

The SCRIPTURE STANDARD

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

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FORSAKING THE ASSEMBLY

Our present government's policy seems to be to 'throw money' at any of the problems they encounter, and it is reported in this morning's newspaper that the Scottish Education Minister is going to throw £65m at the problem in schools - especially truancy and "exclusions". Since corporal punishment in schools was banned as being "barbaric" (teachers are the only persons likely to be beaten in school nowadays) teachers have graciously been allowed to exclude violent and disruptive pupils, who have, nevertheless, ended up being ferried back and forth to special teaching "Sanctuaries" by taxi, and rewarded with individual tuition by special teachers, all at enormous expense. Understandably, the government is now seriously regretting this policy of pampering disruptive pupils and have told teachers that they should no longer "exclude" such pupils. Apparently, the government have now discovered that excluded pupils feel 'rejected' and often turn to crime. Who would be a teacher?

Truancy is another very pressing problem in schools and again millions of pounds are hopefully going to cure it. Some years ago I wrote a few paragraphs on this subject and these are, perhaps, still applicable. At that time truancy in schools was reported as being as high as 30% in some rural schools and 50% in some of the inner cities. Apparently there has been no substantial improvement.

What chaos there must be in the classes where half of the pupils never turn up. It seems incredible but true. It's certainly a long time since I was at school but I can easily remember the drama and scandal in the classroom when it was discovered that *even one pupil* had dared to fail to turn up, or was even slightly late. A great sensation of excitement animated the whole classroom as we anticipated, with bated breath, the return of the culprit next morning, and the dire punishments which awaited his re-appearance. The buzz of agitation in the school lasted for days and certainly had a salutary effect on any of the other pupils who may, at any time, have given half-a-thought to skipping a class. Our school actually had an Attendance Officer, of military bearing and complete with bicycle. who used to visit the parents of any defaulters, and kept a firm control over school attendance.

Now, it seems, things are very different and these large percentages of pupils turn up at school only when they have nothing better to do, and playing hookey is not only common but even quite normal. I notice that in some of the larger cities the police have been asked to look out for truant schoolchildren and to give them a lecture on the

dangers of wandering around in these violent times, and then to ferry them back home. One wonders what sense of responsibility such children will ever have as adults, when, in their formative years, they can indulge themselves in this way. What lessons in loyalty, dependability, attendance at one's post, can such children learn under these conditions; haunting cafés and cinemas when they should be in their places at school? It appears, however, that this malaise does not only affect schoolchildren, but many employers have to give special financial inducements and bonuses to employees contingent upon such workers attending work for the entire week, and especially for turning up on Monday morning. Indeed Britain, it appears, has acquired an international reputation for absenteeism and strikes, described by other countries as 'The British Disease.' Absenteeism must be most inconvenient to employers, but must be particularly depressing in schools and a source of great discouragement to teachers, headmasters and, parents. Thus being so, **how about absenteeism in the Church?** How depressing and discouraging it is to other members: and how does God look upon it: and what does it tell about the absentee?

BRITISH SUNDAY

At one time, amongst the general population, especially in Scotland, where the notion persisted (and still to some extent persists) that the 'Lord's Day' was 'The Christian Sabbath' (and most of the Sabbath rules applied to Sunday), nothing ever stirred on a Sunday, and that up in places like the Isle of Skye, no one would drive even a very sick person to hospital on a Sunday. To buy petrol on a Sunday was virtually impossible and could only be done very furtively from a 'rogue' petrol-station in secrecy akin to drug-smuggling. The last time I bought petrol on Skye on a Sunday, we had to sneak around the back of a shed and a young boy was posted, by the proprietor, as a look-out. Indeed it was considered entirely shameful to buy even foodstuffs on a Sunday; or to whistle; or to read anything of a trivial nature, like Sunday newspapers.

All that has changed radically now, of course, and Britain has a 'continental' approach to Sunday: so that Sunday is now much the same as any other day of the week. Most outings are particularly scheduled for a Sunday, nowadays, and all kinds of sporting events take place. Golf tournaments, bowling championships, soccer matches, running marathons, country rambles, etc. are more and more relegated to Sunday and many shops, hotels, pubs, markets and social clubs are always open to cope with the thriving demand.

There is, therefore, an increasing temptation of young people, and parents, to be caught up in these events and for parents to be pressurised to take the children to the beach; to the hockey match; Youth Club outing; the Boy-Scout week-end; the school games, etc., etc. Parents are loathe to disappoint their kiddies and so if the event can not be fitted in after church attendance, they are faced with the decision as to what they will do: go to join their brethren at the Lord's Table or join the throngs at the sea-side.

EVERY FIRST DAY

Many denominational bodies observe the Lord's Table (the communion) only once in three months; six months or annually, but this was not always so. The original Church spread the Lord's Supper every first day of the week (Acts 20:7) and this continued quite undisturbed until the fourth century when the R.C. Church decreed (Council of Agatha in Lanqueroec A.D. 506) that "none should be esteemed good Christians who did not communicate at least **three** times per year - at Christmas, Easter and Whitsunday." This became the accepted standard and indeed it was considered very presumptuous to commune oftener. This continued for 600 years until the Council of

Lateran ruled that three times was too often and that once would be enough: "an annual communion at Easter was sufficient."

At the Reformation some of the reformers advocated a complete return to the pattern of the early Church and that there be a communion every week. Even Calvin said, "Every week, at least, the table of the Lord should have been spread for Christian assemblies, and the promises declared by which, in the partaking of it we might be spiritually fed." In a sermon entitled "*The Duty Of Constant Communion*" the famous John Wesley said, "It is no wonder that men who have no fear of God should never think of doing this (constant communion). But it is strange that it should be neglected by any that do fear God, and desire to save their souls; and yet nothing is more common. One reason why many neglect it is, they are so much afraid of eating and drinking unworthily, that they never think how much greater the danger is when they do not eat or drink at all." Much more on this subject can be read in A. Campbell's "*The Christian System*." Brother Campbell ends his discourse of this theme with these remarks, "It does appear somewhat incongruous that arguments have to be submitted to urge Christians to convene weekly around the Lord's Table. Much more in accordance with the genius of our religion would it be to see them over-solicitous to be honoured with a seat at the King's table, and asking with intense interest, might they be permitted so often to eat in His presence and in honour of His love . . . But as the want of appetite for our animal sustenance is a symptom of ill-health, or approaching disease; so a want of relish for spiritual food is indicative of a lack of spiritual health."

EVERY ONE OF YOU

We would surely have to agree with Brother Campbell. It does seem incongruous that arguments require to be submitted urging Christians to convene weekly around the Lord's Table. The early Church continued steadfastly (consistently and constantly) not only in prayers, fellowship and apostles doctrine, but also in the breaking of the loaf. And so we have the clear example of the early Church. Luke, some **thirty years after** the institution of the Lord's Supper could say that (even these thirty years later) the disciples **came together upon the first day of the week to break bread** (Acts 20:7). They counted it as vitally important.

It was rightly regarded as important, because, after all, it was ordained of Almighty God. There are at least two Holy Ordinances in the Christian economy: one being water-baptism and the other being the Lord's Table. They were not devised by some synod or committee of men, but came from the very vaults of heaven. How then can we treat them lightly? To treat God's ordinances with a certain contempt, whether by casual neglect or studied indifference amounts to the same thing; and is sad, bad and serious.

We can worship God at any time; at any suitable moment; but we must **come together** to break the loaf. The early disciples *separated* to preach but *came together* to worship. We can not break bread in isolation or by proxy (and there seems no need for the elements to be taken to a hospital ward) but while we have health and strength we should be with the Church when it assembles. We should be there, if physically able. The Lord expects us to be there for Paul, concerning the collection, instructed, "**that upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God has prospered him . . .**" "Every one of you" is expected to be there.

The Lord's Table is a commemorative institution and by our personal attendance at it we have an opportunity to show (declare, preach or proclaim) the Lord's death until He comes. Paul, who was not present at the institution of the Supper, received nevertheless an account of it from Christ almost verbatim to that given in the gospels,

thus indicating the sheer weight of importance ascribed to every detail of it. During Paul's rehearsal of the details of the institution he added these words, "For as often as ye eat this bread and drink this cup ye do show the Lord's death until He come." This is something that WE can do; and something we do by virtue of our attendance and participation. Such opportunity is given to us now: until He comes or until we leave this earthly scene. John Brown of Haddington (born 1722) author of *Dictionary Of The Bible*, and the *Self-interpreting Bible*, wrote a strong treatise (against the beliefs of his church) on the necessity of holding a weekly communion. In answer to those who suggested that the early Christians met every Lord's Day only because it might be their last one (persecution and death being rife) John Brown replied that, even supposing that were true (which it wasn't) it was still a good reason for meeting every Sunday. He said we should indeed meet as if every Sunday was to be our last one.

OUR TRYSTING PLACE

Absenteeism at meetings of the Church is not by any means a new phenomenon, for Paul found it necessary to exhort his brethren, in his day, to forsake not the assembling of themselves together. His, Spirit inspired, advice was, "Let us draw near with true heart in the full assurance of faith: Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering: and let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together as the manner of some is, but exhorting one another: and so much the more as ye see that day approaching." All this is encompassed in four verses (Heb. 10:22-25) and quite clearly Paul equates the assembling of ourselves together with consideration for one another and a provoking to good works. Absenteeism has quite the opposite effect. Our truancy weakens the effort of the Church and discourages the brethren. It also weakens the absentees and does not provoke love and good works. It is also a very bad example all round; and particularly to the younger members. Such, says Paul, is the manner of some.

Recently some acquaintances of ours were invited to the Queen's Annual Garden Party at Holyrood Palace in Edinburgh. We can imagine the raptures of delight which attend such an invitation and how some become quite giddy with the prospect of actually being near to the Queen, and even the odd chance of making a curtsy or exchanging a word. And yet, as brother Campbell remarks (above) we seem quite capable of turning down the weekly honour of a place at the table of the King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

The Lord's Table is our weekly trysting place with our Saviour. A trysting place is where lovers have arranged to rendezvous. If at the appointed time one of the lovers is to be found several miles away showing a preferred interest in someone else, what is the other to think? Our trysting place with Jesus on the first day of the week is usually well arranged. If at that time we are found playing bowls, mowing the lawn or taking the sun, what is Jesus to think; and what kind of commentary is that on us?

"THIS DO" said Jesus, "in remembrance of Me." The main purpose is, therefore, one of remembrance. We can only truly remember by being there. What can we find in this life that can be more important than that?

We trace Thy love, The grief, Thy pains,
And Thy salvation free;
Lord, while a beating pulse remains.
We will remember Thee.

SEEKING THE LIVING AMONG THE DEAD

When Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of Jesus, and other women came to the grave where the body of Jesus had been buried, they saw two men in dazzling apparel and were terrified. The men asked the women: **"Why do you seek the living One among the dead?"** This question causes all kinds of thoughts to run through my mind.

When we think about the contrast of life and death as set forth in this passage we can also put it in a spiritual sense. Paul said in Ephesians he had been **"dead in sin"** before being united with Christ. Paul told the Colossians that they had been *dead in their transgressions* before being made alive together with Christ. John summed up all the unsaved when he said **"the whole world lies in the power of the evil one."** In Hebrews 2:14, Paul says that Satan **"had the power of death"** over those in the world.

Then, there is the sense in which people can be spiritually alive. Paul told the Colossians that they had been dead in their transgressions before being made alive together with Christ in act of baptism. In Rom. 6:1-11, Paul exhorts the Christians to faithful lives and reminds them that they had a **"newness of life,"** that they were alive with Christ, and that they were alive to God in Christ Jesus. SO with this concept of death and life, let's explore four thoughts.

SEEKING FAITH AMONG THE DEAD

Remember that this world is filled with spiritually dead people. There is nothing in this world alive - eternally alive. Yet the majority of humanity is trying to find faith, something to live for, the great purpose for existence. Paul addressed himself to this issue in Colossians chapter two. He told these Christians that they shouldn't turn to philosophy, empty deception, traditions of men, self-abasement, worship of angels, nor visions caused by their fleshly minds. He warns them that their faith didn't stand on self-made religion, self-abasement and severe treatment of the body.

Faith is not found among these dead things, but in the living Christ. Paul in Colossians chapter one reminds these Christians that their faith has been established in Christ who had been proclaimed to them through the preaching of the gospel. Faith, today, is established in the same manner: **"So faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of God."**

SEEKING ETERNAL LIFE AMONG THE DEAD

John reminds the children of God he was writing to that the world and the things of the world were in the process of passing away, dying. In Romans 6:21,22, Paul contrasted life and death. He said that sin would lead to, and result in, death; while those who had obeyed from the heart that form of teaching would have eternal life. Paul summed up where life - real life - was when he wrote:

"If then you have been raised up with Christ, keep seeking the things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. Set your mind on the things that are on earth for you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, is revealed, then you also will be revealed with him in glory" (Col. 3:1-4).

SEEKING HAPPINESS AMONG THE DEAD

The majority of people today are seeking happiness in the dying world. They are trying drugs, sex and pleasure. They are out to satisfy themselves and no one else. No happiness is found in any of these things, because they are unimportant. In fact, people that use such things are likely to become slaves to them.

Paul reminds the Christians at Corinth that their bodies were purchased by the blood of Christ, therefore they are not to be defiled. Our bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit and are not to be polluted.

Sometimes Christians try to seek happiness by association and friendship with the world. James wrote: **"You adulteresses, do you not know that friendship with the world is hostility towards God? Therefore who ever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God."**

SEEKING MORALS, LIFE-STYLE, AMONG THE DEAD

One thing that is corrupting our society is sex without marriage. If you read very much you soon are impressed with what the writers of our day think is on the minds of people. More young people than ever, younger than ever, are bringing children into the world outside of marriage. The idea of marriage is being attacked on every side. Many that are married and want to dissolve that contract simply move out and move in with someone else.

In 1 Corinthians 6:15-18, Paul discusses this situation. He pulls no punches, but calls such a relationship sinful. In Hebrews 13:4 he wrote: **"Let marriage be held in honour among all, and let the marriage bed be undefiled; for fornicators and adulterers God will judge."**

So many are seeking a life-style through self-indulgence and lust. Paul described a sister in Christ as one "who gives herself to wanton pleasure and is dead even while she lives." James said of some that they **"lived luxuriously on the earth and led a life of wanton pleasure; you have fattened your hearts in a day of slaughter."** There is a day of slaughter coming for those who seek to give their lives to sexual self-gratification.

Are you seeking a quality life among the dead things of this world? You are looking in the wrong place.

K. MARSHALL.

THE UNTOUCHABLES

There are people who, because of certain dangerous diseases, are quarantined, isolated from the rest of humanity. There are a few dangerous mental patients that have to be confined in isolation in mental hospitals. There are criminals who menace and disrupt society who have to be locked behind steel bars in prison. Then there is a fourth group of individuals, a group of "untouchables," who are unconfined, unmolested, unarrested and almost wholly unaffected. These untouchables are sinners beyond the reach of the gospel. God has chosen the gospel as his power to reach sinners (Rom. 1:16). However, not all sinners can be reached with the gospel. The majority are beyond the reach of the gospel. They are untouchables concerning the gospel.

UNBELIEVERS

Atheists, agnostics and infidels are beyond the reach of the gospel. The atheist disbelieves in the existence of God. The agnostic disclaims any knowledge of God. And the infidel is sceptic and a doubter of the Supernatural. The Bible states, **"But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him"** (Heb. 11:6).

God will not justify or overlook the unbeliever. God has given what he thinks, and which is abundant and valid proof of his existence and authority. God made man and knows what man is capable of believing and doing. In light of it God has spoken in his

Word and said **"The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God"** (Psalm 14:1).

The fool looks at the earth and the multitude of stars and says they are an effect without a cause. He observes the meticulous and precision design in them and says there is design without a designer. He looks at the purpose of things in nature and says there is purpose with no purposer, and he looks at life and says it came from something dead. Indeed, he who denies God is foolish. His disbelief is inexcusable. Paul said in Romans, **"For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse"** (Rom. 1:20).

The Psalmist says, **"The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handiwork. Day unto day uttereth speech. and night unto night sheweth knowledge. There is no speech nor language, where their voice is not heard"** (Psalm 19:1-3).

Not only is God declared by his creation, but he has spoken to man down through the ages by his prophets and finally through his Son (Heb. 1:1-2). God has given the Bible to man, a product of about 1500 years of writing and about forty writers guided by the Holy Spirit. The unbeliever who disbelieves in the light of all this overwhelming evidence is untouchable and beyond hope of salvation.

CARNAL MINDED

Another group who cannot be reached with the truth are those who are worldly minded, who mind the things of the flesh, Their life is given over to the satisfying of their fleshly passions, whether it be by pouring wine, beer or whisky down their throats, or participating in some type of immorality or one of the many other works of the flesh. They live for the flesh, not for the Lord. Jesus described these individuals who could not be reached with the truth. Jesus said, **"And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For everyone that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reprov'd"** (John 3:19-20).

RELIGIOUSLY BLIND

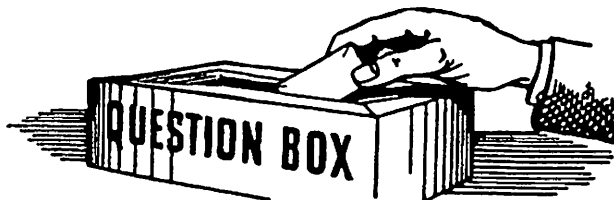
The religiously blind are religious people willfully following error believing it to be truth and truth to be error. In their mixed-up condition they thus reject the only way of salvation and accept a man-made substitute based on the creeds of them. Like a vaccination against a disease which gives the patient a mild case of the disease and prevents, at the same time, the patient ever taking the disease in full effect in the future, so does religious error as a whole. Those following error cannot be touched with the truth as long as they wilfully choose to follow blind leaders.

TRAITORS

The traitor to the cause of Christ is the most abominable of the untouchables. The Apostle Peter said, **"For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them"** (2 Pet. 2:20). Then Peter presents two vivid comparisons. One is a sow that had been washed and cleansed, but then decides that wallowing in the mire is better. The other more sickening picture is a dog that prefers to eat its own sickening vomit above all the good food in the world. The traitor is personified in the sow and the vomit-eating dog. And no wonder, for the traitor had at one time been a partaker of Divine mercy, clemency and love, was cleansed by the precious blood of Christ, and then turns treacherously upon the bestower of such unspeakable gifts and sells out and serves the Devil.

Like Judas Iscariot, they would betray the Master for a paltry sum of thirty pieces of silver and venerate their diabolical act with a kiss. Such super-hypocrisy is almost incomprehensible. Yet there are those today who would betray Christ for a free dinner, or a glass of beer, or one of the many other works of the flesh. Yes, of all the untouchables, the traitors are the worst of the lot.

R. PAGE.



Conducted by
Frank Worgan

“What does 1st Thessalonians 5:20 mean when it says ‘Do not despise prophesying’?”

When one encounters a problem passage it is important to consider the context.

In practice, this means looking at the verses which go before and those which follow. That is always sound advice, and it is advice worth following as we consider the question before us this month.

1. First, consider the text in context.
2. Look at what is actually stated.
3. Consider the implied significance.

1. In this case, the previous verse (v19) says ‘Quench not the Spirit.’

Now, the Spirit referred to, is unquestionably the Holy Spirit. Notice that in this verse the **Present Imperative** tense is used, which means that we have here a statement which relates to something which the believers in Thessalonica had evidently *been doing and were continuing to do up to that moment*.

An ‘Imperative’ is a command, or an instruction, consequently the sense of this particular verse is, quite literally, *‘Do not continue to quench the Spirit’*. This tells us that the Thessalonians were doing something which gave offence to the Holy Spirit. They were disregarding - and perhaps even repressing - a particular manifestation of the Spirit.

We see from the next verse that the specific gift involved was the gift of prophecy. The word which is translated *‘prophesyings’ (proheteia)*, occurs on only two other occasions (1 Cor. 14:6,22), where Paul discusses the exercise of spiritual gifts. The Church at Thessalonica, therefore is told in effect, *‘Do not continue to do what you have been doing, in quenching, or suppressing, this manifestation of the Spirit’*.

Certainly, at the very least, they were discouraging the exercise of the prophetic gift.

2. The apostolic command in verse 19, is followed by the verse at which we are now looking, verse 20. *‘And do not despise prophesying’*. This reveals why the Holy Spirit was being grieved, and here again, we have a Present Imperative, so that it means, *‘Do not continue to despise prophesying.’*

You will find that there is a significant difference between the Authorised Version and many modern versions, in the way in which verse 19 and 20 are rendered.

In the A.V. we have two short sentences; *“Quench not the Spirit. Despise not prophesyings.”* But in modern versions - (the Revised Standard Version for example) -

only a comma separates the two commands, so that they read as one sentence.

"Do not quench the Spirit, do not despise prophesying." The implication is that, to despise 'prophesying' was to quench the Spirit.

Clearly, then, Paul, writing under the inspiration of that same Spirit, regarded the exercise of that particular gift, the gift of prophecy, as of very real importance to the spiritual growth and well being of the infant Church in Thessalonica.

3. Now, this letter was written during the Second Missionary Journey, and is, therefore reliably regarded as one of the earliest of the apostolic letters. It was written after Paul had left Thessalonica and has arrived at Corinth, about 50 AD, where he stayed for 18 months. (**Acts 18:11**). We arrive at this date because we know that the proconsul Gallio, who is mentioned in the next verse, took up his position in Corinth about that time.

The letter was probably written about 51 or 52 AD.

It is even likely, although not expressly stated, that it was Paul himself who imparted spiritual gifts to the Thessalonian Church as he had at Corinth during the year and a half he remained in that city.

4. **On the matter of spiritual gifts in the infant Church**, we learn that Paul informed the Ephesian believers, that prophets were among the Lord's gifts to the Church (**Eph. 4:11**).

Earlier in the same letter he had stated that apostles and prophets had laid the foundation on which the Church is built; that foundation being Christ himself (**Eph. 2:20**).

He followed this, in **chapter 3:5**, with the assertion that the Spirit used apostles and prophets as instruments for the revelation of new truth.

Although there are no such inspired men alive today, it should not be difficult for anyone to understand that in those days apostles and prophets fulfilled an essential role in the revelation of the truth and the establishment of the Church.

After all, the New Testament had not then been compiled. Indeed, as I have already implied, many of the books which comprise our present New Testament, had not even been written. Therefore, instead of being able to study *written* instruction and teaching, we find the prophecy - *oral* instruction - was the means by which the early Christians were taught.

Bear in mind, also, that the word 'prophesying' does not mean that a new revelation was presented every time the prophet opened his mouth!

The word '*profetes*' means '*to speak forth*', and cover, preaching and teaching generally. The prophets who served the early Church simply delivered the Spirit's message, and the exercise of the gift of prophecy meant that they were led by the Spirit, to speak in order that the Church might be strengthened and built up.

5. Now it is clear from our text, (1 Thess. 5:20), that at least *some* of the Thessalonian Christians had been inclined to undervalue this particular gift, because the word '*despise*' means '*set at nought*'. So Paul is urging them, not to 'set at nought' these Spirit-led teachers, or the messages they delivered, but to treat them with respect.

However, he also issues this warning; '*Test everything*'. In other words, 'Be on your guard, and *hold fast what is good*' (verse 21).

I stress again that this instruction - to pay attention to the prophets - was valid as long as the spiritual gifts, which included apostles and prophets, remained. But when they were removed, the *specific or special sense* of these words ceased to apply.

6. Yet, of course, there is a sense in which they still contain a message for us

today.

'*Prophecy*' means '*speaking forth*'. And prophecy, in the general sense of the word, is that which is preached. It is preaching and teaching.

There is no one today who possesses the gift of prophecy about which Paul writes, and we have no 'inspired' or 'Spirit-led' messengers; no apostles and prophets, such as those who served the infant Church.

But we do have those who preach and teach that which the Holy Spirit has preserved for us and presented to us in the Word. We have inherited the rich blessing of '*all things that pertain to life and godliness*', in the New Testament scriptures. We have the recorded words of '*holy men of God who were moved by the Holy Spirit*.' (2 Pet. 1:3, & 1:21).

7. Today, it is as imperative as it ever was, that we who love the Lord do not under-value, despise or set at nought, the preaching and teaching of the Word of God.

We should never forget that the Lord himself told his apostles, '*He, who listens to you, listens to me; he, who rejects you, rejects me, and he, who rejects me, rejects Him who sent me*.' (Luke 1:16). This means that whenever the Word of God is faithfully presented we should receive it with open ears and open hearts.

Incidentally, I wonder how anyone can claim to accept the authority of Christ, whilst rejecting the writings of the apostles whom he authorized to speak on his behalf?

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

THE LORD'S SUPPER (6) - QUESTIONS QUESTIONS

WHY

This is the most important question in Christianity, from why did Christ die to every thing we do and think. We must all have a clear understanding of the basic reason behind all our thoughts and actions. Are they something that God requires of us, or are they requirements of our own or of man's tradition? The same desire should be in us to ask of each of the aspects of the Lord's supper, why do we meet when we do, why do we meet at all, why do we:- have one loaf, have several loaves, use leavened, use unleavened bread, have one cup, have individual cups, why do we drink what we do? We all need to be clear when we are following God's way and when our own or another man's tradition. The "*Scriptures Standard's*" plea for "*a complete return to Christianity as it was in the beginning*" should be each one's own objective and not driven by Alexander Campbell, David King or more recent popular figures, Our only object should be, as Paul said in opening his chapter on the Lord's Supper "**Be ye followers (mimickers - 3402) of me, even as I also am of Christ. Now I praise you, brethren, that ye remember me in all things, and keep the ordinances (traditions - 3862) as I delivered them to you**" (1 Cor, 11:1-2). The Greek word for "all things" of "remember me in all things" is *panta* (3956) and implies a totality, as in Mt. 28:18-20. All power is given me . . . Go and teach all nations . . . observe all things. The requirement on us is then of complete obedience in all things. We have no excuse for modifying any New Testament practice to bring it into the 20th-21st century. That is why the question of 'why' should ever be on our lips. In the Jewish Passover the children are expressly required to ask their father to explain the reason for each thing and action (fulfilling Ex. 13:14), and if no children are present, the participants have to ask each other. Let us encourage this attitude to the Lord's supper.

WHEN

Under the law of Moses the timing of the Passover, from the selection of the lamb to the feast, was very precise. Under the new covenant the wording is far less specific for Paul only says "as often as" (1 Cor. 11:26). Views range from the Quakers and Salvation Army that it is not required today, through the Jehovah Witnesses and Messianic Jews who keep it annually as a strict replacement of the Jewish Passover, to the Roman Catholics who say "Mass" at any time and for many special occasions. Examples from the New Testament show that: - Jesus rose from the dead on the first day of the week (Jn. 20:1) later the same day He stood in the midst of disciples (Jn. 20:19). The next first day (eight days later) joined them again and showed Thomas His side (Jn. 20:26). Six weeks later on the day of First Fruits (Num. 28:26) the Church was founded on the first day of the week (Acts 2:1). Paul gave commandment to the Galatians and Corinthians that "upon the first day of the week let every one lay by in store" (1 Cor. 16:2). Luke tells that the church at Traos came together on the first day of the week to break bread (Acts 20:7). It should be noted that in Acts 20:6 it was "after the days of unleavened bread" clearly then disciples "broke bread" after the Jewish Passover (our Easter) and it could not therefore have been associated with Pasch. Those who support an unlimited celebration of the feast quote the daily breaking of bread in Acts 2:48. This has to be challenged as Paul in 1 Cor. 11:21 denounces those come to eat for the sake of being hungry because what they were doing in Acts 2:46 was for meat (= food - Strong's 5160). The Jewish day began at sunset (Gen. 1:5) it seems from Acts 20:7 that as Paul preached until midnight and that they met on the first day (Acts 20:7) that they must have met on the Saturday evening. This practice is recorded to last until the 5th century in Egypt (Socrates - Eccl. Hist.) however Pliny records in AD 110 that they kept the feast in the very early morning to prevent any association with the Agape.

WHERE

Jesus said "where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst" (Mt. 18:20). Those who belong to Christ are the temple of God and His Holy Spirit dwells within them (2 Co. 6:16; 1 Cor. 6:19). No special location is therefore prescribed in which Christians are to meet because "Thus saith the LORD, The heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool: where is the house that ye build unto me? and where is the place of my rest?" Isa. 66:1.

WHO

Whilst no significance whatsoever is placed on the *place* where Christians should congregate, great importance is given to *who* should attend. Those that the Lord considers unfit "eat and drink damnation to themselves" 1 Cor. 11:29. The question then arises as to what restraints, if any, should be placed on allowing those who wish to partake of the feast. Paul gives the rule that "if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such an one do not to eat." (1 Cor. 5:11) as the wicked are to be removed from among the Church (1 Cor. 5:13). Against these clear cases Jesus warns that we "Judge not, that ye be not judged. For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again. And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye?" (Mt. 7:1-3). The apostle in Romas 14 lays down some guidance on where the line should be drawn between toleration and condemnation. Each case will require careful, prayerful consideration. For those outside Christ, at least they should be counselled of the caution of 1 Cor.

11:29, or, following the early Church practice, of clearly only allowing those who have been baptized to partake, (but observing Col. 4:6).

WHAT TO WEAR

James (2:3,4) warns that no distinction should be made towards the man wearing fine clothes and the poor man. Men are not to wear hats or have long hair (1 Cor. 11:4). The practice of the clergy of orthodox churches wearing highly elaborate headgear and fine clothes as a mark of recognition has no place in the New Covenant. As all those who have accepted its terms are priests unto God (Rev. 1:6; 1 Pet. 2:9). Women too are to wear modest apparel and without 'costly array' (1 Tim. 2:9) and are required to have their heads 'covered', whether this means a veil or long hair must be left to another place to discuss. The subject cannot however be removed from discussion and Paul's reason for placing the issue so close to the passage on the Lord's supper has to be explored.

HOW

Paul makes it plain that the Lord's supper was not a time for eating to remove hunger nor to get drunk (1 Cor. 11:21) as eating a meal was to be done in their houses (1 Cor. 11:22). Coming to the table of the Lord with the right preparation is then required, this extends to us being required to examine ourselves (1 Cor. 11:28) and any differences with a brother these should be reconciled beforehand (Mt. 5:23,24). Corinthians 11:23,24 says that "Jesus took bread, and when he had given thanks he brake it". Much discussion has arisen as to whether Jesus broke a portion off for Himself and passed the remaining entire loaf to the disciples or whether He broke the loaf in pieces and distributed the pieces. Mark and Matthew's account says Jesus brake . . . the disciples ate (Mt. 26:26; Mk. 14:22) this would imply that the "this do in remembrance of me" in Luke 22:19 refers to the whole act of the supper not the disciples taking a piece off the loaf as some suggest. In the Jewish Passover, prayers are first said, aperitifs taken, then the host takes the middle of three Matzahs and breaks it in two (as a symbol of humility) and the larger part is hidden away. After the meal this is taken out from hiding and is eaten as symbol of the paschal lamb. There does not seem to be specific instructions as to how this is taken from the broken matzah, but earlier in the feast the other half is broken off by each participant. In the Apostle's Teaching prayer was said over the bread that had already been broken. This seems to be the only reference before AD180 on this aspect of the Lord's supper. Alexander Campbell's "Christian System" under 'Breaking the Loaf' - Proposition 5 says "The one loaf must be broken before the saints feed upon it." Brother King in the September "Ecclesiastical Observer" of 1873 said "The act of breaking is not said to represent anything; nor does it . . . breaking is an accidental necessity not expressive of any corresponding feature". There is then some cause to pause and reconsider if the practices we use today are the correct ones in breaking the bread. After the bread Jesus took a cup, gave thanks, and all the disciples drank of it (Mark 14:23) and when they had sung a hymn they went out. (Mk. 14:26). The Galatians were also required to "lay by in store" on the first of the week (1 Cor. 16:2). It would seem proper then, as was the practice of the early Church, to use this opportunity to make this collection which was not an appendage to the service but an essential part of having "fellowship". The other guidance in the New Testament for the details required of this feast puts strict limits on the role of women (1 Tim. 2:12).

God willing, next month, this series will be concluded by suggesting answers to these and the other matters that have been raised.

BRIAN BOLAND.

SCRIPTURE READINGS

Dec. 6	Isaiah 40:1-17	Luke 3:1-23 & 38
Dec. 13	Deut. 6:1-19	Luke 4:1-15
Dec. 20	Isaiah 61	Luke 4:16-41
Dec. 27	Leviticus 14:1-20	Luke 4:42, 5:16

JOHN THE BAPTIST PREPARES THE WAY

The ministry of John was at the conclusion of the Jewish age. His message was exclusive to the commonwealth of Israel. "To his preaching of reformation, an immersion of reformers for the remission of sins committed under the law, was added. Multitudes flocked to him, confessed their sins against God under the economy of Moses, and were immersed, confessing their sins, and reforming from them. He proclaimed that the Messiah was soon to appear: nay, that He stood among them, though they knew Him not and that they should believe in Him who was to come after him". (Alexander Campbell).

There is a number of points to be noted about John's baptism. He baptised in the name of God and not in the name of Jesus; he baptised into no name; he did not baptise anyone into the Christian faith; his immersion brought no man into the kingdom of heaven. Christian baptism, then, differs from John's in four particulars: **First**, in the name or by the authority by which it is done. **Second**, into the name, into which it is done. **Third**, the faith upon which it is done. **Fourth**, the kingdom or institution into which it introduces us. "The state in which John's immersion left his disciples, was a state of preparation for the kingdom of heaven, which at first must be gradually developed and progressively exhibited to the world. But the state in which Christian immersion

leaves the disciples of Jesus, is the kingdom of heaven - a state of righteousness, peace, joy, and possessed of the Holy Spirit of adoption into the family of God" (Campbell).

THE GENEALOGY OF JESUS

We find two tables of genealogy pertaining to Jesus: here in Luke 3 Matthew 1. There are similarities, but also differences. Why is this? First off, Matthew begins with Abraham and ends with Joseph, Jesus' legal father. Luke begins with Jesus and ascends all the way to Adam. The lineages differ from David down, but agree from David up. Apologies for quoting Mr. Campbell again: ". . . Luke gives the natural descent of Jesus by his mother from David, it behooved him to trace Eli, her father, up to David, through that branch of David's family in the line of Nathan. Whereas Matthew, intending only to show his legal descent by his reputed father Joseph, from David, he traces the ancestry of Joseph up to David through that branch of David's family descended from Solomon . . . David was the ancestor of both Joseph and Mary, but by different sons".

It is very important to note these points from the genealogical tables: *father* often denotes *ancestor*; *son* means sometimes no more than *descendant*; and the term *begat* only denotes the line of descent. A big question is: why does Luke call Joseph a son of Eli and Matthew call him a son of Jacob? I am afraid I have not the space available to deal with this question. Suffice to say that Campbell answers it in detail in his publication *The Christian Baptism* volume VI dates 1828. It is one of the most revealing articles I have ever read from his pen.

THE TEMPTATION OF JESUS

Satan tempted Jesus by appeals to the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes

and the pride of life (1 John 2:16). His strategy was not new. In fact this was the very approach he made to Eve all those years ago (Genesis 3:1-7). Jesus resisted him by appealing in turn to the word of God. As I often say, it was a good job Jesus knew what was written. Likewise, we need to know the word today to overcome our enemy, who is still as active as ever in his attempts to destroy all those who belong to God. Those who are ignorant of God's revelation are truly duck-soup for the old Serpent. He will devour them easily and speedily. They can give little resistance, if any.

It is clear from this passage of Scripture (4:1-13) that Satan is a personality. Jesus had a conversation with him. You do not have a conversation with some sort of evil force. I know a lot of people who do not believe in the devil. Some of them claim to be Christians and some are even numbered with the clergy. Surely this is his greatest deception: leading people into thinking that he himself does not exist?

JESUS REJECTED AT NAZARETH

I once visited Nazareth. I thought a lot about Jesus when I was there. What was it really like for Him? How did He get on with family and neighbours as He grew up? What was his education like? Did He impress His teachers? How hard did He work in the family business? There are so many questions that come to mind.

Luke tells us about a visit there that nearly resulted in His death. His fellow-worshippers in the synagogue did not like what He said following a reading from the book of Isaiah. One thing He said was: "I tell you the truth, no prophet is accepted in his home town" (4:24, N.I.V.). How true! Jesus went on to pay a compliment to the Gentiles. This really infuriated His audience. You see, Jews at that time had no regard for

the Gentiles at all. In fact, they believed that "God had created the Gentiles to be fuel for the fires of hell". Who did this young Jesus, the son of Joseph, think he was? Their fury led to His being taken from the synagogue and the town with the intention of throwing Him off a cliff. But He overcame them. However, from now on, He would have a different view of Nazareth.

JESUS HEALS MANY

In this portion of Scripture, we read of Jesus driving out an evil spirit from a man in the Capernaum synagogue (4:31-35); healing Simon Peter's mother-in-law (4:38-39) and many others suffering from various sicknesses (4:40); restoring many who were demon possessed (4:41); and cleansing a leper (5:12-14). These actions were proof positive that Jesus of Nazareth was the Messiah, the Son of the Living God. No man could do these miracles except God were with Him (John 3:2). Surely this was the one prophesied by John the Baptist (3:15-17). Sadly, many did not recognise him as such, which is quite unbelievable to me. Mark you, I cannot understand why so many reject Jesus today despite all the available evidence. I guess it is best summed up in these words: There is none so blind as he who will not see; there is none so deaf as he who will not hear.

THE CALLING OF THE FIRST DISCIPLES

Peter, James and John were humble fishermen. However, Jesus called them for special service - to be His righthand men. What a privilege this was! But what responsibilities it brought! They were to be eye-witnesses and ear-witnesses for the Master. They were His chosen disciples. The word *disciples* means "a learner", and what they learned about Him had to be passed on to others. They were to be numbered with the

twelve apostles. The word *apostle* means "one who is sent out". So we can say that they were sent out to be His heralds, His envoys and His ambassadors to men. I think it is great that Jesus did not choose men from the universities, academies or colleges; but He chose men from those who had learned the lessons of life in the business of living.

IAN S. DAVIDSON,
Motherwell.

TEST YOU BIBLICAL KNOWLEDGE

1. Name Abraham's second wife.
2. To what place did Moses flee from Egypt?
3. Name the prophet that rebuked David.
4. Who was Elisha's servant?
5. Who provided Solomon with timber to build the temple?
6. Who was chosen queen instead of Vashti?
7. Who bound his own hands and feet with Paul's girdle?
8. Which angel foretold Jesus's birth?
9. Whom did Paul find in Lystra?
10. Who was surnamed Thaddaeus?

GHANA UPDATE

It is only a few months since we last heard of an increase in growth of the Lords Church in Upper Volta. The Church continues to grow amidst problems that most of the *Scripture Standard* readership will never experience. The new congregation in Dambai are having a particularly hard time and for £150 they could purchase a small piece of land and worship the Lord without the

continual interruptions they presently endure. All the glasses and books "Where there is no doctor" and the new book "Where women have no doctor" have arrived safely. We thank God. I have been noting that most of the new congregation require Ewe or Twi Bibles. In the month of November we will deal with this in one exercise. Last year in Ghana we found a bookshop which sold the same Bibles that we ordered in Ewe and Twi at a fraction of the cost we have been paying and they were already in Ghana. We will contact this shop. The solar lamps appear to have been a good investment but they have not been trouble free. Most of the churches where they are installed are now onto their second bulb. The bulbs were meant to last 8,000 hours and cost £8 each but we only seem to have got 8 months out of a bulb on average. Perhaps the high temperature in Ghana has affected the life span of these bulbs. It is a small price to pay for light. I have sent another pack of spare bulbs. One lamp has a broken component which does not affect it giving light and the manufacturers have sent a replacement at no charge. One other lamp needs repairing. I would like to once again thank everyone who continues to support the work in Ghana, without your help the present work could not continue. It is a long time since I gave anyone an update on how much we have collected for Ghana in the *Scripture Standard*. I hope I may be excused for mentioning this but as you read this (in November) we will have passed the £100,000 mark, collected and sent to Ghana. I hope this will encourage you to keep pressing forward towards the goal. I would like to close this update by sharing with you a salutation from Ghana I received yesterday. "Warm greetings again from Okumah. I never doubt the peace that you are enjoying;

since you are always in the Lord. We're also in the same envelope. Glory always unto His name - Amen."

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

COMING EVENTS

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. This will help us organise the catering and any hospitality which may be required. 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.).

NEW SECRETARY

In our last issue, the address of Colin Hilton (new secretary at Argyle Street,

Hindley) was given as 6 The Mews, Hindley, whereas it should be 7 (seven) The Mews. Sorry for any confusion caused.

EDITOR.

EMERGENCY APPEAL TIDAL DISASTER - PNG

Sister Ruth Coles is pleased to report that the response to the September appeal has been so good that no further donations are now required. Thanks to all who came to the aid of our PNG brethren.

10. Lebbaeus (Matthew 10:3).
9. Timotheus (Acts 16:1).
8. Gabriel (Luke 1:26).
7. Agabus (Acts 21:10-11).
6. Esther (Esther 2:17).
5. Hiram, king of Tyre (1 Kings 5:10).
4. Gehazi (2 Kings 4:12).
3. Nathan (2 Samuel 12:1-14).
2. Midian (Exodus 2:15).
1. Keturah (Genesis 25:1).

ANSWERS

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