

# The SCRIPTURE STANDARD

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

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## THE TRADITIONS OF THE ELDERS

I suppose it all started when the scribes and Pharisees took Jesus to task on the matter of why the disciples of Jesus transgresses the tradition of the elders by not washing their hands before eating. It is, of course, a good thing to wash often and to wash one's hands before meals, but when one is required by others to wash as a religious duty then that is quite another matter. These scribes and Pharisees did not wash their hands because they were dirty but they washed often in case they had come into contact with something or someone deemed to be religiously and ceremoniously unclean. The Pharisees, particularly, placed great stress upon the observance of the traditions of the elders especially with regard to keeping separated from anything likely to be (unclean). The incident is recorded in Matthew 15 thus, "Then came to Jesus scribes and Pharisees, which were of Jerusalem, saying, Why do thy disciples transgress the tradition of the elders? for they wash not their hands when they eat bread". Before we consider the reply Jesus gave to the charge it is as well to remind ourselves concerning what, exactly, constituted 'the traditions of the elders'. 'Traditions' are, of course, customs, practices and beliefs which have been handed down from generation to generation. The 'elders' in this case referred to the old men of centuries before in Jewish history. The Jews believed that when Moses was on Mount Sinai he received laws and precepts from God which were permanently set down on tablets of stone but also that he received laws and precepts which he was to pass on by word of mouth for following generations. These laws and ordinances were, according to the belief, passed verbally from one generation to the next and that, accordingly, they passed from Moses to Joshua, then to the judges, then to the prophets and so on down the years until finally recorded in the Talmud. These then were the traditions of the elders to which the 'scribes and Pharisees' referred in their question to Jesus. The recorded 'traditions' were numerous and though sometimes of a trifling nature they were regarded by the Jews as every bit as important (if not moreso) as the written law of Moses. Mark's account of the incident says, "For the Pharisees and all the Jews, except they wash their hands oft, eat not, holding the tradition of the elders. And when they come from the market place except they wash, they eat not. And many other things there be which they have received to hold, as the washing of cups, and pots, and brazen vessels, and of tables". These washings were ceremonial and traditional but so rigidly held that it is said that Rabbi Akiba, imprisoned by the Romans, with scarcely enough water to sustain life, preferred to use all his supply on his ceremonial washings and died of thirst.

Jesus, understandably, had no respect whatsoever for the traditions of the elders and thus his disciples in no way continued to observe these traditions. On being challenged by the scribes and Pharisees on the subject it gave Him an excellent opportunity of saying what He thought of the traditions of the elders. Thus, upon being asked why His disciples failed to observe these

traditions (in the matter of hand washing), he answered the question by asking another, "Why do ye also transgress the commandment of God by your tradition?" Can we imagine the scene? Can we picture the expression on the faces of all those concerned at Christ's rejoinder to the challenge? Jesus was not only expressing disapproval of the tradition of the elders but He was saying that in the observance of them was the direct transgression of the commandments of God. These traditions, religious in appearance though they were, had no divine authority, were extraneous to the written word of God and had no right to exist let alone be taught and practised. Could it be that for centuries, since Moses, highly devout and religious men had been meticulously observing multitudes of these exacting rites and ablutions, at great personal inconvenience and privation and that all this was in vain and worse, was a stench in the nostrils of God? Yes, it could be and was. The scriptures alone have the approval and authority of God. The scriptures contain all that God has thought fit and necessary to reveal. To be well pleasing to God man requires to read and conform to the written word of God. Any other religious document which calls for Man's attention and obedience usurps the place of the word of God and earns the condemnation of God. It has been truly said that any creed of man which contains more than the bible contains too much, and any human creed which contains less than the bible contains too little, and any creed which contains the same as the bible is superfluous since we already have the bible. While this is true it does not go far enough for man has no right whatsoever to utter even one syllable now that God has spoken.

Jesus then went on to give an illustration of how the commandment of God was so easily set aside by the traditions of the elders. "For God commanded saying, Honour thy father and mother: and, He that curseth Father and mother, let him die the death". (Jesus was quoting from Exodus chaps. 20 and 21). But ye say, Whosoever shall say to his father or his mother, It is a gift, by whatsoever thou mightest be profited by me: And honour not his father or his mother, he shall be free. Thus have ye made the commandment of none effect by your tradition. Ye hypocrites, well did Esaias prophesy of you, saying. This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips, but their heart is far from me. But in vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men". The commandment of God was that a man should look after his father and mother but the traditions of the elders said that if a man declared his goods to be gifted to God (or Corban as per Mark 7:11) then he was absolved from his responsibility to his parents - he was 'free' albeit he did not afterwards devote his goods to God's use. On the matter of cursing father or mother the Talmud provides another example of perverting the commandment of God - the Mishna says "He that curses his father or mother is not guilty unless he curses them with an express mention of the name of Jehovah".

The spirit behind the observance of the traditions of the elders is not dead. It exists very broadly as far as churches go, especially amongst denominational bodies, but certainly not unknown within the church of Jesus Christ, and it exists widely as far as individuals are concerned. We all work the double standard and reckon that our neighbours ought to obey the commandments of God but it is quite in order for us to obey our own version of the traditions of the elders. Think of how men have short-circuited the commandments of God by substitution and misinterpretation. The prophets prophesy falsely and the people love to have it so (Jer. 5:31). The creeds and confessions of Faith written by men ought never to have been penned and have only done despite to the peerless word of God. Neither Roman Catholic nor protestant are guiltless. Think of the complicated and massive overlay the Roman Catholic Church has superimposed upon the simplicity of the New Testament. What about the way in which God's ordinances (such as baptism and the Lord's supper) have been misrepresented out of all recognition and their import destroyed. Such is the situation in this twentieth century that one would be hard pressed to find a religious body which genuinely and seriously wanted to find out and follow the unadulterated and original commandments of God. Theologians over the centuries have quietly and efficiently succeeded in watering down the commandments of God and have provided the world with a painless form of Christianity - and the world is very grateful. Earnest seekers after truth must now dig amongst the ruins and debris of the New Testament, as those who search for nuggets of gold, and give each item found their very close scrutiny. Let us look critically at the religious body with which we associate and see if there are any traces there in its attitude, teaching or practice of the traditions of the elders (ancient or modern)

And then we might look at ourselves as individuals. Very often we know what the commandment of God is but we operate our own little personal version of elders' traditions. We perhaps despise the scribes and Pharisees so very much when we read of them in their confrontations with Christ, with their smug air of selfrighteousness and yet, if we could but see ourselves, we might resemble these Pharisees quite a bit. Perhaps, like them, we are oftentimes guilty of honouring God with our lips, while at the same time our hearts are far from Him.

EDITOR.

## TALKS ON THE TABERNACLE

### No. 4. The Priesthood

NOW these things having been thus prepared, the priests go in continually into the first tabernacle, accomplishing the services (Hebrews 9:6 R.V.). Previous to the setting up of the tabernacle, under the patriarchial dispensation, the father, as head of the family, officiated at the altar. Now, men are chosen and set apart for this service.

Under the Mosaic dispensation the priesthood was in the hands of Aaron, and the tribe of Levi. They were 'appointed for men in things pertaining to God' to 'offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins' (Hebrews 5:1). The prophet spoke from God to man: the priest spoke from man to God.

#### Their Consecration

Only those physically perfect, without blemish or deformity, could be appointed priests.

A sin-offering and a burnt-offering were provided. The sin-offering spoke eloquently of the need of atonement for sin; the burnt-offering, consumed on the altar, spoke of a life wholly devoted, consumed in God's service.

Those to be appointed priests were washed in water, and clothed in linen garments. A 'ram of consecration' was slain, and its blood applied to 'the right ear...upon the thumb of their right hand, and upon the great toe of their right foot' (Exodus 29:20). This suggests consecrated ears to hear God's word: consecrated hands to serve him; and consecrated feet to walk in His ways.

#### The New Covenant Priesthood

Under the new and better covenant all believers are priests. Strictly speaking, Christianity has not a priesthood; it is a priesthood. It has no class of priests, and needs none, neither of the Roman, Greek, or Anglican order.

Bishop Lightfoot (Church Of England) said: 'The only priests in the New Testament, designated as such, are the saints, the members of the Christian brotherhood'. Writing to believers scattered abroad, passing through a fiery trial of persecution, Peter said: 'Ye also, as living stones, are built up a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God through Jesus Christ... Ye are an elect-race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession, that ye may show forth the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvellous light' (1 Peter 2:5-9). John wrote: 'Unto him that loveth us, and loosed us from our sins by his blood, and he made us to be a kingdom, to be priests unto his God and Father'. 'Thou wast slain, and did purchase unto God, with thy blood, men of every tribe, and tongue, and people, and nation, and madest them to be unto our God a kingdom and priests, and they reign upon the earth' (Rev. 1:5;5:9-10 R.V.).

#### The Covenant Consecration

We, too have a sin-offering and burnt-offering, of which those offered under the old covenant were types and shadows. Paul wrote: 'Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savour' (Eph. 5:2).

The life of our Lord Jesus Christ was wholly devoted to God. He was a true burnt-offering, consumed in God's service, and in all things wellpleasing to God. He was 'holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners'. 'in him was no sin'; yet God 'made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him' (2 Cor. 5:21). The prophetic word was fulfilled: 'He was numbered with the transgressors; and he bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors' (Isaiah 53:12).

### New Covenant Priests are washed and clothed

As the altar typified the Cross, so baptism is the anti-type of the laver. The Lord's plan has not been cancelled nor altered by Him. It still stands as the only way of salvation, and of becoming priests unto God. The Lord Jesus said: 'All authority hath been given unto me in heaven and on earth. Go ye therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptising them into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I commanded you: and lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world' (Matt. 28:18-20 R.V.).

How faithfully that commission was carried out is seen in the Acts of Apostles. There were no exceptions or exemptions then; there should be none now.

There is a clear and close connection between the blood of Jesus and the water of baptism. Jesus said: 'This is my blood of the covenant, which is shed for many into remission of sins', (Matt. 26:28 R.V.). To those anxious enquirers on the Day of Pentecost, Peter said; 'Repent ye, and be baptised every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ unto the remission of your sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit' (Acts 2:38). Here repentance and baptism are stated to be for the same purpose that the Lord's blood was shed for: i.e. remission of sins. A passage already referred to, reads in Authorised Version: 'Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood' Rev. 1:5. But to the penitent persecutor, Saul of Tarsus, a heaven-sent messenger said: 'And now, why tarriest thou? Arise, and be baptised, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord' (Acts 22:16). In the one passage sins are paid to be washed away in His blood, and in the other in baptism. DO these passages contradict each other? By no means.

Paul wrote: 'Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptised into Jesus Christ, were baptised into his death' (Rom. 6:3). When was that precious, soul-cleansing blood shed? When Jesus died on Calvary. and baptism is the Lord's appointed means of bringing a believer into contact with His death. 'Into Jesus Christ . . . into his death'.

Surely all agree that there is no remission of sins, no salvation apart from the Lord and His death. Some say they cannot see this. Yet they talk and sing of garments being washed and made white in the blood of the Lamb. Alexander Campbell explained the matter thus: 'God has transferred in some way, the whitening efficacy or cleansing power of water to blood, and the absolving or pardoning power of blood to water' (Christian System, p 228). In that well-known hymn, 'Rock of Ages', Toplady states the simple truth:

'Let the water and the blood,  
From Thy riven side which flowed,  
Be of sin the double cure;  
Cleanse me from its guilt and power.'

It is not a matter for sight, but for faith in the Lord, His word and promises.

'Just to take Him at His word,  
Just to rest upon His promise,  
Just to know, "Thus saith the Lord".'

As the Jewish priests, after being washed, were clothed in white linen garments, typical of righteousness, so the New Covenant priests are clothed in robes of righteousness. It is written: 'As many of you as have been baptised into Christ have put on Christ' (Gal. 3:27). Having no righteousness of our own we accept from the Lord Jesus the wedding garment of His righteousness, and we are clothed, covered, accepted in Him. We put on Christ, and He is our righteousness.

### Sacrifices demanded from us

- 1 'Present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service' (Rom. 12:1-3).
- 2 'Through him, then, let us offer up a sacrifice of praise to God continually; that is, the fruit of lips which make confession to his name' (Heb. 13:15).
- 3 'But to do good and to communicate forget not: for with such sacrifices God is well pleased' (Heb. 13:16).

Nothing is worthy of being called a sacrifice unless it costs, hurts, pains.

It has been well said: 'There's a red stain in the word sacrifice'

In short, God demands our all. Under the old Covenant the sacrifices were presented dead, under the New Covenant a living body with all its faculties and powers must be given up to the Lord to be used, consumed in His service.

The true New Covenant priest says, and shows by deeds that he means it:

"Take my life, and let it be,  
Consecrated, Lord, to Thee,  
Take myself, and I will be  
Ever, only, all for Thee!"

W. CROSTHWAITE.

## ASK

O Thou by whom we come to God,  
The Life, the Truth, the Way,  
The path of prayer Thyself hast trod;  
Lord, teach us how to pray.

"Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us" Ephesians 3:20.

The Apostle Paul, a bond-servant of the Lord Jesus Christ, that mighty man of God, time and again prayed for his brethren. We are not surprised therefore to find him requesting the brethren to pray for them. "Brethren pray for us" 1 Thessalonians 5:25. May I request that you send up a prayer on my behalf, to our loving heavenly Father, that He will bless our meditation on this wonderful subject of prayer. I trust that you may find that many of the glorious truths we hope to glean from God's most precious word, will be a source of rich blessing to your soul, and that you may experience a deepening of your spiritual life. "Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law" Psalm 119:18.

For many years now I have realized the value of the context, when dealing with any text, or portions of the Word of God. We need to look at the verses before the passage or passages, and also at times, what comes after. May I draw your attention to four verses in the Apostle's letter to the Ephesian brethren Chapter 3:16-19 which precedes our text. "That he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by His spirit in the inner man; That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith. that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, May be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God". Can you read these verses without being thrilled? Do you not feel a sense of being caught up inot the heavenlies? The flow of language of this man of God, at times leaves one speechless, and with a longing to be able to share his mountain top experiences with the One he loved so dearly. These verses are Rich...Radiant...Splendid...Brilliant...Magnificent...Words of mine are so inadequate to describe the glory and beauty of these verses. One marvels at the wonderful treasures that can be mined from the precious word. No wonder that this aged warrior of the cross, wrote in chapter 3 about "the unsearchable riches of Christ" verse 8. We can never exhaust the riches of Christ, they are untrackable, not traced out. "beyond all knowledge and all thought". "The riches of his glory...to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God".

Then we are given this masterpiece, for our contemplation and edification:-- "Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us".

ASK

ALL THAT WE ASK

ALL THAT WE ASK OR THINK

ABUNDANTLY ABOVE ALL THAT WE ASK OR THINK

EXCEEDING ABUNDANTLY ABOVE ALL THAT WE ASK OR THINK  
 ABLE TO DO EXCEEDING ABUNDANTLY ABOVE ALL THAT WE ASK OR THINK  
 ACCORDING TO THE POWER THAT WORKETH IN US'  
 NOW UNTO HIM.... NOW UNTO HIM.... NOW UNTO HIM....

One marvels at this saint of God, as he turns his attention heaven-ward. "NOW UNTO HIM", our minds are directed to the giver of all good gifts, to the One through whom all blessings are showered down on His children. The One who through Christ, can satisfy the deep yearnings and longings of the soul. Shall we with Paul send up a peon of praise to the Almighty, "Now unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honour and glory for ever and ever. Amen". 1 Timothy 1:17. Come to the throne of grace, and pay homage to the One who gave so freely. HIS ONLY BEGOTTEN SON, and sing these wonderful lines by W. C. Smith :-

IMMORTAL; invisible, God only wise.  
 In light inaccessible hid from our eyes,  
 Most blessed, most glorious, the Ancient of Days,  
 Almighty, victorious, Thy great Name we praise.  
 Unresting, unhasting, and silent as light,  
 Nor wanting, nor wasting, Thou rulest in might;  
 Thy justice like mountains high soaring above  
 Thy clouds, which are fountains of goodness and love.  
 To all, life Thou givest - to both great and small;  
 In all life Thou livest, the true life of all;  
 We blossom and flourish as leaves on the tree,  
 And wither and perish - but nought changeth Thee.  
 Great Father of glory, pure Father of light,  
 Thine angels adore Thee, all veiling their sight;  
 All laud we would render: Lord help us to see,  
 'Tis only the splendor of light hideth Thee.

"Now unto him that is...able to do...exceeding...abundantly...above...all that we ask or think... according to the power that worketh in us". The more one reads and meditates on the word of God, the more one marvels at the glorious truths given to us by His servants.

THY Word is like a garden, Lord, With flowers bright and fair; And every one who seeks may pluck A lovely garland there.	Thy Word is like a deep, deep mine; And jewels rich and rare Are hidden in its mighty depths, For every searcher there.
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NOW UNTO HIM....

NOW UNTO HIM....

NOW UNTO HIM....

"O LORD our Lord, how excellent is thy name in all earth! who hast set thy glory above the heavens"

"I WILL love thee, O Lord, my strength.

Psalm 8:1

"UNTO thee, O Lord, do I lift up my soul"

Psalm 18:1

"THE Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? the Lord is the strength of my life of whom shall I be afraid?"

Psalm 25:1

Psalm 27:1

"I WILL bless the Lord at all times: his praise shall continually be in my mouth"

Psalm 34:1

"As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God, My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God"

Psalm 42:1,2

"How amiable are thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts! My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth for the courts of the Lord my heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God"

Psalm 84:1,2

"Bless the Lord, O my soul: and all that is within me, bless his holy name. Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits"

Psalm 103:1,2

"NOW UNTO HIM". "Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.

Heb. 4:16

God willing during the coming month's we hope to glean from the passage chosen for our consideration, many thoughts that will help in our daily living for the Lord Jesus.

ABLE TO DO EXCEEDINGLY ABUNDANTLY ABOVE ALL THAT WE ASK OR THINK  
ACCORDING TO THE POWER THAT WORKETH IN US.

Look out for next month's article on the theme of 'ABLE TO DO'.

May God's richest blessing be your portion,

LEONARD MORGAN.

## IMPORTANCE OF THE SCRIPTURES

### Their Source

HOW did they come into existence?

2 Peter 1:21 tells us:—

"For the prophecy came not in old times by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Spirit". So much for the Old Testament Scriptures, but what about the New Testament Scriptures?

Hebrews 1:1-2 tells us:—

"When in former times God spoke to our forefathers, He spoke in fragmentary and varied fashion through the prophets. But in this final age He has spoken to us by His Son whom He has made heir to the whole Universe, and through whom He created all orders of existence" (NEB)

1 Thessalonians 2:13 tells us:—

"This is why we thank God continually, because when we handed on God's message, you received it, not as the word of men, but as what it truly is, the Word of God at work in you who believe" (NEB).

### Their Theme

What is the great subject of the Scriptures? What are they about?

John 1:45 tells us:—

"Philip went to find Nathaniel and told him, "We have met the man spoken of by Moses in the Law and by the prophets: it is Jesus, son of Joseph from Nazareth" (NEB).

Luke 24:27 tells us:—

"Then Jesus began with Moses and all the prophets, and explained to them the passages which referred to Himself in every part of the Scriptures" (NEB).

John 5:46 tells us:—

"For had ye believed Moses ye would have believed me! for he wrote of me (This Moses did in Deuteronomy 18:15, where he says "The Lord your God will raise-up a prophet from among you like unto myself and you shall listen to Him).

John 4:40-42 fully explains the import of these words, when it tells us:—

"When these Samaritans had come to Him (Jesus), they pressed Him to stay with them, and He stayed there two days. Many more became believers because of what they heard from His own lips. They told the woman 'it is no longer because of what you said that we believe, for we have heard Him ourselves; and we know that this is in truth the Saviour of the world" (NEB).

Here is the great theme of all the Scriptures, Jesus, the Saviour of the World.

### Their Purpose

Psalms 119:9-11 tells us:—

"How shall a young man steer an honest course?"

By holding to Thy word.

With all my heart I strive to find thee;

let me not stray from Thy commandments.

I treasure Thy promise in my heart,

for fear that I might sin against Thee" (NEB).

John 3:16-17 tells us:—

"God loved the world so much that He gave His only Son, that everyone who has faith, (believes) in Him may not die but have eternal life. It was not to judge the world that God sent His Son into the world, but that through Him the world might be saved" (NEB).

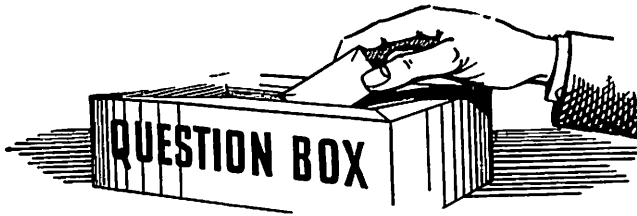
John 20:31 sums it up thus:—

“There were indeed many other signs that Jesus performed in the presence of His disciples. which are not recorded in this book. Those here written have been recorded in order that you may come to believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that through this belief you may have (eternal) life by His name”.

Romans 15:4 emphasises this as the Christian hope in the words:—

“For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope”. (of eternal life).

(To be continued) W. BROWN, DUNFERMLINE




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Conducted by  
Alf Marsden

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I HAVE recently been studying in the Gospels, particularly the parables, and I have been struck by the teaching of Jesus regarding the Kingdom. Would you please comment on the teaching concerning the Kingdom and say how it fits in with our idea of the Church?

CHRIST is King! Hallelujah; Praise the Lord! If more christians appreciated the fact that Christ rules in their lives then I believe we should see a stronger, more dedicated, and more virile Church. I thank the questioner for bringing this to our notice, because it is undoubtedly true that of late we have been presented with a Christ who has done his work some two thousand years ago and now sits benignly in heaven doing nothing, rather than a Christ who is a ruling Christ, exercising control and direction of our lives.

It was Jesus himself who made the call stating the importance of the Kingdom. As Mark records, “Now after that John was put in prison, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, and saying, ‘The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel!’” (Mark 1:14,15). I think we shall best appreciate the Kingdom if we look at it from four aspects, namely:

- 1 The nature of the Kingdom
- 2 Its worth (value)
- 3 Its extension (growth)
- 4 Its consummation

#### Interchangeable Terms

Matthew, commenting on the parables, says “it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the Kingdom of Heaven” (Matt. 13:11). Luke, in his record, say, “unto you it is given to know the mysteries of the Kingdom of God” (Luke 8:10). Here we see that the designations ‘Kingdom of Heaven’ and ‘Kingdom of God’ are identical terms.

In his letter to the Colossians Paul says of God, “Who has delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son” (Col. 1:13). Later in the same chapter Paul says of Jesus, “And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the pre-eminence” (Col. 1:18).

Paul here introduces another kingdom, the kingdom of Christ, which is the church. So we see the interchangeable terms; kingdom of God; kingdom of Heaven; kingdom of Christ; the Church. What we must bear in mind is that the church is the kingdom, ruled and governed by Christ and in existence now. We now need to see what our involvement in this kingdom is.



### The Nature of the Kingdom

1 It is an everlasting kingdom. Daniel in his prophecy depicts one like unto the Son of man coming before the Ancient of days. The scripture then reads, "And there was given him dominion and glory, and a kingdom, that all nations, people, and languages should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed" (Daniel 7:13,14).

What think you of Christ, dear readers? The lowly Nazarene? The despised and rejected one? I tell you HE IS KING! And we had better start appreciating that fact right away, because no one is going to destroy his kingdom.

2 It is a new kingdom, Jesus said, "No man seweth a piece of new cloth on an old garment: else the new piece that filled it up taketh away from the old, and the rent is made worse. And no man putteth new wine into old bottles, etc" (Mark 2:21,22).

God's new order, taught Jesus, cannot be patched onto the old, worn garments of Judaism. By the same token we Christians cannot take the new life in Christ and try to stick it onto the old and decaying life which we should have forsaken.

3 It is a spiritual kingdom. The word of God came to Jeremiah the prophet "After those days, saith the Lord, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and I will be their God and they shall be my people" (Jer. 31:33).

No more written laws. God's covenant is so established in the hearts of men. The Parable of the Sower tells us about the good seed of God scattered into the soil of the hearts of men. Jesus poses the same question to each one of us. "What kind of soil am I?"

### The Growth of the Kingdom

Small beginnings. We can hardly imagine that tiny band of frightened men growing into a vast kingdom. But we shouldn't be surprised, should we? With God at the helm all things are possible.

Didn't Jesus teach this in the Parable of the Mustard Seed? Here was a seed that was difficult to see with the naked eye, and yet it grew to be the greatest of all the shrubs, so large, in fact, that the birds of the air were able to nest in it.

This great growth was about to be repeated in the spiritual world. To the casual observer in the days of Jesus, the visible evidence of the new era was a poor, tiny, contemptible band of Jesus' followers. Could this be the great purpose of God? People tended to see the kingdom as a huge joke, but God was at the helm, and that tiny band of men carrying the divine message was destined to span the earth and sweep the Gentiles into the kingdom as well. If God be for us, who can be against us?

Furthermore, what about the leaven? When Jesus taught this parable he was not comparing the kingdom with leaven but to what happens when you put leaven into a batch of meal. The action is fermenting, dynamic, restless, pervasive. Have you ever thought how leaven works. It starts to work on the particle nearest to it, and spreads through the whole by the influence of particle to particle.

Isn't this the way the kingdom spreads? The message spreads from soul to soul. We are intended to work on those souls which are nearest to us. Never mind the national and international campaigns on a huge scale. Be like the leaven. Work on the people who are nearest to you.

### The Worth of the Kingdom

What is it worth to be in the kingdom of God's dear Son? How worthy is Christ to you? When you found Christ did you find your greatest treasure? Far too often we are only prepared to give to Jesus those remnants which we can spare. This is not what Jesus taught when he spoke the parables of people finding valuable things (Matt. 13:44-46).

What did Jesus teach. When the people found the pearl of great price and the hidden treasure they recognised these things as being of superlative value. What did they then do? They sold all that they had and brought those precious things. They paid all that they had, and they did it

joyfully!

How meagre our responses oftentimes are. We should realise the great treasure that is ours in Christ.

Worthy the lamb that died they cry  
To be exalted thus.  
Worthy the lamb our lips reply  
For he was slain for us.

Some christians say, 'Make the kingdom more worthy. Separate the bad from the good'. In the Parable of the Tares Jesus supplies the answer. Let both grow together until the time of harvest, then God will separate them. We are not to anticipate the judgement of God. We have not sufficient knowledge.

### The Consummation of the Kingdom

Matthew 13:47-50 shows that judgement follows the end of the present kingdom. The wicked are severed from the just (v 49) and the wicked are then cast into the furnace of fire(v50).

Christ is coming again! "and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation" (Heb. 9:28).

Some premillennialists refer to a seven year period of what they describe as 'The Great Tribulation'. At the beginning of this period Christ will come for his saints. During the seven year period God will then deal with Israel again. At the end of this period Jesus will come again with his saints to rule on earth.

Let us say emphatically that the Bible does not teach this. In 1 Cor. 15:24-28 Paul makes it clear that this present reign will continue to the end of time. When Christ leaves the throne at God's right hand it will be the end of this age, and he will then deliver the kingdom up to the Father.

Christ is coming again! Let us look expectantly and confidently for him. Even so, Lord Jesus, come quickly. Amen.

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

## SCRIPTURE READINGS

NOVEMBER 1976

7—Hosea 6	Matthew 9:1-17
14—1 Kings 17:8-24	Matthew 9:18-34
21—Psalm 23	Matthew 9:35 to 10:15
28—Jeremiah 1	Matthew 10:16 to 11:1

### COMPASSION AND FORGIVENESS (9:1-8).

JESUS quoted the prophecy "the Spirit of the Lord is upon Me" (Luke 4:18), and that spirit was made obvious by both word and action. It was the mission of our Saviour to bring the forgiveness of God within man's reach. Man's forgiveness of man cannot bring relief though even it can bring immeasurable increase of peaceful co-existence. The four men whose faith and practice brought the paralytic within reach were moved by compassion for him and faith in Jesus. No doubt the sufferer urged them on, sure that the power was there, the

power to heal the body. Little did they know that a much greater blessing would be received. Jesus knew that the greater need was there and gave it first place. The doctors of the law were present (Luke 5:17) and to them it was necessary His spiritual power should be made plain, and His claims declared. Long afterwards He was asked by such "Who art Thou? His reply was "Even that which I have also spoken unto you from the beginning". By that time it had become necessary to tell His disciples not to publicise His claims as that would have led to violence and frustration of His real mission. It is easier to say than to do. Every preacher knows that more is required of him than mere words. If his preaching and his practice do not agree, the one stultifies the other. In the incident we are studying Jesus completely non-plussed His detractors by publicly manifesting His power over disease, and justified His claim on earth to forgive sins — which they rightly recognised as God's prerogative. To us it may seem amazing that His enemies could continue to disbelieve Him when complete consistency

of all His words and actions were so obvious (9:34). They were indeed blinded by envy and hatred. With them there was neither compassion nor forgiveness, the two essentials for spiritual life. Jesus was that life, and therefore the light of the world – love manifested in compassion and forgiveness. He reminded them of God's order – mercy before observances (9:13). To the ordinary man and women the restoration of the paralytic excited their wonder, and they glorified God for the power of Jesus (9:8).

#### Fasting (9:14-17).

John the Baptist was a Nazarite from birth (Luke 1:15). He had one supreme service to fulfill. It required him to be set apart from normal human society. "He was in the deserts until his shewing unto Israel". The men who became his disciples were men of like consecration. Their function was to back up the work of stirring up the people for the coming of Jesus, the Christ, the Son of God. God was to visit His people. How vitally important it was that the work should be thoroughly done. With such a task the deepest consecration and consciousness of God's presence and help were essential. Hence it was reasonable that they should fast. It was a time for sorrow because of the sins of the people and the priests. Abstinence from food and any worldly pleasures emphasise the seriousness of appeal to God. The fasts of Moses, Elijah and Jesus were of divine appointment, and indicate the vital importance of their position and work for God. Other fasts in Old and New Testament times, whether individual or public serve the same purpose. While therefore little is said about this religious practice, it had always been recognised, associated with prayer, as the natural exercise when serious matters are considered. So the practice by John and his disciples, and the Pharisees when rightly undertaken are approved by Jesus, and likewise now upon occasions by Christians. However as a part of covenant relationships with God, it has passed away. We no longer have instruction to "afflict our souls" (Lev. 16:29 etc) in this way, but we have examples of fasting by Christians in needful cases (Acts 13:2&3; 14:23; 1 Cor. 7:5). Jesus spoke three parables on this occasion. The first related to His disciples enjoying His presence as the Bridegroom's friends at a wedding enjoyed bringing the bride from her home to the bridegroom's and rejoicing in the procession and the subsequent feast. To be sad in

such circumstances would indeed be "wet blanket". He more than hints at His departure from them (Mark 16:10). In these times there are with most Christians times of despondency and depression when the Lord seems far away and not be hearing our prayers, when in fact fasting may be appropriate.

#### Contrasts (9:16 & 17).

Surely thinking of contrast between Law and Gospel Jesus tells the parables of the 'Cloth' and the 'Wineskins'. What a homely illustration is that of patching an old garment! The practice has perhaps become out of date with the affluent society but the lesson is clear. The old and the new are often impossible to reconcile. With regard to the wineskins, grape juice unfermented immediately bottled in airtight containers remains so, but if the wineskins had been used before they would contain remains which would cause fermentation which would burst any container, and fermented still wine would not burst any vessel. The teaching of Jesus superceded other teachings and would have to be accepted without admixture. Neither John Baptist nor Pharisee could overrule the disciples of the Supreme Teacher.

#### The Ministry of the Apostles (10:5-42)

The Saviour's 'charge' to the apostles clearly sends them out without earthly support. Society was very different in those times and in that country. We who are used to every 'mod. con.' and all it means can hardly understand their work. Certainly Jesus was well known, His work as a healer had effected thousands of homes in that countryside and when His apostles arrived in any town they would be recognised at least when their message was given if not by sight. The request for hospitality would be quite usual and involve hardly any preparation. Thus refusal would mean definite hostility to their call for repentance. Their message came with healing power for the sick. There could be no mistake about their authority as messengers of God. On other occasions their ministry was not limited to the house of Israel but this first "campaign" by the twelve put that first. It was a primary duty. Opportunity was given to those with most knowledge and most responsibility in the sight of God. Those twelve comparatively unlettered men went everywhere preaching and teaching with their Master's authority as an introduction and preparation for the tremendous

task with which they were later entrusted. Their experience must have been invaluable although it was still beyond them to have any appreciation of the future. Jesus did impress upon them the greatness of their power. They had the assurance that the fate of those who rejected them was commensurate with that of Sodom and Gomorrah, and that their preaching was in fact their Master's own. Matthew in reporting all that Jesus told them had by that time come to a full understanding of those things "whatsoever I have said unto you", and understanding only possible by the miraculous leading of the Holy Spirit.

So concentrated are these portions of gospels, all four of which need be brought into view, that we have only space for a very limited comments. We trust these will prove helpful.

R. B. Scott

### FILM ABOUT CHRIST

In view of the recent controversy over the possibility of making a film on 'the sex life of

Jesus', I would like to use the pages of the S.S. to urge the brethren to do as the church at Wallacestone have done and write their local M.P. to use his influence and office to ensure that no such film ever be made in this country and that the person involved be refused entry into this country.

The writer believes that God would expect his children in such an issue to stand up and be counted.

JAMES GRANT

45 Kirkwood Avenue, Redding, Falkirk.

### NEW BIBLE TRANSLATION IN POLAND

FOR the first time in 300 years, a new translation of the Bible is available. It is the fruit of twenty-five years work by theologians and language experts of several churches. Printed in Poland and financed by the European Production Fund of the Bible Societies, the first edition was 50,000 copies. There is an increasing interest in the Bible in Poland.

## CORRESPONDENCE CLASS

### THE EARLY HISTORY OF THE CHURCH OF CHRIST

or

### THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

#### Questions on Chapter 3

- 1 Reconcile verse 6 with verse 16.
- 2 In verse 17 Peter says, 'I wot that through ignorance ye did it'. Was their ignorance excusable?
- 3 Quote from the Prophets instances to which Peter refers (verse 18).
- 4 'Repent' (verse 19). What is repentance?
- 5 'Be converted' - explain.
- 6 What are the 'times of restitution of all things'?
- 7 Has the promise of Deut. 18:15 been fulfilled?
- 8 When will the souls 'which will not hear that prophet', 'be destroyed from among the people'?
- 9 Where is the quotation in verse 25 found. What is Paul's argument re 'seed' and 'seeds'. (Gal. 3:16).
- 10 Does verse 26 refer to the work of Jesus before Calvary?

Answers, which should be written on one side of the paper only, should be returned for the end of November.

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