in fact a Muslim is asked directly and indirectly to seek by his love to turn aside Allah's wrath and to gain his approval in its place. This is not a genuine love. The love which seeks its own security does not proceed from the heart.

The Bible does not say, "if ye love". It does not offer an option. Jesus called it the "Great and the first commandment" (Matt. 22:38). A commandment is intended to be compulsory. Despite our failure to keep this command we learn from the Bible that :- "God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life" (John 3:16).

Now when we search the Quran, we will not find this kind of spontaneous love. It says very little about God's unconditional love for mankind. In the Quran, God's love is an expression of approval to those who do good. For example "Lo! Allah loveth the beneficent" and "Allah loveth not the disbelievers" (Surah 3:32 and Surah 2:195).

When the Quran says Allah loveth, it means he loveth only the beneficent. He loves those who do good and he does not love those who do evil, while the Injil says that God so loved the world which means the whole mankind. In contrast we find in the Quran and the traditions of Islam that God has already created some for Hell and some for paradise. For example:

And if thy Lord had willed, He verily would have made mankind one nation (Surah 11:118).

...He sendeth whom He will astray and guideth whom he will... (Surah 16:93).

There is not one of you but shall approach it (hell).

That is a fixed ordinance of thy Lord. Then We shall rescue those who kept from evil-doers crouching there (Surah 19:71, 72).

These statements are also full of contradictions. We can not expect God to be such a personality. If God has already decided about every one that this one will go to paradise and this one will go to hell then there was no meaning of sending his messengers to this world to lead mankind into the straight path. The Muslims themselves believe that God sent 124,000 prophets to this world. How is that the God of the Quran misleadeth whom he pleases and guideth whom he please (Surah 14:4)? A loving God will not do that. He as the Bible says, is patient ... not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance (2 Peter 3:9).

This brings to a conclusion that in the teaching of the Quran no capacity for mutual love between God and men is possible such as is presented in the Bible's perfect view. The Quran indeed calls God as the loving God, but only on two occasions, however this does not employ the depth of love in the nature of God such as is found in the Bible i.e. "God is love" (1 John 4:8).

The Quran has omitted the Biblical command to love God with all our hearts, soul and mind, because it does not offer men total assurance of forgiveness of his sins and for this reason genuine love is not possible for him. A Muslim, like the founder of Islam, is not sure whether he is fulfilling God's purpose or not, whether he will have any forgiveness or not, whether by keeping all the laws and rituals he will go into paradise or not. Mohammad used to say, "...I am no new thing among the messengers (of Allah), nor know I what will be done with me or with you..." (Surah 46:9).

According to Islam a Muslim is supposed to love God as a "Ghulam" - a slave and such love can not be an example. A genuine love could only be expected of a man if God himself is infinitely more loving. The Bible presents that side of God to us very clearly and emphatically. Please read 1 John 4:7-21 and you will see this truth.

We can not fully love God unless He first reaches down to us. This brings us to the final conclusion that we love Him because he first loved us. We keep his commandments not because it is a duty, but this is that love which turns us to obey him. Therefore we consider that the Love of God described in the Bible has a full view and far better than any other book and that which is the real and the true view of our Almighty God.

STEVEN MASOOD

GLEANINGS

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

**LIFT UP NOW THINE EYES, AND LOOK FROM THE PLACE WHERE
THOU ART. Genesis 13:14**

"These words were spoken to Abram when he was in a place of peculiar difficulty. He was now in the Land to which he had been sent by God. Moreover he was there after a deflection from the pathway of faith, in which deflection he had gone down into Egypt. An hour had come when domestic difficulties had arisen between him and his kinsman, Lot. It had become necessary for them to separate from each other. With the magnanimity of a great soul, Abram had given to Lot the right to choose the place where he would dwell in the land, and Lot had chosen. The result was that Abram, on that level of human arrangement, was excluded from the best

of the country. It was at this juncture that God communed with him, and gave him this command. The words are seen in their true suggestiveness when they are put into contrast with those found in the tenth verse, "Lot lifted up his eyes." In doing so, Lot had chosen upon the ground of personal advantage. When he had gone, God said to the man who had chosen not to choose, "Lift up now thine eyes," and directed him to look "northward and southward and eastward and westward"; that was to every point of the compass and consequently over all the land, including that which Lot had chosen for himself. All he thus looked upon was then secured to him by the covenant of God. The teaching of the story is patent. Man has no final rights in any possessions other than those which are his by the gift of God. The man who, by faith, leaves the choices of his life to God, is the man who finds his way into possessions of which he cannot be robbed."

Campbell Morgan

GOOD AS READY MONEY

"An active faith can give thanks for a promise though it be not as yet performed; knowing that God's bonds are as good as ready money."

Matthew Henry

THE JOYFUL MESSAGE OF GOD

"The Gospel is not a piece of undirected intelligence, set adrift to float as it may upon the idle breeze, a convenient clipping of unknown paternity to be left to the chances of catching the eyes of some, being overlooked by others, deemed of no particular consequence by any, but only to be taken for what it is worth. No: it has all the authority of an urgent, public, governmental Message from God, challenging universal attention, and requiring immediate action. Being this, and being withal a Proclamation of Good Things, past, present, and to come, it is pre-eminently and distinctively the Joyful Message of God."

J.B. Rotherham

TRIUMPHANT TRUTH

"TRUTH never dies. The ages come and go;
The mountains wear away; the seas retire;
Destruction lays earth's mighty cities low;
And empires, states, and dynasties expire;
But, caught and handed onward by the wise,
Truth never dies.

Though unreceived and scoffed at through the year;
Though made the butt of ridicule and jest;
Though held aloft for mockery and jeers,
Denied by those of transient power possessed,
Insulted by the insolence of lies,
Truth never dies.

It answers not; it does not take offence,
But with a mighty silence bides its time;
As some great cliff that braves the elements,
And lifts through all the storms its head sublime,
And never dies.

As rests the Sphinx amid Egyptian sands;
As loom on high the snowy peak and crest;
As firm and patent as Gibraltar stands,
So truth, unwearied, waits the era blest,
When men shall turn to it with great surprise.
Truth never dies.

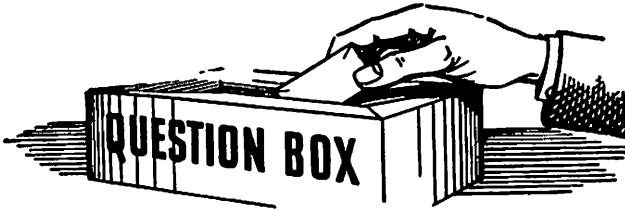
Author Unknown

"The good shepherd giveth His life for the sheep." John 10:11

"To be anxious for souls and yet not impatient; to be patient and yet not indifferent; to bear the infirmities of the weak without fostering them; to testify against sin and unfaithfulness and the low standards of spiritual life and yet keep up the stream of love, free and full and open; to have the mind of a faithful shepherd, a hopeful physician, a tender nurse, and a skilled teacher - requires the continual renewal of God's grace."

C.G.

Selected by Leonard Morgan



Conducted by
Alf Marsden

"Do you think it was fair that the labourers who worked all day in the vineyard should get no more than those who only did an hour's work?"

I suppose in the context in which the questioner uses it the word 'fair' would mean just, equitable. I suppose God is represented by the householder, and the Kingdom by the vineyard. The workers are those who are employed in the vineyard and who enter it at various times. The context suggests that there will be those who will enter the Kingdom early or late, and that they must understand how a just and equitable God will deal with them all.

The Context

The incident under consideration is recorded for us in Matthew 20:1-16. Prior to this, Peter had said to Jesus, "Behold, we have forsaken all, and followed thee; what shall we have therefore?" (19:27). Jesus told the Twelve the special task which was reserved for them, but He also indicated that *anyone* who had left people or things precious to them would not go unrewarded. He also made it very clear that 'first in' would not of itself qualify for special treatment. He then embarks on the parable.

The first thing we notice is that the labourers who were engaged in the early part of the day *agreed* with the householder what they should be paid. There seems to have been no dialogue regarding what they had to do nor how long they had to do it. There was no Law of Contract then, but it was evidently held, by the householder anyway, that a binding agreement had been entered into by *both* parties.

I have little doubt that the significance of this parable would not be lost on the disciples, nor ought it to be lost on us. Some of the disciples saw themselves as having borne the burden and heat of the day with the Lord, and consequently they had the impression that they were entitled to greater consideration; perhaps some of us think like that also. But we should realise that to labour in the Kingdom is a blessing *in itself* no matter how arduous or demanding the tasks may be. To receive a reward on top of that is a measure of the love and concern of our Divine Householder.

Righteousness

The next thing we notice is the answer given to those who were engaged later in the day, "Go ye also into the vineyard, and whatsoever is right I will give you.

And they went their way" (v4). These latter weren't even offered any set sum of money, but to their credit they were obedient (some of their present-day compatriots might even say foolhardy). The lesson here is plain; anyone who enters the Kingdom doesn't barter with God over the conditions which *they* expect to have. They trust that a Righteous God *can only* give what is right, and so they get on with their work and rest content in His assurance. I wonder why so many of us cannot simply rely on the specific assurances of God? We ostensibly labour in the Kingdom but we seem always to have a weather eye cocked to take advantage of what we term the legitimate rewards of the world in order to supplement what we consider to be the boundless Grace of God; rather paradoxical I have always felt. "Will not the Judge of all the earth do right?" Well, of course He will.

Motivation

It seems today that motivation to do *anything* depends very much on the incentives offered. There are a number of well-established factors which govern the motivation process but I want to bring just two to your notice. These are expectancy and availability. Let's take the case of a man coming home from work and he has a strong desire to eat some fish and chips so he decides he will call at the local 'chippy'. Unfortunately when he gets there the 'chippy' is closed. 'Ah well', he thinks to himself 'I'll make some when I get home', and so on his way he goes, salivating like Pavlov's dog in anticipation of the treat awaiting him. His expectancy is paramount. When he reaches home, no fish has been taken out of the freezer and there are no potatoes. There is now an acute problem of availability. In this condition the man has a frustrated need which will change his whole attitude to people and things.

The labourers in the vineyard had an expectancy that they should have received more than the late-comers. The availability was there, they thought, with the householder, and they began to complain when the extra reward wasn't given. They had a frustrated need and it showed in their conduct. How many times do we act like spoiled children when we don't receive those things to which we think we are eminently entitled? We complain what God has done for other people, and sometimes we even go so far as to blame *Him* for what we term as our misfortune. God will give us what is *right*, not what *we* believe we have merited. There may be some who would look at a person who came into the Kingdom in the twilight of life and think, 'Ah, its alright for some. They can enjoy themselves for the greater part of their lives and then come to reap the blessings of the Kingdom when they die.' May God forbid that any Christian should think like that.

There is also jealousy to consider. Our petty jealousies can consume us and do untold harm to the Church. We should lay them at one side; they are sins.

Did the householder act fairly? Maybe not, the worldly man would say, but as regards the Kingdom, there can certainly be no doubt that God will. His ways are so much higher than ours. His eye will not be evil because ours is.

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

Never attempt to bear more than one kind of trouble at a time. Some people try to bear three kinds—all they have had, all they have now, and all they expect to have.

I count him braver who overcomes his desires than him who conquers his enemies; for the hardest victory is the victory over self. Aristotle

SCRIPTURE READINGS

DECEMBER 1983

4—Ezek. 3:12-27	Rev. 3:1-13
11—Jer. 1	Rev. 3:14-22
18—Ezek. 1	Rev. 4
25—Dan. 7:1-14	Rev. 5

SARDIS

THIS was one of the oldest cities of Asia Minor. There, at one time, the king of Lydia ruled over his empire in oriental splendour. The original Sardis was built on a high ridge which made it virtually impregnable. However, twice in history it fell to its enemies because the Sardians thought themselves too safe to need a guard. A city with a history like that would know what Jesus was talking about when he said: "Watch!"

Sardis was also famous for its wealth. Its greatest king was Croesus, and his name is still commemorated in the proverb, "As rich as Croesus." For him, gold was not hard to come by because it was readily obtainable from the river Pactolus which flowed through the lower town. No wonder it was called "the river of golden sand."

By the time John wrote this letter, the city was still wealthy but degenerate. Sadly, the church too had become affected by this base culture. It was a corpse rather than a living body.

Angel an earthly messenger.

Seven Spirits of God the seven (complete) functions of the one Spirit. (See also 4:5).

Seven Stars messengers of the seven churches (1:20).

Dead spiritually dead in trespasses and sins (Ephesians 2:1-5).

The congregation was so lifeless that it was untroubled by any attack.

Be Watchful should be the constant attitude of the Christian life.

Remember, Hold Fast, And Repent these are important imperatives.

White stands for purity and victory.

Book of Life God's book of remembrance (Malachi 3:16; Revelation 20:12).

Philadelphia

Philadelphia was the youngest of the seven cities. The name is from the Greek *Philadelphos* which means "one who loves his brother." The city was founded for a special purpose - to be a missionary of Greek culture and language to the regions of Lydia and Phrygia. It had been given an open door to spread Greek ideas in various lands. Another great missionary opportunity had now come to it - to spread the message of Jesus and His love.

Strabo, the father of geography, once described Philadelphia as a "city full of earthquakes". The people there were therefore in a constant state of readiness to flee for their lives from the city to the open spaces. They would well know what security lay in a promise that "he shall go no more out" (3:12).

The name of this city was changed a few times in history. The saints would have understood the comments on the "new name" (3:12).

True to the Greeks the word meant "real". In Jesus is reality.

Keys Of David the symbol of authority.

I Will Make Them To Come And Worship Before Your Feet the Jews believed that one day all nations would do homage to them.

Pillar promise of security.

I Will Write Upon Him My New Name description of an act of honour.

The honour is given to the citizens of the new Jerusalem which is not of this world (3:12).

Laodicea

Laodicea was founded about 250 b.c. and like many of the cities of the ancient world was named after a woman. It was situated on one of the main roads to Rome and therefore grew to be an important city, strategically and commercially.

Laodicea was a great banking and financial centre. It was much like modern London but far, far wealthier. When it was devastated by an earthquake in a.d. 61 it did not even require the assistance of Rome for the rebuilding programme. It had need of nothing. It was so wealthy that it did not even need God (3:17).

It was a great centre of clothing manufacture. Its woollen garments were world famous. The Laodiceans were so proud of their mass-produced clothes that they never realized their own nakedness in the sight of God (3:17).

It was an outstanding medical centre. The treatment of eye and ear disease featured greatly at its medical school. The ointment *-kollourion-* produced there for eye trouble was exported all over the world. As William Barclay has written: "Laodicea was so conscious of its medical skill in the care of the eyes that it never realized that it was spiritually blind" (3:18).

The Amen when we read in the gospel records Jesus's words: "Verily, verily," we may not know that he in fact uttered: "Amen, amen".

The Beginning Of The Creation Of God the origin or source of God's creation. See John chapter 1. Jehovah's Witnesses abuse this verse.

Cold in Greek, to the point of freezing;
Hot to the point of boiling;
Lukewarm tepid.

Gold Tried In Fire speaks of a faith in need of a fiery trial.

Behold, I Stand At The Door And

Knock remember this is written to a congregation.

Any Man the approach by Jesus is to the individual. YOU can be faithful in a lukewarm church.

Sup the term in Greek refers to the main meal of the day.

God's Throne

The word *Throne* is an important word in the book of Revelation. The book reveals the conquest of the throne of God over all earthly thrones. Isaiah 6 and Ezekiel 1 should be read in conjunction with Revelation 4. The throne scene gives us a glimpse of heaven. Precious stones are used to describe the glory of it all.

What is about to be revealed unto John? Jesus said: "I will show you the things which must take place in the future." (4:1). The history of the world and especially the last great world kingdom - the Roman Empire - is now depicted. The book of Daniel is important to our understanding here. (Read, for example, Daniel 2).

The Twenty-four Elders and the

Four Beasts

Who are the twenty-four elders? From the book of Revelation we learn that they are seated around God's throne (4:4); they are clothed in white raiment (4:4); they have on their heads crowns of gold (4:4); they worship Him that sits on the throne and cast their crowns before Him (4:10,11; 5:8-10, 14; 7:11; 11:16; 19:4); they bring to God the prayers of the saints (5:8); one of them encourages John when he is sad (5:5); and one of them acts as interpreter of one of the visions (7:13-17). I suggest that these elders or ancients constitute the senate of heaven and are celestial beings (angels). They act as agents for God.

Please note verse 11 of chapter 4. If you are not living to please God then you have missed the whole point of your existence.

The Four Beasts is an unfortunate translation. "The living creatures" is a better way to describe them. They are always found around the throne and the Lamb (4:6; 5:6; 14:3). They have six wings and they are full of eyes (4:6,8). They are continuously engaged in praising and in worshipping God (4:8; 5:9; 5:14; 7:11; 19:4).

I point out again that both Isaiah and Ezekiel saw these creatures (Isaiah 6 and Ezekiel 1). Isaiah describes them as the seraphim; Ezekiel as cherubim (Ezekiel 10). These are a particular order of angels.

Full of Eyes represents great intelligence.

Lion represents strength

Calf (o.t. *Ox*) represents humility.

Man represents rationality.

Flying Eagle represents swiftness and exaltation.

The Seven-Sealed Book

Books in the New Testament times were not as we know them today. The people then used scrolls which were made from papyrus. We read here that this scroll was *Written Within And On The Backside*. That means it contained a message of tremendous importance. It was a message which dealt with the future (4:1). The *Seven Seals* indicate that the scroll contained the complete fate of the people of God and the nations of the world.

The Lion Of The Tribe Of Judah, The Root of David, we read, **PREVAILED TO OPEN THE BOOK AND LOOSE THE SEVEN SEALS**. This, of course, is Jesus. (See Genesis 49:8-10 and Isaiah 11). Our Lord is also described as the Lamb. This never speaks of His meekness, but His sacrificial love. What a paradox in scripture! Jesus is not only the Lion but also the Lamb. Worthy indeed is that Lamb which was slain!

Seven Horns perfect power (omnipotence).

Seven Eyes perfect knowledge (omniscience).

*Harp*s instruments of praise.

Verses 9 and 10 - incorrectly translated in the A.V. Change US to read THEM; WE to read THEY. Many of the modern translations have so corrected these verses. The redeemed are human beings not angels.

IAN S. DAVIDSON, Motherwell

THE INTERPRETATION OF THE BIBLE

"Rule 1 - On opening any book in the Sacred Scriptures, consider first the historical circumstances of the book. These are the order, the title, the author, the date, the place, and the occasion of it.

2 - In examining the contents of any book, as respects precepts, promises, exhortations, etc., observe who it is that speaks, and under what dispensation he officiates. Is he a Patriarch, a Jew, or a Christian? Consider also the persons addressed - their prejudices, characters, and religious relations. Are they Jews or Christians - believers or unbelievers - approved or disapproved? This rule is essential to the proper application of every command, promise, threatening, admonition, or exhortation, in the Old Testament or New.

3 - To understand the meaning of what is commanded, promised, taught, etc., the same philological principles, deduced from the nature of language, or the same laws of interpretation which are applied to the language of other books, are to be applied to the language of the Bible.

4 - Common usage, which can only be ascertained by testimony, must always decide the meaning of any word which has but one signification; but when words have, according to testimony - (i.e. the Dictionary) - more

meanings than one, whether literal or figurative, the scope, the context, or parallel passages must decide the meaning; for if common usage, the design of the writer, the context, and parallel passages fail, there can be no certainty in the interpretation of language.

5 - In all tropical language, ascertain the point of resemblance, and judge of the nature of the trope, and its kind, from the point of resemblance.

6 - In the interpretation of symbols, types, allegories, and parables, this rule is supreme. Ascertain the point to be illustrated; for comparison is never to be extended beyond that point - to all the attributes, qualities, or circumstances of the symbol, type, allegory, or parable.

7 - For the salutary and sanctifying intelligence of the oracles of God, the following rule is indispensable:- We must come within the understanding distance.

There is a distance which is properly called the speaking distance, or the hearing distance, beyond which the voice reaches not, and the ear hears not. To hear another, we must come within that circle which the voice audibly fills.

Now we may with propriety say, that as it respects God, there is an understanding distance. All beyond that distance cannot understand God; all within it can easily understand him in all matters of piety and morality. God himself is the centre of that circle, and humility is its circumference."

ALEXANDER CAMPBELL

BELIEF : (15)

The Obedience of Belief

IN our previous article we sought to find if obedience comes after godly sorrow for sins, leading to repentance, and before remission of sins. In the case of the erring Christian at Corinth it

was only after they had obeyed Paul's inspired instructions that their sin was forgiven. Is this true of all godly sorrow leading to repentance? I believe that it is.

Purification and Sanctification

It is abundantly clear that our Lord's coming to earth was that men and women everywhere might, by their obedience to his instructions be forgiven their sins, and thereby purified and sanctified (*hagiasmo*) as his disciples (see article 9).

This sanctification was the result of the Thessalonians' belief in the truth, which was to lead to their salvation and we set out to investigate this in our very first article (2 Thessalonians 2:13).

The same result came to the Christians at Rome. In Romans 1:1 they are called *saints* (*hagios*), the same root word, meaning sanctified, purified or set apart. Likewise the "saints" at Corinth, Galatia, Ephesus, Colosse, Thessalonica and everywhere else where men and women had been sanctified by obedience to the instructions of the Lord given through his apostles.

The Holy Spirit

Romans 1:4 shows that Jesus himself was declared by God in his gospel to be "the Son of God, according to the Spirit of holiness (*hagiosunes*)" — meaning separated and purified. So does the New Testament everywhere speak of the Holy Spirit, the word translated holy meaning "pure, holy or set apart."

Sanctification of the Spirit

In Romans 15:16 Paul speaks of those to whom he had preached the gospel of God as having been sanctified (*hegiasmene*) by the Holy Spirit (*pneumati hagio*). Sanctification by the Spirit therefore, can only be a process of purification of sinners through the agency of the Holy Spirit.

Notice, however, that this was the result of their obedience, and that this was the sole purpose of his (Paul's) ministry that the nations (Gentiles) should be obedient (Romans 15:18). Obedient to what? The gospel, surely. The apostle makes this clear in Romans 15:19-20.

What was the gospel which the Lord required the apostles to preach? What were its hearers required to obey? See our next article.

Exercises in Belief

John 17:8; 14-21; Acts 6:7; Romans 6:17-18; 10:16-17; 2 Thessalonians 1:7-8.

W. BROWN

(To be continued)

"THE BREAD IN THE LORD'S SUPPER"

Brother A. G. Arnott of Gladysdale, Australia has been examining evidence of changes in EAST (Greek) and WEST (Roman) Catholic Churches about this question of centuries old differences, and concludes that alterations in translation of scriptures account for certain apparent contradictions in accounts of the Lord's Passion in the gospels. He has accordingly written his studies in a book of the above title. I have six extra copies available free on application.

We who entirely trust the scriptures as divinely inspired have not been too much concerned perhaps on this particular point where the most eminent scholars have differed in their explanations. However we would be glad to know an explanation easy to understand and agree upon. Study of the matter can be profitable if undertaken in a humble spirit. We should be interested to know the plain truth. The EAST has always practised dipping for baptism. May it not be right on another point?

Have a copy of the book if you are interested!

R. B. SCOTT

NEWS FROM THE CHURCHES

Kentish Town: It was a happy company that met at 3 o'clock on Saturday October 1st. to enjoy the ministrations of Geoffrey Daniell from Bedminster, and to remember the grace of God permitting another year of worship and service in HOPE CHAPEL - the 112th. Numbers increased to 60 in the evening meeting, and we all appreciated the messages taken from the three great Bible characters, Joshua, Ezra and Peter... Encouragement and warning are always appropriate.

Jim Sinclair kindly chaired the afternoon session and Derek Daniell the evening. We were glad to welcome visitors from London, Wembley, Bedminster, Birmingham, Reading, Tranent and Buckie and a good company from Tunbridge Wells always helpful and closely associated. Leonard Daniell from Bedminster stayed and served us on the Lord's Day. Our gratitude to all, and news - Tom Walton made the good confession and was baptised on August 3rd.

R.B.Scott.

Kitwe, Zambia: After a short (3 month) visit to the U.K. I am now back in Zambia and have been making some long-range preaching trips. Some new congregations are being organised in the Kabura area. My wife, Angela is still in England with our sick son, Ian, and should rejoin me later.

Chester Woodhall

Manchester: We rejoice with angels in heaven over the baptism into Christ of Samuel Appiah Anane on Tuesday the 13th of September 1983.

Samuel is from Ghana and is studying at Manchester University Dental Hospital. He has a deep faith in Jesus and is well versed in the Scriptures. We pray that the Lord will bless him and use his talents to His glory.

We are again grateful to the brethren at Longshoot Scholes, Wigan for allowing us to use their baptistry.

ALAN ASHURST, Sec.

Newtongrange, Scotland: On Saturday, 8th October last, many friends gathered at the Meeting-house for our Annual Social and a wonderful time of fellowship. After tea and a few words of welcome from the chairman, bro. Andrew Sharp (who spoke briefly on the importance of preaching) the assembly prepared themselves for a feast of teaching from the speakers of the day. The speakers were Bro, Leslie Purcell, Motherwell, and Bro. Jack Nisbet, Ulverston. Before the first speaker a solo from bro. John McCallum, Motherwell, was enjoyed - 'Standing on the Promises', as was a solo from Sister Roberts, Kirkcaldy. Bro. Purcell then spoke on his subject "Your Life Is A Book - How does it fare" and this fine discourse gave much food for thought. After a hymn, which brought the first half of the Social to a close, an interval for general conversation amongst the brethren was enjoyed. The second half began with a hymn sung by all assembled, followed by a solo from Sister Gray, Haddington, followed by a solo from Sister Coventry, Newtongrange. These were followed by a duet from sisters Gray and Roberts, who sang 'Nearer Still Nearer'. Bro. Jack Nisbet then spoke on his theme 'Insights Of The Kingdom' and expounded many truths, stressing the importance to continue aright in the worship, and in following the Lord. Before departing, all again had tea and a rich time of fellowship. The church here wishes to thank all those who helped with the foodstuffs; the speakers and those others who took part; and all those who visited with us.

A. P. SHARP, Sec.

passing of a dearly beloved brother in Christ, Albert Longden, at the age of 63 years. Albert had suffered from an unusual affliction for well over a year, his sight was taken, and he eventually succumbed, after several weeks in hospital, on 18th September.

Albert was well-loved by us all, a true Christian and servant of Christ for 46 years and had served well in teaching and preaching the word both at home and among sister churches. He had given of his talents as Sunday-School teacher and secretary, a faithful deacon and for a time served as elder. Albert worked well and efficiently, was a stickler for scriptural truth and lived as befitted a child of God. Christ was his example and leader and now Albert has gone to the well-earned reward that Christ promised, for he truly set his hope in Him. We are sure the Lord will receive him kindly, - "Come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the Kingdom prepared for you"

Our deepest sympathy is extended to Albert's wife, Marjorie his sons Roger and Michael and their families and indeed to all who were close to him.

We earnestly commend them all to the kind mercies of our Heavenly Father, knowing that He can and will supply all their needs.

Services were held in the meeting-room and at the Mansfield Crematorium on September 21st, the writer officiating.

Tom Woodhouse (Sec.)

Regarding the preceding notice, Sister Marjorie Longden would like to take this opportunity to express her sincere thanks to all brethren and friends for all the love and kindness shown to her during her bereavement, especially for the cards of sympathy and floral gifts and tributes. These have been a source of help and strength to her time of need.

Tom Wood-

OBITUARY

Beulah Road, Kirkby-in-Ashfield:
We deeply regret to announce the

MORMON RESPONSE

Readers may recall that in an article recently (Aug. 1983) entitled "Book Of Mormon - Again" I stated how that local Mormons refused to answer the Questions (quoted in that article) but recommended that I write to their headquarters in Salt Lake City for a written answer. I promised, in that article to let readers know of the response received from Salt Lake City. The Secretary of the 'First Presidency' replied from U.S.A. but said that the local Mormons would answer my questions - in view of the fact that the questions were 'not suitable' for a written reply. I wrote back and said that the local Mormons had already refused but if they did change their minds I would be pleased to hear their answers *provided* I be allowed to record the answers on tape. After a long delay of weeks Salt Lake City again wrote and again said that my letter had been passed to the local Mormons (Edinburgh) for attention. That was a month ago but so far nothing has happened. I thought Mormons were keen to talk to others about their book.

Editor

AN APPEAL

Brother Ernest Udom, writes to me from Nigeria, stating that he hopes to set up a Home For Children. He describes himself as a 'poverty-stricken preacher' and will therefore hope and

trust that he will receive financial assistance from brethren in this country, or elsewhere. As requested I have placed his appeal in the 'Scripture Standard' and although I have no further details brother Udom will, no doubt, be happy to provide any information (on being contacted) at P.O. Box 231, Etinan Cross River State, Nigeria, West Africa.

Editor

EVANGELIST WANTED

The Slamannan District of Churches require an evangelist and all interested brethren should apply in writing to the District Secretary, Hugh Davidson, 21 Glen Lyon, St Leonards, East Kilbride, Scotland, G4 2JJ.

SUBSCRIPTION RATES 1984

WE are sorry to announce an increase in the subscription rate for 1984. The new rate will be £5.50 per year. We have held the price for two years but now find it necessary to cover our increased costs with a higher charge.

Due to the fall in the value of the pound against the dollar the Canadian and U.S.A. rate is unchanged.

Reading cards will be available later in the year and will be sent out to the Churches as soon as possible.

JOHN KNELLER

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