

# 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"***

## **Be uplifted...**

....by the fact that this week the Gospel of forgiveness has been made known to our nation, albeit in the most tragic of circumstances. Stephen Oake, a Special Branch police officer was killed during a police raid on a suspected terrorist hideaway in Manchester. Mr. Oake has been described as a dedicated family man, a committed Christian and a lay preacher in his home town of Poynton, Cheshire. Speaking of his son's death, his father told the nation on television and through the press,

**"He was a quiet and modest man, though to hear him in the pulpit you would think he was a different person." Of his son's killer, he said: "I'm trying hard to forgive him, as I am sure Steve would. I am sure he will find solace from God in some way, as Steve and I did. I don't want any recrimination against him at all."**

In the circumstances that is a remarkable but uplifting statement made from the very depths of loss. It's a statement that stands out against the normal calls for revenge and retribution. It's a statement of strength, not weakness; it speaks of courage and faith. I don't know the details of the doctrines to which Mr. Oake (Senior) holds, but I do know that many people have witnessed, albeit briefly, a real example of the way of Christ.

What a wonderful gift is forgiveness. God's forgiveness is the only way in which we have been made free from sin and it is only on the basis of that freedom that we have any hope of eternal life. **"But now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves of God, the return you get is sanctification and its end, eternal life. For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord."** Romans 6:22,23.

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# Practical Christianity

## Forgiveness

(David Yasko)

Last month's article asked why we should forgive. This month David considers the 'how' of forgiveness.

### How should I forgive

The Bible gives us four steps to take if we are going to experience the freedom of forgiveness.

#### Step one: Realise that we are all imperfect

When we hate somebody we tend to lose our perspective about them. What we do in our anger is dehumanise them. We forget they are human beings and we forget that, in one way or another, all of us have intentionally wronged other believers. Maybe not in the same way, but we've all been selfish at some point in our lives. Ecclesiastes 7: 20 **"There is not a righteous man on earth who does what is right and never sins."**

#### Step two: Relinquish my right to get even

Now this is the heart of forgiveness. It's what forgiveness is all about. Romans 12:19 **"Do not take revenge, my friends, but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written: 'It is mine to avenge; I will repay,' says the Lord."** Real forgiveness happens when we say, "I give up my right to get even with you. You deserve to be hurt back, you deserve to be retaliated against, but I'm not going to do it." Now, the thought may be running around, "But Dave, that's unfair." You're right, but when has life ever had anything to do with fair? Fair is heaven and this isn't heaven. Where there's sin there is going to be hurt. We live in a world full of injustice. The good news is one day God will balance the books and the Bible tells us not to do God's job. It isn't up to us to settle the score. Now, how often do we have to give up our right to get even? We make a mistake when we think forgiveness is a one time shot, do it and it never comes back. We know that's not true. We've been hurt. We know how often it comes back. Now, would God expect us to repeat the forgiveness process and give up the right to get even? Let's ask him: Matthew 18: 21 – 22 **"Then Peter came to Jesus and asked, 'Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother when he sins against me? Up to seven times?' Jesus answered, 'I tell you, not seven times, but seventy times seven.'" The issue isn't numbers. It's as often as it comes back, forgive them again.**

### **Step three: Respond to the evil with good**

Now, how do we know we've released the hurt? When we can understand the pain of the people who hurt us and when we can pray for them. You know how much you had to pray, so God could help you understand what your mate was going through. And you know how many times you had to give that hurt to God and eventually, you stopped praying for them to get run over by a truck and started praying for their souls. We learned to return good for evil. Luke 6: 27 – 28 **"Do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you."** There is no way we can do this verse on our own power. Humanly speaking, we can't pray as much as we need to pray, love as much as we need to love and for give as much as we need to forgive unless we have the power of Jesus Christ in our lives, to draw on. Our human based love runs out. Only Gods love never runs out. Only God's love can keep no record of wrongs. (1 Corinthians 13: 5)

### **Step four: Refocus on God's Plan for my life**

Stop focusing on the hurt, stop focusing on the event, stop focusing on the person who offended us and refocus on God's purpose for our life, which is greater than any pain or problem we are experiencing. As long as we continue to focus on the person who hurt us, they control us. And let me go further. If we don't release our offender, we will end up resembling our offender. That's a law of life. We become like what we focus on. How many folks say, "Well I'm never going to be like my Mother." Oh yeah? When we resemble our offenders, the hate in our hearts has eaten us up. Job, who had every reason to harbour bitterness gave us three keys to refocusing our lives. Job 11: 13 – 16 **"Yet if you devote your heart to him and stretch out your hands to him, if you put away the sin that is in your hand and allow no evil to dwell in your tent, then you will lift up your face without shame; you will stand firm and without fear. You will surely forget your trouble, recalling it only as waters gone by."**

#### **Three keys to refocusing:**

- 1** Devote our hearts to God. That means release and forgive. We cannot be devoted to God with bitterness and resentment in our hearts.
- 2** Reach out to God. That's the only way God gets into our lives and we don't have enough power to make it on our own. Reach out to him to fill us with the love we need to fill our hearts.
- 3** Face the world again. When we are bitter we want to isolate ourselves. Satan loves to use isolation. Come out of that shell. Don't cut yourself off from the love of God any more. Start living again. An isolated heart shrivels and dies. Notice the result with me. "You will surely forget your trouble." Wouldn't that be great! For that pain to stop hurting so bad, wouldn't that be wonderful. Well you can start today.

# The Ultimate Reason is the Supreme Designer

## Fortuitous Chance - Continued

(Allan Ashurst, Manchester)

### The Weasel Computer Programme Argument

Richard Dawkins has demonstrated a computer program that kept re-writing letters entered at random on the keyboard, with small changes each time, until it spelt the words "METHINKS IT IS LIKE A WEASEL" (taken from Shakespeare's Hamlet) claiming it proved that complex order can happen by random chance alone.

Richard Dawkins, or a programmer on his behalf, must have used a program language with which to design his "weasel" program. The designers of that program language most likely based their program on a more elementary program such as machine language. Machine language was in turn developed by designers from binary language. Even that most elementary language (binary) was designed. It did not come about by fortuitous chance. It is an insult to the scientists and programmers involved to suggest that the fruit of their labours, involving millions of man hours, evolved by fortuitous chance.

All this design was in place for the "weasel" programmer to be able to produce a program that produced the result that had the appearance of fortuitous chance. Anyone with programming experience knows that algorithms must have been built into the "weasel" program which made it inevitable that the final result for any mix of letters entered would read "METHINKS IT IS LIKE A WEASEL"

### The Spontaneous Generation of Life Theory

Some theoreticians propose that by some process such as lightning zapping inanimate mud on a primeval shore a life form, the first "primitive" cell, the ancestor of all life forms, spontaneously came into being from a random collection of chemicals by fortuitous chance.

All life forms have DNA. Every life form's DNA is a complex program similar to a computer program. Computer program languages are designed. Computer programmers then use the program languages to design programs. Without these computers are useless. A lot of ingenuity is involved in designing these languages and programs. they do not evolve by "fortuitous chance". Are we to believe that the DNA program language and life form DNA programs evolved by "fortuitous chance"?

Is not that an audacious supreme insult to the Supreme Designer?

What is the simplest life form - bacteria - an amoeba? How complex is the simplest life form? Even the simplest life form has long strands of DNA and its programming is complex.

So evolutionists require us to believe that on the primeval shore there was dust consisting of all the right chemicals in the necessary amounts and in the right proportion (by fortuitous chance) all together in the right place at the right time, being lapped by water when suddenly they are zapped into the simplest life form complete with all the necessary DNA fully functioning, epidermis in place etc.etc etc.. "Marvellous what evolution can do" Is it? Anyone who believes something like that will believe anything.

The theory of the spontaneous generation of life does not even have a kick start. Evolution of life by fortuitous chance is a non-starter. So all the theorising about subsequent transmutation of species\* being proof of transmutation across the barriers of distinctly different genera, is irrelevant. No foundational premise - no theory.

[\* "species" is used to denote any variant within genera. In Genesis 1:12, 21 & 25 "kinds" is used for distinctly different life forms.]

## **The Ultimate Reason**

Speculating theoreticians, who place their faith in "fortuitous chance", should not be let loose in a research laboratory. In their search for fortuitous chance they would only bungle their research. Only scientists who believe that there is reason behind all physical phenomena can be relied on to have the right approach to research.

The ultimate reason has to be the supreme designer. That is why major advances in empirical science have been made by scientists who believe in the Creator. Even those scientists who do not believe in the ultimate designer have to admit that they do their research expecting to find reasons even when investigating phenomena that "have the appearance of" chaos.

It cannot be overemphasised that true scientists expect to find reason, expect to find design. Only bogus scientists look for chaos as the reason for physical phenomena and that is where the case for fortuitous chance producing order collapses.

## **Conclusion**

Design must be in place for "fortuitous" accidents to happen. **THE ULTIMATE REASON HAS TO BE THE SUPREME DESIGNER.**

# Word Study **Babbler**

Ian Davidson (Motherwell)

Ancient Athens was the centre of philosophy in Greece. The city was the home or the adopted home of such famous philosophers as Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, Epicurus and Zeno. The city was also known for its unsurpassed sculpture, literature and oratory. The apostle Paul visited Athens during his second missionary journey. "In fame it was long past its meridian when Paul visited it. There was little of grandeur except its sculpture. Even that had been marred." (Alexander Brown)

Paul encountered the Stoics and the Epicureans in Athens. We read of his visit in Acts 17. Stoicism and Epicureanism were outstanding in importance and influence in the ancient world. The Epicureans were the earliest scientific and liberal humanists. The Stoics "sought salvation in aligning the will with the inherent Reason of the universe, Logos." (New Bible Dictionary). "While Stoicism at its best was marked by a great moral earnestness and a high sense of duty, it was marked also by a spiritual pride quite foreign to the spirit of Christianity." (F.F. Bruce). We should not underestimate the influence of both these philosophies. Stoicism, for example, continued as an organized movement for some five hundred years. Famous Stoics included Seneca and the Roman Emperor, Marcus Aurelius, author of *Meditations*.

We read in Acts 17:18, **"Then certain philosophers of the Epicureans and of the Stoics, encountered Paul. And some said, 'What will this babbler say? Others, he seems to be a setter forth of strange gods: because he preached unto them Jesus and the resurrection."** Obviously, Paul's opponents thought that Jesus and the *Anastasis* (the Greek word for resurrection) were gods, Jesus being the male god and Anastasis, the female god(dess). To them, the former might well have stood for 'healing' and the latter 'restoration'.

The translators of the Authorised Version chose the word 'babble' to translate the Greek term *spermologos*. The English word itself is interesting in that it is probably from the infantile ba, ba and, perhaps, affected in some sense by Babel. The Tower of Babel is where the confusion of tongues took place (Genesis 11). There the people wanted to stay together, but God wanted them to be scattered over the face of the whole earth. To achieve this end, He confused their language so that they could not understand one another. It's a strange thing. When God wants people to be scattered abroad, they want to be together. When God wants His people to be together in Christ Jesus, they prefer to be divided and scattered abroad. Jesus has revealed that the salvation of the world hinges upon the unity of all believers (John 17). This is a huge lesson for all saints everywhere.

*Spermologos* has been variously translated as 'babblers', 'picker of scraps', 'chatterbox', 'charlatan', and 'ignorant show-off' to name a few. Vine writes of *spermologos*, "Primarily an adjective, it came to be used as a noun signifying a crow or some other bird picking up seeds (*sperma*, a seed, *lego*, to collect). Then it seems to have been used of a man accustomed to hang about the streets and markets, picking up scraps that fall from loads; hence a parasite, who lives at the expense of others, a hanger on. Metaphorically, it became used of a man who picks up scraps of information and retails them secondhand, a plagiarist, or of those who make a show, in unscientific style, of knowledge obtained from misunderstanding of lectures." Prof. Ramsay points out that there does not seem to be any instance of the classical use of the word as a babbler or a mere talker. He finds in the word a piece of Athenian slang, applied to one who was outside any literary circle, an ignorant plagiarist." What an indictment then the use of this word is against the apostle Paul.

Paul brought the truth and Christ Jesus to Athens. The great servant of God was no plagiarist or picker up of scraps but a genuine ambassador of the heavenly King. His credentials were of the highest order and his words the words of life. I am sure that being described as a 'babblers' didn't bother Paul so long as people listened carefully to his message. He wanted people to come to the risen Christ and be saved and he knew that philosophy could not save. After all, philosophies such as Stoicism and Epicureanism reflected the wisdom of man rather than the wisdom of God. He later wrote to the Corinthian saints, **"For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. For it is written: 'I will destroy the wisdom of the wise; the intelligence of the intelligent I will frustrate.' Where is the wise man? Where is the scholar? Where is the philosopher of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? .....Jews demand miraculous signs and Greeks look for wisdom, but we preach Christ crucified: a stumbling-block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles, but to those whom God has called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God."** (1 Cor. 1:18-25)

What resulted from Paul's address in Athens? We read, **"And when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked: and others said, 'We will hear you again of this matter.' So Paul departed from among them. Howbeit certain men clave unto him, and believed: among whom were Dionysius the Areopagite, and a woman named Damaris and others with them."** (Acts 17:32-34) We don't read of a congregation being established in Athens and there was never a subsequent epistle to a church in Athens. The tragedy is that they were so filled with the wisdom of this passing age that they had no room for the wisdom of God in their hearts and minds.

The true 'babblers' of our world today are those who pontificate on various subjects contrary to the revelation of God. We hear them all the time in the media. They speak as if they possess all authority. I prefer to listen to Jesus who has truly been given all authority in heaven and on earth (Matt 28:18). We must listen to Jesus and obey Him. After all, it will be his words that will judge us in the last day. (John 12:48)

## Editorial

# The Enemy Without

All true Christians believe that God is the essence of goodness. We must equally believe that the essence of evil is Satan, the Devil. Satan is real, just as God is real; and he is far more than just an 'influence' in the world. Satan is the enemy. He is the adversary of God and of Christ, of God's people and indeed of mankind itself. Quite what precipitated what we commonly refer to as the 'Fall' will no doubt remain something of a

mystery for us until all is revealed in the fullness of time. However, it is difficult to resist the idea that some kind of apostasy or revolt took place in heaven which resulted in banishment from the presence of God and Christ. Whether, as many suggest, this was as a result of the sin of pride, or some other cause is open to debate. Whatever the truth, there can be no doubt that Satan is the enemy.

It is easier to confront an enemy that we can see and hear, than it is to deal with a 'spiritual' enemy and whilst the effects of the work of Satan are all around us, he is difficult to pin down. I think one of the reasons why in the Church we have often resorted to confronting what we perceive to be the enemy within, is that it so much easier to have a row with our brethren than it is to have a go at Satan. We must of course, and this particularly applies to those who are in positions of leadership within congregations, always be on our guard to ensure that error and false teaching do not make inroads into the Church. There is however a distinction to be made between the disagreements that Christians have amongst themselves from time to time, and which have continued from the very inception of the Church, and the deliberate and purposeful false teaching which is designed to prevent men and women from seeing the truth of the Gospel, or having once seen and accepted it being lured away from it. It is this latter for which the New Testament writers reserve their direst warnings, and on the perpetrators of which they pour their severest opprobrium.

### The adversary exposed

Jesus himself was scathing in his condemnation of the Scribes and Pharisees. Why? Essentially I believe because they refused to accept Jesus as the Son of God and Saviour. They were men of the Law rather than teachers of grace and in basing their religious conviction on a strict adherence to detail of the Law they prevented their adherents from seeing the truth of the glorious Gospel of Christ. One of the seminal statements of the New Testament for me is recorded in John 10:33 because it underpins the confrontation that Jesus experienced throughout His ministry and ultimately was a key factor in His death. Jesus here is again establishing His authority as Son of God and in doing so is challenging the Jews. He has already told them that the works He performs in the Father's name bear witness to Him; He has expressed His unity with the Father and in response to His question about which good work they were taking up stones against him for, the Jews say. **"It is not for a good work that we stone you but for blasphemy; because you, being a man, make yourself God."** They denied the truth about Jesus and Satan's work is done when people are prevented from seeing the truth about Jesus.

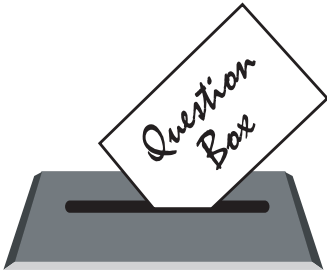


Paul also vents his anger and frustration against those who preached anything other than the truth about Jesus. What a beautiful picture he first paints of the work that he has been trying to fulfil amongst the church at Corinth. He writes, **"I am jealous for you with a godly jealousy. I promised you to one husband, to Christ, so that I might present you as a pure virgin to him."** (2 Cor. 11:2) But Paul recognized the potential for the purity of that relationship to be undermined by work of Satan. **"But I am afraid that as Eve was deceived by the serpent's cunning, your minds may somehow be led astray from your sincere and pure devotion to Christ. For if someone comes to you and preaches a Jesus other than the Jesus we preached....you put up with it easily enough."** (2 Cor. 11:3,4) Of those who would elevate themselves and stray from the preaching of the true Gospel, Paul says, **"For such men are false prophets, deceitful workmen, masquerading as apostles of Christ. And no wonder, for Satan himself masquerades as an angel of light."** (v 14,15)

### **Battles continue; but the war is won**

In his epistles John gives a stark warning about 'antichrists' and 'the antichrist'. It seems that there were, and are, many antichrists who are forerunners of **the** antichrist, and that the common cause amongst them is to deny the existence of the true God. (1 John 2:18) Denial of Jesus and his incarnation was their fundamental distortion of the truth. 2 John 7 records, **"For many deceivers have gone out into the world, men who will not acknowledge the coming of Jesus in the flesh; such a one is the deceiver and the antichrist."** John warns his readers of the supreme importance of staying faithful to those truths about Jesus that the apostles themselves had been taught by Him and which they had faithfully passed on through their ministry. Depending upon your interpretation of John's statements about **the** Antichrist, and Paul's warnings to the Thessalonians about the "man of lawlessness" (2 Thess. 2:3-12) it may well be that Satan's work is far from done yet and that Christians in the future will be even more severely tested by this 'roaring lion'.

Satan's work is done when he can persuade people to fail to see the truth about Jesus or to deny Him. If he can persuade Christians to look inwards and fight each other then he knows that the trumpet will have an uncertain sound and the Gospel message will remain muted. The enemy without is the one who deserves our fullest attention and against whom we must constantly guard. The threat is real and the consequences of succumbing are dire. But we can take confidence in the glorious knowledge that the cosmic battle is won, Satan's fate has been sealed from the moment that God promised a Redeemer (Gen. 3:15) and that in Jesus the works of the devil have been destroyed. For us individually the battle goes on and for the Christian Church the overwhelming objective must be that we remain true to Jesus, that we honour and worship Him and let nothing get in the way of our acknowledgement of Him as truly God's Son.



*May I first express, on behalf of Isobel and myself, our sincere thanks and appreciation for all the support that you, our brothers and sisters in Christ, have given us in the sixteen months during which Isobel has been dealing with her illness. I am sorry that it has been necessary to shelve 'Question Box' for a time, but I feel sure that you will appreciate the pressures with which we have had to cope. We often thank our heavenly Father for the fellowship of the Family that has meant so much to us both.*

## **The Parable**

This month I would like us to consider a number of questions that have arisen from a study of one of the Lord's less familiar parables, found in Luke 18:1-8, and which, in the Authorised Version, is described as '*The Importunate Widow*' – a title which itself is almost certainly not understood by most readers and contributes nothing to an understanding of the parable. After all, how many of us have ever used the word 'importunate'? Indeed, how many know the meaning of the word!

However, we notice, firstly, that there are two people in this story; two *very different* characters. There is a Judge, who, somewhat arrogantly, declares that he fears neither God nor man; and there is a widow who is, apparently, the victim of an injustice and who has tried repeatedly, but unsuccessfully, to persuade the Judge to take an interest in her case. No doubt, because she is a Widow and therefore unable to offer him a bribe to act on her behalf, this judge is not interested in securing justice for her.

We can very easily imagine the intense frustration and growing sense of indignation that the widow experienced. She must have felt utterly helpless, since, in those days, a widow who apparently had no male relative to act on her behalf, was the most helpless and vulnerable person imaginable.

But the Lord Jesus tells us that, eventually, this '*unrighteous Judge*' decides that, for his personal comfort and well being, he had better do something about this poor woman's problem. He complains that her persistence '*bothers*' him. She is wearing him down! In fact, the expression he uses means, quite literally, that she is '*beating him black and blue*'.

## **An unfinished story**

Now precisely what action the Judge took and what the outcome was, we are not told, and I suppose that in this sense the story is unfinished. We are simply left to surmise that it ended with the persistent widow obtaining the justice she had sought for so long! But this is not the point of the parable.

The problem is that sometimes, in sermons about Prayer, we are told that in this parable the Lord teaches us that the Judge, unjust and unworthy as he was, responded to the poor widow's petition, *because of her persistence*, and therefore, we also should pray – an keep on praying – until, like the widow, our perseverance moves God to respond.

Well I suppose that such an explanation may offer a measure of consolation to some poor soul who has prayed for a long time about a problem or a need without,

apparently, receiving an answer. But I suggest that, in fact, it is an interpretation that is difficult both to understand and accept, because it raises more questions than it answers. For example is the Lord Jesus:

- meaning that, like this widow, we should *lay siege* to God's throne with our own prayers?
- telling us that God is *like the unjust judge*?
- teaching us that it is *persistence* in prayer that achieves results?
- saying that God will react to *our* persistence in prayer, as the judge reacted to the widow's persistence?

Surely such notions cannot possibly represent the teaching of the parable. Firstly we cannot possibly be meant to suppose that God is in *any way whatsoever* like this Judge! Bear in mind, that Jesus tells us that the Judge has no respect for anyone – not even God – and that he is an '*unrighteous*' man. Secondly, nor can we be meant to think that God is *unwilling to act* on behalf of His children when they call to Him or that He is ever uncaring. Thirdly, as for the poor widow herself; the word '*importunate*', which some versions use to describe her, means, '*persistent, demanding, annoying, unrelenting*'. One translation 'The New American Translation' actually tells us that the judge decided to take up the widow's case, "**Lest she come and strike me!**"

Now perhaps, in the circumstances, her attitude is understandable because she is looking for justice – vindication – that does not appear to be forthcoming! But, are we to understand that this is the kind of attitude that we must adopt when we pray, and that it is to this attitude that God responds?

### **Not similarity but contrast**

The truth is quite different. I suggest that what the Lord Jesus teaches us in this parable is that God is *not at all like the Judge*. Unlike the judge, He does not refuse to respond to our prayers until we weary Him and our persistence *compels* Him to act. Our heavenly Father stands in complete contrast to the unrighteous judge, because He is always ready to listen and to act on our behalf. His Word assures that His ear is *always* open to our cries, and He *always* hears and answers our prayers.

This is not to say that He always answers immediately, or in the way we expect or desire. And that, I suggest is the root of our problem. I am certain that we do not always understand why our sincere and earnest petitions seem to go unanswered, but we should at least understand that there **is** a reason, and our Father, who loves us, sometimes says, 'Wait! My child!' And sometimes says, 'No! My child!' The Lord tells us that we have a caring Father in Heaven, when He says, referring to God and His people who cry to Him, "**Will he delay long in helping them? I tell you He will quickly grant justice to them.**" (Luke 18:7)

Human justice is as fallible and uncertain as the men who make and administer the laws, but God's justice is both infallible – and inescapable.

*(We have a great facility, through Question Box, to achieve a more thorough understanding of God's revelation from Frank's years of study and application of God's Word. If something is troubling you or you just want further knowledge about a matter – ask! Questions please to: **Frank Worgan, 11 Stanier Road, Corby, Northants, NN17 1XP**)*

# Biblical Archaeology 2

Ian Davidson (Motherwell)

The 2nd International Congress on Biblical Archaeology was held in Jerusalem between 24 June and 1 July 1990. The official opening took place at The Citadel (Tower of David) in central Jerusalem. Fortunately, all the deliberations of the Congress were conducted in English. The British have had a huge influence in Israel and most Israelis speak English, although Hebrew and Arabic are the official languages. Each session was held under the guidance of a Moderator in the Grand Ballroom of the Laromme Hotel, Liberty Bell Park, Jerusalem. Sessions consisted of presentations by various Professors, etc. on various subjects, some of which were so detailed that they were hard to follow. These presentations were then discussed by other experts described as Respondents. Sometimes the subsequent dialogues became rather heated. Experts never agree!

Session 2 of 10 featured the Moderator Abraham Malamat, who was the most impressive of them all. He was of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem and had, in fact, presented a paper on Mari and Hazor at the Pre-Congress Symposium. I found him a most engaging and a very witty personality. Among others, he gave a very warm welcome to Prof. Kenneth A. Kitchen, Professor (now Emeritus) of Egyptology at the University of Liverpool, England. Here was one man I wanted to hear and he did not disappoint me. I knew him as the author of the articles on Egypt in the New Bible Dictionary and of the book *The Bible in its World*. He later told me of his other works, which included *Pharaoh Triumphant: The Life of Ramesses 11* (probably the Pharaoh at the time of Moses) and *The Third Intermediate Period in Egypt*, both of which I subsequently purchased. Prof. Kitchen believes that the Bible is the inspired word of God. He is undoubtedly, one of the world's experts on ancient Egypt and an outstanding Biblical scholar. It was a great privilege to speak with him on a number of the field visits and to listen to some of his insights into Biblical events.

Our first field trip took us to Tell Qasile and the Museum of Eretz-Israel; Tel Dor; and the Reuben and Edith Hecht Museum at the University of Haifa. The Eretz-Israel Museum promoted two exhibitions: *At that Time the Canaanites were in the Land* and *The Man and His Work Centre*. The first exhibition portrayed daily life in Canaan in the Middle Bronze Age 11 (2000 – 1550B.C.) Its focal point was the reconstruction of a Canaanite house from authentic building materials. The house was based on the well-preserved finds from Jericho. The latter exhibition was a comprehensive exhibition of local tools and methods brought to life in vaulted workshops where master artisans, using ancient techniques, practised their crafts before the public.

Dor was once a city on the Mediterranean coast of Palestine, just south of Carmel. **“Its King joined with Jabin, King of Israel and shared in his defeat”** (Joshua 11:1-2; 12:23). Though on the borders of Asher, it was given to Manasseh, who failed to drive out the Canaanite inhabitants (Judges 1:27). (See also 1 Kings 4:11; 1 Chronicles 7:29) (New Bible Dictionary). Dor is now the site of one of Israel's

largest excavations. Excavations are led by Ephraim Stern (Moses Bernard Lauterman Family Professor of Palestinian Archaeology at Hebrew University in Jerusalem: a specialist in Phoenician material culture) and have revealed the main street, forum, sanctuaries, stoa, basilica and aqueduct of the Roman city and gates and fortifications from the Hellenistic, Persian and Iron Age cities. Archaeologists have also found a destruction level with Philistine pottery and early Phoenician artefacts. After twenty years, the archaeological excavations are now coming to a close. However, the dig has ended with a surprise: the discovery of a large fragment of the head of a Gorgon (a female monster from Greek mythology). The find provides strong evidence of Greek culture at Dor and raises the possibility that Dor was once home to a Greek temple as well as a Greek community.

Haifa is a principal port of Israel and is sited on the slopes of Mt. Carmel where, we recall, Elijah once challenged the prophets of Baal. Haifa's population is now 270,500. The special session at the University of Haifa featured three talks on *The International Bronze Age Anchorage Site at Tel Nami: The Ancient Ship Discovered off the Coast of Maagan-Michael*; and *The "Sea Peoples" Port at Dor*. Tel Nami was once a harbour town south of Haifa and was abandoned in the 13th Century BC. The relics of the ancient ship were first discovered in 1985 and the ship itself dates to c. 400 BC.

Our second field trip was to the Biblical sites of Tel Miqne, Tel Ashkelon and Tel Lachish. Tel Miqne is better known as the ancient Philistine city of Ekron. The 13-year excavation there finished in 1996. It was directed by Trude Dothan (Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Israel) and Seymour Gitin (W.F. Albright Institute of Archaeological Research, Israel). Important finds have included monumental buildings: industrial kilns; cult rooms; olive oil factories; inscriptions; silver caches; and a neo-Assyrian palace. In the Bible, Ekron is mentioned in Joshua 13:3; 15:11, 45-46; 19:43; Judges 1:18; 1 Samuel 5:10; 6:16 7:14; 17:52; 2 Kings 1:2,3,6,16; Jeremiah 25:20; Amos 1:8; Zephaniah 2:4; and Zechariah 9:5,7. It was one of the five principal cities. The other four were Gaza, Ashkelon, Ashdod and Gath. Incidentally, Trude Dothan, together with her husband Moshe Dothan, wrote the famous book *People of the Sea: The Search for the Philistines*. The Philistines, of course, played a no-small part in the history of Israel and, indeed, it was they who gave us the name "Palestine". The Philistines derived from Casluhim, the son of Mizraim (Egypt), the son of Ham (Genesis 10:14; 1 Chronicles 1:12). Jeremiah (47:4) and Amos (9:7) reveal that the Philistines originally came from Caphtor. This is, in all probability, Crete.

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## **Extracted from a book of love letters circa 1922.**

Find out the best in a person and tell him about it. We all need that. I have grown up on praise-and it has made me humble. It will always make a person long to deserve the praise. And any real consciousness is aware of something much greater than itself. Praise means understanding. We are all fine and great, fundamentally; overestimation of one another is impossible. Learn to see the greatness and the loveliness in one another- and to tell one another of it when we see it.

# Would you believe it?

My daily newspaper, The Independent, recently carried an article by its science correspondent declaring that scientists now claim that, "**Life 'began in rocks under the ocean.'**" It is claimed that one of evolution's great mysteries can now be explained by the formation of microscopic 'incubators' which allowed complex biological molecules to form.

**The new theory, formulated by Professor William Martin of the University of Dusseldorf and Professor Michael Russell of the Scottish Environmental Research Centre in Glasgow, claims that life on Earth began in tiny metal spheres in rocks thousands of feet under the ocean. The non-living "cells" formed in iron sulphide rocks near hot, hydrothermal vents on the sea floor.**

According to the newspaper's science correspondent, "Their theory turns conventional theories upside down by suggesting cells, rather than replicating molecules, came first. These metallic cells were non-living."

The new theory is published in the Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society and proposes that these first capsules of iron sulphide were formed in total darkness on the ocean floor, where they allowed the complex chemistry necessary for life to begin. "As hydrothermal fluid emerged from the Earth's crust, it reacted inside tiny metal sulphide cavities," Professor Russell said. "They provided the right micro-environment for chemical reactions to take place. Iron sulphide cells, we argue, are where life began."

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*I'm glad all that's been cleared up then! Quite how any area of research that can produce a "**theory** which turns conventional **theories** upside down", can be presented, taught and accepted as fact (which is how the Theory of Evolution is presented) defies belief. We should (and shall) be eternally thankful that Christianity rests on the unchanging, immutable truths about the Creator God, the saving grace of Jesus and the indwelling Spirit. It is also extremely disturbing that when the great majority of people readily accept these 'fantastical' theories, some who claim to have a belief in God seemingly cannot accept events like the resurrection for which there is historical support and record! It seems to me to require a far greater leap of faith to believe the still evolving 'theory of evolution' than it does to believe in the Creator God. (Editor)*

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## Religion

The religion of some people is constrained: they are like people who use the cold bath, not for pleasure, but for necessity and their health; they go in with reluctance, and are glad when they get out. But religion to a true believer is like water to a fish; it is his element, he lives in it, and he could not live out of it.

What I want is not to possess religion, but to have a religion that shall possess me.

## News and Information

### ***Ghana Appeal***

Your donations brethren have been a great help in reducing suffering and premature death among our Ghanaian brethren, as well as assisting them in promoting the Gospel. Through their letters they extend their thanks and appreciation.

The baby born with severe internal abnormalities had to have an operation postponed due to her physical weakness. Let us pray that she will soon be strong enough for this to proceed. Although hernia may not appear to be a major complaint, an operation is necessary and another brother has just received this successfully. A case which would cause much more emotional trauma is of a sister whose two sons have become mentally ill within a short time of one another. Such cases have responded well to treatment in the past and we ask for your prayers that these will as well.

Among recent cases of bereavement is a young pregnant sister who was drowned when a boat capsized, leaving her devastated husband with two young children. We ask your prayers for his comfort, strength and guidance in such traumatic circumstances. Another sister who was expecting an operation for a stomach ailment has been prescribed a course of drugs, which it is expected will make her operation unnecessary.

Evangelism continues enthusiastically and this brings requests for bibles and hymn books. 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**

## Coming Events

***Peterhead***  
***Merchant Street***  
***2003***

***8th & 9th February***

*Speaker:* Alistair Ferrie, Dundee

***1st & 2nd March***

*Speaker:* John Mooney, Livingston

**On each occasion meeting times will be:**

Saturday 7.00pm

*(followed by refreshments)*

Sunday: 10.00 am Bible Class

11.00 am Breaking of Bread

6.00 pm Gospel Meeting

**Annual Social**  
**12th & 13th April 2003**

**Saturday 12th April**  
3.00 pm and 6.00 pm

*Speakers:* Joe Nisbet, Aberdeen  
Graham Gorton, Manchester

*These brothers will also speak on Sunday 13th at the times noted above.*

**Tranent**  
**Social Meeting**

**Saturday, 15th March 2003**

*Speaker:* James Grant, Wallacestone

*All welcome*

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**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.*

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**Just a thought**

Once in my life I lost a dear one which left me in unbearable distress. I felt that God was no longer near. With Jesus I cried, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"

My friend came and sat beside me and said, "Just pray to Him and his hand will touch you and comfort you." So I did pray and felt His hand touching me and a warmth pouring over me.

When I opened my eyes I said to my friend, "God was so real, His hand was just like your hand. "It was my hand," she said. "You see when God answers prayer He so often uses people."

God is expressed in the love and care of Christian friends around us. Praise be to His holy name.

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*If you plant a tree, don't keep pulling it up by the roots to see if it is growing.*

*The best example of perfect security in this world is the man who is serving a sentence in prison. - Dwight D. Eisenhower.*

*The trouble with being a leader today is that you can't be sure whether people are following you or chasing you.*

*Experience is the thing that enables you to recognise a mistake when you make it again.*

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