

The **SCRIPTURE STANDARD**

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

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PRINCE OF DEMONS

There have been numerous discussion programmes on T.V. recently, examining reports of local buildings being haunted, and investigating the possibility of there being such things as ghosts, or a spirit world. And just four days ago, the morning's newspapers informed us that a research team, led by Dr. Richard Wiseman, of Hertfordshire University, Britain's leading paranormal investigator, had arrived in Edinburgh to track down ghosts. He is leading a team of hundreds of volunteers and will distribute them overnight in the caverns and vaults below Niddrie Street, the Castle, South Bridge and Mary King's Close (A disused underground street said to be haunted by plague victims left to die; and by the ghost of a small girl and her dog). Dr. Wiseman unveiled the results of his investigation to the Edinburgh Science Festival yesterday, and told the press that whereas all of his volunteers had been fairly sceptical at the outset, 45% of those in the vaults under Niddrie Street had reported "some very unusual experiences" (but unfortunately he did not elaborate); and 50% of the other volunteers had similar experiences. Digital photographs taken, showed "strange white areas and green density spots" and, all in all, many of the volunteers emerged from their vigil quite shaken.

The spirit-world is perennially a source of fascination to each generation and a cause of continual speculation. There will, I suppose, always be two diametrically opposed views on the question of ghosts: those who scoff at the very suggestion, and those too scared to pass the cemetery after dark. Most of mankind will go to their graves unconvinced either way.

However, the spirit-world has always been with us, and although there is, in the world of spiritual (or spiritism), much deception and trickery, it is quite possible to contact the spirits of the dead; i.e. those who have "gone over to the other side". The fact that King Saul prohibited the practice of contacting the spirits of the dead speaks for itself. God is unlikely to prohibit something which, in itself, is impossible. As it turned out, Saul at a later date thought it necessary, himself, to consult a spiritualist (the witch of Endor), and, through her, managed to have a conversation with the prophet Samuel. Samuel had, of course, died some time previously. (1 Sam 28:7). The Bible still prohibits contact with the spirit-world and, of course, would not do so if there was no such thing as the spirit-world.

The encounters Jesus had with the spirit-world have always been, not only a source of awesome interest, but also of perplexing mystery, and we still ponder the identity of these spirits, from whence they came, to where they have gone and if they can come

back.

Jesus, and the twelve, and the seventy disciples, together, must have cast out countless demons, but only six cases are given specific mention in the gospels; viz. the Capernaum demoniac (Mark 1:23); the Gerasene demoniac (Mark 5:1); the dumb demoniac (Matt. 9:32); the blind and dumb demoniac (Matt 12:22); the Syrophenician demoniac (Mark 7:24); and the "epileptic" boy (Luke 9:37). Two instances, outside the gospel, are also mentioned, in Acts.

THEIR NATURE

Evil spirits (or demons) are mentioned throughout the Bible albeit mainly in N.T. times when Jesus was here. However, even in the O.T. we read of "seducing spirits" and "lying spirits" amongst the prophets (2 Chron. 28:21); "perverse spirits" (Isa. 19:14); "unclean spirit" (Zech. 13:2) and "evil spirits" (Judges 9:23 and 1 Sam. 16:14). Moses in his "song" records God's people provoking their God to jealousy when, **"They sacrificed unto demons, not to God, to gods whom they knew not, to new gods that came newly up whom their fathers knew not"**, and Paul echoes this truth when he says, **"The things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice unto demons and not to God, and I would not that ye should have fellowship with demons"** (1 Cor. 10:20). And so the *existence* of these spirits (gods to the Gentiles) or demons, is confirmed but their *deity* is denied. Thus they are distinct from men and also distinct from God, albeit spiritual beings. Besides having a similar spiritual nature to their master, they have also a similar character, and, like their master, who was **"a liar and a murderer from the beginning"**, they are classified as "unclean spirits": "Lying spirits": "spirits of error": "spirits of wickedness" and as indicated (in Matt, 12:45) some are even more wicked than others.

There were **no redeeming features** about these demons (or unclean spirits): they were combined in their opposition to God, and used their considerable powers to seduce, corrupt, deceive, vex and torment all those (humans) under their control. They afflicted their victims with blindness, dumbness, paralysis, insanity and a type of epilepsy. The Pharisees believed them to be the servants of the devil, Beelzebub, whom they described as the "Prince Of Demons": a title to which Jesus did not seem to object. (Matt. 12:24).

THEIR ORIGIN

All kinds of suggestions have been offered over the years as to the origin and identity of these evil spirits, how they came to the earth and what might have been their purpose: but, at the end of the day, I suppose we shall all have to make up our own minds. In Christ's time it seems that the general opinion was that unclean spirits were the disembodied spirits of wicked men who had somehow escaped "from the other side" and returned to occupy the bodies of men (or women) once again. This was the view of Josephus, the Jewish historian, (Wars 7.6,3) who was, of course, virtually a contemporary of Christ, and it was also the consensus of the early Christian writers, such as Origen, Iranaeus, Justin Martyr and others. Alexander Campbell also held this view very strongly and in his *Lectures And Addresses* said he could see no reason of any kind "to weigh against the evidence already adduced in support of the position that the demons of Pagans, Jews and Christians were the ghosts of dead men, and, as such, have taken possession of men's living bodies, and have moved, influenced and impelled them to certain courses of action." Far be it from me question the view of a man of Campbell's learning, but we are told in Ecclesiastes that upon the death of a person **"their spirit goes back to God who gave it"**, and, once in God's keeping, it would surely be a surprise, would it not, if God would carelessly lose possession of some of

these spirits and allow them to come back again to earth?

On the assumption that the devil is the greatest among the fallen angels, who not only tempted Christ in the wilderness, but also tempted Eve in the garden: who has long been the enemy of God and man, laying traps to snare the unwary and roaming the world seeking whom he may devour, it seems logical to think that the lesser evil spirits, the demons, are actually kindred spirits with Satan and came from where he came; i.e. **"angels which kept not their first estate"** (Jude 6). The demons were cunning, highly intelligent with supernatural knowledge, subtle, merciless, implacable, arrogant, aware that they were enemies of God and that punishment awaited them; and so they would seem to have had more in common with Satan, than they had with the spirits of dead men: even evil dead men.

DEMONIACS

Demoniacs were, of course, those subjected to the complete control of the demons. The evil spirits entered into, and took possession of, their victims sometimes for long periods of years, and utilised all their bodily faculties and mental powers, subjecting them to all manner of physical affliction, and even trying to kill them. In the case of the demoniac son, for instance, the demon threw the boy about, and even cast him into water and into the fire trying to destroy him (Matt. 9:22). The demons which occupied the "mad man" from the Gadarenes rendered him so strong that he could not be subdued, and could snap all chains and fetters. Once the evil spirit had been cast out, the boy and the "mad" man were really quite normal: i.e. any problem had been entirely due to the influence of the demon.

"Demon-possession" was quite separate from "divers diseases and torments", and from lunacy and palsy, and is always mentioned separately: viz. **"And they brought unto Him all sick people that were taken with divers diseases and torment, and those that were possessed with demons, and those that were lunatic, and those that had the palsy, and He healed them all"** (Matt. 4:24). There are many similar passages, and when Jesus sent out the twelve, and later the seventy, **"He gave them power over all demons and to cure diseases"**. (Luke 9:1).

Surely the most spectacular demoniac was the "mad" man of the Gadarenes, living in tombs, naked, fierce, cutting himself with stones, able to snap steel chains, tormented "for a long time" by a legion of demons. At the arrival of Jesus, however, the demons immediately surrendered and pleaded with Jesus to be cast into a large herd of swine nearby. The herd, on receiving the demons rushed down a steep incline into the sea and, all two thousand of them, perished. (Luke 8:26). The pigs died but did the 2,000 demons? Small wonder the herdsmen fled. Apparently the demons liked good billets, as Jesus confirms (in Matt 12:43) when He said, **"When an unclean spirit is gone out of a man, he walketh through dry places seeking rest and finding none"** i.e. restless creature. **"Then he saith I will return unto my house whence I came out, and when he is come, he findeth it empty, swept and garnished. Then goeth he, and taketh with himself seven other spirits, more wicked than himself, and they enter in and dwell there, and the last state of that man is worse than the first"**. This illustrates how demons could readily contact one another, and share their good fortune, and also how some were much more evil than others.

EXORCISM

"Exorcism", or the casting out of evil spirits, is fairly exclusive to N.T. times, and the fact that David's music had a calming effect on Saul (suffering depression from "an evil spirit from God" - 1 Sam. 16:14) while beneficial, can not be classed as an exorcism. Perhaps *the many references* to exorcisms in N.T. times was because of "a

showdown", at that time, between good and evil. Jesus, at the commencement of His ministry, had been tempted of the devil in the wilderness and had been victorious. He now demonstrates His power over the forces of evil by casting out demons, the very servants of the Satanic one. Indeed when the seventy returned with joy, saying "Lord, even the devils are subject unto us through thy name", Jesus replied, "I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven" (Luke 10:17). The demons, for their part, all knew at once that Jesus was now on the earth, acknowledged Him as "The Son of God" (which is more than the Pharisees or Bishop Holloway would) and grovelled at His feet in a futile attempt to deceive or appease Him.

Apart from exorcisms in the gospels, exorcisms are also mentioned in the Acts, where crowds brought their sick into the streets, hoping that even the shadow of Peter might fall on them, and "those that were vexed with unclean spirits" were also healed: every one (5:15). Likewise, when Philip converted many in Samaria he also, in the process, performed many miracles, and ". . . unclean spirits, crying with a loud voice came out of many of them that were possessed of them" (Acts 8:7). In one instance, an evil spirit was used commercially by the masters of "a certain damsel possessed with the spirit of divination, which brought her masters much gain by soothsaying", and we can imagine their great anger when this very powerful source of information was lost. Paul cast out the demon "in the name of Jesus Christ", but seems to have done so only because her behaviour was making her a nuisance (Acts 16:16).

We assume that the power of exorcism was confined, in the beginning, to the twelve and the seventy, but John complained of having encountered a man who was casting out demons in Christ's name but who was *not one of them (the disciples)* and that he (John) forbade him to do it. Jesus replied that John was remiss in forbidding the man, for no man can do a miracle in Christ's name who is not with Him (Luke 9:49). Exorcism does not appear to have been one of the supernatural gifts of the Holy Spirit but may have come under the heading of the "gift of healing". Paul was certainly not one of the twelve, yet he was powerful in casting out demons. Indeed, in Acts 19:11 we read that God wrought "special miracles" by the hand of Paul, so that from his body were brought unto the sick, handkerchiefs or aprons, and the diseases departed from them, and "the evil spirit went out of them". And so, Paul could cast out demons from long-distance just by sending a small garment which had touched his body.

JEWISH EXORCISTS

While Luke is telling us this, he goes on to describe an attempt by "certain vagabond Jews", who regarded themselves as exorcists, who "took upon themselves to call over them which had evil spirits", and said, "We adjure you by Jesus whom Paul preacheth". These Jews were seven in number and all the sons of Sceva, the High Priest. The evil spirit replied, "Jesus I know and Paul I know, but who are ye" and thereupon attacked all seven of them so viciously that they all fled from the house naked and wounded: an outcome which had a profound effect on all those in the locality. And so the sham, or unqualified, exorcists were easily recognised by the demons and sent on their way. It appears however, that there may have been some who could cast out demons, quite apart from Jesus and His disciples. For instance, when Jesus was accused of casting out devils by the power of Beelzebub (Matt. 12:24), He asked His accusers, ". . . by whom then do your sons cast them out": indicating that some Jews were, at least, trying to cast them out. With what measure of success we are not told. And so the inference of our Lord's question suggests that there were, in fact, exorcists, much like the seven sons of Sceva, offering to cast out demons. Indeed,

Josephus describes an exorcism which he personally witnessed (Ant. 8.2.5.). Space prevents a lengthy quotation, but he does aver that when God gave Solomon wisdom, that wisdom allowed Solomon to concoct various spells and incantations for the casting out of demons. He describes being in the presence of the Roman ruler Vespasian, together with a large crowd of officers and soldiers; watching Eleazor (a Jewish exorcist) insert a herb root in the nose of the demon-possessed, and thereafter draw the evil spirit out through the man's nostrils, in the name of Solomon. Eleazor also used to place a basin of water nearby and command the demon to upset the basin, as proof of its departure. Josephus also describes the incredible properties of one of the plant roots (Baaras) used by exorcists (Wars 7.6.3). It is said that a book called "*The Testament Of Solomon*", full of marvellous demonology, still exists. The great gulf of difference between the likes of Eleazor (assuming he was genuine) and Jesus, was, that Jesus did not require herb roots, spells, incantations or upturned buckets of water, to move the evil spirits, but cast out demons (even legions at a time) with but a word. The demons all knew Him and complied at once, with fear and trembling.

CONCLUSION

Obviously it is difficult to "sum up" such a puzzling subject. It does not appear that demons are around today, albeit the devil is still seeking whom he may devour. Some ascribe demon-possession to the really evil cases of madness in mental asylums, or to really diabolical men like Hitler or Stalin, but clearly it is quite possible to be extremely evil without being "demon-possessed". The demons, as we have seen, "possessed" their victim (their voice, limbs and volition) so that the victim had no control of its actions. This was not the case with the likes of Hitler, Stalin or Jack The Ripper.

As already mentioned, the devil is ever active, **but he can be resisted**; and, if repulsed will desist. "**Resist the devil and he will flee from you.**" (James 4:7). "**Paul on the whole armour of God**", said Paul, "**that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil**". (Eph. 6:11). And so, although not "demon possessed", it is still quite possible to fall for "the wiles of the devil" devil and suffer the consequences. Eve was not demon-possessed, but we can see how her simple brush with the serpent changed the entire course of history. John says, "**He that committeth sin is of the devil, for the devil sinneth from the beginning. FOR THIS PURPOSE the Son of man manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil**" (1 John 3:8). When accused of being Beelzebub, Jesus replied that it would be strange indeed if Beelzebub would cast himself out, *but rather*, Christ's casting out of demons showed that HE (Jesus) had entered the strong man's domain and robbed him (bearded the devil in his own den), and that Christ's God-given power over the demons was "**by the finger of God**" and a potent sign that "**the Kingdom of God had come**" (Luke 11:20).

Dr. Richard Wiseman and his volunteers had "some very unusual experiences" in Edinburgh, trying to locate the spirit-world. While we can well understand the curiosity of those who search for ghosts, it has to be said that it would be much more profitable, indeed eternally profitable, for men to look for God. And the Lord is much closer than we think, for, as Paul says, ". . . men should seek the Lord, if haply they feel after Him, and find Him, though He be not far from any one of us. For in Him we live and move and have our being." (Acts 17:27). "**And when they shall say unto you, Seek unto them that have familiar spirits, and unto wizards that peep, and that mutter: should not a people seek unto their God?**" (Isa. 8:19). Yes, it is infinitely more profitable to seek the Lord, and "**thou shalt find Him if thou shalt seek Him with all thy heart, and with all thy soul**". (Deut. 4:29).

A GOOD NEIGHBOUR

No words express greater appreciation and praise of another than for one to say "He, (or she) is a good neighbour."

Being a Christian involves much more than being a good neighbour. As a matter of fact, being a good neighbour is just half of being a Christian, and the second half at that. But it is certainly true that no one can be a good Christian without being a good neighbour.

The law of Moses defined most inter-personal conduct in terms of conduct towards one's "neighbour." The last five of the ten commandments relate to man's duty to his fellow-man in general. In two of them the word "neighbour" is used: "**Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour**" and "**Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's house, thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's wife, nor his manservant, nor his maidservant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor anything that is thy neighbour's.**" In the additional statutes and ordinances that spell out the terms and the penalties of the law, the word "neighbour" is used with respect to the other three commands that relate to man's dealing with others. In all the word occurs 36 times in the laws and ordinances of Exodus, Leviticus, and Deuteronomy.

In the midst of a list of fairly typical Old Testament ordinances, and consisting of only part of a verse as man has made those divisions, there occur some words that are later to be seen as much more highly significant than their position in the chapter might indicate: "**Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.**"

This verse, called "the royal law" by James, and described as the second greatest commandment by Jesus, is quoted or plainly alluded to 11 times in the New Testament, always in a context which places great significance upon it. When one combines that with parallel accounts in the gospels, Jesus still refers to this commandment at least four times, and emphasis is given to it three times in the epistles.

When a rich young ruler asked Jesus which commandments he should obey in order to have eternal life, all of the commandments Jesus quoted to him were from the ten commandments except "**Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.**" Then, when Jesus was asked, "**Which is the greatest commandment in the law?**" he replied "**Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.**" Then Jesus added, as the next verse records, "**On these commandments hang all the law and prophets.**"

LOVE AND LAW

The apostle Paul twice makes basically the same affirmation as Jesus makes, using the expression, "**Love fulfils the law.**" In the Galatian letter, after calling the brethren to their liberty, he commands, **Only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another: For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this: Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.**" And again we read, "**Owe no man anything but to love one another: for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law. For this, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not kill, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Thou shalt not covet: and if there be any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, namely, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. Love worketh no ill to his neighbour; therefore love is a fulfilling of the law.**"

No wonder it is such a wonderful thing to be or to have a good neighbour. A good neighbour does no harm but rather seeks his neighbour's good. And when he loves his neighbour as himself, he seeks his neighbour's good as zealously as he seeks his own.

Paul not only repeats Jesus' sentiment that love fulfils the law, however; he also declares that love is defined by the law. "**Love works no ill to his neighbour;**" that is plainly the reason why "**Love is the fulfilment of the law.**" Both Jesus and Paul clearly believe that "ill" to one's neighbour is defined in the law's term. To commit adultery, to steal, to bear false witness; these things work ill to one's neighbour, and because they do, love will avoid them. That is why and how love fulfils the law. This is one of the major points at which "situation ethics" goes wrong. Situation ethics says love is the only law and leaves love undefined except as the one loving defines it for the situation. Hence it expressly states that adultery, lying, or stealing may in a given situation be the loving thing. The Bible says that these things by their very nature and by the nature of Christian love, are always, in every situation a violation of love.

James adds his voice to Jesus' and Paul's in this regard. He declares, "**If ye fulfil the royal law according to the scripture. Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself, ye do well.**" Then he goes on to specify that violations of the laws against murder, adultery, and respect of persons are violations of this royal law and therefore are sin.

WHO IS MY NEIGHBOUR ?

One important question, though, still remains unanswered at this point: **Who** is my neighbour? Who is it we are to love as ourselves? It is interesting to note that this question was raised by a lawyer, who with remarkable insight saw that the law could be summarised just as Jesus would summarise it. He first asked Jesus "**What shall I do to inherit eternal life?**" Jesus usually answers questions with either another question, a scripture, or as story. In this exchange, in which he is asked two questions, he employs two of these methods. First he responds with a question, "**What is written in the law?**" The lawyer replies with two summary commandments: Love God supremely; love thy neighbour as thyself. Jesus not surprisingly replies, "Thou hast answered right: This do and thou shalt live." But the lawyer is not quite content. He wishes to "justify himself", either for asking such a foolish question which he could so easily have answered himself, or for his conduct in confining his love to his own class and kind. "He, willing to justify himself, said unto Jesus, **And who is my neighbour?**"

Jesus answers this time with a story, with one of the greatest stories ever told. It is told not just as a story, the telling of an incident, but a parable, a story with a message, "an earthly story with a heavenly meaning." It is the story of the good Samaritan. But only this parable told by Jesus, would ever have put together the words "good" and "Samaritan". The Jews had no dealings with the Samaritans, as a Samaritan woman once reminded Jesus. The Samaritans were hated and despised: hated as a mongrel race, despised for their mongrel religion. But Jesus told, not of a Jew helping a Samaritan, which would have been shocking enough, but of a Samaritan helping a Jew, who had been neglected by his own religious leaders, surprising for the Samaritan, considered degrading to the Jew. When, however, Jesus drove the point home with the question, "Which . . . was neighbour to him that fell amongst thieves?" the lawyer had to reply: "He that showed mercy upon him." Jesus' injunction, "Go and do thou likewise," clearly crystallises Jesus' answer. Who is our neighbour whom we are to love as ourselves? Whomever we see who is in need of our neighbourliness!

"**If ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? . . . And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more than others.**" It is not one that one is nearby, or likes us, or good to us that makes him our neighbour. It is his need. "Love thy neighbour as thyself."

Are you a good neighbour?

WHITED SEPULCHRES

Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are like unto whited sepulchres, which outwardly appear beautiful, but inwardly are full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness. Even so ye also outwardly appear righteous unto men, but inwardly ye are full of hypocrisy and iniquity" (Matt. 23:27,28; ASV).

Earlier in chapter 23 of Matthew (v. 13) Jesus began his pronouncement of the seven woes. This was his last public discourse before the crucifixion and perhaps his strongest. He gives seven denunciations of punishment against the scribes and Pharisees, whom he has been chastising all during his ministry for their wrong conduct. This particular woe is the sixth one of the seven. Let's now go into a deeper look at this sixth woe and see what applications can be made to us today.

A.T. Robertson, in his *Word Pictures in the New Testament*, states that the word for whited sepulchre in the Greek (*taphois kekonianmenios*) refers to the tomb being whitened with powdered lime dust; the sepulchres of the poor on the roadside, not of the rich, who had rock hewn tombs. These are whitewashed a month in advance so travellers going to the Passover could see them and avoid being defiled by touching them.

This same lesson is taught in Luke by an exact opposite figure. In Luke 11:44, Jesus has been asked to dine with a Pharisee, and some murmur because he hadn't taken a bath beforehand. Jesus then went about telling of their faults in three woes. In verse 44 he says, "*Woe unto you! for ye are as the tombs which appear not, and the men that walk over them know it not.*" According to the old Mosaic law, anyone touching a grave was unclean. The grave was defiled for seven days (Num. 19:16). They were usually whitewashed once a year as a warning to other Jews. But Jesus likens the Pharisee as a tomb having not been whitewashed. Their hypocrisy covered up what they really were, so that unsuspecting men were corrupted or hurt by their influence without knowing it. This surely would make the Pharisees to whom Jesus was speaking cringe, to think they had been compared to something as repulsive as an unmarked grave.

ARE WE ANY BETTER?

If it made the Pharisees upset, what would that same type of language do to us if we were spoken of as graves full of dead men's bones? Most, if not all, of the Pharisees would deny this accusation. If it had been preached to us, instead of them, would we examine ourselves to see if it was true of us, or would we, as the Pharisees, deny that it was true? Knowing how defensive of our actions we are, I suspect, we, too, would cast it off as being false, without one consideration of its being true. We expect the solemn truth from everyone else. We want to know the true facts, about the things we buy and about our friends and leaders. Truth in advertising is something we demand.

Yes, we are concerned in having honesty, *except* when it applies to ourselves. What we do is *our* business. *How* we sell our old car is not half as important as it is to sell it. All the rules of fair play are cast aside when it applies to us. We, somehow, are exempt from truthful and honest practices. We *appear* to be concerned and honest to others, yet inside we are full of deceit and lies. We are filled with "dead men's bones." This has been concerned mostly with the business and worldly nature of us, but what about our spiritual side? Are we really concerned Christians, or is that just our outward appearance, while we have a different nature or character underneath? In other words, are we really what we profess to be?

Jesus was looking at the heart of the Pharisees, and contrasting that with what they professed to be, when he pronounced the woes upon them. What they claimed to be didn't measure up with what they really were. Do we fit in this category? Does our

heart match up with our actions or do they conflict? Do we *profess* one thing while we *perform* something else totally different? A popular saying of recent years is "what you are speaks so loudly I can't hear what you're saying," and its true.

Men, are we the type of person who has a Christian appearance, but lose it at work, or as soon as we leave the church building? Women, do we profess our faith and dedication to God on Sunday and then gossip about various members to our neighbours on Monday? Young people, do we tell of our love and zeal for lost souls to brothers and sisters, and yet tell filthy jokes to those lost souls at school? Are we the type of Christian that can live as wild a life as the sinner does? If so, we are not Christians at all. This type of life has done more for driving away lost souls than any other factor I can think of. Our life is an example to those around us. What kind of example has yours been to others.

MOTIVES IN WORSHIP

But let's delve one step further. We have looked at how we behave among other Christians vs. the outside world. Let's now look at our actions during worship. What are our motives during Services? Is it just to receive praises from men, or from God? Earlier in chapter 23 of Matthew Jesus spoke of the Pharisees in this way: "*But all their works they do to be seen of men: for they make broad all their phylacteries, and enlarge the borders of their garments, and love the chief seats in the synagogues, and the salutations in the marketplace, and to be called of men Rabbi.*" Customs may have changed from Jesus' day to ours, but people haven't. We still sit by those who'll gratify us, we still love to hear how well we can sing, lead a prayer, give a talk, etc. We still are rejecting God, for we still would rather have the "praises of men" than "praises of God."

One of the best examples of useless worship is a case we all have witnessed. Everything this person does for his religion was loudly publicized. It seems he (or she) has to tell all of us if he's baptized someone, counseled someone, brought one back to the fold, etc. He lives to hear praise of how great a Christian he is. All his efforts seem to be for the purpose of being seen of men. But Jesus, in the Sermon on the Mount, had something different to say. "*Take heed that ye do not your righteousness before men, to be seen of them: else ye have no reward with your Father who is in heaven.*" "*Verily, I say to you, they have received their reward*" (Matt. 6:1,5). Worship is from the heart. How can we expect, then, to receive the praise of God when we do our righteous deeds for praise from our friends? We have not worshipped God at all! Our reward will lie with the recognition of men, not from God on the day of judgement.

RITUALISM

We must, then, be careful of our motives in worship. We also must not fall into the snare of ritualism. Do we just sing three songs, have a few prayers, take of the Lord's Supper, hear a sermon, visit with friends for a few minutes, and go home feeling secure? We still haven't worshipped the Lord. John 4:24 tells us that "*God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship in spirit and truth.*" Men must offer a worship that is similar with the nature and characteristics of God. A.T. Robertson relates the phrase "in spirit and truth" (*en pneumati kai aletheiai*) in this way. "This is what matters, not where, **but how** (in reality, in the spirit of man, the highest part of man, and so in truth). All this according to the Holy Spirit (Rom. 8:5) who is the Spirit of Truth (John 16:13). Here Jesus has said the final word on worship one needed today." Our attitude of mind, of heart, is most important when we turn our thoughts and affections to the One worthy of worship. Our devotion must be placed with God. not with the admiration of men.

Jesus compared the Pharisees and scribes to whitened sepulchres; white outside but full of dead men's bones, being hypocritical and filled with iniquity. We must strive not to fit this description of Jesus today. We must be a Christian not only during worship, but at work, home, school, etc. We must carefully monitor our motives in worship, to make sure we are in harmony with Biblical teaching. We must also take care to watch our works *for the Lord*, not for men. "**Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.**"

R. JOHNSON.



Conducted by
Frank Worgan

- (Continued from last month) -

The Lord's View of Fasting

What he thought about this practice is also revealed in Mark 2:18-22, where we find him being criticized for failing to instruct his disciples to fast.

After all, they were apparently neglecting to do what all really devout Jews were expected to do, whether Pharisees and their disciples, or disciples of John the Baptizer!

Notice especially, that a marginal note tells us that the Lord's critic asked, "*Why do we and the Pharisees fast frequently . . . ?*" So, this questioner tells us two things:

First, that there certainly was a section of Jewish society that fasted 'often'.

Second, that Jesus clearly did not regard fasting as a religious duty, because he had not taught his own disciples to fast. In fact, the disciples of Jesus might be called the 'Non-conformists' of their time, because they did not follow the practice of the majority.

Now listen to the Lord's response, in verses 19-22 of Mark chapter 2.

He might have brushed aside the criticism by saying something like, "*The fasting about which you speak is unessential, because it is not commanded by the Law of God*". Instead, he gave an answer which is most significant because it revealed that not only fasting, but also *the entire ceremonial law* was soon to have no meaning. He said, in effect,

"Whilst the Bridegroom is present with his friends there is no need to fast. And when he is absent, it will not be necessary to tell them to fast, because the sorrow they feel at his absence will guide them as to how they should behave, without having a law imposed upon them".

Then, he went on to illustrate this teaching by using the two examples of the wineskins and the cloth. He said that new wine is not put into old wineskins, because the old cannot contain the vitality and freshness of the new.

Similarly, you do not sew a piece of strong, new cloth on an old garment, because if you try to do so, you will find that the threads of the old garment are weak and you merely make a larger rent.

In other words, fasting, says the Lord, is one of the practices which belong to the old system, and the vital spirit of the new faith - the coming Christian dispensation - cannot be put into the old forms of Judaism.

The Practical Meaning of this Teaching

How does this fit in with what the Lord says in Matt? 6:16, in the 'Sermon on the

Mount'?

Well, I repeat, he was expressing neither approval nor disapproval of a practice which the Jews had imposed upon themselves. He was saying that their fasting might be either a good thing, or a bad thing.

If they engaged in it sincerely, as a genuine sign of humility and repentance, and fasted in order to concentrate their minds in order to be able to give proper attention to spiritual matters, it would be a good thing.

But, if they engaged in it simply in order to impress people with their piety and to show how 'religious' they were, it was a bad thing.

There were, the Lord, said, certain people who deliberately put on a doleful face and who even disfigured their faces. They *whitened* their faces, to emphasize how pale their self-denial had made them! And it is not without significance that the Pharisees choose to fast on two days of the week - Monday and Thursdays - which just happened to be market days! You can readily imagine how crowded Jerusalem would be on market days!

The Lord does not mince his words. He says, bluntly that they do it '*to be seen by men*'. They want to be praised for their piety. This, they will certainly receive. But that is the *only* praise they will receive, for they will not receive the praise of God. Therefore, his advice to his fellow-Jews amounted to this:

"If you decide to fast, do it the right way. Keep it to yourself. Do not make a show of your devotion. So far as our outward appearance is concerned, when you fast look normal! There is no need for others to know that you are fasting. Let it be a matter between God and you."

Back to the original Question!

"Should Christians fast today?" Couched in this form the answer to the question must be "No!" That word 'should' implies compulsion. It speaks of compliance with a requirement - something which *ought* to be done - and, as we have seen, there is no law of Christ that imposes the obligation to fast.

If the question is *uncouched*, "May Christians fast?", the answer is surely, "Yes".

But it remains something about which an individual must decide for himself.

We can all appreciate, I am sure, that whilst there is nothing in the teaching of the New Testament requiring Christians to fast as an act of devotion or worship, fasting may well be something from which, in these days of stress and excess, modern men and women of the Western world at any rate, might benefit.

Can you think of any advantages that might be derived from the occasional fast?

So then, when do you propose to begin?

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

GETTING WHAT WE DESERVE

Recently I ran across the following statement in some clippings I have accumulated: "Though we can't have everything we want, we should be thankful we don't get what we deserve." All of us tend to dwell on what we do not have more than upon what we do possess. We become envious of the possessions of others. Man's avarice is really a problem. As one man observed, we would all like to have "just a little more money than we could ever spend." We observe others and feel we deserve more simply because they have more, rather than being thankful for what we do have.

Actually, we should probably be thankful we do not get what we deserve, either

materially or spiritually. But for the grace of God we could have been born at a different time, in a different culture, and under very different circumstances. We should be thankful for things being as well with us as they are. The next time we start feeling proud and self-sufficient about "our" accomplishments we should think of all the people in the world who have toiled much harder than we have so much less to show for all their efforts. If it were just a matter of reward for effort expended, in all honesty, many of us would have much less than we now have.

This same attitude should characterize us regarding our spirituality. When we start feeling proud of our spiritual accomplishments we need to remember Paul's words of warning in 1 Corinthians, "*Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall.*" But for the grace of God we might be lying somewhere in the gutter of sin.

Let's be thankful for what we have and are. Let's give God the credit he deserves for the rich blessing he has bestowed upon us both materially and spiritually. Let's be glad he has not given to many of us what we deserve!

N. BRANSON.

SCRIPTURE READINGS

July 1	Exodus 30:1-16	Matthew 17:14-27
July 8	Genesis 28:1-15	Matthew 18:1-20
July 15	Genesis 45:1-15	Matthew 18:21-35
July 22	Duet. 23:15 to 24:4	Matthew 19:1-15
July 29	Duet. 8	Matthew 19:16-30

TEMPLE TAX

Every male Jew between the ages of twenty and fifty was obliged to pay an annual tax of half a shekel for the maintenance of the temple in Jerusalem. The withholding of this payment would not help the cause of Jesus among His fellow Jews - so He paid it. He set an example for all the Jewish Christians who lived during the period A.D. 30 to 70. "This story emphasises the fact that Jesus was a loyal Jew who accepted the imposition of the Temple tax, but was under no theological obligation to pay it. The analogy of the Roman government taxing aliens heavily would be well understood" (R.E. Nixon). Incidentally, the Greek word for "tribute" (17:24) is *didrachmon*, a half-shekel.

THE GREATEST IN THE KINGDOM

Jesus had to point out to His disciples that humility was the way to greatness in the kingdom of God. He

used a child as an illustration. An infant is innocent, trusting and selfless. A follower of Jesus should be childlike, not, of course, childish. Jesus' words are clear: "**Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven**" (18:4). Jews believed then that infants were specially protected by God and each had guardian angels. Jesus confirmed this view (10). A son or daughter of God could expect similar protection. Those who tried to tempt one of His children to sin (6) could expect appropriate Divine retribution. The Master spoke of "everlasting fire" (8) and Gehenna (9). His words should be heeded by all.

BROTHERLY BEHAVIOUR

Church discipline is an important subject. Disciples and discipline go hand in hand. If believers throughout history had always followed what Jesus instructed here (15-22) then the body of Christ would certainly be in a better and healthier state. There is no substitute for simply following what the Lord says. Every time I read this portion of Scripture, I am reminded of W. Carl Ketcherside's book - *A clean Church*. It deals with this very subject of church discipline and is one of the best of the thirty-two books he penned. In it he wrote: "Let us pray for each other that we may

be pure and holy in His sight. Let us purge out of our heart all envy, malice and rancour; let us keep our bodies a clean dwelling place for the Spirit of God. When a brother is overtaken in a fault, let those who are spiritual restore him. When it is impossible to restore those who go astray, let us then prayerfully, tearfully and sadly take that step which will be for their good in the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus".

Forgiveness is not always easy, but we must emulate the forgiveness of God Himself. "Peter wished to find the limit to this duty (21) . . . The answer implies that there is no limit; for, as Chrysostom says, Jesus does not here intend to imply a limited number, but that the number of times a brother should be forgiven is unlimited. Forgiveness is to be continuous and everlasting" (Edwin W. Rice).

THE UNFORGIVING SERVANT

We read earlier in this gospel record **"For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: but if you forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses"** (6:14,15). I see this portion of scripture (18:23-35) as an expansion of the above. The parable gives a contrast between absolute malice and infinite mercy. "In the story we are shown, on the one hand, the magnanimity of the king, whose compassion is to be thought of as commensurate with the debt owing to him - infinitely great; and, on the other, the ingratitude and unhuman behaviour of the official" (E. A. Armstrong). The wonderful thing about Jesus is that He not only taught forgiveness, but embodied forgiveness. In His case, words were always matched by action.

Forgiveness is at the heart of the gospel message. Salvation is all about the forgiveness of sins. Of course, salvation is conditional upon obedience to the

gospel. Another wonderful thing is that God not only forgives, but also forgets. ". . . for I will forgive their iniquity and I will remember their sin no more" (Jeremiah 31:34). The last two verses of Matthew 18 are very telling: **"And his lord was wroth, and delivered him to the tormentors, till he should pay all that was due unto him. So likewise shall my heavenly Father do also unto you, if you from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses"** (34,35).

RULING ON DIVORCE

Marriage is a Divine institution. **"Marriage is honourable in all, and the bed undefiled: but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge"** (Hebrews 13:4). **"He who finds a wife finds what is good and receives favour from the Lord"** (Proverbs 18:22, N.I.V.). **"I will therefore that the younger women marry, bear children, guide the house, give none occasion to the adversary to speak reproachfully"** (1 Timothy 5:14). These are just some of the passages relevant to the subject of marriage.

God designed marriage to be permanent and not to be annulled by man. "To the natural question why in that case divorce is permitted in the law of Moses (Deuteronomy 24:1), the answer is given that this was a concession to 'hardness of heart' but a departure from the Creator's ordinance, which Jesus affirms" (F. F. Bruce). So we clearly see that divorce was introduced by Moses because of Israel's obdurate sinfulness. Much could be written here on this subject and I have done so in the past. One thing I learned from history was this: It was the Eastern Church in the 6th century A.D. that opened its doors to re-marriage after divorce and not the Western. Heth and Wenham have written: "The author of the most comprehensive study ever written on this subject contends that in the first five centuries all Greek writers and all Latin writers except one agree

that remarriage following divorce for any reason is adulterous. The marriage bond was seen to unite both parties until the death of one of them. When a marriage partner was guilty of unchastity, usually understood to mean adultery, the other was expected to separate but did not have the right to remarry".

Verse 9 of ch 19 reads: "**And I say unto you, Whosoever shall put away his wife, except it to be fornication, and shall marry another, commits adultery: and whoso marries her who is put away commits adultery.**" Remember, Jesus is responding to the question: "**Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause?**" (3). Heth and Wenham in their book *Jesus and Divorce* paraphrase verse 9 thus: "No cause, save unchastity, justifies divorce, and even then remarriage is adultery". Personally, I read it that way too.

THE RICH YOUNG RULER

The encounter between Jesus and the rich young ruler is found in all three synoptic gospels (19: 16-26; Mark 10: 17-27; Luke 18: 18-27). Mark reveals that Jesus had a love for him. He also quotes Jesus as saying: "**Children, how hard is it for them that trust in riches to enter into the kingdom of God**" (24). Wealth, in itself, is not a sin, but trusting in wealth is. Jesus said; "**No man can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one or love the other; or else he will hold to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon**" (Matthew 6:24; Luke 16:13). Paul wrote: "**Charge them who are rich in this world, that they be not high-minded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who gives us richly all things to enjoy . . .**" (1 Timothy 6:17). Commenting on Jesus' words, Donald A. Hay in his outstanding book *Economics Today* has written: "The word 'mammon' has overtones of a personified wealth. Mammon is attacked because it can blind

men to their need of God, and can divert them from the work of the kingdom. Jesus challenges His hearers . . . It is a question of priorities. Are we putting Jesus first, trusting Him and seeking security for our lives? Or are we compromising to provide for our own security? If the latter, then our wealth has become an idol, a rival to God Himself".

IAN S. DAVIDSON,
Motherwell.

TEST YOUR BIBLICAL KNOWLEDGE

1. How many daughters did the priest of Midian have?
2. Who was Noah's grandfather?
3. He became king of Judah at the age of sixteen.
4. How many died inside the tower of Shechem after Abimelech set it on fire?
5. Name the first son of Ruth and Boaz.
6. Which Persian king ordered the rebuilding of the temple at Jerusalem?
7. What is quick and powerful and sharper than any two-edged sword?
8. According to the book of Revelation, how many years will Satan be bound?
9. Who was Sergius Paulus?
10. What protects a Christian from the fiery darts of Satan?

NEWS FROM THE CHURCHES

Buckie: Our Annual Social Meeting on 5th May was a rich time of fellowship, with brethren from many different parts of the country, and we thank Bro. Mike Heinemeir for his helpful and stirring messages.

Solas Singing Group inspired us all with their hymns of praise, but we were encouraged most of all by the baptism of Emma Cheyne into the Lord Jesus

Christ. Sister Emma is aged 12 years, and is the daughter of Bro. and Sister Bruce and Lynne Cheyne. It is uplifting to us all to see a young person taking Jesus as their Lord, and our prayer is that she will be an example to young and old, as she serves her Master.

BILL MAIR (Sec.)

Kelso: We wish to thank all those who supported our Outreach Meetings here on 24th and 25th April, with Bro. Mike Heinemier and Bro. Frank Worgan; the speakers. A special thanks to those who remembered us in their prayers, and who contributed in other ways. Unfortunately not much interest was forthcoming from the people but we shall try again sometime.

JENNY, HELEN and BARBARA.

Badagry, Nigeria: With the gift of £250 from British brethren to purchase Bibles in our local language ("Yoruba") every member/family now has a copy, for which we are very thankful. With the residue we bought Strong's Concordance: The Amplified Bible and Matthew Henry's Commentary in one volume. Our evangelistic programme resumed in March and two precious souls were baptized on 15th March - Friday (Jimoh) Oke and Augustine Michael (both male). Two weeks ago our sister Congregation at Isalu Road Church of Christ, Ajara, had two baptisms - Sister Ressi Adehola and Tobi Hunton. Our congregation was only established in 1999 but we desire to press ahead and work harder for the Lord. Our Bible Class on Thursdays is of great interest and we are studying "The New Testament Church" using Roy Cogdill's book as a guide. Rains are heavy at present and our meeting house needs repair, but we need to do something about a permanent meeting house. We are currently making bricks in moulds but are held up due to lack of finance. Any help would be gratefully accepted.

EMMANUEL H. HOKON,
P.O. Box 159, Badagry,
Lagos State, Nigeria.

OBITUARY

It is with deep regret that we report the death of Sister Jessie Baird (widow of the late John Baird) on Thursday 3rd May, 2001. Jessie was always a faithful member of the Church, but for some years now illness had prevented her from attending the services. She was laid to rest on Wednesday 9th May, with brother Ian Davidson officiating. Our condolences go to her two daughters, sister Janet and Joan, and their families, but "We grieve not as those having no hope"

JAMES GRANT.

GHANA APPEAL

We would again like to express thanks and appreciation to all who have contributed to the Ghana Appeal. This has greatly helped to reduce physical suffering and even death, as well as saving many spiritually. It's encouraging to have these Ghanaians now as our brothers and sisters in Christ and although separated by distance, we are united in the bond of love with one Father. A blind brother who is homeless is presently sleeping in a friend's house and whenever someone is available to lead him, goes into the village to proclaim the Gospel. He knows where his eternal future as faithful child of God lies and shows his loving gratitude in service to his loving Father.

While we want to get help where it is needed as quickly as possible, sometimes an emergency such as sudden illness or injury, may need immediate attention. We've just heard of a diabetic brother selling his sewing machine to pay for urgent medical attention. We can judge the seriousness of this when we consider that such items represent peoples income - the tools of their trade.

Those wishing to help in this work, please make cheques payable to: Den-nyloanhead (Church of Christ) Ghana Fund and send to the treasurer Mrs. Janet W. Macdonald, 12 Charles Drive, Larbert, Falkirk, Stirlingshire. FK5 3HB. Tel: 01324 562480.

THANKS

My family and I would like to thank all the brethren at Glenrothes and Hayfield for their prayers, visits and cards during our recent bereavement.

And thanks to all those who took part in the service; and to the dear sisters for the lovely tea after the service.

RICHARD GILMOUR.

I would like to thank all those who sent me cards and flowers, both before and after my recent heart surgery. Your good wishes and prayers were most welcome and very much appreciated. The operation was a great success and I continue to make good progress.

Sister ISA GRANT.

COMING EVENTS

PETERHEAD:

Gospel Campaign:

With Harding Students in June
17th to 24th June

(No meeting on 22nd)

Speaker: Jack Strachan
(East Kilbride)

A warm welcome awaits all.

Special Weekend:

Saturday 15th Sept. - 7pm

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

Speaker: G. Gorton

Special Weekend:

Saturday 29th Sept. - 7pm

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

Speaker: F. Worgan

Special Weekend:

Saturday 6th Oct. - 7pm

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

Speaker: D. Langdon (Glenrothes)

A warm welcome awaits all.

10. Shield of faith (Ephesians 6:16).
- (Acts 13:6,7)
9. Proconsul in Paphos, Cyprus
8. One thousand (Revelation 20:2).
7. God's word (Hebrews 4:12).
6. Cyprus (Ezra 1:2).
5. Obed (Ruth 4:17).
4. One thousand (Judges 9:49).
3. Uzziah (2 Chronicles 26:3).
2. Methuselah (Genesis 5:21-29).
1. Seven (Exodus 2:16).

ANSWERS

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