

# The SCRIPTURE STANDARD

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*"Let us run with perseverance the race that is set before us looking unto Jesus the pioneer and perfecter of our faith"*

## **6 days, 2 hours, 26 minutes and 18 seconds..**

Isn't it inspiring when someone performs some feat that is truly exceptional? When they defy the odds, when every logical expectation is surpassed and the will of the human spirit overcomes.

Twelve years ago, Michael Watson was a boxer in prime physical condition. At the end of a tough fight he suffered a blood clot on his brain, fell into a coma that was to last 6 weeks (from which he was not expected to recover) and even when he awoke from the coma was severely paralysed – unable to walk or talk. His condition was described as 'near-vegetative'. Over the last 12 years he has gradually fought to regain his ability to speak and only last Christmas he took his first steps unaided since that fateful fight.

Today, April 19th, he completed a marathon. OK so it has taken him a week to do it; he's had help and support from a medical team; he's walked a maximum of 4 or 5 miles a day. But he's done it. He's beaten the odds; defied the medical prognosis.

Along his route he was joined by a 14 year old boy called Alex Robinson who had sustained similar injuries in a skateboarding accident. Until last Monday Alex could only walk the length of his parents' front room. Then, inspired by Michael Watson's example he joined in and today he too crossed the finishing line. I don't know the details of Mr. Watson's religion but he has publicly thanked 'God and Jesus Christ' for his so far partial recovery.

Are there lessons? Certainly. I don't know if it's right to say that Jesus defied the odds, but in winning our salvation he performed the most exceptional feat in human history and along the way defied a brutal physical assault and spiritually, in divine perfection, carried the burden of sin to the cross.

And do we doubt the power of example? Will we now be so moved by the example of our Saviour that we, like Alex, will use the power of that example to defy our natural self and strike out for new heights of spiritual achievement?

Finally let us reflect seriously on the fact that we too, along our Christian walk, can be an inspiration to others. Russell Hill reminds us in an article elsewhere in this issue that with God, all things are possible. So, urge each other on to keep the faith and to strive to be "changed into His (the Lord's) likeness from one degree of glory to another." And let us complete our walk of faith.

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# God and the Nation of Israel

(Stephen Woodcock, Wigan)

## 8 ELECTION

The Jews have always regarded themselves as God's chosen people. What justification is there for their holding this view?

Moses made it clear that God's election was based on the following:

- (a) He loved their forefathers (Deut. 4: 37; 10:15)
- (b) He loved them (Deut. 7:7)
- (c) In order to keep the oath that He swore to their forefathers. (Deut. 7:8)

The election of Israel was not for salvation, even though it offered that possibility. He gave them advantages (Rom 3:1), but there was no guarantee of eternal salvation. Their election was for the fulfilment of God's ultimate purpose to bring salvation to all nations (Genesis 12: 3; 22:18; 26: 4 & 28:14 where God explicitly states that this is His intention through Israel) The idea that in choosing Israel God condemned other nations is utter nonsense. In choosing Israel he rejected all other Nations **as the instrument of his blessing for the world.**

The blessing of the Gentiles is something that God stressed, especially through the prophet Isaiah (see Isaiah 2:2-4;11:10; 42:1,4; 49:5-6) It is out of Zion that the word of the Lord goes out to the nations, bringing light to the Gentiles and it is the Israelite Messiah that the Gentiles flock to see. Israel forgot that this was the purpose of their election and instead they thought that they were ELITE. So they did not co-operate with God and so He had to punish them. However, He did not totally reject them, because within the nation He raised up "spiritual Israel" who co-operated with Him and became the REMNANT.

## 9 REMNANT

In Isaiah 10:20-23 he makes the point that the decimation of the nation is according to justice. As a whole, the nation is disloyal to God. This judgement would result in a remnant of the nation being preserved. Paul used this passage in Romans 9:23-29. In that section Paul dealt with the awful reality that the bulk of the Jews were outside of God's blessing in the Messiah, despite the fact that they have been nationally elected. The doctrine of a spiritual remnant is as old as the Old Testament and so the existence of a small number of Jews, in a blessed state should not be too surprising. This was the message of Isaiah 10.

The righteous remnant led to the preservation of the nation, as a nation, (though in a decimated condition). Had there been no righteous remnant, none who came to believe in God, there would have been a total obliteration of the national identity. This is what Isaiah 1:9 speaks of. If you read Daniel and Ezekiel, you find a righteous remnant in exile. They not only tried to preserve their national identity, but they also encouraged others to put their faith in God. When they did return, they endeavoured to restore the Law, as the basis of the national faith (see Nehemiah 8).

Throughout the Inter-testamental period they preserved the faith, under very difficult conditions. During the period, which the Gospels refer to, the Jewish nation had fractured. Sects had developed; Sadducees, Pharisees, Essenes, etc. During this period, John the Baptist came as the forerunner of the Messiah. His mission was to "turn the sons of Israel to the Lord their God" (Luke 1:16) He was of the righteous remnant. When Jesus came, His mission was to proclaim that the kingdom of God was at hand. (Mark 1:15) Both John and Jesus insisted on repentance. Who did they preach to? The Jews! In Acts 2, Peter preached the first full gospel message. Who did he preach to? The Jews! Those Jews that did obey became part of the "spiritual Israel", the righteous remnant. This is discussed by Paul in his letter to the Romans. Today any Jew, who obeys the gospel, becomes a member of the righteous remnant.

## **10 THE LAW**

### **(a) The Mosaic Covenant**

1. The Mosaic covenant was not universal. It only applied to Israel.
2. It had within it an atoning system, which represents the GRACE (faith) element.
3. It had within it laws and edicts, which were not universal. They were civil, ceremonial and all were temporal.
4. It was an agreement between the Sovereign Lord and Israel and it was enacted at Sinai.
5. It was annulled at the death of Christ.
6. It was neither the beginning nor the end of the Moral Law.
7. It demanded unswerving and unrelenting obedience. Legal commands can do no less than this.
8. It had its earthly tabernacle, priesthood, country and commonwealth. But it did not guarantee eternal salvation.
9. It had its sacrifices, but they were a shadow (Heb. 10:1). They did not touch the eternal aspect of man and his relationship with God.
10. It was pedagogical and typical as well as a shadow.
11. Because it was pedagogical it was redundant when the Teacher arrived. (Gal. 3:2ff).

### **(b) The Effects of the Law**

1. Gives ground for boasting (Rom. 3:27)
2. It doesn't justify (Rom. 3:20; Gal.3:10ff)
3. Requires flawless obedience (Rom. 10:5, Gal.3:10ff)
4. Is ineffective to save due to man's weakness. (Rom. 8:2-3)
5. Brings wrath (Rom. 4:15)
6. Under this transgressions are imputed. (Rom. 7:8-11)
7. Promises are empty words under this. (Rom. 4:13-15)
8. Under law, under curse. (Gal. 3:10ff)
9. Life is impossible under it. (Rom.4:15; Gal.3:21)
10. Under law, "bound by law". (Rom. 7:1ff)
11. Severed from Christ. (Gal.5:4)
12. Fallen from grace. (Gal. 5:4; 2 Tim. 1:9)
13. All the condemned are under it. (Rom. 2:12-14; 3:9,23)

**(This article concludes Stephen's summary of the development of God's relationship with the Jews – Editor.)**

# Bigger than any Box

(Russell Hill, Morley)

A young boy travelling by aeroplane to visit his grandparents sat beside a man who happened to be a seminary professor. The boy was reading a Sunday school take-home paper when the professor thought he would have some fun with the lad. "Young man," said the professor, "If you can tell me something God can do, I'll give you a big shiny apple." The boy thought for a moment and then replied, "Mister, if you can tell me something God can't do, I'll give you a whole barrel of apples!"<sup>i</sup>

I'm not sure where you stand, but too often I am on the seminary professor's side wondering what God can do. How I wish I found myself on the little boy's side more often, knowing and believing that there truly is nothing God cannot do!

Paul proclaimed at the end of a prayer in Ephesians 3 that God is able to do immeasurably more than all we can ask or imagine. In Isaiah 55 we read, "**For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways,**" declares the Lord. "**As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.**"

For years God lived in a box called the Ark of the Covenant, or at least the Israelites thought He did! I wonder if sometimes we are suffering from that disease called *smallbox* as well. Paul and Isaiah both were telling us God is bigger than any boxes we can put Him in. He works in more ways than we can ever imagine. He can do more than we could ever ask!

In Hosea 11 we are reminded again just how awesome and infinite God really is and, in this particular passage, just how much more we should praise Him for being the way He is! Why, you ask? Because Hosea 11 is a description of the incomprehensible grace of God towards His children.

Below is an outline of Hosea 11:

## **How God treated His children**

11:1 – He loved us  
11:3 – He taught us to walk  
11:4 – He led us with kindness  
11:4 – He lifted our yokes  
11:5 – He fed us

## **How God's children treated Him**

11:2 – We turned our backs on Him  
11:3 – We ignored His existence  
11:5 – We did whatever we wanted to

## **What God's children deserved**

11:5 – Exile (sent from His presence!)  
11:6 – Destruction  
11:7 – God ignoring our pleas

## **What God's children received**

11:8 – Compassion  
11:9 – Gentleness  
11:11 – A Father who takes us home

Why don't we get what we deserve? The reason is, "**God is God, and not man – the Holy One among you!**" (Hosea 11:9)

You see, when it comes to God's grace no boxes can contain Him, and no thoughts can explain Him. He leaves us with only one choice, to Praise Him! I challenge you to reach for the whole barrel of apples, you will never get them but you will be left in awe of God!

<sup>i</sup> Today in the Word, April 1989, p.43

# Word Study **Saint**

Ian Davidson (Motherwell)

## **Hagios (saint). . . IT IS CHARACTERISTICALLY GODLIKENESS**

A lot of people think that sainthood is limited to a few deceased individuals. They could not be more wrong. All Christians are saints. We read: **"To all that be in Rome, beloved of God, called to be saints..."** (Romans 1:7a); **"Paul ...unto the church of God which is at Corinth, to them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints..."** (1 Corinthians 1: 1,2a); **"Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, to the saints who are at Ephesus..."** (Ephesians 1:1a); **"Paul and Timotheus, the servants of Jesus Christ, to all the saints in Christ Jesus who are at Philippi, with the bishops and deacons..."** (Philippians 1:1); **"Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, and Timotheus our brother, to the saints and faithful brethren in Christ who are at Colossae..."** (Colossians 1:1,2a ). The people of God, under the Old Covenant, were also described as "saints". There are nineteen such references in the Psalms alone.

The main Hebrew word for "saint" is *chasid*, which means kind or pious. This is interesting because hasidism is a Jewish pietistic movement, which still persists today in small but vigorous groups. The supporters of Judas Maccabeus (2nd century BC) were known as Hasideans. They urged ritual observance and faith and were the precursors of the Pharisees. However, the point is this: God's people were called "saints" long before the Hasideans.

### **BEING DIFFERENT**

The Greek word is *hagios*, which is also the word for "holy." W.E. Vine has written: 'In the plural, as used of believers, it designates all such and is not applied merely to persons of exceptional holiness, or to those who, having died, were characterised by exceptional acts of saintliness.' But what does it mean to be a saint or to be holy? It means simply that one is *different*; and the difference lies in the fact that one is *in Christ*. "He never forgets the presence of Christ; he walks for ever with Christ; he makes no decision without consulting the guidance of Christ; he attempts no task without the help of Christ; he is in Christ just as really as he is in the air he breathes." (Barclay). You see, the Sabbath was holy because it was different from all other days; the priest was holy because he was set apart or was different from all other men; the temple was holy because it was different from all other buildings; the Bible is holy because it is different from all other books; and the Christian is holy because he too is different – he marches to the sound of another trumpet and is God's man.

Sainthood and holiness, therefore, go hand in hand. God has always sought holiness in his people. **"Sanctify yourselves therefore, and be you holy: for I am the Lord your God."** (Leviticus 20:7). **"But as He who has called you is holy, so be you holy in all manner of conduct; because it is written, Be you holy; for I am holy."** (1 Peter 1:15,16). G.B. Stevens in Hastings' Bible Dictionary wrote: 'It is evident that *hagios* and its kindred words...express something more and higher than *hieros*, sacred, outwardly associated with God; something more than *semnos*, worthy, honourable; something more than *hagnos*, pure, free from defilement. *Hagios* is...more comprehensive...It is characteristically godlikeness.' Every saint should be striving every day and in every way

to be more like his God. The wonderful thing is that He has been given the perfect example to follow- Jesus Himself.

## SAINTS CAN CHANGE THINGS

God sees two kinds of people in this world – saints and sinners. A sinner is separated from God because of his sin. A saint is united with God because of His Son. A saint is simply a sinner saved by grace. All sinners can become saints through obedience to the gospel of Christ. Once I was a sinner, but now I am a saint. Once I was in the kingdom of darkness; now I am in the kingdom of light. Once I rejoiced in the works of the flesh; now I glory in the fruit of the Spirit. Once I was in the broad way that leads to destruction; now I am in the narrow way that leads to life. Once I was dead in trespasses and sins; now I am alive and in the Master for evermore. I have been justified, sanctified and saved. Thank God for Jesus!

One thing a saint should never do is to turn his back on this world and enter a monastery or a convent or a similar institution. Jesus never encouraged such action in His followers. The saint has to be in the world, but not of it. He or she has to work in the world to make a difference. And we can all make a difference if we remain faithful to the Master and follow in His footsteps. We once wrote these words in one of the tracts published in Motherwell:

*'One of our great tragedies today in Britain, it seems to us, is that people have lost heart. They have given up trying. It isn't that they no longer believe, but they have become convinced that it will not make any difference. There is nothing they can do! We believe there is and we think it is invaluable. We can change the world we live in. The members of the Church of Christ are dedicated to doing just that. None of them are wealthy, powerful or influential in halls of government. But they believe that through prayer and with the Spirit of God they can alter the world.'*

The Roman Catholic Church venerates its saints. A saint is established by canonisation, following beatification. The first saint canonised by a Pope was Ulrich, bishop of Augsburg, who died in 973 and was canonised by Pope John XV at the Lateran Council of 993. There have been a great many canonisations since. Today, two authentic miracles obtained through invocation after beatification must occur before the cause of canonisation can be introduced. Of course, there is nothing in the Bible about all this. There is also nothing in the Bible about praying to the saints. There is a lot in the Bible about the prayers of the saints. I like this passage from the book of Revelation: **"And when He had taken the book, the four beasts and four and twenty elders fell down before the Lamb, having every one of them harps, and golden vials of odours, which are the prayers of the saints."** (5:8). So, my brothers and sisters in the Lord, our prayers reach heaven and are scooped up in bowls by the angels to be presented to the Lamb (Jesus) as incense. 'The allusion is clearly to the temple service, and to the fact that incense was offered by the priest in the temple itself at the time that prayer was offered by the people in the courts of the temple.' (Barnes).

We must see sainthood as God sees sainthood. The world looks upon a saint as someone in a stained-glass window. God looks upon a saint as one who has seized the window of opportunity to be saved through His beloved Son. He or she is also a believer, a Christian, a disciple, a child of God, a brother or sister in Christ, a sheep of the fold of God, the salt of the earth, the ransomed of the Lord, a vessel of honour, a vessel of mercy, etc. May all saints live worthy of all these titles.

# Foundations of the Faith

## *A series of studies into the foundational truths of the Christian Faith*

(Introduction by Graham Gorton, Stretford)

As an introduction to a series of articles under the above heading it would be useful to define the scope of the exercise.

### THE FAITH

At the time of the Reformation, King Henry V111 of England was given the title 'Defender of the Faith'. This was an honour bestowed upon him by the Pope.

The Reformers continued with this title for the monarch and it is still in use today by Kings and Queens of England. We are reminded of this on our coinage by the letters "F.D." (Latin: Fidei Defensor). This usage relates particularly to the role of the monarch as the Governor of the Church of England.

The Bible speaks of the Faith in the New Testament in a way that clearly indicates a body of teaching and doctrine and is not to be confused with an individual's personal faith. Jude says, **"I felt I had to write to you to contend for the faith that was once for all entrusted to the saints."** (Jude 1:3) The context of this encouragement was

**"...the salvation we share...."** (1:3) and,

**"...changing the grace of our God into a licence for immorality and denying Jesus Christ, our only Sovereign and Lord.."** (1:4)

The truths of the faith were under attack and this was emanating from godless men who had infiltrated the Church.

Our scriptures are the source of doctrine and many attempts have been made to summarise the key issues that are found in them with a view to presenting a creed or statement of faith. Examples of these are the Apostles' Creed – a very early summary of belief ascribed to the apostles of Christ. Then the Athanasian Creed, thought to have been drawn up by Athanasius of Alexandria in the 4th century. Successive groups and denominations have, from time to time, produced their own understandings of what is to be believed, as being fundamental, to enable a person to be a member of their communities.

The apostle Paul found it necessary to address Christians at Corinth, reminding them of the issues of "first importance." (1 Cor. 15:3) It is worth noting that Paul presents these fundamental truths as being "according to the Scriptures." As we study our Bible we become aware of doctrines that are foundational to Christian belief. They are a part of a wide body of teaching, and rejection of them erodes the faith and, if not checked, soon heads to apostasy. The purpose of this series of studies is to identify those truths upon which the Church is built, not in any attempt to establish a creed to be learned by rote, but as a means by which each individual's faith can be sustained and indeed grow.

### FOUNDATIONS

A building must have a solid and secure foundation if it is to stand four square and withstand the elements. Jesus spoke of this, saying, **"Everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house upon the rock. The rain came down, the streams rose and the wind blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall because it had its foundation on the rock..."** (Matthew 7:24,25)

So, in these studies, we are searching for Biblical truth ("...everyone who hears these words of mine.."), as a basis, not only of personal faith, but as a rock on which the Lord's Church stands.

# Editorial

## Big Bangs and Miracles 2

So, let's get back to Albert Einstein and his quote, - **'You can live your life with one of two thoughts. Either that nothing about us in life is a miracle or that everything about us in life is a miracle.'** I don't claim at all to know what the great man had in mind with those words and as with all such quotations it is possible to test them to the point where they become

meaningless. But it is easy to see the possibilities of what he meant. We can all too readily reach the point where we take just about everything for granted. Of believing that we have a right to everything, whether we have earned or justified it or not. One of the remarks that irked me quite a bit when my parents died, dad at the age of 77 and mum at the age of 74, was "it's no age is it?"

### The miracle of physical life

Isn't that staggering? Some now take the miracle of life so much for granted that a span of 80 years is our expectation, or maybe even regarded as our right. What happened to David's sense of wonder when he contemplated the work of God in the creation of humankind. **"For thou didst form my inward parts, thou didst knit me together in my mother's womb. I praise thee, for thou art fearful and wonderful. Wonderful are thy works! Thou knowest me right well; my frame was not hidden from thee, when I was being made in secret, intricately wrought in the depths of the earth."** (Psalm 139:13 – 15) A 19th century US poet, Walt Whitman said, 'Seeing, hearing, feeling are miracles and each part and tag of me is a miracle.' Conception, birth, the sustenance of physical life, are all miracles in their own right, gifts to be cherished from a loving God. By the time we reach the age of 70 our hearts will have beaten around 2.5 billion times. So you woke up again this morning! Big deal. If you are 50 years old you have already done that 18000 times; if you are 70 years old well over 25000 times. And every time, if we are fortunate to have all the senses functioning, we can see and hear and feel. We experience emotions – joy, fear, love, anxiety and so much more. And all of this before we bring any spiritual element into our existence. Rutherford Platt said, 'We can see a thousand miracles around us every day. What is more supernatural than an egg yolk turning into a chicken.'

Well, what is the point here? Start to translate all of that wonder at the physical capacity with which we are born into thoughts about the impact of God in our lives. Consider our spiritual nature as Christians. We can consider nothing about us in life is a miracle; or that everything is a miracle. In my more rational and considered moments I find the second of Einstein's options far more compelling.

He who can no longer pause and stand rapt in awe is as good as dead; his eyes are closed. (Einstein)



Do we still wake up in the morning rapt in awe that God the Father should, before the foundation of the world, have set forth for our salvation a 'plan for the fullness of time'; that as part of that thrilling (but divinely expensive) plan God the Son should have offered Himself up as the atonement for sin? Are we still thrilled, humbled and awed by the knowledge that through His singular sacrifice we should have the miraculous gift of freedom from sin? Is the reality that we have the Spirit of God dwelling within this mortal frame still as vivid and life-enhancing as it ever was when we first responded to the loving call of Jesus our Saviour? I don't know whether the above quotation was said in a spiritual or physical context. In reality, it doesn't matter, simply read it and pause for a moment to assess for yourself whether the spiritual fire still burns as brightly as it should.

### **The miracle of eternal life**

And what about the miracle of eternal life; the miracle that we should, through Christ, be bound up into the unity of the Godhead with the everlasting God, Creator of the Universe, Jesus the Son and the Holy Spirit. That's a promise which John referred to at the start of his first letter, when he enjoins his readers into the fellowship of the apostles, who were eye-witnesses of things pertaining to the 'word of life', going on to note that the apostle's fellowship "**is with the Father and His Son Jesus Christ.**" (1 John 1:3) If we no longer pause to wonder and stand rapt in awe at the majesty, beauty, kindness and overwhelming love of our God and Redeemer then, spiritually, are our eyes are closed and we are as good as dead.

At the end of John's magnificent account of the purpose and nature of Jesus contained in his Gospel record, he states the overriding purpose for his account. "**Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in his name.**" (John 20:31, 31). John wanted us, through his eye-witness account of the actions of Jesus, both before and after his resurrection, to understand the expressions of his Divine authority and power that were revealed through his 'signs', first amongst which was the resurrection itself, the ultimate acknowledgement of Christ's Sonship and Divinity. Through these we have believed that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God – and we have life in his name. We have life – what a sublime gift the Lord has bestowed upon us.

I sometimes fear that against the backdrop of our Western cultures, where everyone has rights but few seem to accept obligations and responsibilities, and where self sufficiency has replaced a dependence on God, even in the Church we may be losing sight of the miracle that is our salvation; that God is slipping away from his rightful place in our lives. Let's look again at the miracle of God's saving grace and 'pause to wonder and stand rapt in awe' and resolve to restore God, and His Son our Saviour, to pre-eminence in our lives.

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One cool judgement is worth a thousand hasty councils. The thing to do is to supply light and not heat.



**Question: When our Lord instituted the Feast....He said "Do this in memory of Me." How should we remember?**

A brother whom I have known for very many years, and for whom I have great respect, has raised an important question concerning the celebration of the Lord's Supper. Although his question was raised in a personal letter, he has kindly given me permission to comment on it in 'The Question Box', and I am happy to do this, because I recognise that the issue he has raised affects – or *should* affect – us all.

The question springs from the fact that, whilst we are urged by the Lord to "*Do this in remembrance of me*", as our brother rightly points out in his letter there are no explicit or detailed instructions as to *how* we are to remember. He wonders what guidance we should give to young or new Christians.

This question is one that certainly merits attention, especially from those in our congregations who occupy positions of leadership. It must be admitted that only in a well-organised congregation is the time taken to give new converts guidance in the matter of their observance of the Lord's Supper. 'Babes in Christ' are, all too often, left to 'fend for themselves' when the Table is spread, with the result that they do not derive from the celebration of the Supper as rich a blessing as they might.

However, whilst it is true that the scriptures do not tell us how we should feel, or what we should think, when we take the unleavened bread and the fruit of the vine, they *do* contain indications and inferences which give us some degree of guidance.

1. Let us begin in the Upper Room, where Jesus and the disciples met to remember the Jewish Passover. There, when after the Passover celebration the Lord instituted His own Supper, He clearly established the connection between the death of the Passover lamb, the blood of which provided safety and shelter for the Israelites in Egypt, and His own death as the 'Lamb of God', whose blood was shed to ratify the New Covenant and provide our deliverance from sin.

On that occasion, He specifically declared that His blood was shed '*eis aphesin hamartion*' = '*for the remission of sins*', (Matt.26;28), – (this is the identical expression, used by Peter in Acts 2;38 in connection with the act of baptism.) As we celebrate the Supper, therefore, we might think about the high cost of our salvation, remembering that we have been redeemed by "**precious blood, as of a lamb without spot or blemish.**" (1st Pet.1:19).

2. You will also recall that, in 1st Cor.11, Paul states that what he had learned about the institution of the Supper he had learned "**from Lord Himself.**" (v.23). We should not overlook the significance of this piece of information, because it means that not only is Paul's both an accurate and an authoritative account of the events of that night, it is also the *earliest* account we have of those events, since the 1st letter to the Corinthians pre-dates all four of the Gospel narratives.

Paul also declares that, "**As often as you eat the bread and drink the cup you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.**" (v. 26) I recall that about forty years ago, I heard the scholarly F.F.Bruce say that the expression '*you proclaim*' the Lord's death, literally means, '*you tell again*' the Lord's death. This tells us that every time the early

Christians met together to celebrate the Supper, either in the very act of celebration itself, or in the words that were spoken on that occasion, there was a recalling and a re-telling of the most important facts that are the foundation of Christian faith.

They *'told again'* the story of His death - and, at the same time, they *proclaimed the message of His return*. This surely means they must have *thought* about both of these events, when, in obedience to His request/command, they kept the Feast.

3. It is true, of course, that we all think and feel about the death of the Lord in different ways and at different depths of spiritual intensity, because we are at different stages of spiritual maturity. In every congregation there are Christians who hold a faith that is both simple and uncomplicated, but which is for them, even though simple and uncomplicated, no less real and satisfying.

There are other believers, older in the faith and therefore more mature. who, when they take the bread and the fruit of the vine, find themselves led into a more profound contemplation of the mystery and wonder of the Saviour's sacrifice. Who can tell how wide a range of thought is represented in a congregation, when the Supper is celebrated?

I say this because I have in mind the statement which John makes in Rev.1:10. He says, **"I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day."** On the isle of Patmos, isolated from his brethren on the mainland, John did not forget the Lord's Day when it came around. He knew that on that special day the churches in Asia would be meeting to remember the Saviour.

He could not be physically present with them, but he could be with them in spirit, and he therefore took time for spiritual contemplation. I have no doubt that, on the Lord's own Day, John thought about the Lord Himself and remembered with gratitude what Jesus had done to make salvation possible (vv.5-6). **"Unto Him who loves us and loosed us from our sins...!"** Contemplation and meditation led to worship and praise!

One cannot think about the Supper and what it signifies, without recognizing, as did John, that everything it represents had its origin in Love. As we sit together at the Lord's Table, we too should be lead into thankfulness and praise.

4. In conclusion, I suggest that, when we celebrate the Lord's Supper, it is fitting that Christians, young and old, should be encouraged by those who lead the service, to think about *anything* involved in the life and death of the Lord, as, for example, is suggested by such passages as Gal.4:4, which reminds us:-

- a) *When* He came = **"in the fullness of time."** His supernatural birth occurred at the precisely planned moment in our Heavenly Father's perfect plan of redemption.
- b) *How* He came = **"born of woman."** He was truly Man, yet His life was the perfect example of sinless obedience to the will of the Father.
- c) *Why* He came = **"to redeem."** He 'bought us back' from the bondage of sin, by offering Himself as the purchase-price of our salvation.

Our brother G.Y.Tickle expressed this so well in his fine hymn:

*"Remember Thee! Thy death, Thy shame,  
Our hearts' sad load to bear?  
O memory! Leave no other Name  
Than His recorded there!"*

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# Biblical Archaeology 5

**Ian Davidson (Motherwell)**

Our field trip to Jerusalem concluded with a visit to the Canaanite settlement of Nahal Refaim. This site was first discovered in 1979 during the archaeological survey of the southern suburbs of modern Jerusalem. Finds in this one-time rural community have included a temple and several votive pottery vessels. Some experts believe that Nahal Refaim is the Biblical Manahath. (Joshua 15:59)

Our next field trip, which involved an overnight stay in a kibbutz guest house, saw us at Tel Yarmuth and Horvat Rosh Zayit. Yarmuth or Jarmuth is found in the Bible in Joshua 10:3,5,23; 12:11; 15:35; and Nehemiah 11:29. Jarmuth was a leading Amorite city at one time. 'Late Bronze walls and pottery indicate occupation of 6 - 8 acres by a population of 1500 - 2000 before the Israelite invasion.' (New Bible Dictionary). Rosh Zayit is the Biblical Cabul, which is the name of a border city in the tribal location of Asher. (Joshua 19:27; 1 Kings 9:13) Zvi Gal, of the northern district for the Israel Antiquities Authority, has directed excavations at ancient Cabul - King Solomon's gift to King Hiram of Tyre. His team has discovered a fortress; a two-roomed pillared building; a large complex of oil presses and an Israelite four-room house. Other finds include storage jars; a small group of clay seals; large bowls and jugs. The final destruction of Horvat Rosh Zayit probably came in 841BC at the hands of the Assyrian king Shalmaneser III. Later a village re-appeared near the old fort, but this too was destroyed by the Assyrian king Tiglath-pileser III, who conquered the Northern Kingdom of Israel in 733/732 BC.

Next day, we journeyed to the ancient sites of Tel Hazor, Tel Dan and Banias. This was a most memorable field trip. Hazor is one of the most famous archaeological sites in Israel. Hazor was a city captured by Joshua. (Joshua 11:10). We read: "**...for Hazor was the head of all those kingdoms.**" (Joshua 11:10b). Later we read of Jabin, king of Canaan, reigning from this same city (Judges 4:2). He threatened Israel in the days of Deborah. Later still, we read of the fortification of Hazor, along with Jerusalem, Megiddo and Gezer, by Solomon (1 Kings 9:15). Eventually, the city was destroyed by Tiglath-pileser III in the days of Pekah, King of Israel (2 Kings 15:29).

The first major excavations at Hazor were directed by the famous Yigael Yadin. These followed trial soundings in 1928 by the equally famous John Garstang. Hazor, sited about 20 miles north of the Sea of Galilee, also appears in extra-Biblical texts. The Egyptian Execration Texts (c. 19th - 18th centuries BC) curse Hazor as an enemy of Egypt and an 18th century BC Babylonian tablet reports that Hammurabi's ambassadors resided in Hazor. The current dig is under the directorship of Amnon Ben-Tor, the Yigael Yadin Professor of Archaeology at Hebrew University, Jerusalem. Excavators have found a Middle Bronze Age Canaanite palace and cultic buildings; Israelite and Canaanite fortifications; and an Israelite administrative building, along with clay tablets, sculptures and jewellery' (Biblical Archaeology Review). Prof. Ben-Tor has written: 'Hazor was the most important site in southern Canaan. It controlled the main trade route and military routes that connected Israel to Phoenicia and beyond, to Syria, Anatolia, Mesopotamia and Egypt. Hazor holds an honoured place in the history of modern Israeli archaeology. The expedition to Hazor in the

mid-1950's, led by the late Yigael Yadin, was the largest and most important archaeological excavation undertaken by the young state of Israel. Yadin employed hundreds of workers spread over the 200-acre site...Here, more than any other site in the country, the next generation of Israeli archaeologists was trained.'

Recent evidence has confirmed the Biblical record that Hazor was once destroyed by the Israelites. I am not surprised by this finding. After all, the Bible is God's revelation to mankind and is a revelation that is historically accurate. How could it be otherwise?

Tel Dan proved to be a special visit. There we met an exceptional individual - Professor Avraham Biran, who, at the time of our trip, was eighty years old. Everyone in our group could hardly keep up with him as he moved around the site at Dan like a young gazelle. He is still with us. He is the Director of the Nelson Gluek School of Biblical Archaeology at Hebrew Union College in Jerusalem. In 1995 he replaced the late Benjamin Mazar as president of the Israel Exploration Society. In his time, he has participated in excavations in Iraq and Jordan. He accompanied Nelson Gluek in his epoch-making discoveries at the head of the Gulf of Eilat. He has also directed excavations at Anathoth, Tel Zippor, Ira, Aroer, the synagogue of Yesud Hamaalah and Tel Dan, the longest ongoing excavation in Israel. In 1994, Prof. Biran published a 280-page book entitled *Biblical Dan*, which I read with great interest.

Dan was the most northerly Israelite city, hence the phrase "from Dan to Beersheba". Its earlier name was Laish (Judges 18:29). Following the division of the tribes, Dan, was elevated (along with Bethel) to the status of a national sanctuary by king Jeroboam I (I Kings 12:29f). Prof. Biran did not find the golden calf, but he did uncover enough evidence to enable his team to reconstruct Jeroboam's sanctuary. Other major finds at Dan include massive Canaanite ramparts; a Canaanite gate with three arches; a tomb with imported Mycenaean objects; extensive remains of metalworks. (2 Chronicles 2:7 & 13-14); Israelite fortifications; and an Aramaic stele. However, the most exciting discovery in recent years at Tel Dan has been that of an inscription by an Aramean king which mentions *Beth David*, the House, or Dynasty, of David. It also clearly mentions the 'King of Israel.'

I sat with Prof. Biran at the entrance to the old city beside the foundations of the main gate. He reminded me of the book of Ruth, where we read: **"Then went Boaz up to the gate, and sat him down there: and, behold, the kinsmen of whom Boaz spake came by; unto whom he said, Ho, such a one! Turn aside, sit down here. And he turned aside, and sat down. And he took ten men of the elders of the city, and said, Sit you down here. And they sat down."** (Ruth 4:1-2). "Young man, the city gate was the place for important assembly. It was also the place where legal business could be publicly transacted. To sit here is to follow their example." (Biran)

One of the people Biran studied under was William F. Albright (1891-1971), who is regarded as the father of modern Biblical Archaeology. Biran said of him in a recent interview: 'He was a towering figure. He knew so much that it was our total despair. He made us take courses, which I think to this day are utterly impossible...He taught us cuneiform and hieroglyphics... He was a genius, and we were just human beings.' I am sorry that I never met Albright; but, at least, I can say that I have met one of his star pupils - the unforgettable, Avraham Biran.

## News and Information

### ***Ghana Appeal***

Our Ghanaian brethren extend their thanks to you for your help in extending the Lord's Church, as well as enabling them to receive medical help in times of illness and infirmity.

We are encouraged to continue learning of new congregations being established, and without your funding this would not have progressed as quickly as it has. As well as individuals telling others, the Gospel is proclaimed through evangelizing campaigns. These invariably attract an interested crowd and contacts are made for further study.

In country areas some preachers and teachers travel between congregations by bicycle and, as this is often rough ground, tyres have to continually be replaced. We have just had another request for a bicycle for this purpose.

Brethren are keen to improve their understanding of the Bible and we have requests for study material.

There is a high incidence of illness including the wives of two church leaders, one of whom requires an operation. There is injury from a lorry accident, treatment for eye trouble and typhoid fever. A subsistence farmer, who depends completely on his produce to support his wife and family, is no longer able to do so because of severe back trouble. Assistance is also needed for elderly ladies living alone, as well as for widows with children.

Those wishing to contribute, please make cheques payable to: Dennyloanhead Church of Christ Ghana Fund and send to the treasurer, **Mrs. Janet Macdonald, 12 Charles Drive, Larbert, Falkirk, Stirlingshire. FK5 3HB. Tel: 01324 562480**

## News

### **Glenrothes, Scotland**

We are pleased to announce two new ministries for the Churches of Christ in Scotland.

***E-pistle*** Scotland delivers people-related news direct to your email inbox, e.g. baptisms, weddings, engagements, prayer requests etc.

***E-vents*** Scotland sends out regular reminders of up and coming Scottish Church events e.g. Gospel meetings, Lectureships, Youth Weekends, Camps, Ladies' Days, Church socials etc.

Both ministries share a single mission statement: To share good news of what is happening in Scottish Churches and to promote the support of Scottish-wide events. If you would like to be a part of either or both of these exciting new ministries, send your name, congregation where you attend, your preferred email address and which ministries you wish to subscribe to, to:

[Glenrothescoc@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:Glenrothescoc@yahoo.co.uk)

## Coming Events

### ***Peterhead***

***Merchant Street***

**Sunday 15th - Sunday 22nd**

**June 2003**

Meetings at 7.00pm each evening  
(including Sunday meetings)

*Speaker:* Bruce MacLarty

### ***Buckie***

***Social Meeting***

**Saturday, 3rd May 2003**

@ 3.00pm

*Speaker:* Bro. M. Glover, Birmingham who will also speak on following

**Lord's Day, 4th May**

*A warm welcome is extended to all.*