

The SCRIPTURE STANDARD

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

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“EARLY” COMINGS OF JESUS

This is my last concession to the reader who complained that I studiously avoided subjects like the "Signs Of The Times", the future of the Jews, and the near coming of Christ. I have, over the past two issues, dealt with the first two of those subjects and in this article will deal with the "near" coming of Christ. It is not true to say that I avoid such subjects: indeed I have written about them previously but am happy to repeat the process.

In the religious world a great deal of nonsense is spoken concerning the "Second Coming" and one must try not to add to the confusion; given that there are some difficult passages. Some things can be said **with certainty** while others can only be held as one's own personal perception of the matter. For instance, Christ's "Second Coming" is **very certain** and it is **equally certain** that it has not yet come to pass: i.e. is still future. It is also **very certain** that Christ came into the world about 2,000 years ago (His first "coming") and so, between His first coming and His final coming, any other "comings" (such as the one mentioned above, in Matt. 10:23) must be slotted in to their proper place. Herein lie some difficulties. As with any other Bible subject we must tread warily, always aware that we might be missing the point and that there are, as always, *elements of mystery* involved. For example, how many Jews could have been expected to guess that Malachi's prophecy that "**Elijah must first come**" would be fulfilled in the person of John the Baptist? The Jews looked for a literal "coming" of a literal Elijah and would not expect John to come "**in the spirit and power**" of Elijah. Thus a need to tread carefully.

TERMINOLOGY

Objections to the words "Second Coming" are sometimes expressed because the term never appears in the N. T. In view of the fact that Jesus had several "comings" between His birth and ascension, it would certainly seem more accurate to talk of His "Final Coming" or His "Second Appearance" than "Second Coming." Indeed, the writer to the Hebrews says, (9:28) "**So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many, and unto them that look for Him shall He APPEAR THE SECOND TIME without sin unto salvation.**" Christ's first APPEARANCE (*Parousia*) was, of course, at His incarnation or birth. He certainly *existed* before that time, but had not *appeared* in the world until that time. Paul says that we are saved by God's own purpose "**which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began, but it is now manifest BY THE APPEARING of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.**" (2 Tim. 1:10). In short, Jesus' "coming" into the world was in bodily form (see Vine on *Parousia*) i.e. He "appeared" in bodily form. His final coming will also be an "appearing;" He will come in bodily

form: He will come personally. He had several "comings" but not all of His comings involved appearance. Readers may feel that hairs are being split but there is a difference, and whereas the N.T. talks of "comings" and "appearances" it never refers to a "Second Coming" but does mention a "Second Appearance."

AN EARLY RETURN?

It is sometimes averred that the early Christians were expecting Christ to return in their own lifetime. At His ascension from Mount Olivet the angels said, ". . . **this same Jesus which is taken up from you into heaven shall so come in like manner as ye have seen Him go into heaven,**" and those listening probably presumed that since this statement was made personally to them, they would, personally see this (return) come to pass. There are also some passages of scripture, which, some think, are indicative of a general tendency to the 'early return' expectancy. For example, Paul says to the Philippians, "**Let your moderation be known unto all men, the Lord is at hand**" (4:5). The writer to the Hebrews says, "**For yet a little while and he that will come, will come, and will not tarry.**" (10:3). James says, "**Be ye also patient, stablish your hearts: for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh**" (5:8). John says, "**Behold, I come quickly, hold fast that which thou hast, that no man take thy crown**" (Rev. 3:11).

It may well be that many of the early disciples were looking for, and hoping for, an early return of Jesus, especially if they were undergoing great privations and persecution, and it also may well be that some of those verses applied to *one or other* of the "comings" to be mentioned in the next sub-heading.

Certainly the apostle Peter didn't encourage the idea of an early return (with reference to Christ's final return) and indeed remarks upon those who would scoff at the non-return of Christ. He says, ". . . **there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts. And saying, where is the promise of His coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of creation.**" Peter goes on to accuse such scoffers of being "wilfully ignorant" of the fact that whereas the "old world" was destroyed by a flood, "**the heavens and the earth WHICH ARE NOW are (by the same word of God) KEPT IN STORE, reserved UNTO FIRE (not a flood) against the day of Judgement and perdition of ungodly men.**"

"**BUT**" continues Peter, **BE NOT IGNORANT OF THIS ONE THING, that one day with the Lord is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. The Lord is not slack concerning His promise (to return) as some men count slackness but is longsuffering to usward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance**" (2 Peter 3:4-9). And so, for those who might be wondering about the validity of the "early return" theory we have the above comments on the matter by an apostle of Christ. Peter certainly did not seem to subscribe to the idea.

SOME OF HIS VARIOUS COMINGS

The writer to the Hebrews (9:28) says that Christ would "**appear a second time**" and this implies a first appearance. Thus Christ's *first coming* was at His birth: or incarnation. This is mentioned in the same chapter, a few verses previously (9:24) where the same writer, referring to the animal sacrifices of the old economy, says, "**For then must He (Christ) have suffered since the foundation of the world; but now, once in the end of the world hath HE APPEARED to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself**" (See also 2 Tim. 1:10).

Time and space allows only a very brief mention of some of His various "comings".

(1) Probably the next coming was when He began His ministry. Paul, when speaking in the synagogue at Perga said, that of David's seed. "**God, according to the promise, raised unto Israel a Saviour; Jesus; when John had preached BEFORE**

HIS COMING the baptism of repentance to all the people of Israel" (Acts 13:24). Jesus had, by this time, been in the world for nearly 30 years when John was preaching (and indeed was only six months younger than John) and yet John is here described as having preached *before* "THE COMING" of Jesus, and so this "coming" would appear to refer to the beginning of Christ's ministry. And John, himself, said "There COMETH (future tense) One mightier than I AFTER ME, the latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to stoop down and unloose" (Mark 1:7). Jesus and John were contemporaries and yet John talks of Him "coming" *after* John's ministry is over, and clearly talks of Christ's ministry as a "coming".

(2) The next "coming" would seem to be involved in Matt 10:23 where, when Jesus was sending out the 12 on their preaching mission, He said ". . . verily I say unto you, Ye shall not have gone over the cities of Israel till the Son of man BE COME." We don't know how long it took the 12 (and later the 70) to cover all the ground but obviously it was to be sometime in the future (many months). This "coming" could refer either to the destruction of Jerusalem, or the "coming" of the Kingdom of Heaven, for Jesus had said, "Verily I say unto you, there be some standing here which shall not taste of death, till they see the Son of man COMING IN HIS KINGDOM" (Matt. 16:28) or as Mark renders it, ". . . till they have seen the Kingdom of God COME with power (9:1).

(3) Only six days after the statement just referred to, (Matt. 16:28) we have the transfiguration of Jesus, as He converses with Moses and Elijah on the holy mount, simultaneously with God's awesome voice from heaven declaring the Sonship of Christ. Christ, as Son of God, was thus made vastly pre-eminent over the O.T. lawgiver, Moses, and O.T. prophet Elijah. This momentous event was witnessed by three chosen witnesses, Peter, James and John, and Peter, later in life, made this comment on the profound transactions of that day. He said, "For we have not followed cunningly devised fables when we made it known unto you the POWER AND COMING of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of His majesty. FOR He received from God the Father, honour and glory when there came such a voice to Him from the excellent glory. This is My beloved Son in whom I am well pleased. And this voice which came from heaven we heard, when we were with Him in the holy mount." Bible students will find that most commentators link the "power and COMING" with the transfiguration.

(4) Another "coming" of the Lord was when Jesus made His formal entry into Jerusalem as King. Some 500 years previously Zechariah had prophesied, "Rejoice greatly, O Daughter of Zion; shout O Daughter of Jerusalem: behold thy King COMETH unto thee; He is just and having salvation; lowly and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass" (9:9). Matthew (21:11) describes beautifully the fulfilment of this prophecy, when Jesus (who owned nothing whatsoever) had to "borrow" an ass on which to enter the city as King. Multitudes, in a fervour of high religious excitement, strawed the streets with their garments and with palm leaves, shouting, "Hosanna to the Son of David, Blessed is He that COMETH in the name of the Lord; Hosanna in the highest." Mark adds that some also shouted, "Blessed be the Kingdom of our father David, that COMETH in the name of the Lord: Hosanna in the highest" (10:10), and Luke tells us that the Pharisees called upon Jesus to rebuke those who were shouting, whereupon Jesus replied that if men held their peace the very stones would have to shout (19:40). Thus, near the end of His ministry, and after many previous visits to Jerusalem, Jesus "comes" to the city as King of Sion, in fulfilment of prophecy. He "came" in the name of the Lord.

(5) **Destruction of Jerusalem:** The destruction of Jerusalem (and obviously, the temple and Jewish religion) was predicted in the O.T. e.g. "Behold I will send Elijah

before the "coming" of the great and dreadful day of the Lord." (Mal. 4:5; see also Zech. 14:5). Elijah's mission was to persuade Israel to set its house in order and to give them their very last chance of repentance. Elijah came, as we have seen, in the person of John the Baptist, and John, of course, came just prior to the destruction of the holy city. Matthew 24 (and parallel passages) describes and lists the signs which would presage the actual catastrophe. Interpretation of the chapter is complicated in that Jesus is answering two separate questions; i.e. "When shall these things be" and "What shall be the sign of Thy coming and of the end of the world." The bulk of the chapter, and certainly up to verse 28, refers to the destruction of the city. In verse 6 Jesus alludes to "wars and rumours of wars" and says, "But the end is not yet"; meaning, of course, the end of the Jewish economy; not the end of the world. At verse 14 He says that "this gospel shall be preached in all the world, and then shall the end come," and again, He means the end of Jerusalem: not the end of the world. After listing a great many of the conditions and events which would, step by step, lead up to the eventual holocaust in the city, Jesus warns of the abundance of false Christs which would flourish at the time. He says, "Wherefore, if they shall say unto you, Behold He is in the desert, go not forth; Behold He is in the secret chambers, believe it not. FOR as the lightning cometh out of the east and shineth even unto the west, so shall THE COMING of the Son of man be." This particular "coming" is in the context of the sacking of Jerusalem for surely Jesus' 'mention of the false Christ' being overshadowed by His own coming (as easily seen as lightning is) had reference to the end of the Jewish age, and not to the end of the world. Jesus would "come" in Judgement on the city and "there would be great tribulation." Indeed Jesus said (v.21) "For there shall be great tribulation such as was not from the beginning of the world to this time, nor ever shall be." And this was the fulfilment of Christ's sombre prophecy that "The blood of all the prophets, which was shed from the foundation of the world shall be required of this generation. From the blood of Abel unto the blood of Zacharias, which perished between the altar and the temple. Verily I say unto you, it shall be required of this generation." (Luke 11:50).

CHRIST'S FINAL COMING

We may often agonise on various passages of scripture as to which particular "coming" of Christ they refer; but there is one "coming" of which we can have no reservations or doubt, and that is Christ's final coming. Certain momentous events will occur simultaneously with Christ's final appearance which will make it impossible to ignore. Paul, (giving reassurance to those worried about dead relatives) says, "For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain unto the COMING OF THE LORD, shall not precede them which are asleep. For the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven WITH A SHOUT; with THE VOICE OF THE ARCHANGEL; and with THE TRUMP OF GOD; and the dead in Christ shall rise first. Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so shall we ever be with the Lord" (1 Thess 4:16). The shout, the voice of the archangel and the trump of God will make His coming very audible: indeed it will be noisy enough to awaken the dead; viz. "All that are in the graves shall hear His voice and come forth." (John 5:28).

Not only will His coming be very audible, but very visible. "Behold, He cometh with clouds, and every eye shall see Him, and they also which pierced Him, and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of Him." Nor will Jesus come alone. "When the Son of Man shall come in His glory, and ALL THE HOLY ANGELS WITH HIM, then shall He sit upon the throne of His glory" (Matt. 25:31). And so we learn that Jesus will come on *Judgement Day*. The *general resurrection* will also accompany Christ's return: viz. "For the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven

with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God and the dead in Christ shall rise first." (1 Thess. 4:16).

All these things will happen, not over a long protracted period of months, but instantaneously: viz. **"In A MOMENT, in the TWINKLING OF AN EYE, at the last trump, for the trumpet shall sound and the dead shall be raised incorruptible."** (1 Cor. 15:52). (Some suggest that the trump of God is figurative, but this is not so: see Ex. 19:19). Simultaneously, we shall all be changed. Paul says, **"Behold, I show you a mystery. We shall not all sleep but we shall ALL BE CHANGED . . . In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet, for the trumpet shall sound and the dead shall be raised incorruptible AND WE SHALL BE CHANGED. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality"** (1 Cor. 15:31). Jesus, Himself, said, **"But when the Son of man shall come in His glory and all the holy angels with Him. Then shall He sit upon the throne of His glory, AND BEFORE HIM SHALL BE GATHERED ALL NATIONS and He shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd separateth the sheep from the goats, and He shall set the sheep on the right hand but the goats on the left."**

These are some of the awesome events which will occur at Christ's return and which will be consummated in the destruction of our planet, as described by Peter, who says, **"But the 'day of the Lord' will come as a thief in the night, in the which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with a fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up."** From all the above we can see that it will be very difficult to confuse the Final coming of Christ with anything else.

CONCLUSION

There is not much space left for a summary, but, as we have seen, there are some very interesting "comings" of the Lord subsequent to His first appearance, and we can see that the verse at sub-head (2), (Matt. 10:23) had its fulfilment in one of these comings, probably the destruction of Jerusalem. In John 14:18 Jesus, when promising to send the Comforter, said, **"I will not leave you comfortless, I WILL COME TO YOU"** (John 14:18), and this is another "coming" I did not have time to comment upon. And there are also references in the Revelation, where Jesus, in writing to the church at Pergamus, warned, **"Repent, or else I WILL COME TO THEE QUICKLY"**; and to the Church at Philadelphia said, **"Behold I COME QUICKLY"**; and to the Church at Ephesus said **". . . repent, and do the first works, or else I WILL COME TO THEE and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except ye repent."** (2:5).

It seems, however, that all this is water under bridge and the only coming we can safely expect is the final coming of the Lord, a coming which, as Peter assures us, is delayed only because God is not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance. Such is the wonderful grace of God.

EDITOR.

UNLESS WE SEE SIGNS

As we discuss the pros and cons of modern miracles, we run the risk of missing the point of those miracles. Of the many miracles which Jesus performed, John selected seven which he says were written that we might believe Jesus is the Son of God. In chapter 2, He turned water into wine. In chapter 4, He healed a nobleman's son. In chapter 5, He healed a man who had been lame for 38 years. In chapter 6, He fed 5,000 with five loaves and two fish. In the same chapter, He walked on the water. In chapter 9, He restored sight to a man who had been blind since birth. In chapter 11, He raised

His friend Lazarus from the dead.

These acts were not ends in themselves, John calls them "*signs*." They were deeds which pointed to some power or meaning behind the act itself. If the thing pointed to is missed, one is like a traveller who sees a sign saying, "SCENIC VIEW AHEAD," but misses the view because he can't take his eyes off the sign. John says that he selected these signs in order that we might believe that Jesus is the Son of God and in believing have eternal life. If the miracles were *recorded* for this purpose, they must have been *performed* for the same purpose. If Jesus performed His miracles simply to bless the thirsty, hungry, blind, or sick people upon whom they were performed, then why didn't He have enough compassion to heal **all** of the sick, feed **all** of the hungry, raise **all** of the dead, and provide the meat and bread for everyone's picnic? Those involved in the miracles often received a double reward - the reward of an immediate blessing available only to them and the reward of a spiritual blessing available to us as well. These people then became a part of Jesus' signs. Whether they received the blessing behind the sign or only the blessing inherent in the sign depended upon their own spiritual perception. A good example of this can be seen in the healing of the nobleman's son in John 4:46-54.

THE NOBLEMAN'S SON

There is much to be said for the character of this man. For a nobleman to come seeking this itinerant preacher instead of sending a servant was no small act of humility, faith, or love. He was willing to leave the side of his son whom he loved so much, knowing that it could well be the last time he would see him alive. But he travelled the 22 miles with the conviction that if he could get to Jesus and bring Him back in time, Jesus would heal his son.

How the world needs humble, loving fathers - and mothers - who are convinced that Jesus is the answer to the needs of their sons and daughters. Too often an education at a prestigious university, employment with a "blue-chip" company, and marriage to a blueblood are the answers to every parent's prayer.

In spite of all the good things that can be said about this nobleman, Jesus rebukes him for failing to believe. Surely He could not have been rebuking him for not believing in Jesus' miracle-working powers. He had come over 20 miles to request a miracle. But there was something missing. He believed that Jesus could help his son **only** if He were present before the boy died. He did not see Jesus as one who ruled over distance and death. Had Jesus hastened to the boy's side and restored his health, the man might never have seen past the healing to the healer.

FAITH REWARDED

How often would this rebuke apply to us? We do not believe, or at least we are not secure in our belief, unless God is constantly reassuring us - some insisting that it be miraculous and other providential. If our health is good, our checking account showing a surplus, and everything is generally going our way, we feel that God loves us. If these things are lacking, if we are in bad health, if we are suffering persecution, if our plans are crumbling in our laps, we begin to falter, to insist upon reassurance by providence or miracles is to insist upon walking by sight. It wasn't hard for Job to believe in God's love when all was well. It was when he was stripped of every assurance but God's word that his faith really became faith.

The nobleman's faith did not go unrewarded. Jesus gave him an opportunity to move from faith in the power of His *presence* to faith in His *word*. "Go," He said, "**your son lives.**" The response was immediate. Acting solely upon the word of Christ without any sign to confirm that word, the nobleman began the long journey back home. "**Your son lives**" was soon not a matter of faith, for servants came confirming the Lord's promise in the very words which He had uttered. His son had experienced a

complete recovery at the very hour Jesus had spoken. The father had asked, 'When did he begin to improve?' The reply was that the fever left him at the seventh hour. So complete and sure was the cure that the servants had set out to find the father to assure him, perhaps, that there was no need to bother the miracle worker.

DO WE REALLY TRUST?

We too must learn to trust Jesus' words. Whereas the confirmation came immediately for this man, our faith may not be vindicated in this life at all, for the promise is not that we or our son will live physically, but that we can live eternally with Christ on a higher plane of life. But we sometimes falter at His word and want providential assurance. In effect, we will not believe unless we see a sign. But is Jesus not master of time, space and even death? Suppose we approach Him in behalf of our son and the child dies. Shall we then refuse to believe? Paul wrote: "For not one of us lives for himself, and not one dies for himself; for if we live, we live for the Lord, or if we die, we die for the Lord; therefore whether we live or die, we are the Lord's. For to this end Christ died and lived again, that He might be Lord both of the dead and of the living" (Rom. 14:7-8). The nobleman thought Jesus was powerless unless He could be present with his son before he died, but Jesus is Lord both of the living and the dead. It would hurt to lose a son, but it would hurt us more to lose faith in the word of Christ as a result.

MISSING THE VIEW

But there was a reward for which he had not reckoned. He came seeking life for a son and found it for the whole household. His faith had grown from faith in Jesus' miracle working power to faith in His word to faith in His person. It must be noted that verse 53 says that the man believed. But he had already believed that the miracle worker would heal his son, for he had responded without hesitation to the command to return to his son. The belief in verse 53 must therefore be the belief of which John spoke in chapter 20 - belief that Jesus is the Son of God. The reward of this faith is not good health, but eternal life. One could benefit from faith in the miracle working power of Jesus by being healed, fed, or whatever, but fail to go beyond the sign to eternal life. This happened in chapter 6 with those who ate the bread and fish, but then turned away when Jesus taught that these things really pointed to Himself as the bread of life which they should seek.

If one of my children were to become sick, I could not claim the promise of Jesus to this nobleman that the child would recover. He or she might not. But I can claim the promise that lies *behind the sign performed* 2,000 years ago - the promise that Jesus is master of time, space, and even death. I might have to give up that child, but I am assured that Christ still has complete control over the situation. If that child is a believer or not yet accountable, I know that he has life. I will know, not because God will send a vision as I stand in the cemetery, but because Jesus said so. "I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in Me shall live even if he dies" (John 11:25).

Are you missing the view because you are too busy looking at the sign? Trust Jesus' words and act upon them as did this nobleman?

D. CAMPBELL.

WAS JUDAS BLAMEWORTHY? (Part 2)

But was he warned?

It is suggested that Judas' intention was to precipitate a situation which would force the Lord to reveal Himself as the mighty royal Messiah. However, several events should have convinced him - that it would run counter to the Lord's purpose - that His

Kingdom was "not of this world." He must have heard the Lord's answer when Peter protested that the Lord would not be executed - **"Get thee behind Me Satan (i.e. obstructionist) you are an offence to Me: for you don't savour the things that are of God, but those that are of men"** (Matt. 16:23). And then there was the incident when a Samaritan village refused the Lord, hospitality and the sons of thunder (James and John) wanted to consume them with fire from heaven. The Lord's response was **"Ye know not what kind of spirit ye are of, for the Son of Man hasn't come to destroy men's lives but to save them"** (Luke 9:55-56) - (Sadly, these vitally important clauses are missing from modern liberal translations, even though they were extant in mid-second century manuscripts).

When the Lord announced **"one of you is a devil (a maligner)"** (John 6:67-71). Judas would know he had been rumbled. Even at the last minute - when the Lord, after washing Judas' feet said **"one of you will betray Me"** he could have backed out. He certainly knew the Lord was severely distressed and that he was the cause of His distress (John 13:21). Even to the last the other apostles were at a loss to know who would betray their Lord but not Judas. He did not - like the others - sorrowfully, apprehensively asked "Lord is it I?" - but after an awkward delay, secretly presented his query - addressing Him formally - **"Rabbi - It is I?"** to which the Lord replied "You've said *it*" (Matt. 26:22,25). Despite that response, he went ahead. The rebel no longer acknowledged Jesus as his Lord.

But, it is protested, aren't the gospel records biased and unreliable being an accumulation of written and verbal traditions?

This is a subject in itself. However, as more and more external information comes to light, the historical reliability of the "Gospels" is constantly being verified. Also from internal evidence alone, the sceptic who wrote "Honest to God" - the late John A.T. Robinson - was obliged to re-date them pre-AD 70.

There are no other manuscripts written in the lifetime of the apostles giving us detailed information on Judas Iscariot. If this sole source of contemporary information on Judas Iscariot is rejected there is nothing to discuss.

For more information vindicating the historical truth of the New Testament documents, you can consult the internet address <http://members.aol.com.muqaddas/> and click on "Fact Sheets" then on "#01 The Historical Authority of the Bible Documents."

What motivated Judas to do it? Was it greed?

In the last week preceding the crucifixion The Lord Jesus and His apostles visited the house of Lazarus, Martha and Mary (John 12:2 ff). Mary spontaneously washed our Lord's feet with fragrant ointment worth 399 denarii - an average years' wages for a worker. I can understand the disciples' concern that this seemed to them to be ruinous waste (the AV "ruin" is from the same Greek word as "perdition" in John 17:12, "son of perdition") Matt. 26:8, Mark 14:4. No doubt they had genuine concern for the poor who could have benefited from the sale of the ointment. But how come they reacted so badly - showing "indignation"? Who took advantage of their mood and stirred it up? John's record fills the gap for us: Judas - the "son of ruinous waste" - the disruptive maligner - **"cared not for the poor - he was a thief"** he stole from the communal money bag with which he had been entrusted John 12:5-6.

Possibly stung into action by Jesus observation "the poor you have always with you" (John 12:8) it was **"then"** that he consulted the chief priests Matt. 26:14. His question to them was **"What will you give me and I will deliver Him to you?"** (Matt. 26:15).

They set the price ("covenanted") - 30 Shekels - **4/10ths of a year's wage for a worker** (Matt. 27:9). Not a trifling sum of money for a man who would most likely be taking what he considered to be undetectable amounts out of the communal bag.

("spoken by Jeremiah" - note "spoken" not "written." It was apparently quoted by Zechariah, see Zech. 11:12-13. It was not unusual for one inspired prophet to quote another).

But that was only the price of a slave? (Exodus 21:32)

A lot of money for a greedy man. A paltry sum for a human being - "the son of man."

Greed causes men to slay the innocent and spare the lives of the guilty for a handful of barley and fragments of bread. Ezekiel 13:19 - to sell the righteous for silver and the poor for a pair of sandals. Amos. 2:6.

Was it meanness?

He had shared loaves of bread with the Lord only to lift up his hand against Him, John 13:18 (Psalm 41:9). Lest there be any confusion as to which person was the Lord, Judas proposed that the "kiss" of friendship be the signal. So that he himself wouldn't have problems he advised them to "**lead him away safely**" Mark 14:43-44. Judas accepted a company of officers to carry out the arrest. As he "**drew himself near to kiss Him**" the Lord implored him "**Do you betray the Son of Man with a kiss?**" Luke 22:47-48.

It was betrayal - he himself recognised his guilt.

Judas seeing the chief priests and elders decide on the death penalty regretted what he had done and tried to return the money to them saying: "**I have betrayed the innocent blood.**" Having made no impression on them he committed suicide - plunging himself into "the awful unknown" Matt. 27:1-5.

Subversive talk - greed - outright antagonism - remorse - suicide.

Judging Judas

When I think of Judas - seeing the Lord's sorrow over him - I feel sad for him.

Should we hate Judas for what he did? Is it for us to dictate the penalty?

The archangel Michael would not make any accusation even against the arch-maligner - the devil himself - but said, "**The Lord rebuke thee**" Jude 9. Vengeance belongs unto the Lord. It is His prerogative. Romans 12:19.

Could there be a bit of disruptiveness, meanness, greed in each one of us? These evils put the Lord Jesus on the tree. Are we culpable? Yes - we are all guilty.

Could he have been forgiven?

If Judas had gone and begged forgiveness of the Lord as He hung on the tree, would He who had washed his feet have said - "sorry - no chance - clear-off?"

Forgiveness was available even for those who howled for His death, Acts 2:37-38. Forgiveness is available through trust, repentance, and immersion, for us too, despite any of our past disruptiveness, meanness, greed or any other damnable sin. The apostle Paul saw himself as the chief of sinners and an example of God's readiness to forgive to the uttermost those who put their trust in Him, 1 Timothy 1:15-16.

Don't let Judas be our role model

We live in an age when our young are tempted to see vile pop stars as role models. Judas is a warning to all of us what we should not be. We should not even seek to excuse sins either in Judas or in ourselves or we might finish up going to our "own place," Acts 1:25.

Here is the one and only role model for us (Philippians 2:5 ff):

The Lord of glory - in humility and love - washed even the feet of Judas - "knowing" he had determined to betray Him John 13:1-5.

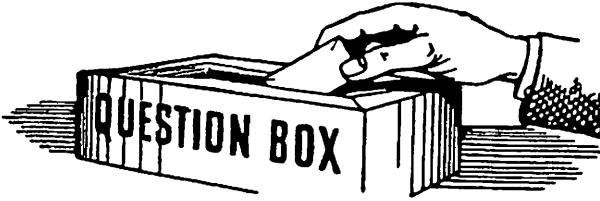
"Now before the feast of the Passover, when Jesus knew that His hour had come that He would depart out of this world to the Father, having loved His own which were in the world, **he loved them to the end.** And supper being ended, the devil having now put into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, to betray Him; Jesus knowing that the

Father had given all things into His hands, and that He ws come from God, and went to God. He rose from supper, and put aside His garments; and took a towel, and girded Himself. Then He poured water into a basin, and began to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the towel with which He was girded."

Would you have washed the feet of Judas?

Would you love such a one "to the end?"

ALAN ASHURST.



Conducted by
Frank Worgan

"We read in the Bible of people being 'filled with the Spirit.' Is it possible to be 'filled with the Spirit' today?"

The first statement is absolutely correct. In the New Testament scriptures - and it is the New Testament scriptures with which we, as Christians, are concerned - there are no fewer than ten references to this 'filling,' and they involve a wide range of personalities and occasions, mentioned in the Gospel according to Luke, the book of Acts and the letter to the Church at Ephesus.

To the question in the second sentence, the answer is an emphatic 'Yes!'

The Ephesian Christians were told, "*Do not get drunk with wine . . . but be filled with the Spirit*" (Eph. 5:18).

It is significant that '*be filled with the Spirit*' is not offered as one-time mysterious experience, as some religious groups seems to think, but is in the tense known as '*the constant emphatic*,' which means that this filling should be the abiding, ongoing condition of the Christian's life.

Furthermore, notice that it is an '*imperative*.' This means that it is not proposed as an option but is a command which God expects to see obeyed. And, if the letter to the Ephesians has any relevance at all today, this command is still valid.

Perhaps it is the use of that word 'filled' and the failure to understand its significance, which is the reason why there is so much error in circulation concerning the nature and work of the Holy Spirit.

Far more could be written on these matters than can possibly be dealt with in the space at our disposal, but it is enough to say that many mistakenly suppose that the Holy Spirit is some kind of impersonal influence or energy which God uses to accomplish His will in the world. Such views have been taught by groups such as the 'Mormons,' 'Christadelphians,' and 'Jehovah's Witnesses,' whilst the founder of 'Christian Science' - so called - Mrs. Eddy, wrote that the Holy Spirit is 'divine science' and by this she meant her own writings!

THE INDWELLING SPIRIT

All of these groups - and there are others - clearly ignore the fact that when the scriptures mention the Holy Spirit, or the Spirit of God, personal pronouns are constantly used and the attributes of personality are ascribed to Him. In other words we are told that He leads, guides, speaks, chooses, may be grieved and is even capable of loving. Thus to be 'filled with the Spirit' should not be thought of as an action comparable to the filling of an empty container with liquid, or the 'charging' of a battery with energy. He is an intelligent member of the Godhead, and the expression 'filling' is

a figurative way of telling us that we must allow the Holy Spirit to so control our lives that He is able to help us in ways which not only enable us to become more Christ-like, but which also make it possible for us to enjoy the assured and satisfied life which God desires all His children to experience.

The word 'filled' is the rendering of the word '*pleroo*' and means 'to fill up,' or 'to diffuse completely.' Therefore, when we read that in the New Testament times believers were 'filled with the Spirit,' we are to understand that they had received the Spirit of God into their lives and had allowed Him to take control.

The importance of this is shown in 1st Cor. 3:16, "*Do you know that . . . the Spirit of God dwells in you?*" See also 2nd Cor. 1:22, which teaches us that God has placed the Holy Spirit in our hearts as the guarantee or pledge of His intention to redeem us completely.

Notice, also that the Galatians were told that God "*has sent the Spirit of His Son into your hearts,*" Gal. 4:6, whilst the Romans were warned that "*if everyone does not have the Spirit of Christ he does not belong to Him*" Rom. 8:9, and that "*all who are led by the Spirit of God are the sons of God,*" Rom. 8:14.

CONCLUSION

To be 'filled with the Spirit' does not mean to have some sort of ecstatic spiritual experience, or some strange sensation - no tingling electrical feeling surging through one's body! It is the result of the yielding of the heart and life to the Spirit of Jesus Christ (Gal. 4:6), and the evidence of a willingness to allow Him to take control.

Acts 2:38 promises two blessings to the obedient believer; firstly, the forgiveness of sins and, secondly, the gift - '*dorea,*' or 'free gift' - of the Holy Spirit.

This means that the Holy Spirit Himself is *God's personal gift to the Christian*. But a gift is not a 'gift' until it is accepted. We must be willing to open our hearts and lives (2nd Cor. 1:22) to allow the Holy Spirit to enter and take charge.

He will then be able to guide us through the Word of God, which He Himself inspired, and as we submit in obedience to what is revealed in the Word, the Spirit will be able to exercise more and more control in our lives.

If we fail to obey that which we know from the Word to be the Will of God, to *that* extent we diminish the Spirit's control over us, because we reject His guidance and reduce His influence on us - and we thus 'grieve' Him (Eph. 4:30).

Furthermore, if we continue to refuse to be guided by Him, He will be 'quenched' (1st Thess. 5:19), and this means 'suppressed' and eventually extinguished.

In other words, He will leave us.

Let us remember, as we study the scriptures, that since the Holy Spirit today guides through what He has revealed in the Bible to be the will of God no one who is in ignorance of God's Word can be led by the Spirit.

I recall a statement made by F.F. Bruce:

"Being filled with the Spirit implies more than being indwelt by Him. In some believers He has little more than a foothold, being almost crowded out by a number of considerations. Paul is eager that his converts should be under the undisputed control of the Spirit."

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

THE WORD OF GOD

Here are a few good points to remember about God's Word and the chapter and verse of the Bible where they are found.

I. **What is the word of God?** John 17:17 tells us that it is **the word of truth**. Ps.

119:105 says it is a **lamp and light**. Luke 8:11 says it is the **seed of the Kingdom**. In Peter 1:23 we read that it is the **incorruptible seed**. Eph. 6:17 teaches that it is the **sword of the spirit** and Heb.4:12 adds that it is quick and powerful. John 6:63 says it is the **spirit and the life**. We find in Acts 13:26 that it is the **sword of life**. 2 Cor. 5:19 tells us that it is the **word of reconciliation**.

II. **What does the Word of God do?** In Tim. 3:15 we read that it makes one **wise unto salvation**. James 1:21 tells that it **saves the soul**. In Acts 20:32 we find that it **builds us up**. It **discerns the thoughts and intents of the heart** according to Heb.4:12. In Tim. 3:16-17 we are taught that it **completely furnishes us unto every good work**. John 15:3 tells us that it **cleanses us** from the evil and it **makes one free** according to John 8:32. It tells us **how to behave** ourselves in the house of God (1 Tim. 3:15). In James 1:25 we find that the New Testament is the **perfect law of liberty** and in Heb. 10:19-20 that it **contains the new and living way** to heaven. The old law was only temporary in that the sins of the people were rolled forward a year at a time and that done by the shedding of the blood of animals (Heb. 10:1-4). It required the shedding of blood of the sinless, stainless, spotless Son of the Living God on Calvary's cruel cross that mankind might be saved eternally in heaven. There is now a **NEW and living way** to heaven, although it is more than 1900 years old, (Heb. 10:19-20). The old way was done away at the cross and it was superceded by the new way.

III. **What is the new way?**

1. Hear the word. Mark 12:29; Rom. 10:17.
2. Believe it. John 8:24; Rom. 10:10.
3. Repent of sins. Luke 13:3; Acts 17:30.
4. Confess Jesus to be the Christ, the Son of the living God. Matt. 10:32; Rom 10:10.
5. Be baptised for the remission of sins. Mk. 16:16; Acts 2:38; Acts 22:16; Rom. 6:3-4; 1 Cor. 12:13; Gal. 3:27; 1 Peter 3:21.
6. After these things are done we must live the Christian life as God directs. When we come to the river of death we can go across unafraid, there to enjoy the sunlight of God's eternal love. We as Christians, are sometimes prone to neglect the **last major point** in this new way - Rev. 2:10 sums it up - **BE THOU FAITHFUL UNTO DEATH**.

C. CLEVELAND.

SCRIPTURE READINGS

Aug. 1	Isaiah 53	Luke 18:28-43
Aug. 8	Numbers 14:1-25	Luke 19:1-27
Aug. 15	Zechariah 9	Luke 19:28-48
Aug. 22	Psalms 118:8-29	Luke 20:1-26
Aug. 29	Psalms 110	Luke 20:27-47

A BLIND BEGGAR RECEIVES HIS SIGHT

Blindness is a huge handicap. Personally, I have never taken good eyesight for granted, mostly because I have studied so much about human and animal vision in the light of my own

visual impairment. The blind have, and always will have, my deepest sympathy. I know that all of them would sacrifice much to have their eyesight restored. Recent medical developments bring hope to at least some of them.

The Great Physician in His day could give sight to the blind in but a moment. Such was the case with the blind man whom Jesus met on the road to Jericho (18:35-43). "**Lord, I want to see . . .**" (18:41, N.I.V.) Jesus made his wish come true right there and then. I should have liked to witness the scene. The face of the blind beggar must have been a picture to behold after the miracle. No wonder he went on to follow

Jesus and praise God with all the people (18:43). A point to ponder: no one will be afflicted by blindness in heaven.

ZACCHAEUS

Zacchaeus was a tax-collector or a *publicanus*. He worked for the Roman authorities. "We know that tax-gatherers were unpopular with the citizens, partly because they were collaborators with an alien government, partly because they often extorted more money than they really had a right to do, and pocketed the difference" (A.C. Bouquet). But Zacchaeus was no thief. "**Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have taken anything from any man by false accusation, I restore him fourfold**" (19:8).

"Probably he had already done so for some time past; though it is generally understood that the expressions only refer to what he now purposed to do" (Adam Clarke). The latter view results from what Jesus went on to say. I think it might well be the correct one.

THE TRIUMPHAL ENTRY

Jesus was now in the final days of His Ministry. We now read of His triumphant entry into Jerusalem. His followers cried out joyfully in praise to God for all the miracles they had seen (19:37). Some of the Pharisees were unhappy, but Jesus told them that "if these should hold their peace, the stones would immediately cry out" (19:40). We read here of a truly wonderful event. However, there is sadness too. Jesus wept over the city because He foresaw its destruction by the Romans. Anyone who has studied the subject in detail knows why. "Jesus longed that even at this late stage it might repent and seek what would be for its welfare; how little did the conduct of Jerusalem, the city of peace (Hebrews 7:2), resemble its name! The time would come when the city would be besieged with a bank round it with tremendous loss of life, and all because it had failed to recognise that God was visiting it and longing to save it" (I. Howard Marshall).

THE AUTHORITY OF JESUS QUESTIONED

People were always astonished at Jesus' teaching because "He taught them as one having authority and not as the scribes" (Matt. 7:29; Mark 1:22). The Jewish leaders were particularly perplexed. Those in authority wanted to know from whence came His authority. But I think they were really trying to entrap Him at this time. If they could get Him to say He was the Messiah and the Son of God then they could immediately charge Him with blasphemy and arrest Him on the spot. Jesus' hour was not yet come so He asked them a question which placed them on the horns of a dilemma. It was centred on John's baptism to which Jesus Himself had submitted. They could not answer so Jesus replied: "**Neither tell I you by what authority I do these things**" (20:8).

I have read many a great debate, especially all those featuring Alexander Campbell. However, above all, I should have liked to listen-in to all those open-air encounters between Jesus and His opponents. It would have been wonderful to hear Him silence His critics again and again. Error stood no chance as it faced The Truth.

PARABLES

We have two parables in this section: the parable of the Pounds (19:11-27) and the Parable of the tenants (20:9-19). Jesus in His teaching was noted for His parables. In fact, the record says: "**All these things spake Jesus unto the multitude in parables; and without a parable spake He not unto them: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophets, saying, I will open my mouth in parables; I will utter things which have been kept secret from the foundation of the world**" (Matt. 13:34-35).

"In the parable of the pounds He gave them the programme of events. He was going to afar country to receive His Kingdom. During His absence His ser-

vants were to trade with His capital for profit. At His return He would deal with those who had thus been responsible . . . By the parable of the tenants He revealed the awful sin and failure of the Hebrew nation, culminating in His own rejection, showing, moreover, that that sin must result ultimately in the breaking into pieces of the sinning people" (G. Campbell Morgan). It is important to try to establish the exact meaning of each of Christ's parables, but not to read more into them than the Master intended.

PAYING TAXES TO CAESAR

Palestine in Jesus' day was, of course, enemy-occupied territory. Jerusalem had been captured by the Roman leader Pompey in 63BC. From then on, the Jews experienced Roman control notably through governors. At this time of which we read, the Roman governor was Pontius Pilate and the Emperor was Tiberius Caesar, who reigned AD 14-37. The subject of Roman taxation was a hot one. The Jews were all divided on the matter. In fact the Jewish group known as the Zealots refused to pay taxes to the Romans and were prepared to kill both Romans and Jewish collaborators. (Jesus had a former Zealot, Simon, a disciple.) "Some scholars have suggested that Jesus sympathised with the Zealot movement. This overlooks the fact that another disciple, Matthew, was a former tax-collector. Far from following Zealot policy, Jesus, when shown a coin with the image of Caesar, said, 'Pay the Emperor what belongs to the Emperor'" (Edwin Yamauchi).

THE RESURRECTION AND MARRIAGE

The two main Jewish sects in Jesus' day were the Pharisees and the Sadducees. The Sadducees consisted of the wealthy aristocratic families who controlled the office of high priest. They rejected belief in angels and the resurrection. They raised with Jesus the subject of levirate marriage in Judaism. Surely the woman who married seven brothers had a problem in the next life?

"Therefore in the resurrection whose wife of them is she?" (20:33). They erred, of course, because they knew not the scriptures, nor the power of God (Matthew 22:29; Mark 12:24). The point is that there is quite a difference between this world and the next. In the latter, the children of God will be like the angels in heaven and so will not be subject to marriage. I like the fact that Jesus also said of them: ". . . neither can they die anymore" (20:36). "In other words, the new age will be peopled by new beings living a new life under new conditions. Humans will be like angels. Mortals will have become immortal. Borrowing a phrase from the apostle Paul, they will have been raised imperishable. Consequently, the need to propagate the race will no longer exist . . . And in so far as reproduction is one of the chief purposes of marriage, humans will no longer marry. Not that love will cease, for 'love never ends.' But sexuality will be transcended, and personal relationships will be neither exclusive in their character nor physical in their expression" (John R. W. Stott).

IAN S. DAVIDSON,
Motherwell.

TEST YOUR BIBLICAL KNOWLEDGE

1. Where did Absalom plan to have his coronation?
2. How did Rachel die?
3. Which hill did King Omri of Israel buy from Shemer?
4. What did Jael use as a weapon to kill the sleeping Sisera in her tent?
5. For how long after his marriage did a Jewish man not have to go to war?
6. Who turned King Solomon away from God?
7. Which two men were the first to follow Jesus?
8. Who sat listening to Jesus while her sister prepared the meal?
9. In which city had Paul suffered persecution before coming to

Thessalonica?

10. Who was Paul's first convert in the continent of Europe?

OBITUARY

Reading: Mrs. Eunice Clara Payne went to be with her Lord on 24th May, 1999 at the age of 95. She was the second daughter of brother and sister Cummins of the Forest Gate Church in London. Baptised at the age of 13 at Kentish Town, she was a member of the Church for 82 years. Upon marrying in 1935 she moved to Reading and was an isolated member there for about 25 years, but always held fast to scriptural teaching. In 1961 it seemed like an answer to prayer when other members arrived in the town willing to meet as a church. However, the new congregation almost immediately ran into exceptional difficulties, mainly on account of lack of suitable male leadership. Sister Payne, acting as secretary, was chiefly responsible for holding it together for the next 28 years. About 100 members, mainly from overseas, worshipped there at different times, and there were 24 baptisms. After this she broke bread at her own house until she had to enter a nursing home in her last years. Bro. Derek Daniell led the service at the crematorium.

ROSE M. PAYNE.

NEWS FROM THE CHURCHES

Slamannan District: The Quarterly Mutual Benefit Meeting of the Slamannan District took place at Haddington Meetinghouse on Saturday, 5th June, when the subject for discussion was "Who were the Sadducees and the Pharisees and why was Jesus hostile to them?" The speakers were Peter Sneddon, Dennyloanhead, and James R. Gardiner, Haddington. The Chairman was Graeme Scobbie, Dennyloanhead.

As always, much more emerged from the subject than would be generally anticipated, and a lively discussion followed upon the introductory talks given by the speakers. Our next meeting will, God willing, be held at Motherwell on 11th September, 1999, when the speakers will be Jimmy Grant, Wallacestone, and Bill Cook, Dunfermline. The Chairman will be Ian Davidson, and the subject will be "What was a NT Evangelist (such as Timothy and Titus) and can we have such evangelists today?" Once again we thank the sisters at Haddington for their generous hospitality and refreshments.

H. McGINN (Secy.).

WANTED

FULL-TIME WORKER

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

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

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

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

APPEAL FOR BIBLES

In our recent appeal for help to purchase a Public Address System for our gospel work here in Nigeria, the Church in Haddington kindly sent us £250. With the little money left over we hope to repair the roof of our shed which lets in rain at present, and make some benches for new members. Due to our success and increase in numbers we would greatly appreciate a copy of the Bible for new members, and if given a preference would like the RSV (with Concordance and Dictionary) which failing the New

KJV. If you could help in some way please write to me: Emmanuel K. Hokon, P.O. Box 159, Badagry, Lagos State, Nigeria.

Thank you.

GHANA APPEAL

We have heard in the past month about the death of brother Adu Sarfo Kumasi. The details are sketchy, but we understand that he had a liver problem, attended the hospital who sent him home to die. He passed on from this valley of tears on 21st May, 1999. Adu Sarfo helped to look after Bill Cook when he spent a year in Ghana in 1992. He was the preacher in South Suntresso and also very active in Patriensa. He and his wife Owusua had five children. The oldest Ampamfo died in 1997 at the age of Twenty-three, the youngest is seven years old and was named Bill Cook Sarfo. Three weeks before the death of Adu, his mother died. Both were buried together on the same day 12th June, 1999 He will be sadly missed by many.

I am awaiting the details of a report that 21 were baptised in Dambai in one day this month. The churches we are trying to help now number 60. The committee have approved and sent money to three churches to help them in their

building programme. One of these churches is Patriensa who have patiently waited for years to get a roof on their building.

The clothes and books (Where women have no doctor) which were posted in February have all arrived. The clothes and glasses received in the past month have now been sent. Thanks to J.M.Barnett for £20 (Receipt 1176).

Ghana may be materially poor, but are rich in Spirit and your donations greatly encourage the brethren. Please make cheques payable to "Graeme Pearson (Ghana Appeal)" and send to Graeme Pearson, 13 Fairways, Dunfermline, Fife. KY12 0DU. Tel.: (01383) 728624.

1. Lydia (Acts 16:14).
2. Philippi (1 Thess. 2:2).
3. Mary (Luke 10:39).
4. Peter and Andrew (Matt. 4:18-20).
5. His wives (1 Kings 11:4).
6. One year (Deut. 24:5).
7. A tent peg (Judges 4:21).
8. Samaria (1 Kings 16:24).
9. In childbirth (Gen. 35:16-19).
10. Hebron (2 Samuel 15:10).

ANSWERS

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