

The SCRIPTURE STANDARD

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

VOL. 47. No.8

AUGUST 1979

JUST FOR CONFIRMATION

Every so often a matter comes up just when we were thinking that we hadn't been hearing much about it for a while. In letters received recently some 'old chestnuts' have turned up, including the matter of miracles, and the performance of same in these days. Some make modest claims in this direction (if claims of miracle working can ever be considered 'modest') and confine their claims of miracle to the cure of someone the medical profession had failed to help. Others, such as the Mormon church, go the whole hog and claim that their special officers can accomplish the whole range of New Testament miracle working, including the raising of the dead (a fantastic achievement which seems to get surprisingly little publicity). One can't help feeling that if these things can really be done we would be hearing more about it than we do. Occasionally (of the order of one per annum) a miracle is claimed at Lourdes, a place to which thousands flock from all over the world as a last resort looking for a cure for some really serious physical illness.

Is it fair to lead sick people to believe there are miracle-workers about in the world today and that God will supernaturally cure the sick today just as He did in New Testament times? Such an idea gives great scope to many of the unscrupulous of this world, especially if they have 'the gift of the gab' and endowed with a touch of the sleight of hand. We do not intend to limit the power of God (as if we would) by trying to suggest that God could not or would not perform a miracle to His own satisfaction and to suit His own purpose, but does God in His word lead us to suppose that there are men about in the world today who have His power and His authority to perform miracles? There are, of course, men who do believe this and who produce such 'proof' texts as John 14:12; Mark 16:17,18; James 5:14 etc. Some would also say that prayer is futile if we don't believe that miracles will be performed today. To this it could be pointed out that much of prayer should be in the form of thanks and that only a small percentage of devotees would be asking God to supply miracles. In God's answer to prayer He acts mostly through natural means and His influencing of everyday events, but even if God chooses to personally intervene, to the point being reached where the result is tantamount to being a miracle what is that to us? God can do as He wills with His creation at any time but this is a far cry from saying that there are men in the world today who can do miracles by the power of God, and who have been appointed so to do.

I believe that if we understand *why* miracles were performed by Christ and His disciples in New Testament times we shall be greatly assisted in understanding why such miracles are not performed today, and do not require to be performed today. The question is not 'Could God enable men to perform miracles today' for we know that He *could*, but the question is 'Does He.' In the present context miracles were performed by men, only by virtue of the power God gave them, and usually the purpose of the miracle was to CONFIRM THE TRUTH of the words spoken by God's servant. Even when we go back as far as Moses we find that this was the inherent purpose of the wonders and signs. Firstly Moses spake the words, then his actions confirmed that God was behind his words. The miracles, signs and wonders performed by Jesus were to confirm the truth of His mission and that He was God's son. It has been said that the miracles of Jesus were worthless as testimony that He was God's Son because the apostles performed similar miracles and logically if miracles could prove Sonship then the apostles also proved themselves to be Sons of God. This is, of course, a foolish fallacy which fails to take account of the very important principle just outlined — that the purpose of miracles was to confirm truth. Jesus claimed divinity and God confirmed the claim by Christ's miracles, whereas the apostles never at any time claimed any form of divinity. What the apostles did claim God confirmed with miracles but the claim was not that they were Sons of God — it was quite different. God would not be party to a deception by allowing His power to be used as proof of a false proposition. The form of claim made by Jesus, therefore, differed somewhat from the claim made by the apostles but the assertions of all were confirmed by God throughout the miracles performed by each. What did the miracles prove?

In the case of Jesus the miracles were designed to prove that He was the only Son of God. When the imprisoned John the Baptist sent two of his disciples to Jesus to ask Him if He was the Messiah, or were they to look further afield, Jesus referred to His own signs and wonders as proof of His divinity. In the closing verses of John Chap. 20 we read, "*And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book: But these are written that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through His name.*" Jesus claimed to be Messiah and God's only Son. God confirmed this claim by miracles and signs. Unlike the wonders and signs of Moses which vexed the Egyptians the miracles of Christ and the apostles were usually in the form of some act of mercy but to say that they were wrought for the single purpose of reviving the sick (as 'miracle' workers profess today) would be to ignore the over-riding factor stated in the passage just quoted from John 20:31. For instance when Jesus said to the paralytic, who was let down before Him through the roof, "Son, thy sins are forgiven thee," He was charged with blasphemy, because God alone can forgive sins. He then made this argument: "Which is easier to say, Thy sins are forgiven thee; or to say, Arise take up thy bed and walk? But that ye may know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins, He sayeth unto the man, Rise, take up thy bed and go to thy house." Thus Jesus made the claim that because of His divinity He could forgive sins and God endorsed the claim by providing the miracle.

The miracles wrought by the apostles likewise were for the prime purpose of CONFIRMATION. Not confirmation that they were divine for such a claim they never made, but confirmation of the truth of what they uttered. The gospel they preached was a new message and they were to take it into all the world. The world at

that time was full of differing doctrines. How could they prove that Jesus had sent them.

They had no Bible — the New Testament had not yet been written. Thus Jesus promised them special powers (Luke 24:46-48; Act 1:5-8) through which they would be able to convince the world that they were the true emissaries of Christ. These special powers were bestowed upon them not long after Christ's ascension to Heaven and details of this are given in Acts 1 and 2. Consequently we read that they went forth and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them, *and confirming the word* with signs following. (Luke 16:20). What were some of the signs which followed? Casting out devils: Speaking in tongues: handling of deadly serpents: immunity from deadly poisons: and recovery of the sick. What was the declared purpose of these miracles? To CONFIRM THE WORD.

Did the apostles succeed in confirming the word, or did they fail? The writer to the Hebrews (Chap 2:3,4) confirms what has been said so far and also informs us that the apostles succeeded in confirming the world: "How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, AND WAS CONFIRMED unto us by them that heard Him; God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit, according to His own will."

This then was the purpose of miracles, signs and wonders; to confirm the word. The word was confirmed and thus needs no further confirmation. When God confirms something it needs no further confirmation. Even amongst men something once confirmed requires no further confirmation and a court which finds a man innocent doesn't have to reconvene regularly to reconfirm his innocence. Does Jesus have to reproduce the same miracles in each succeeding century to prove His divinity? or the apostles, that they spoke the truth? The need and the purpose of miracles no longer obtains and the world, if it is to be saved, will have to believe the written testimony of Jesus and His apostles — the confirmed word. Those who today seek a sign (or a miracle) are doomed to disappointment. Faith comes through hearing the word of God (the confirmed word of God) Rom. 10:17.

Editor.

GLEANINGS

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

"WHAT IS SPIRITUAL LIFE, AND HOW TO DEEPEN IT?"

"Without further digression, I will bring before you a statement of Jesus as a starting point for our enquiry. John x. 10 "... I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly." I choose this simple statement because it has in it both the life we are considering, and its deeps. The passage is part of the explanation of the parable of the sheep-fold. Jesus, as the Good Shepherd, puts himself in contrast with those who were only bogus shepherds! who under the guise of shepherds would come to steal, to kill, and to destroy. They come to impoverish; He comes to enrich. The gift He comes to bestow is LIFE. It is a remarkable declaration when you think of it. It is spoken of those, whom the Great Shepherd came to gather into the fold, and for whom He was to give His own life. They were living men and women who were to become members of His church, and to enjoy spiritual life with Him. Hence they were persons already in possession of life of a sort. They had the capacity to hear His voice, and to follow Him. They manifestly had the power also to follow the hireling; therefore the warning. They were living

persons; yet without that life which Jesus came to bring. In the elucidation and exposition of this passage we may find the answer to the double question which is the title of the paper.

There are three deductions which we may draw from this passage:

1st — That though the people of whom Jesus spoke were alive, they were not vitalised with *the life He came to bring*.

2nd — That Jesus came to bring and bestow that *Life*.

3rd — That it is a life which when once possessed may be enjoyed in growing abundance.

First, then, it seems clear that the life here spoken of was a kind or quality of life which man does not have through natural birth or succession; because if it had so come, it would have been in possession of the race,— the whole race — and would not need to have been brought. I am of opinion, however, that in the simplest possible form, this life was once before a possession of man, but was forfeited by transgression. Once man communed with God face to face, and life was peace, purity, and sunshine. Man fell! Communion ceased! Spiritual contact was broken, he died!

True life is in communion with the Author and Source of Life. God is life! Christ is life! Communion with God and with Christ is life! Sin separated man from God, and a state of death ensued. So we read, "Wherefore as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin, and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned."

Death having passed upon all men, all are under Death as under a king. We are subjects of Death. We live naturally in a state of death. Paradoxical as such a statement may seem, it yet truly describes the condition of man by nature. Hence it is that Paul says to those who became Christians, "And you hath he quickened (or made to live) who *were dead* in trespasses and sins. Wherein in times past you walked according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience," etc., Eph. 2:1,2. "But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we *were dead* in sin, hath quickened us (made us to live) together with Christ," Eph. 2.4,5. "And you, being *dead* in your sins, and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened, (or made to live) together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses," Coloss. 2. Man naturally 'may then be said to be dead spiritually; and though alive, not in the possession of that life, to the enjoyment of which he may be quickened with Christ, and which Christ came into the world to bring. Jew and Gentile were alike in that case, for "all had sinned and come short of the glory of God."

Secondly, we have to consider Christ as coming to bring and to bestow that life. We have to discover that Christ came with this life from God. Here testimony may be piled up tier over tier, till it reaches the very throne of God itself, from whence came the dove-like Spirit, and the majestic voice, like the sound of thunder, saying, "This is my Son, the beloved one, in whom I delight, hear ye him." Starting with John 1:1 we have a testimony to the point, "In the beginning was the ord, and the word was with God, and the word was God. All things were made by *him*, and without *him* was not anything made that was made. In him was LIFE, and the life was the *light of men*," etc. The same writer in his 1st Epistle says, "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled of the WORD OF LIFE (for the life was manifested and we have seen it, and bear witness and show unto you that Eternal Life which was with the Father and was manifested unto us), that which we

have seen and heard declare we unto you, that you also may have fellowship with us, for truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ." John 3.15,16,17, "And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have *everlasting life*," verse 36, "He that believeth on the Son hath life; and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life." John 4:14, "But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst, but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life." John 5:24, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation, but is passed from death unto life." John 5:26, "For as the Father hath life in himself, so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself." John 5:40. "And ye will not come to me that ye might have life." John 6.35, "And Jesus said unto them, I am the bread of life." John 8.12, "I am the light of the world; he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life." John x. 27,28, "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: and I give unto them eternal life." John 17.2, "As thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him." Such quotations would fill all my space. You know many more, such as, "I am the resurrection and the life." Jesus is called "the Bread of Life." The Gospel of Jesus is called "the Water of Life." Jesus is said to be "Christ our Life." Our life is said to be hid with Christ in God. Jesus said, "This is life eternal to know thee the only true God and Jesus the Christ whom thou hast sent."

From all these and a hundred other passages, it is abundantly clear that Christ came from heaven to give man life — to give him *eternal life*. That Christ Himself is the life — the eternal life which was with the Father and hath been manifested to men. That He gives to whomsoever He will. That he that hath the Son hath the life: having passed *from death to life*."

The above is a continuation of the Conference paper by G. Collin in Bristol in the year 1894. God willing we shall continue with the paper next month.

Selected by Leonard Morgan

THE BURNT OFFERING

Read Lev. 1 & 6 vs 8-13

We now come to the first of the offerings mentioned in the Levitical order and have already commented on verses 12 & 13 of ch. 6 in relation to the fire upon the altar, with the command 'It shall never go out' and we saw something of the figurative meaning of the fire, speaking of the Divine Presence and Holiness of God. The burnt offering, then, seems to have the pre-eminence among all the other offerings, for here it is put first and has a very special place in the sacrificial law. It is also the first of the sweet savour offerings and plays a very large part in the sacrificial system of Israel as recorded in Numbers chs. 28 & 29 using different kinds of animals on numerous occasions throughout the whole year. These were compulsory, by Divine dictate; for the whole camp of Israel, but when we come to Leviticus 1 we find it is an optional and individual sacrifice. In verse 2 we read, "If any man —" which shows how individual it was, and in verse 3 'he shall offer it of his own voluntary will'. It was offered in gratitude and worship.

Let me remind you again of the story of Noah in Gen. 8 where we have the first mention of the burnt offering. Noah, grateful to God for having passed safely through the waters of judgement in the ark, builds an altar and offers burnt sacrifices of the clean animals to God and God smelled a sweet savour. This, of course, is typical of ourselves. In Christ we too have passed

through the judgement that fell upon Him at the Cross and as the Ark came to rest upon the mountain, so in Christ, on the resurrection side, we are seated together with Him in the heavenlies and as Ephesians 5 v 2 reminds us, He gave Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet smelling savour.

The whole burnt offering then, was wholly for God, except the skin, which was given to the priest who offered. It typifies the Lord Jesus in His absolute devotion to His Father's will. He laid His all on the altar of self-sacrifice giving Himself wholly in life and in death, without spot to God. And although these offerings are Christ exalting in their ministry yet from them we can learn many practical truths, for in this the Lord Jesus is the great example to the believer. So we are called upon to devote our lives to Him, even to sacrificing that which is dearest to us and lay our all upon the altar of our devotion to Him. *Nothing* is worth *anything* unless it costs us *something!*

But some might say, "if the burnt offering was not for sin, but represents Christ's devotion and obedience, why does verse 4 of chapter one say 'it shall be accepted to make atonement for him?'" Ah, this is not atonement for direct and positive sin, as in the sin offering, but atonement in the negative sense, that in which we are deficient, the thing in which we are lacking. The Lord Jesus, in all His purity and perfection, more than makes up for what we are NOT and therefore atones for our deficiency. The burnt offering, then, is the sufficiency of Christ meeting us in our need and insufficiency, that perfect life of His offered to God in death, by the which God imparts and imputes to us the very righteousness of that One Who died for us and rose again. Romans chapter 3 speaks of the righteousness of God being unto all and upon all that believe. And that is why the priest receives the skin as we are told in Lev. 7 verse 8. For the skin is the outward adornment of the animal and speaks of the Divine righteousness as seen in the life of Christ, 'that which we have seen with our eyes, that which we have looked upon' John tells us in his first Epistle, the outward and visible expression of the righteousness of God, with which we are clothed. This is illustrated by what happened in Eden's garden. After man had sinned and after his vain attempt to cover himself with that which was perishable and futile, God provided them with coats of skin, implying of course, the death of the animal, in order to cloth them. Such is the beautiful truth of the death of Jesus, anticipated by God, to provide us with that wherein we were lacking. So basically, in the sight of God, in Christ, we are righteous and this righteousness should be seen in a changed life, should find its outward expression in our daily living for Him. That is why we are told to adorn the doctrine of God and our Saviour, to put on Christ, to put on the new man, which after God, is created in righteousness and true holiness, Eph. 4.

So the priest receives the skin but if we would go deeper, if we would look upon the inner glories of the Lord as represented by the inwards and the fat, then the victim must die! and it is the cross of the Lord Jesus that reveals those things which otherwise would never have been made known. God is going to be revealed and glorified in a way that He could not otherwise have been apart from the cross. The fact speaks of the richness of the sacrifice, that which so readily responds to the fire. And all that the Lord Jesus was in the mystery of His personality found acceptance in the flame of Divine approval, 'This is My beloved Son!' The head and fat are put together on the altar. The head controls the body. Christ is the Head in His power and authority. Calvary was no accident but the planned result of Him Who worketh all things after the counsel of His Own will. The inwards and the legs are placed together to be washed in water and then burned upon the altar. Ephesians 5 speaks of the washing of water by the Word. Water is associated with cleanliness so here we have inner and outer cleanliness, the inwards and the legs, for the one determines the other. What we are inwardly determines what we are outwardly. So the New Testament exhorts us to the daily renewing of our mind because this shows itself in our character. Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus and so on. The Word of God only cleanses us in the measure in which we are obedient to it. That is why Jesus was so pure and perfect. His was complete obedience to the Word for He was the Word. In His high priestly prayer for His own in John 17 He could say 'sanctify them through Thy Truth, Thy Word is truth' and 'for their sakes I sanctify Myself'. The legs then, naturally, would remind us of His walk and ours. Ephesians is full of the walk of the believer. John Baptist, looking on Jesus as He walked said, "Behold the Lamb of God" He recognised Who and

What He was and all this found its culmination in the death of Jesus, an offering made by fire, the fire of His devotion, of a sweet savour unto the Lord. But before the washing with water there had to be the sprinkling of the blood upon the altar round about. The blood is the evidence that the animal has died for the life is in the blood. The shed blood had to be sprinkled or personally appropriated in our identification with the sacrifice, the blood of sprinkling 'which speaketh better things than that of Abel' Heb. 12 v 24. Here we have the two cleansings spoken of in the New Testament for the believer, cleansing by blood from the guilt of sin once and for all and daily cleansing from the defilement of sin by the water of the Word for that is the Divine order.

But now we see that the burnt offering is divided into three sections one of which we can offer according to our respective status in life. There is a choice from the herd, from the flock and even down to a bird. If we are wealthy we could afford a bullock. If we are not so wealthy, a sheep or a goat and if we are poor, then a turtle-dove or a pigeon. And this last one would remind us of the poverty of that little family at Nazareth, of which Jesus was the first-born, for when they brought Him as a baby to the Temple to offer according to the law, then it was the poor man's sacrifice, a turtle-dove or pigeon. He was rich yet for our sakes became poor and as Schofield reminds us, the sacrifice of the poor man became the poor man's sacrifice. But this provision shows God's wonderful care and concern even for the poorest and the sacrifice of a small bird was just as acceptable to Him as the bigger offering of the middle or wealthy class, because they all speak of Christ.

On the other hand these three divisions could remind us of our individual appreciation of the worth of the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus and this varies considerably according to our spiritual maturity or the depth of our experience of God's wonderful salvation. As regards our spiritual maturity, this three-fold division is found in John's first epistle where the family of God is looked at as fathers, young men and children. It is understandable that a young believer, a new born babe in Christ, would not be expected to know the Lord in the same degree as a more mature Christian yet his appreciation of the Lord Jesus means just as much to God. That is why we are exhorted to grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ for there is so much we can learn about Him.

Thirdly, some have a deeper experience of salvation than others and the Lord Jesus is more real to them and their appreciation of Him is all the greater.

But we also have a three-fold representation of Christ in the Gospel of John when Jesus spoke three times of "doing the will of Him that sent Me" in chapters four, five and six which respectively apply to each of the three offerings, the bullock, the sheep and the bird, as we shall see. For this is the burnt offering, Jesus completing the will of His Father irrespective of what blessing we receive thereby. So the bullock would remind us of His strength, His patience, His endurance in accomplishing this great task. But not only in life is the bullock of service to man but in its death provides an abundance of meat. So Jesus could say in John 4 "My Meat is to do the will of Him that sent Me" And this was the occasion when Jesus was reaching the people of Samaria through the woman at the well. As the disciples begged of Him to eat, He could say "I have Meat to eat that ye know not of." You see, Jesus put first things first. That which was spiritual superceeded that which was natural. Doing the will of His Father was of the utmost importance and took precedence over every else. And so it should be with us. "Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness" said Jesus for if we give God the second place we are bound to be losers.

Let us think now of the sheep and the goat. The sheep, that docile and submissive animal, speaks of Jesus in His unresisting self-surrender to the will of God, Isa. 53 V 7 reminding us that 'as a sheep before her shearers is dumb so He opened not His mouth' and Peter tells us 'when He was reviled He reviled not again.' The sheep too, is sought by the shepherd and this is the key word of John 5. Jesus said "I seek the will of the Father which sent Me" and although all the antagonism of men was arrayed against Him, He did not resist but submitted and accepted all that they would do to Him as being the will of His Father.

But why also a goat? This puzzled me for a while until I felt that here we have the other side of the penny for a goat will resist and move in to attack. So Jesus accepts the challenge of Satan and moves in to the attack, setting His face steadfastly to go to Jerusalem, knowing exactly all

that would befall Him there. All the forces of hell were arrayed against Him, principalities and powers, the rullers of the darkness of this world. How often Satan had tried to destroy Him, through King Herod, after His birth in the slaughter of the innocents; then by the people of Nazareth when they tried to throw Him over the brow of the hill and then on the Sea of Galilee, when the storm threatened to sink the ship wherein He lay. But His hour was not yet come. How Satan then, and all the hosts of hell must have rubbed their hands with glee when they saw Him at Last, hanging upon a cross, not knowing that this was to mean their ultimate defeat. 'By weakness and defeat, He won the mead and crown; Trod all His foes beneath His feet, By being trodden down!' And so rising from the dead as the Mighty Victory, He led captivity captive, destroying the power of him that had the power of death, that is, the Devil. Such I feel is the lesson taught by the goat as part of the will of His Father.

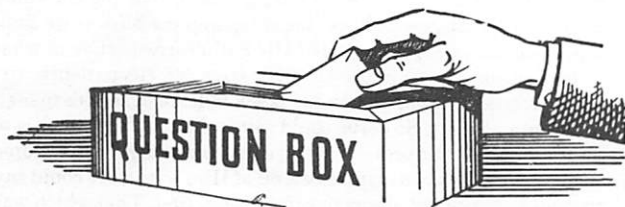
And now for the bird. The creature of the heavenly sphere, its natural habitat. Relating this to the will of His Father He could say in John 6 v 38 "I came down from heaven to do the will of Him that sent Me" much to the confusion of His enemies, who could not understand His claim, His coming down from Heaven. This heavenly man, this visitor from outer space, was none other than God manifest in the flesh, but their eyes were veiled to His Glory.

But notice how the bird was treated as a sacrifice, its head wrung off and the body cleft but not divided. The church takes its heavenly character from Christ, its Head. The Head is in heaven but the body here on earth. Separated but not divided in the sight of God for we are all one in Christ and are eternally linked with Him. Sanctified by the offering of the body of Jesus once for all.

These then were wholly burned upon the altar and in the law of the burnt-offering in Lev. 6, the ashes were taken to a clean place without the camp, v 11. After Jesus had expired upon the cross, His body was taken down and put in a clean place, that is, in a tomb wherein man had had never lain before. It had never seen a dead body, never seen any corruption. It was indeed, a clean place and the body of Jesus would not defile it either because He never saw corruption! It was a clean place for a clean person, the incorruptible Christ!

Such is the wonder and glory and beauty of the meaning and the message and the ministry of this great sacrifice, God anticipating, exalting and magnifying His Own dear Son, our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

(J.D.H.)



Conducted by
Alf Marsden

"On the basis of pleading for a complete return to Christianity as it was in the beginning, how would you acknowledge Acts 11:15 concerning the pattern of the early church; this reads, 'And as I began to speak, the Holy Ghost fell on them, as on us at the beginning'?"

I gather that the questioner had a discussion with some brethren of a local assembly of Christians concerning the importance and validity of water baptism, and wasn't altogether pleased with the conduct and outcome of that discussion. He feels, if I understand him aright, that too much emphasis is placed on water baptism, based on what he believes to be flimsy scriptural evidence, and not enough emphasis on baptism of the Holy Spirit which I think he believes is substantiated by the scripture quoted above. He is quite right in his basic premise that if we plead for

a complete return to N.T. Christianity then we should be able to give a sound reason for those things which we believe and teach. This we shall now attempt to do, and in order to explain the significance of the text quoted above we shall have to think about it in the context of Acts of Apostles chapters 10 and 11.

The Context

We must begin by understanding that there are two records of the same event. In Acts chapter 10 we have the record of Luke, who is believed by most scholars to have written Acts of Apostles, and in Acts chapter 11 we have Peter's account of the same event as he recounted it to the apostles and brethren in Jerusalem. Luke's account is a factual record of what occurred; Peter's account is explained by the scripture, "But Peter rehearsed the matter from the beginning, and expounded it by order unto them, saying . . ." (Acts 11:4). The fact that the matter was rehearsed from the beginning *in order*, is extremely important.

The Event

This event marks the inception of the gospel to the Gentile nations. It is accomplished initially in the person of one Cornelius, a centurion, and his household. The architect of this stupendous event is God. The instrument of God's will is the apostle Peter. Up to this time the recipients of the gospel were exclusively Jewish; the Gentiles were not considered fit subjects for this divine grace.

Cornelius was a devout man. The scripture tells us that he was visited by an angel of God who informed him that his prayers and alms had come up as a memorial before God (Acts 10:4). Such a person, we would think, might merit full acceptance by God, but he was instructed to send for Peter, "And now send men to Joppa, and call for one Simon, whose surname is Peter; he lodgeth with one Simon, a tanner, whose house is by the seaside: he shall tell thee what thou oughtest to do" (10:5, 6). Notice how God indicates His chosen messenger; He doesn't want any mistake by getting the wrong Simon. The reader will also notice that Cornelius is *to be told* what he should do: this would seem to indicate a *spoken message*.

The following day Peter was praying on the housetop of the house where he was staying, and he became hungry. He had a vision of a great sheet coming down from heaven, and in this sheet was all manner of four-footed beasts, and fowls of the air; a voice told him to kill and eat. Peter declined, saying that he did not eat the common or unclean (it is a Jewish custom not to eat *all* kinds of meat). The voice insisted, however, that what God had cleansed should no longer be looked upon as common or unclean. After this had been done three times the vessel (sheet) was raised up into heaven. While Peter pondered the meaning of this (v19) the Holy Spirit said unto him, "Behold, three men seek thee. Arise, therefore, and go with them, doubting nothing: for I have sent them" (vv19, 20). It is worthy of note that the Spirit sent these men to bring Peter to Cornelius. What would have been the need for that if the Spirit was going to save Cornelius by acting *directly* on him? But we shall see. So they came to the house of Cornelius, who had called together his kinsmen and close friends. Peter was accompanied by six brethren.

Drama at Caesarea

It is evident, when one views God's preparatory arrangements, that notable things were to happen at Caesarea. Both Cornelius and Peter had been prepared; the 'fulness of time' had come for the gospel to be received by the Gentiles.

Peter then opened this mouth and began to speak to the assembled company. He told them how he had come to understand that God was no respecter of persons. He then went on to speak about the good news of salvation in Christ, how that he had

been put to death, buried, and raised from the dead; in other words, he brought these Gentiles the gospel. Then an amazing thing happened; let Peter tell it as he recounted it to the brethren at Jerusalem, "And as I began to speak, the Holy Spirit fell on them, as on us at the beginning" (Acts 11:15).

The mistake that many of our religious friends make is in equating the advent of the Holy Spirit on this occasion with salvation. The scripture doesn't teach that, nor should we teach it either. You will notice that the angel which appeared to Cornelius said to him, "Send men to Joppa, and call for Simon, whose surname is Peter; Who shall *tell thee words*, whereby thou and all thy house shall be saved" (11:14). So it was not by the direct operation of the Holy Spirit that these people were to be saved, but by *the words* which Peter should speak to them. You will also notice that when the Spirit fell on them Peter had *not yet* stated the gospel, for he says, "And as I *began to speak . . .*", so if Cornelius was saved when the Spirit fell, then we are led to the inevitable and anti-scriptural idea that he was saved *before he heard* the gospel and obeyed it. At Pentecost and since, no one was or is saved except by reception of the spoken word and obedience to the gospel contained therein. That Peter acted in accordance with God's will at Caesarea cannot be denied, because later when he spoke to the brethren at Jerusalem he said, "Men and brethren, ye know how that a good while ago God made choice among us, that the Gentiles *by my mouth* should hear the word of the gospel, and believe" (Acts 15:7).

Confirmation to the Church

If the foregoing is true, then we have to ask ourselves, "Why did the Spirit fall on the household of Cornelius"? You will recall that Peter said that he took six brethren with him to Caesarea. When the Spirit fell on the household of Cornelius, these brethren, being jews, reacted in a predictable way, "And they of the circumcision which believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because that on the Gentiles also was poured out the gift of the Holy Spirit" (Acts 10:45). Why were they astonished? Well, so far as the gospel was concerned, it had been looked upon to this time as a Jewish 'closed shop'; now, here were the Gentiles being treated by God as they, God's chosen people, had been treated by Him; well might Peter say, "I perceive that God is no respecter of persons." It would seem, then, that the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the household of Cornelius was to *confirm* to the *Jewish church* that the Gentiles were fit subjects for the gospel. No other explanation will suffice.

The Words

What, then, were the words whereby the household of Cornelius should be saved? Peter said, "The word which God sent unto the children of Israel, preaching peace by Jesus Christ: That word, Isay, ye know, which was published throughout all Judaea, and began from Galilee, after the baptism which John preached" (Acts 10: 36, 37). Matthew records that the eleven disciples went away into Galilee as Jesus had appointed them. Jesus came unto them and said, "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you" (Matt. 28:16-20).

On the first Pentecost the Holy Spirit fell on the disciples in Jerusalem and Peter began to preach the gospel. He called for faith, repentance, and baptism (Acts 2:38). Later on, in explanation of what happened at the household of Cornelius, Peter said, "And God, which knoweth the hearts, bare them witness, giving them the Holy Spirit, even as He did unto us; *and put no difference between us and them*, purifying

their hearts by faith" (Acts 15:8, 9). So if God put no difference between the Jew and Gentile then the means of salvation must have been the same in each case.

Therefore, on the basis of the scriptures we have discussed, we can say with some conviction the following:

1. The Holy Spirit fell on the household of Cornelius *before* they heard the gospel.
2. This being so, it was meant to indicate from God's part that the Gentiles were *fit subjects* for the gospel.
3. The terms of the gospel were the same as in Acts 2, and all cases thereafter in the N.T.; faith, repentance, confession, immersion in water for the remission of sins.
4. That immersion in water is meant cannot be denied, because Peter said, "Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptised, which have received the Holy Spirit as well as we? And he commanded them to be baptised in the name of the Lord" (Acts 10: 47,48).

Dear reader, the Bible is its own explainer. Let it teach you.

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

SCRIPTURE READINGS

SEPTEMBER 1979

- | | |
|------------------|---------------------|
| 2-Isaiah 42:1-16 | Acts 13:42-52 |
| 9-Chron. 16:7-34 | Acts 14 |
| 16-Amos 9 | Acts 15:1-21 |
| 23-Daniel 1 | Acts 15:22-35 |
| 30-Nehemiah 2 | Acts 15:36 to 16:15 |

ENVY AGAIN

Pilate knew that for envy the Jews had delivered Jesus to him. Extreme nationalism originates and develops this disastrous sin. Pride of race which should have humbled and purified the character of the Jew, has proved so much to be his downfall. Here in the heathen city of Antioch in Pisidia the news of salvation for all mankind was welcomed by some and its universal nature attracted especially the gentile proselytes attending the synagogue worship. While Jews in general did not "evangelise" among gentiles, their moral and religious standards attracted serious minded gentiles in all parts — witness certain centurions in the gospel stories. Paul and Barnabas must have rejoiced as the news of their preaching and teaching spread, but alas the majority or at least the vocal members of the synagogue were filled with envy.

Thus the hard core of unbelievers was successful in stirring up opposition after the second sabbath meeting. They must have worked upon the prejudices of influential people so that the authorities expelled the preachers, who protested at the injustice but had to leave.

However those who had accepted the gospel "were filled with joy and the Holy Spirit" in spite of persecution. Iconium would be the next big town about 90 miles east of Antioch, and there the apostles had the same experience of opposition, being even followed up by the Jews. Here miracles were wrought and some considerable time spent in the district until the opposition developed dangerously. There was extensive publicity and this led to persecution. The Jews again were successful in getting even the public authorities to plot against the apostles.

"When they persecute you in one city, flee to another" (Matt. 10, 23).

They went further east to a more remote district with the same success. In Iconium there was division in the city, and doubtless the envious Jews were able to play upon objections to the demand for purity of life and the "new religion."

Some temporary relief from Jewish interference in Lystra enabled the

apostles to make the gospel known through the towns and villages in all that area. The miraculous cure of a lame man aroused the superstitious instincts of the people who were apparently all heathen, having a temple to Jupiter and a priest at the city gate. Paul and Barnabas baulked them of their worship and festivities, preaching the true God. Here again the hostile Jews followed them up and using their persuasive skill on the crowds were able to stone Paul in the city. How they managed this in a town under Roman rule we do not know. Paul was miraculously saved from death and this would confirm those who had become disciples and formed an assembly. Our concluding reading this month tells of the development of churches in this area (16, 1-5). We do not know how long the work continued here but it was sufficient to create some measure of co-operation between Derbe, Lystra and Iconium and to develop stable bodies of believers. Honest and good hearts accepted the new way of life. There were those who had the Jewish background of the Old Testament for both Lois and Eunice were there, and surely others like them among the men who both at Antioch, Iconium, Lystra and Derbe: "many of the Jews and devout proselytes followed Paul and Barnabas" (13, 43). See 2 Tim. 1,5 and 3,15. It is quite wonderful to think of hundreds of comparatively ignorant heathen with a sprinkling of Jews taking the yoke of Christ upon them, and becoming new creatures in Christ Jesus in the midst of degraded idolators, and probably facing daily temptations to give up or compromise.

However what a priceless boon to have the news of God's love, and the consciousness of forgiveness of sins and the prospect of eternal life in fulness of joy. When Paul wrote of the "care of all the churches" he had them all in view. We have to consider the communication set-up. Someone had computed that

Paul and Barnabas were away from Antioch (in Syria) for three years on this journey, and there would be no news whatever between travellers and church. We can imagine the anxious thoughts of

the church members and their continuing earnest prayers all the time, upholding the preachers before God. They knew some of the dangers of the way, and something of the persecution and opposition that would be met.

THE TRIUMPHANT RETURN

The return journey was in a sense the most important part. How could they consolidate the work that had been done, and be assured that the churches would develop and grow — how continue to spread the holy influence of Jesus! "Make disciples of all the nations" is the commission (Matt. 28,19) and this has been done. Now the learners must be taught, which is a process lasting the rest of their lives (Matt. 28,20). So we summarise the steps taken: 1, Confirm their souls; 2, Encourage them to continue; 3, Warn them of tribulation; 4, Appoint elders; 5, Pray with fasting. Much is involved. Surely they laid hands on some and imparted spiritual gifts (Rom. 1,11). How else would the gospel story remain authoritatively known? Their choice of elders was surely very vital, and prayer with fasting accompanied that exercise. The Lord Jesus spent a whole night in prayer before selecting disciples to be apostles. This journey back through the towns was as exacting as the outward one. How the church must have rejoiced with them for the opening a door of faith unto the gentiles!

TROUBLE IN THE CHURCH

Antioch in Syria had become an important outpost for the faith in the heathen world. It was well known at Jerusalem as the church which sent generous help to the elders at Jerusalem for the poor members at a time of famine. Barnabas had been sent there

to encourage them. Certain of the Jewish converts in Jerusalem still maintained a strong Mosaic influence. We had occasion to mention this when Peter was arraigned for the conversion of Cornelius (ch. 11).

In spite of the approval of his work then, they still held that Moses should be obeyed. They had not yet grasped the universal character of the gospel. Some of them in mistaken zeal went to Antioch to teach the necessity of obedience to the law, in particular the rite of circumcision. Anyone of us can be held by tradition, personal prejudice or preconceived ideas from accepting truth. It is essential to have open minds, but open to God's leading through His Word very humbly interpreted and with commonsense. Ostensibly coming from the "mother church" these teachers would have special respect from the members at Antioch. Fortunately Paul and Barnabas were there with glad tidings of the effect of the gospel upon the heathen, and enlightenment on its truths. The "teachers" were stopped and a party from Antioch with Paul and Barnabas went up to consult the "pillars" of the church at Jerusalem over this vital matter. We should read at least the first two chapters of Galatians at this point. The journey to Jerusalem was almost a march of triumph through the Phoenician and Samaritan churches with the news of the "conversion of the gentiles" — so much rejoicing it excited. It was indeed a vital matter that a decision should be made once and for all by those most eminent and respected in the church: It was not surprising that the division should arise. God's wisdom and the guidance of the Holy Spirit enabled those respected and consecrated apostles, elders and members of the Jerusalem church to make decision and to embody it in a letter and appoint special messengers to carry their word to Antioch and to all concerned. The result

brought comfort and joy to those who had been disturbed by the false teachers.

R. B. SCOTT.

NEWS FROM THE CHURCHES

Cape Town, South Africa: "After much consideration, and prayer, having visited, preached and taught in Bible studies over the past 7 months, with a small congregation in a Schoolroom in the Bokmakirrie, Athlone area, about 5 miles from my apartment, have decided to labour with them full time now; saw the need to do so!

Since having helped them to the Glory of God, the regular services attendances have been very commendable, averaging 24, then in the Bible study conducted on Wednesday evenings in a private home, of a family who are Christians, (mother, wife and daughter) with the average attendance at these studies, being 25, with members, visitors attending, and with the interest exhibited, we look forward to many precious souls obeying the gospel Lord willing.

The young daughter of the family mentioned, were among another 4 (total 5) who were baptized between 3rd and 4th March 1979. And that during this period of time I was able to share with other preachers in a gospel campaign, held at the Bonteheuvel congregation 26th February to 4th March 1979, and that each evening the campaign was well patronised, with the final evening, the hall was filled to capacity.

Yes, I can testify, to the Glory of God, that the little congregation in Bokmakirrie ... expressing signs of a growing congregation, though slow as we might say, but some day we shall rejoice in the fact that our testimony, and faith was a real truth. Ask you one and all to

share in your prayers on my behalf, as I labour with this congregation, with others doing their best to augment, its growth and purpose." T. W. Hartle.

Exeter: The church here now meets at 17 The Crescent, Pathfinder Village, Exeter, Devon, at 9.30 a.m. each Lord's Day. Many visitors pass through the West Country at this time of the year and they will be very welcome to worship with us. Max Taylor.

Manchester: Our week-end of meetings with brother Bob Whittaker were very encouraging.

On the Saturday evening (23-6-79) the hired hall was two-thirds full despite the rain. We were grateful for the presence of a good number of friends of various religious persuasions and of members of the churches at Eastwood, Blackpool, and Wigan. We were all deeply moved by Bob's simple and direct presentation of Jesus; his analogy to the different attitudes to life's blessings, and successes, of African negroes and Western whites; the former giving. God thanks instinctively even for that we would consider a very meagre blessing, and the latter's self-praise for his life's achievements — "I did it" and how this latter is diametrically opposed to the Spirit of Christ.

We thank God for blessing the efforts of that week-end and it is our intention, God willing, to do something later this year. Allan Ashurst.

Haddington, East Lothian. The church here is enjoying the visit of brother Earl Severson who is on visit to Scotland from the Vancouver area of Canada. Brother Severson has been here before and hopes on this occasion to visit a few more churches and meet as many brethren as possible. He also hopes that some of the congregations will avail themselves of his humble services in the teaching of the word of God. Brother

Severson has spent a life-time in schoolteaching and has considerable experience in evangelisation. We wish him a good and profitable trip. Allan Broad

Newtongrange, Midlothian

A wondrous week of fellowship and love has been the experience of the church here at Newtongrange. On Saturday the 16th June, the church and friends travelled to the small town of West Linton. A time of great joy was had by all, with some sixty souls and four dogs joining in the fun and games. The Lord was good to us as the day was, a day of sunshine all the way. On our return preparations were put in hand for the start of the week-long mission. Due to the ill health of our Bro Kemp, Bro E. Jess and Bro T. Nisbet of the church at Tranent kindly agreed to labour with us for the week. The church was privileged to have Bro Jess serve it on the Lords day of the 17th. A great time of spiritual uplift was experienced by all present. On Monday 18th some 43 souls gathered to hear the good news of salvation powerfully preached by Bro Jess. The day following, being Tuesday 19th, the brethren and friends were again thrilled to hear the gospel news, come forth in strength and love.

Bro Nisbet following the same theme of, The Church, Salvation and Jesus Christ, took up the challenge and spake forth on behalf of the Lord on Friday 22nd. A good number of friends and brethren were gathered to hear Bro Nisbet proclaim the wonderful news of salvation. On the Saturday following, ie the 23rd, a number of 40 upwards gathered for a time of fellowship praise and song. The speaker Bro Nisbet, preached from the book of Acts chapter 10. Once again the presence of the Lord was experienced, as the Spirit moved amongst us. At the close of the meeting, the church rejoiced to see two souls put on their Lord in baptism. Our new Sister being Mrs. Grace Coventry and our new

Bro being Mr. Brian Sharp (son of Bro and Sis A. P. Sharp) both of the area.

Then on the Lord's Day of the 24th we had the honour of having Bro Nisbet serve the church.

The church at Newtongrange wish to record its thanks for all the assistance given by the local churches in this gospel effort. We trust that our work together may be fruitful in the days to come and that the Lord's church will flourish abundantly in this area. The church at Newtongrange hope D. V. to have another mission in the month of Aug/Sept., when our Bro T. Nisbet will be with us to spread the gospel in film. He hopes to show his collection of films on mission works of the past. This year if the Lord should tarry, the church at Newtongrange will be holding its annual social on October 27th. Speakers for that date being Our Bro T. Nisbet of Tranent and our Bro J. Morgan of Hindley. We look forward in anticipation to this event.

Andrew Sharp, Sec.

ARTICLES FOR THE 'S.S'

The 'S.S.' does not, of course, have a panel of professional writers and depends, as always, upon interested brethren amongst the churches to produce the reading matter for the paper. Previously articles have been solicited by me in the columns of the 'S.S.' but some readers have expressed their dislike of articles being asked for in this way. Recently therefore I have written privately to a goodly number of brethren throughout the country asking if they would be prepared to provide one article per year. I hope in the future to write to others as time and opportunity allows but I hope that the fact that I have not yet written to any particular brother will not put him off, and I shall be more than delighted if he shall send me an article without being asked. Some

brethren already send material to the 'S.S.' and so I have not written to them. Of the letters sent only one or two brethren have not bothered to reply, and the response in general has been extremely encouraging with, to date, fourteen brethren having promised to write one article per year.

This is an admirable situation for the magazine and once these articles begin to arrive the quality of the 'S.S.' can only profit from it. On behalf of the readers of the 'S.S.' I would like to thank the brethren who have responded in this very helpful manner. The other point I would care to mention is regarding news items and advertisements.

Some have expressed a desire to see more news items in the paper. This would be a good thing and individual church members should ask the church secretaries to report news of church activities. Readers abroad may get to thinking that many of the churches here don't engage in any activities and this would not be quite true at all. Churches never fail to report obituaries and rightly so, but we know that more is happening than that. Advertisements in the 'S.S.' cost nothing whatsoever (many write asking for the bill).

Editor.

CHANGE OF SECRETARY

Kirkcaldy, Scotland. The new secretary of the church at Hayfield Road is Robert Hughes, 115 Chapelhill, Kirkcaldy, Fife, KY2 6P2. Tel. No. Kirkcaldy (0592) 3531.

OBITUARY

Nyanjama Village, Mwanza, Malawi: We regret to record the passing of sister Podani, on the 2nd April, 1979, beloved wife of brother Rutherford Pondani. We pray that God will strengthen all they that mourn.

“WHAT THE ARTIST LEFT OUT”

The church at Haddington, East Lothian, has had a reprint made of the tract with the above title. This tract proved popular at its first printing and all copies have been dispensed. A second printing of 30,000 copies has therefore been made and any congregation interested may purchase the same.

Several churches have already done so. The price has been confined to bare printing costs of £12 per thousand with £1 for postage within the U.K. Any orders please, to J. R. Gardiner, 88 Davidson Terrace, Haddington, East Lothian, Scotland.

HYMN BOOKS WANTED

The church at Kirkcaldy are keen to obtain, either new, or good second-hand copies of ‘Sankey’s’ Sacred Songs and Solos (1200 pieces) without music. Any reader able to help please contact R. Hughes, 115 Chapelhill, Kirkcaldy, Fife.

QUOTES — on the Bible

There is one book, and only one, which embraces all the heights and depths of human nature. The Bible belongs to those elemental things — like the sky and the wind and the sea: like bread and wine, like the kisses of little children and tears shed beside the grave — which can never grow stale or out of date, because they are the common heritage of mankind.

T. H. Darlow

The greatest source of material for motion pictures is the Bible and almost any chapter in the Bible would serve as a basic idea for a motion picture.

Cecil B. DeMille

It (the Bible) is an armoury of light;
Let constant use but keep it bright,
You’ll find it yields
To holy hands and humble hearts,
More swords and shields
Than sin hath snares, or hell hath darts.

Richard Crashaw

The Bible rose to the position it now occupies because it deserved to rise to that place; and not because God sent anybody with a box of tricks to prove its divine authority.

Bruce Barton

THE SCRIPTURE STANDARD is published monthly.

PRICES PER YEAR - POST PAID BY SURFACE MAIL

UNITED KINGDOM and COMMONWEALTH	£2.00
CANADA & U.S.A.	\$4.00
AIR MAIL please add 50p or \$1.00 to above surface mail rates				

DISTRIBUTION AGENT & TREASURER:

JOHN K. KNELLER, 4 Glassel Park Road, Longniddry, East Lothian, EH32 0NY
Tel. No. Longniddry (0875) 53212 to whom change of address should be sent.

EDITOR: JAMES R. GARDINER, 88 Davidson Terrace, Haddington, East Lothian, Scotland.