

The SCRIPTURE STANDARD

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

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AS A MAN THINKETH

In spite of the busy nature of our lives, there are, never-the-less, many hours spent in thoughtful pre-occupation and meditation. Human thoughts fluctuate over a very wide spectrum; from the shallow to the profound and from the whimsical to the dire. One wonders, for instance, about the thoughts, at this present time, of those who planted the recent bomb at Omagh, Ireland, as they contemplate their cold-blooded massacre of twenty eight passers-by, and the truly horrific injuries of those who survived, including the young girl blinded now for life. One also wonders about the thoughts they had as they met to conspire this new atrocity, for our deeds are but the outcome of our thoughts.

Our thoughts are very important. Few of us can say that we do not have thoughts; indeed most of our waking hours are spent in thoughts of one kind or another. Nebuchadnezzar had troubled thoughts even as he lay in bed. Human thoughts can be morbid; sad; sombre; dark; brooding; malicious; resentful; envious; treacherous; suspicious; painful, malevolent; pernicious; baleful; mischievous; vile; nefarious; base; corrupt; depraved; wicked; vicious or can be bright; pleasant; generous; kind; pious; virtuous; benevolent; cheerful; healthful; genial; agreeable; hospitable; beautiful; gracious; happy; pure; friendly, or a mixture of these. Our thoughts have a great bearing on our lives and usually those "who think beautiful thoughts" have equally beautiful personalities. We can think the worst in every situation and 'thinking the worst' soon becomes a bad habit, and even an attitude to life. "Think beautiful thoughts" is good advice. Perhaps we feel that it is not within our compass to think beautiful thoughts, or any other kind for that matter; and that we have, in fact *no control* over what we think - thoughts just come to us. Truly the devil tempts us with evil thoughts but the scriptures require that we should not entertain such thoughts but cast them behind us. When the thought came to Judas that he ought to betray Jesus he harboured the thought and eventually brought it to fruition; whereas he should have strangled it in its infancy.

Thoughts are vitally important because, as Solomon said, "**As a man thinketh, in his heart, so is he**" (Pr. 23:7). It is alarming to think that we can never be better than our thoughts. As a man thinks so is he. Our *actions begin* as thoughts. Expediency may be the *mother* of invention, but thought is the *father* of action. We worry about our actions and yet actions are firstly conceived in our thoughts. Indeed we never know what a person is thinking until their thoughts have found expression - either in words or in actions. The Chinese have a reputation for being "inscrutable" and we can never read their thoughts in their faces but this is essentially true of everyone. *Kind thoughts* will

give expression to a *kind act*, and conversely, we can be sure that all evil deeds are cradled first in evil thoughts. Sometimes an evil thought remains unconsummated, in the mind of man because of the fear of the consequences but *the thought* is as repugnant to God, as is the deed. One man may harbour a desire to injure, or even kill, his neighbour but refrain from doing so in fear of discovery, but the thought is as evil as the act. Thus, evil thoughts, quite apart from the absence of any accompanying action, are per se, under the condemnation of God. In the estimation made by Jesus "*Evil thoughts*" head the list of all the terrible things emanating from the human heart. He said, "For out of the heart proceed *evil thoughts; murders; adulteries; fornications; thefts; false witness; blasphemies.*" (Matt. 15:19). Evil deeds are condemned by Jesus but so are *evil thoughts*. Men say that we can't go to jail for what *we think*, but it seems that we might well end up in hell because of our thoughts.

GOD'S THOUGHTS ARE HIGHER

Every now and then we should indulge in a little introspection and ponder the *nature* and the *quality* of the thoughts that we have. Jesus was continually taking the temperature of the thoughts of men. "What thinkest thou" He would ask. "Wherefore think ye evil in your hearts"? "How think ye" "Why do these thoughts arise in your hearts" (a good question). By probing the thoughts of men Jesus was able to demonstrate the vast gulf between God's thoughts and man's thoughts. After all, man is not known for being modest about the alleged high standard of his own thoughts. There is no shortage of men willing to commit their thoughts to print so that all the world may share their sagacity and marvel at their wisdom. Any bookstall will demonstrate this. It's not so very long ago that Mao Tse-tung wearied the world in general, and the Chinese in particular, by printing the little red book - "The Thoughts Of Mao Tse-tung" and insisting that his thoughts be studied and memorised by all the many millions of Chinese, and that excerpts be over the radio every hour. We never hear of his 'thoughts' nowadays and he, and his thoughts, have gone the way of the world. To be offered the proverbial "Penny for our thoughts" is usually to be offered more than they are worth, for Paul says that even the thoughts of those regarded by man as wise, are vain (1 Cor. 3:20). Paul went on to say that even if it was remotely possible to think of God as partly foolish, His foolishness would be wiser than the wisest of men. The best of men are men at best. The Psalmist has much to say about man's thoughts but is as complimentary as he can be when he describes them as 'vain'. At best they are vain and at worst they are an abomination, and "God has no place in the thoughts of the wicked" (Ps. 10:4) Even prior to the Flood God discovered "that the wickedness of man was great upon the earth and that every imagination of the thoughts of man was only evil, continually."

Is it surprising, therefore, to note the words of Isaiah (55:7-11) "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his *thoughts*; and let him return to the Lord; and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon."? Isaiah believes that just as wicked man can forsake his *way* and unrighteous man *can forsake his thoughts*. Isaiah would, therefore, seem to disagree that we are the *victims* of our thoughts and that we are held captive by them. He calls upon man to *diich* his unrighteous thoughts. "For My *thoughts* are not your *thoughts*, neither are your ways My ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My *thoughts* and your *thoughts*." Thus, Isaiah confirms that man can not only be 'wicked' in his 'ways' but also 'unrighteous' in his 'thoughts' and both equally are to be repented of. We notice too that in trying to quantify the disparity between God's ways and thoughts and man's ways

and thoughts Isaiah finds the difference incalculable (i.e. the distance between heaven and earth) which, when we come to think of it, seems appropriate. The Psalmist uttered similar sentiments when he cried, "**Many, O Lord, are Thy wonderful works which Thou hast done, and Thy thoughts which are to usward; they cannot be reckoned up in order unto Thee: if I would declare and speak of them, they are more than can be numbered**" (Ps. 40:5).

THE THOUGHT EQUAL TO THE DEED?

What then, is the practical effect of this vast differential between God's thoughts and man's thoughts? Surely it must mean that we must at all times *be guided by God's holy scriptures*, and *not* by the recommendation of men, however well intentioned. We must, as Solomon put it, "**Trust in the Lord with all thine heart and lean not unto thine own understanding**". (Pr. 3:5). Notwithstanding these wise words, it seems that 'when the chips are down' that men seek out fellowmen (with a reputation for wisdom) and seek their guidance. (For some time I attended a Bible-Study where one lady used to conclude all discussion by saying, "Yes, that's what the Bible says but I must go and see what my Minister thinks".) To all intents and purposes God's thoughts and ways have been encapsulated in the New Testament and that is the document by which we shall be accused or excused. The apostle Paul (Rom. 2:15) refers, with obvious approval, to the fact that the Gentiles, notwithstanding that they did not have the Law (of Moses) nevertheless kept that Law, quite naturally, and their conscience and *their thoughts* either excused or accused them. This was highly admirable of course but today we have a written New Testament and our consciences and thoughts can be regulated by the words of Christ and His apostles. This same document, (says the writer to the Hebrews,) "**is quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.**" (Heb. 4:12). Thoughts enter our heads much like, I suppose, fish enter the seaman's net. Many of the fish in the net, upon close examination, are unsuitable and are thrown back into the sea. The Word of God is '*a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart*' and so furnishes a divine measuring rod for our thoughts, whether they be wholesome or evil, whether virtuous or unrighteous. When Simon the Sorcerer offered to *buy* the supernatural gifts of the Holy Spirit *the mere expression* of the wish brought the wrath of God upon his head. We are to suppose that had the thought not been given words, and Peter had not heard it, the wrath of God would still have focussed upon the thought, albeit unexpressed. Simon was advised '**to repent of his wickedness and pray to God that the thought of his heart might be forgiven him**'. I fear that we all have unworthy thoughts from time to time and require the admonition given to Simon. The story is told of the small girl who was encouraged by her father to read a portion of the Bible every day. After a few weeks the child complained that she could not always retain what she read and indeed could scarcely remember what she had read a few days previously. Her father agreed about the difficulty of retaining what she read but insisted that it was still a good practice - even just for *the cleansing of the mind*. He sent her to fetch the potato basket and after emptying out the muddy potatoes told her to go and fill the basket with water. She returned several times to admit failure but was sent back again to the tap. After a while the father called a halt to the procedure and admitted that the basket would never be able to retain all the water, "But", said he, "Notice how much cleaner the basket is".

"BEHOLD I THOUGHT"

When Naaman the leper (2 Kings: 5) was instructed by Elisha, God's prophet, to

"Go and wash in Jordan seven times, and thy flesh shall come again to thee, and thou shalt be clean" we find that his reaction to God's instruction was not untypical of similar reactions from mankind today. "But Naaman was wroth and he went away, and said, **"Behold I thought ..."**. The instructions were not what he had expected. He had imagined that Elisha would have come out to see him (at the very least) and that he would have put his hand on the diseased parts of the body and uttered great prayers to his God. But no! nothing like that had happened - a mere servant had been sent with the cold and laconic message to go and dip seven times in the local river. As we know, Naaman's servants eventually calmed him down and suggested that if he had been asked to do some great thing, he would have done it - so why not do a simple thing. The incident ended happily with Naaman losing his dread disease as he emerged from the Jordan the seventh time. But surely Naaman's attitude is very common today. People come to God with predetermined notions of what they want to hear, and when they discover that God wants them to believe and be baptised (immersed) - (Acts 2; Rom. 6 etc.) - they often shrink back and say "This is not what I expected" - **"Behold I thought . . ."** this or that. Indeed much of the trouble in the religious world is because more credence is given to *our thoughts* (what men think) than what God says. "Behold I thought . . ." is a common reaction and if our thoughts (or the thoughts of 'our Minister') take preference over God's thoughts, then *our thoughts* must be regarded as evil. After all, we cannot expect our thoughts to be in any way pre-emptive of God's thoughts, since His thoughts and ways are superior and higher.

CONCLUSION

Clearly our thoughts are very important and they influence our lives. We have a certain control over them and must try to expunge all unworthy thoughts from our hearts and minds. Our thoughts must be *conditioned* by God's word and if, for example, we think to revenge ourselves upon someone for some act or word against us, the knowledge that **"Vengeance belongeth to the Lord"** will condition such a thought and hopefully evaporate it. In this connection there are at least two passages of scripture worthy of our notice, however brief:-

(1) 2 Cor. 10:5 where Paul states that the weapons of our warfare are not weak **"but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds. Casting down imaginations and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ"**. Paul reckons that our thoughts can be controlled i.e. **"brought into captivity to the obedience of Christ."** McKnight says of this verse, "The empty reasonings and foolish imaginations of the human mind being thrown down, every thought which arises in it, from that time forth, is made as subservient to the obedience of Christ, as slaves are to the will of their Lords. In this noble passage, the apostle with great energy describes the method in which wicked men fortify themselves against the gospel, raising as it were one barrier behind another, to obstruct its entrance into their minds. But when these are all thrown down, the gospel is received, and Christ is obeyed implicitly; *every thought and reasoning* taking its direction from him."

(2) The second passage, Phil. 4:8, suggests to us *the kind of thoughts* well pleasing to God. Once again the words come from the apostle Paul, as parting advice to the disciples at Philippi, **"Finally brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things."** Clearly advice to "Think beautiful thoughts" is perfectly scriptural. "Think on these things," says Paul. Anything

true; anything honest; anything just; anything pure; anything lovely; anything respectable (of good report); anything virtuous; anything praiseworthy - any of these are fit subjects to form the basis of our thoughts.

Think on *these* things - think beautiful thoughts.

EDITOR.

THE SPIRIT OF CHRIST

Nails may have held the body of my Lord on the cross of Calvary; but it was sin, my sin and your sin, that He bore on the cross. We read 2 Corinthians that God made Jesus to be sin for us: He knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him. Sin is black. Sin is ugly. Sin is dirty. Sin is a disgrace to all that is holy and right. Sin is to be feared, to be despised, to be hated. Sin will damn our souls. **"For the wages of sin is death."** Sin brings disgrace to our life, grief to the life of loved ones, and puts our Lord to an open shame.

It would be impossible for me to draw an adequate picture of how God views sin. But if sin is so, if sin is pictured as ugly; to be despised and to be hated, why did God send Christ? Why did Christ come willingly? Why did God allow Calvary? Why did Christ lay his body willingly to be nailed? Why did Christ take upon Himself sin when He had known no sin? And of course, the answer to these questions is the story of the gospel. This is grace, this is mercy, this is love.

This love and grace that we are trying to see, has been pictured in several different ways by our Lord. The one that I want to share with you now is found in Luke 7 beginning with verse 41. **"There was a certain creditor which had two debtors; the one owned 500 pence, the other 50. And when they had nothing to pay, he frankly forgave them both. Tell me therefore, which of them will love him the most? Simon answered and said, I suppose that he to whom he forgave the most, and he (Jesus) said to him, Thou hast judged rightly."**

MUCH FORGIVEN

This parable is pictured in the home of Pharisee named Simon. It was the respectable thing to be a member of the Pharisees. This was the "in group." This was the right place to be in society. These people would tithe of even the smallest of herbs. These people were strict in the observance of law, but forgot the weightier matters of justice and mercy.

Into this household Jesus came to eat and into this scene came a woman with a multitude of sins. The Bible says that she came into the Pharisee's house with an alabaster box of ointment, stood at Jesus' feet behind him weeping, began to wash His feet with tears, did wipe them with the hairs of her head, kissed His feet and anointed them with ointment. Simon spake within himself, **"This man if he were a prophet, would have known who and what manner of woman this is that touched him, for she is a sinner."** Jesus said, **"Simon, I have something to say to you,"** and Simon said, **"Say on."**

So Jesus gives the parable. The he says, **"Simon, see this woman? I came into your house, you gave me no water for my feet but she washed my feet with tears and wiped them with the hairs of her head. You did not greet me with a kiss, but this woman, since the time she came in, has not ceased to kiss my feet." Simon, this woman, with much sin has offered unto me the courtesy that you should have given. Now, her sins which are many, are forgiven."** I believe Jesus is saying, **"Simon, it is as if you owe me 50 pence and this woman 500, and the creditor, or God,**

hath frankly forgiven both of you." Now what is it that I should learn from the 500 pence and the 50 pence - of guilt, of sin, of debt?

First of all, I need to learn that free and full forgiveness is for everyone! I believe that my Lord's treatment of this woman should be a strong assurance that some people whom we write off, some people whom we will count as not worthy to be in Christ, some people whom we think are of the low, of those who are disgraced and have disgraced, are the very people that Jesus will receive. We sing a song, "Sinners Jesus Will Receive," and so I need to learn that a free and full pardon is available for all.

Secondly, it is not because this woman loved Jesus that she was forgiven, and so it is not because we love Jesus that he will forgive us, but, it is because we are willing to repent and do his will. When we recognize our sinful condition, through the "word", we have a merciful Saviour, one to Whom we can render our obedience, and be assured that we will be received. Then, there will be this deep and pure flow of salvation that will come to our souls. It is a simple, natural and divine outgrowth of penitence, faith and obedience.

GUILT AND GRACE

Thirdly, I need to learn a deep sense of God's grace. But before I can have that deep sense of God's grace, I need to have a sense of guilt. To whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little (Luke 7:47). So if we have an imperfect sense of guilt and therefore an imperfect sense of God's grace, we will have an imperfect response in gratitude and love. We must know and we must feel the guilt of our sins in the light of God's grace. For it is not a matter of the magnitude of the sin that determines how much we love God, but it is the fullness of our sense of guilt.

One sinner had a debt of 500 pence and another of 50 pence. Was it simply because this woman had much sin that she was able to love much? No, but it was because she realized the magnitude of God's forgiveness which was able to surmount the magnitude of her sins. I am truly concerned that with many of us, we do not appreciate the magnitude of God's grace, because we have a tendency as the Pharisee to say, "Look, my sins are little. My sins are few. Look at what I have *not* done. I am not an extortioner. I am not an adulterer. I am not as that sinner." So prayed the Pharisee. Like the Pharisee, we have a tendency to put our sins in a small cup and when we do, we put God's grace in the same cup. You may say, "There's not too much to that salvation bit. There's not too much to this thing of God's grace"; when indeed minimizing our sins, we are robbing ourselves of the wonderful cup of greatness of the mercy of God.

Number four, I need to realize that my Lord takes notice of my sins. I want you to picture a school bus involved in a tragic accident. I want you to try to picture the broken, the burnt, the maimed and shocked little bodies as they are carried to the hospital. What will be the reaction of every doctor, of every nurse, of every aide, of every orderly? There will be "Let us help, let us serve, let us ease the pain, let us dress the wound, let us calm the troubled heart." Why? This tragedy demands this ministry of healing.

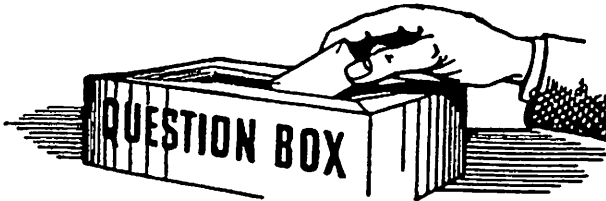
So, while God hates the sin, while it was sin that put Jesus on the cross; it seems as if my Saviour sits at the right hand of the throne of God and when He takes notice of sin, says: "Here is mercy, Here is grace. Here is healing." He does not stop to think. The doctor does not say to this child that is broken, bleeding, and near death; "Why didn't you miss the bus?" He doesn't run to the the driver and say, "Why did you cause this accident? Why did you create the atmosphere in which this is the result?" No, the doctor uses what is his to heal. So I say it is likewise with sin, which breaks, bruises, and puts people into shock. The spirit of Jesus Christ says, "I forgive."

THE SPIRIT OF CHRIST

To the woman taken in adultery, Jesus said, "Go and sin no more." I don't condemn you. To the man with palsy in Matthew 9 Jesus said, "Thy sins be forgiven thee." To the woman of many sins in our lesson Jesus said, "Thy sins are forgiven." Yes, the Son of man has come to seek and save the lost. God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world. Let me repent, this is the spirit of Christ. If this is not the spirit of the Church of Christ, then we are fooling ourselves and we will stand damned in the judgement.

Christ came to call sinners to repentance. We must also. Christ receives *penitent*, *obedient* sinners. We must also. Christ creates the atmosphere for change and for growth. We must also. Christ does not discourage sinners because of greatness of guilt. We must not. God's children can come home from the far country to love. Are we that love? Will we, are we, have we, been creating within ourselves individually and hence collectively as the family of God a home that when the memories of the prodigal centre upon us; he can with warmth remember - my family loves me! This is the Spirit of Christ.

R. KELLEY.



Conducted by
Frank Worgan

"Would you please explain Daniel 12, verse 7."

This month we have another question based on that fascinating book of prophecy, the book of Daniel.

The expression to which the question refers is '*time, two times and half a time*' (R.S.V. rendering) and to understand it we need to look at the **11th Chapter of the book of Daniel**. That chapter introduces a series of prophecies relating to world history after the fall of the Babylonian Empire to an alliance of the Medes and Persians, as recorded in **Dan. 5**. The 31st verse of that chapter tells us that Darius the Mede ruled after the death of Belshazzar, but history reveals that it was the Persians who became the dominant partner in that alliance (**ch.11;2**), whilst the Medes faded into the background.

Some time ago I replied to a question concerning the 'Inter-testamental Period', and to avoid too much repetition, it would be useful to refer to what I wrote at that time.

It is sufficient to say that **Daniel 11** predicts the conflict, which developed between the Persians and the rapidly rising, Macedonian, or Greek Empire, of which Alexander the Great was the central figure: a conflict, which resulted in the defeat of Persia.

However, after the early death of Alexander, predicted by **Dan. 11:4**, power was not retained by his immediate family as might have been expected, but went to his many generals who fought among themselves for control of the empire. It is often claimed that, before he died, when he was asked to whom he left the empire, Alexander replied, "*To him who can take it*".

STRUGGLE BETWEEN EGYPT AND SYRIA

Eventually, two rulers remained to face each other in a contest for supreme power. These were **Ptolemy**, who is described as "**king of the South**", which was Egypt, and

the "king of the North", which was Syria, ruled by the Seleucid dynasty, whose successive rulers took the name **Antiochus**.

We should bear in mind that, since at this point Daniel's prophecy relates to the future of Palestine and the Jews; these two kingdoms, Syria and Egypt, are called 'North' and 'South' only in relation to the situation of the Jews.

At first Judea and the Jews formed part of the kingdom of Ptolemy, but as you may see from a map, because of their unfortunate geographical situation, lying between the two warring kingdoms, they were overrun, first by the army of Antiochus as he marched south to attack Egypt; and then by the Egyptian army as Ptolemy struck back. This conflict is described in **Dan. 11, from verse 5**.

The most notorious of these Syrian rulers was **Antiochus 4th**, whose vanity led him to call himself '**Antiochus Epiphanes**'. The word 'Epiphanes, which means 'Glorious' or 'Brightness', reveals his opinion of himself. The people, however, called him 'Epimanes', a word that means 'mad'. This man is referred to in **ch.11: 21-25**.

THE SYRIAN OPPRESSION

The intensity of the suffering, which he inflicted on the Jews, is well known and well documented, and we need not discuss it here. It is sufficient to say that the period of time during which they were oppressed by Syria, for which Antiochus 4th responsible, lasted for **three and a half years, or 42 months, or 1260 days (ch.12: 6-7)**.

This is the period which in prophetic language, is expressed as time, two times and half a time.

'Time' represents one year.

'Times' (or two times) equals two years.

'half a time' represents six months.

This gives a total of three and a half years.

THE HISTORICAL DATES

This persecution of the Jews, instigated by Antiochus, began in **June 168 BC** and continued to **December 164 BC**, a period of three and a half years, as predicted by Daniel.

They enjoyed a period of independence, lasting for 100 years. This independence ended when they foolishly invited the Roman general Pompeii to enter Judea. The Romans came - and they stayed! We know that they were still there when the Lord Jesus was born.

However, the expression '**time, times and half a time**' relates to the three and a half years of Syrian oppression which the prophet foresaw.

The subsequent liberation of the Jews from Syrian oppression is still celebrated by them in the 'Feast of Lights', and it is therefore important to remember that the expression which we are now considering relates to a *definite period in the history of God's ancient people*, during which they endured persecution by the 'Gentiles' (i.e. 'the Nations') which was ended by a great deliverance.

NEW TESTAMENT REFERENCES

In the **Book of Revelation**, the same period of time is also used to represent a period of persecution or suffering, inflicted on God's *new* people, the Church, but also as a period which ends with their vindication and the defeat of the oppressor.

Five times this period is referred to in terms of 'days' or 'months' or 'times' or 'years'.

1. In **Rev. 11:2** we read that the 'Holy City' would be 'trampled', that is violently overrun, by the Gentiles; a clear figurative allusion to the persecution of Jerusalem by Antiochus. This would be for **42 months**, (which are 1260 days, or three and a half years).

2. The same chapter mentions the **1260 days**, in v.3. Notice here the significant reference to 'sackcloth', the emblem of grief and mourning.
3. **Verse 9** speaks of '**three days and a half**', using here the well-known prophetic symbolism in which a day is used to represent a year; hence **three years and a half**.
4. **Verse 11** again expresses this period as '**three and a half days**', after which God's witnesses rise again.
5. And, in **ch.12: 6**, the Church, represented as a 'radiant woman', is driven into the wilderness by Satan, (the 'Dragon' of ch.20: 2), for that familiar period **1260 days**, where she is nourished and cared for by God.

It is clear that these verses in the Revelation refer to the same period of time, viewed from different angles, and are meant to remind us of that piece of ancient history.

They represent, as in the book of Daniel, a period of opposition and persecution endured by the Church, the 'true Israel of God' (**Gal. 6:16**), but which lasts for only a limited time, because God has determined both the final deliverance and victory of His people and the destruction of the evil one responsible for their oppression.

Compare the reference to Antiochus, at the end of **Dan. 11:45**, and **Rev. 20:10**.

I also heartily recommend a comparison of **Daniel chaps. 11 and 12**, with **Revelation chaps. 11 and 12**. At the very least this makes an interesting study!

(Questions should be sent to: Frank Worgan, 5 Gryfebank, Houston, Renfrewshire, Scotland, PA6 7NZ)

THE LORD'S SUPPER (5) - THE CUP

THE NEW TESTAMENT

"This is my blood of the New Testament" (Mt. 26:28) - God has stated that *"without shedding of blood is no remission"*. (Heb. 9:22) however five hundred years before Jesus was born, when Jeremiah prophesied of the virgin birth (Jer. 31:22) the following verses says the Lord would *"make a new covenant with the house of Israel... not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; and this covenant will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts;"* (Jer. 31:31/3). By keeping the Passover on Nissan 14 of each year, the old covenant ensured Israel always remembered that the night they came out of Egypt an unblemished lamb was slaughtered and its blood applied to the lintel and two side posts of the door so that the Lord would not destroy them but "pass-over" them. The new covenant prophesied by Jeremiah was brought into effect when Jesus, the last Passover lamb, was sacrificed (1 Cor. 5:7) on the cross. Henceforth there is no need for any blood to be shed as *"now once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself"*. (Heb. 9:26).

"This cup is the New Testament in my blood" (1 Cor. 11:25). So said Jesus when initiating the Lord's supper. Following Christ's exodus (Lu. 9:31 - 'decease' translated from the Greek 'exodus'), the cup now has replaced the shedding of blood and the Old Testament reminder (Ex. 13:9) has been replaced with a new reminder - *"this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me."* (1 Cor. 11:25). As the 'reminder' is now of the "New Testament" its requirements cannot be dictated by referring back to the Old Testament. The apostles laid down the limits in Acts 15:9/20 to which we are now bound by the 'custom of Moses' - *"And put no difference between us and them, (Jew and Gentile), purify their hearts by faith. Now therefore why tempt ye God, to put a*

yoke upon the neck of the disciples, which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear? But we believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved, even as they"... *"But that we write unto them, that they abstain from pollutions of idols, and from fornication, and from things strangled, and from blood."* Christ has replaced the law of Moses with his own, the laws relating to righteousness have been made more demanding (e.g. divorce) whilst others, largely removed (e.g. dietary laws).

THE VINE

The substance in the cup is said to be *fruit of the vine*, (Mt. 26:29). The vine was highly symbolic to the Jew. Isaiah 5:7 says *"For the vineyard of the LORD of hosts is the house of Israel."* On the outside of the great central porch of Herod's Temple was a large carved golden-clad grape-vine. The choice by our Lord then of choosing the "Fruit of the Vine" was linked to God's chosen people. It is not without significance that just before his death Jesus cursed the fig tree (Mt 21:19) *"I will surely consume them, saith the LORD: there shall be no grapes on the vine, nor figs on the fig tree, and the leaf shall fade; and the things that I have given them shall pass away from them"*. (Jer. 8:13). Israel was planted a noble vine that turned into a degenerate plant (Jer. 2:21) which was thoroughly gleaned by its adversaries. (Jer. 6:9) with no grapes left (Jer. 8:13) it is only good for firewood (Ez. 15:2/6) and so Israel became an empty vine (Hos. 10:1) one that is laid waste (Joel. 1:7) and dried up (Joel. 1:12). However Zechariah foretells that the vine will give forth its fruit (Zech. 8:12) and the remnant will possess all. Zechariah 8:19 foretells that the breaking of the two tablets of the law, the destruction of the first and second temples, and the day of atonement would all become joy and gladness, and cheerful feasts for those who love truth and peace. What a wonderful picture of the Lord's Supper, all the tragic milestones of Jewish history forgotten and replaced with cheerful feasts. Jesus is now the true vine (Jn. 15:1) in whom we have to abide to bear fruit (Jn. 15:4) and the symbol of the vine has now passed to the Church, as Jesus said *"I am the vine, ye are the branches"* (Jn. 15:5). We should, therefore, use 'fruit of the vine' and not other fruit juices nor the practice denounced by the Early Church of using milk or water.

THE FRUIT OF THE VINE

The choice for the contents of the cup can only be between fermented and unfermented grape juice. Whichever is chosen, as Jesus remarked in Mt. 11:18/19, will probably be met with disapproval. The Jews at their Passover would have used fermented wine. They did not consider wine to be leavened, in spite of their very strict rules on avoiding even the tiniest trace of leaven, the Jews in Constantinople, according to Rabbi Culi, used wine in making their Matzos as there was less risk of grains fermenting than using water.

The Old Testament view on fermented wine is very cautionary (Pr. 31:4; Isa. 28:7). Yet it was not forbidden. It must be remembered that Melchizedek, the priest of the most high God, brought forth bread and wine (Ge. 14:18). Even strict Rabbi's, who did not drink over the year, felt it best to use red wine, (even if better white wine was available) and would bind their heads from Passover until Shavuoth (Pentecost) because of the great headaches the Passover wine caused them (The Passover Haggadah). The custom amongst the Romans at the time of Christ was to drink heated wine, which, as it was very thick and syrupy, they would mingle with water. This seems to have been the practice in the first two centuries of the Church. (Irenaeus - Justin - Didache). The practice amongst the orthodox Jews today seems, on the whole, to require the use of the best wine that can be afforded (Num. 18:12). Earlier Jewish requirements were that even if one did not have money to buy wine, their clothes

should be pawned or sold to ensure that wine was drunk at Passover. Liberal synagogues and Messianic Jews do however now tolerate unfermented wine. The practice of using unfermented grape juice seems to have become popular around the turn of this century with the rise of the temperance movements. This led to the Archbishop of Canterbury initiating a study in 1913 into the what should be used at the Lord's Supper. A report was issued in 1917 which recommended the continuance in the practice of using fermented wine. This follows the practice of all other established and orthodox churches I have been able to review so far. The ante-Nicene practice was for the wine to be mingled with water either before or during the service, which still is the practice of the Eastern orthodox churches.

The only restrictions we now have on drinking wine is that we should not offend or cause another to stumble (Rom. 14:21) and for moderation (1 Tim. 3:3). Even those that took the Nazarite vow were allowed to take wine after completing the law's requirements (Num. 6:20) before which they were not allowed to eat anything of the vine even the husk (Num. 6:3/4).

THE CUP

"And he took the cup, and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them: and they all drank of it." (Mk. 14:23) The Interlinear says *"and - taking - a cup - giving thanks - he gave - to them - and - drank - of - it - all."* Which makes it clear that one cup was used out of which that all drank, the practice of using one cup seems to be almost universal until earlier this century. In view of the concern by some on risks of infection from the practice, I spoke to Richard Lacey, the UK Professor of Clinical Microbiology, an acknowledged expert in disease transmission, and he advised that he has carried out a literature search on the risks from drinking from a common cup, and has found no evidence of transmission of disease through the practice, nor does he see that there should be any. However he recommends, on health grounds, that fermented wine be used not diluted with water.

REJOICE!

For those in Christ the cup is *"The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion (Strong's 2482) of the blood of Christ?"* (1 Co. 10:16). The fellowship (Strong's 2482) (Eph. 3:9/10) enjoyed at the Lord's supper should give life to the Lord's body *"For the life of the flesh is in the blood"* (Lev. 17:11). As we take the cup we acknowledge that the only source of life is now through Christ Jesus (Jn. 6:53,14:6). What we have been given is not just life but abundant life. (Jn. 10:10). The sight of the empty tomb and the angel's assurance to the women caused them to have great joy (Mt. 28:8) This joy was a manifestation that they knew the ways of life; (Act. 2:28) which is, as Jesus taught *"that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full"*. (Jn. 15:11). Jeremiah prophesied that *"Therefore they shall come and sing in the height of Zion and shall flow together to the goodness of the LORD, for wheat, and for wine, and for oil,... and they shall not sorrow any more at all."* (Jer. 31:12). The corn, wine and oil occur several times close to prophecies of the coming of the Messiah. Jewish feasts were associated with rejoicing (De. 16:13/14). If the Jews were unable to get to Jerusalem for a feast they could use their money for wine and strong drink to meet the commandment *"thou shalt rejoice"* (De. 14:26). The Psalmist promised that those who loved righteous would be anointed with the oil *"oil of gladness"* (Ps. 45:7). Such was the case of those early disciples who - *"ate with gladness"* (Acts 2:46). *"yea, happy is that people, whose God is the LORD"*. (Ps. 144:15).

Next month, God willing, we will look at the details surrounding the use of the elements.

SCRIPTURE READINGS

Nov. 1	1 Samuel 1:1-19	Luke 1:39-56
Nov. 8	1 Samuel 1:20-28	Luke 1:57-80
Nov. 15	Psalm 29	Luke 2:1-21
Nov. 22	Leviticus 12	Luke 2:22-40
Nov. 29	Numbers 9:1-14	Luke 2:41-52

MARY'S SONG

Edith Deen has written: "No woman in the entire history of the world has been so honoured and revered. The world's most majestic poems, novels, and plays have had Mary and her Son as their central figures. In the most magnificent cathedrals she is depicted on canvas, in stained-glass windows, in bronze, marble, and stone. Through the centuries the most triumphant hymns and the best-loved carols, lullabies, and folk songs have told of her pre-eminence among women". Mary has had many titles bestowed on her through the years, such as 'Mother of Mercy', 'Mother Most Blessed', 'Queen of Heaven', 'Mother Most Pure', 'Virgin Most Powerful', 'Spiritual Vessel' and 'Mother of God'. We could go on and on.

The veneration of Mary is especially strong in Roman Catholicism. Loraine Boettner has commented: "In the life and worship of the Roman Church there has been a long course of development, setting forth Mary's perpetual virginity, her exemption from original sin and from any sin of commission, and now her bodily assumption to heaven. In the Roman Church Mary is to her worshippers what Christ is to Protestants. She is the object of all religious affections and the source whence all blessings of salvation are sought and expected". The Bible says nothing about worshipping Mary. It does, however, tell us to "**worship God**" (Revelation 22:9). Personally, I believe this: "the more Maryology the less Maryolatry."

Without doubt, Mary is a very exceptional woman. She was a chosen

vessel of God. Part of her song) known as The Magnificat) reads: "For He has regarded the low estate of his handmaiden: for, behold, from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed. For He that is mighty has done great things; and holy is His name" (1:48-49). I rejoice at these words. I rejoice that this humble, young peasant woman was to be the mother of the Incarnate Son. I rejoice that God did not go to the great and the learned but to the meek and lowly for a woman to bring the Saviour into a lost world.

BIRTH OF JOHN THE BAPTIST

John was the son of Elizabeth and Zechariah. His birth was an answer to prayer (Luke 1:13). This man was to be no ordinary man, but a special servant of God with a unique task - to prepare the way of the Messiah. The hand of the Lord was to be with Him (1:66). The name John means "*Jehovah is gracious*" - so named by God Himself (1:13).

Zechariah's prophetic song or hymn of praise is worthy of deep analysis (1:67-79). I never fully appreciated that it contained so much until I recently read and re-read it. Take, for example, verses 76 to 79 in which "Zechariah proclaims the dignity, employment, doctrine, and success of his son; and the ruin and recovery of the Jews and the Gentiles" (Adam Clarke). No wonder Jesus later said of John: "**Verily I say unto you, Among them that are born of women there has not risen a greater than John the Baptist...**" (Matthew 11:11). But notice what Jesus went on to say: "**...notwithstanding he that is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he**".

BIRTH OF JESUS

Luke tells us about a taxing authorised by Caesar Augustus when Cyrenius was governor of Syria (2:1-2). Actually, what was decreed was a census. W.E. Vine has written: "Confirmation that this census was taken in the dominions of the Roman Empire is give by the historians Tacitus and Suetonius.

Augustus himself drew up a sort of a Roman Domesday Book, a Rationarium, afterwards epitomised into a Breviarium, to include the allied kingdoms, appointing twenty commissioners to draw up the lists". Syria is mentioned because at that time Judea was a part of it. The prophecy reads: **"But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of you shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting"** (Micah 5:2). Little did Caesar Augustus realise that when he instigated the census he helped bring about the fulfilment of God's prophetic word that the promised Messiah would be born in Bethlehem of Judea. Even God can use pagans for his own ends!

Shepherds feature strongly in God's word and they played an important part in the celebration of the birth of Jesus. Angels featured strongly too in the birth account. I love to read the words all year round and not just at Christmas time. They speak of joy, peace and good-will toward men. What could be better? It is interesting to note that Luke says nothing of the wise men from the East. The time of the coming of these magi has been much disputed by Gospel harmony writers. Personally, I think it was a year, if not two years, after the birth. Such a view certainly breaks with certain Christmas traditions, which demand careful and impartial analysis by all serious Bible students.

In the book of Genesis we read: **"And he that is eight days old shall be circumcised among you, every man child in your generation, he that is born in the house, or bought with money of any stranger, which is not of your seed"** (17:12). If the eighth day fell on the sabbath day then the child was still circumcised. Joseph and Mary strictly adhered to the Law and had Jesus circumcised. Later they took the child to Jerusalem **"to present him to the Lord"** (2:22). An appropriate

sacrifice was offered, reflecting their humble status (2:24). God had blessed Mary and Joseph with a Son and He was a gift not just for them, but the whole world.

SIMEON AND ANNA PROPHECY

Simeon and Anna were blessed by God because they lived to see the promised Messiah before their deaths. They were deeply religious people. Simeon is described as **"just and devout"** (2:25) and Anna as one who **"served God with fasting and prayers night and day"** (2:37). Simeon said of Jesus: **"Behold, this child is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel; and for a sign which shall be spoken against..."** (2:34). The reaction to Jesus will be for or against Him. There will be no neutral position. He Himself later said: **"He who is not with me is against me; and he who gathers not with me scatters abroad"** (Matthew 12:30). He will experience much opposition. **"Towards Jesus Christ there can be no neutrality. We either surrender to Him or are at war with Him. And it is the tragedy of life that our pride often keeps us from making that surrender which leads to victory"** (Barclay).

JESUS AT TWELVE

I am trying to think back when I was twelve. I had just commenced Secondary School and had a lot to learn. The Bible was mostly a closed book to me. I was more interested in football, popular music and playing with my pals. Jesus at twelve was something else! We read: **"And it came to pass, that after three days they found Him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the doctors, both hearing them and asking them questions. And all that heard Him were astonished at His understanding and answers"** (2:46-47). I often wonder about the history of Jesus' childhood and private life. **"What early proofs He gave of His having the divine nature united to the human; what proficiency He made in knowledge and the methods He advanced therein; what way He**

employed Himself when He arrived at man's estate; what notions His acquaintance formed of Him; the manner of His conversing with them, and other things of a like nature, which the Holy Spirit has not thought fit to explain" (James MacKnight).

The next eighteen years would prove interesting, to say the least. All we know is that "Jesus increased in wisdom and stature and in favour with God and man" (2:52). Is He not the perfect model for all young people everywhere?

IAN S. DAVIDSON,
Motherwell.

TEST YOUR BIBLICAL KNOWLEDGE

1. Who "walked with God; and he was not; for God took him?"
2. Who was Abraham's daughter-in-law?
3. Who was Joseph's youngest brother?
4. This king has his eyes put out by the Babylonians.
5. He led the building of the walls of Jerusalem.
6. He was Gideon's servant.
7. Whose ear did Peter cut off when Jesus was arrested?
8. Whom did Jesus behold "as lightning fall from heaven?"
9. Who looked after the clothes of Stephen's killers?
10. Name Jesus's first two disciples.

NEWS FROM THE CHURCHES

Kelso: We are pleased to report that on the 21st August, 1998, Helen Draye was baptised into her Lord at Tranent Meetinghouse and we are confident that she will be a great asset to the Church and a faithful servant of Jesus. We thank the church at Tranent for the use of their baptistry and for all their kind assistance on this joyful occasion.

JENNY MURRAY.

Slamannan District: The Quarterly Mutual Benefit Meeting took place in Motherwell Meetinghouse on Saturday, 12th September, when the subject was "Why was there a laying on of hands in the N.T.? Who laid hands on whom and for what purpose? Should this be done today?" In the chair was brother Andrew McGinn and the speakers were James McGinn and Harry McGinn (father and two sons). The speakers dealt very ably with the subject and the hour's discussion which followed brought out many interesting points.

The next such meeting will, (DV), be held on 5th December, 1998, in Tranent Meetinghouse, when the subject will be, "What is the blessing of 1 Cor. 10:16 and what form of blessing do we expect?" The speakers on that occasion will be Ian Davidson, Motherwell, and Graham Scobbie, Dennyloanhead, and the Chairman will be John Kneller, Tranent. We thank the sisters at Motherwell for their excellent refreshments.

HARRY MCGINN, (Sec.).

Stretford, Manchester: Rejoice with the Church at Stretford, Manchester.

Donald Parker a young student of 24 years of age, from Freetown, Sierra Leone was baptised into Christ on Thursday evening the 27th of August 1998 at Longshoot, Wigan. He has a deep love for the Lord and is a keen student of the Scriptures. He has been attending meetings and studying with us for about 12 months.

We are grateful to the Longshoot brothers and sisters for hosting us admirably.

In Jesus who is greater than he who is in the world.

ALLAN ASHURST.

APPEAL FROM NIGERIA

I have been occupied in preaching at Owode-Apa, Badagry, a border town 32 kilometres away. Two of our members reside there. As a result of holding Bible Classes and preaching, five precious

souls have been baptised during May. I continue to hold a weekly Bible Class and hope the Church can be established in Owode and brethren start worshipping there. We are trying to secure a place for them to meet and would greatly benefit from having some Public Address instruments to help in our open-air preaching. If anyone or any church could possibly help us in this we would be extremely grateful. Please send any help to Emmanuel E. Hokon, P.O. Box 159, Badagry, Lagos State, Nigeria, W. Africa.

APPEAL FROM CAMEROON

Many years ago, brother James Gardiner, Scotland, sent much aid here through the Cameroons Evangelisation Fund, including a printing press for printing our own gospel literature. I wish that this fund could be re-introduced for the churches in Cameroon are dying through lack of help and support. I have personally been struggling since 1974 on part-time support and am not able to train the preachers and leaders needed. Many requests for help from other congregations are made to me but I just cannot help and have no transport, and can't afford to pay transport. My nine children are growing up and I can't afford their school fees. When they complain I tell them that God will provide, but I never get replies to my appeals for help. Please try and see if you can encourage someone to help us here in the Cameroon. I beg you. In His service. Contact Tabi Martins Ameli, Kumba Town Church of Christ, Box 121, Kumba, Meme Division, S.W. Province, Republic of Cameroon.

GHANA THANK YOU

Following the appeal for the famine I received this letter from Navrongo, Northern Ghana which I thought those who gave to the Famine Appeal would like to read. It was a well supported appeal, thank you.

For the urgent attention of: *The Brethren*

FAMINE RELIEF SAVES LIVES

Your early response to our cry for help, although we could not get the government supplies, has saved lives, renewed relations and brought new believers to faith.

This happened when brother Fred Tamatey distributed the money as instructed. I was with him at Kandiga where we sat with the widow, her mother-in-law and a leader of the church.

We gave the old woman some money; however, we gave the young woman her money when she saw us off. Enclosed are some photographs.

In sum, the following is how the churches used their share of the distributions at Kandiga, every member of the church took bowls of maize with money to his or her home, even those who are not Christian benefited. The children in the church had the biggest party in their lives. It was great.

It was a huge blessing at Navrongo and Bosco. Not only did the adults and the children take something home, but also bought some benches and a table. Brethren, we are extremely grateful to you for so kindly contributing in aid of the needs of your brothers and sisters in the most deprived area in Ghana. Today, the problem of famine is fading out. Although the rains delayed, farmers are harvesting the early millet - the staple food.

What is more, we thank God for the dynamic relations we have with Him and others building His kingdom together.

BEDIAKO JOE CLIFFORD,

Evangelist.

P.S. The death of my father and the funeral performance of my late landlord is causing us, the church in Navrongo and my family, much headache. Wake-keeping, burial, and thanksgiving for my father comes on 21, 22 and 23 August. My family is planning to attend the funeral. However the family of my late landlord is demanding one year rent advance from every tenant in September ending to enable them perform the old

man's funeral - Adongo Afroysia died last four years. I cannot sleep at night because they have vowed they would not take it lightly with any tenant who refuses to pay by the deadline. I pay thirty one thousand (31,000.00) cedis every month for five rooms including the church study room. Your help is needed.

Please make cheques payable to "Graeme Pearson (Ghana Appeal)" and send to Graeme Pearson, 13 Fairways, Dunfermline, Fife, KY12 0DU. Tel: (01383) 728624.

NEW TREASURER & SECRETARY

Would the brotherhood please note the following changes at the church at Argyle Street, Hindley, Wigan.

Secretary: Colin Hilton (w. Christine), 6 the Mews, Hindley, Wigan, WN2 3EZ. Tel. 01942 258194.

Treasurer: Steve Farrow (w. Jean) 33 Memorial Road, Walkden, Worsley, Manchester, M28 5AG. Tel. 0161 790 7895.

C. HILTON, (Sec.).

COMING EVENTS

ANNUAL SOCIAL NEWTONGRANGE

on 3rd October, 1998 at 4.00 p.m.

Speaker: Ian Davidson, Motherwell

Chairman: Joe Currie

127th ANNIVERSARY MEETING

Kentish Town, London

Saturday, 10th October at 3.00 p.m.

Tea at 4.45 p.m. followed by the

Evening Meeting at 6.30 p.m.

Speaker: Bob Eckman

(Also on the Sunday)

KIRKCALDY

Saturday, 14th November, 1998

at 2.00 p.m.

200 Year Anniversary Celebration

Speaker: Bro. Albert Winstanley

Please tell us if you are planning to be with us for our celebration. Please give us a call on 01592 772334. For those who have already replied a further letter with times and directions will be sent during October 1998.

ALLAN J. MOYES, (Sec.).

10. Peter and Andrew (Matthew 4:18).
9. Saul (Acts 7:58).
8. Satan (Luke 10:18).
7. Malchus (John 18:10).
6. Phurah (Judges 7:10).
5. Nehemiah (1:1 & 4:6).
4. Zedekiah (Jeremiah 52:11).
3. Benjamin (Genesis 42:4 & 13).
2. Rebekah (Genesis 24:67).
1. Enoch (Genesis 5:24).

ANSWERS

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