

# The SCRIPTURE STANDARD

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

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## THE PROMISED LAND

In last month's issue I mentioned the doctrine of 'pre-millennialism', which, in the religious world at large, is fairly widely held, and which teaches that when Christ returns He will restore the nation of Israel to all its ancient landmarks, and will rule the world from the 'throne of David' in the city of Jerusalem. Those who have had any discussions with 'pre-millennialists' will know that they are inclined to apply O.T. prophecy to the future, notwithstanding the fact that such prophecy may already have been fulfilled. One of their main contentions is that God made 'land' promises to the Israelites early in the O.T. and, because God never reneges on promises, these have still to be fulfilled and; when Christ returns, the Jews will be restored to Palestine. Thus 'pre-millennialists' have a great deal to say about Abraham, **his seed**, and **the promises**. We should always try to avoid blind prejudice, have an open mind on all scriptural matters, and fairly examine the views of others. Have these 'land' promises made to Abraham (and his seed forever) still to be brought to pass? In a short article such as this we can hardly hope even to scratch the surface of such a subject, but can, perhaps, give some pointers.

Most bible students will surely acknowledge that the best interpreter of O.T. prophecy was Jesus Himself, and His inspired apostles. This may seem self-evident, yet nevertheless many still apply prophecy to yet future fulfilments notwithstanding that Christ, (or His apostles) have declared that these prophecies have already been fulfilled. The N.T. abounds in references to O.T. prophecy and states its application. This is because most O.T. prophecy was fulfilled in Christ Himself: and in the church (kingdom of God). For instance, Jesus, on one occasion in the synagogue, read a prophecy from Isaiah (60: 1-2) and said, "This day is the scripture fulfilled in your ears". The apostle Peter said (Acts 16) with reference to the outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. "This is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel." These statements brook no argument and should end all types of human speculation on these prophecies (but they don't). The Jews spent most of their time, sometimes in bitter dispute, on the meanings of prophecy and formed many sects and parties (as we do today) and more often than not they came to the wrong conclusions. Perhaps they could not be expected to know that much of what looks like having a **literal** fulfilment had, in fact, a **spiritual** application. Men are still making the same mistakes today. For instance, the Jews looked for a literal kingdom: a national resurgence with a king on a white charger at their head: but Jesus entered Jerusalem on the foal of an ass and disappointed all their national aspirations. They said, "We shall not have this man to rule over us" and eventually crucified Him. They expected and hoped for a military emperor who would sweep all before him (especially the dreaded Romans):

whose presence desecrated the Holy Land) and could not accept 'turning the other cheek to enemies' or indeed the conception of a spiritual community as a kingdom. There are still many today who can not accept that Christ's kingdom 'is not of this world' and who teach that the literal kingdom of God has merely been postponed for a while, but will come to pass when Christ returns. I respectfully suggest that 'pre-millennialists' make the fundamental error of applying much prophecy to Christ's final coming, when, in fact it was fulfilled when Christ came into the world the first time. I believe that the more we study these matters the more we shall come to this conclusion.

#### THE PROMISE — OF LAND

But what about the 'land' promises which were made to Israel, which 'pre-millennialists' insist have yet to be fulfilled? We read of the original promise in Gen. 15:18 which reads, "In the same day the Lord made a covenant with Abram, saying, 'unto thy seed have I given this land, from the river of Egypt unto the great river, the river Euphrates: the Kenites, and the Kenizzites, and the Gadmonites, and the Hittites, and the Perizzites, and the Rephaims, and the Amorites, and the Canaanites, and the Girgashites, and the Jebisites.'" Earlier, (in Gen. 13:14,15) God had promised the land to Abraham, and his seed, for ever.

Was 'the promise' ever fulfilled?

Joshua, just before he died, declared, "Therefore it shall come to pass that as all good things are come upon you, which the Lord your God promised you; so shall the Lord bring upon you all evil things, until He hath destroyed you from off this good land which the Lord your God hath given you. When ye have transgressed the covenant of the Lord your God, which He commanded you and have gone and served other gods, and bowed yourselves to them; then shall the anger of the Lord be kindled against you, and ye shall perish quickly from off the good land which He hath given unto you." (Joshua 23:15,16). Joshua refers to the 'good land' which 'God hath given you' but also highlights the fact that they would remain on the land only on condition of their fidelity to God. Israel's long history is chequered with their times of idolatry and rejection of God by their gross disobedience. God punished them many times and just as often took them back again.

Joshua also said, "And the Lord gave unto Israel all the land which He sware to give unto their fathers: and they possessed it, and dwelt therein. And the Lord gave them rest round about, according to all that He sware unto their fathers ... there failed not ought of any good thing which the Lord had spoken unto the house of Israel; all came to pass." (Josh. 21:43). Here Joshua assures us that All that God sware unto the fathers was given; nothing failed. All came to pass and they dwelt in all the land that God sware to give them.

Near the end of the O.T. record we learn that, after Solomon's reign, the twelve tribes became a divided kingdom. Two of the tribes (Judah and Benjamin) formed a southern kingdom with Jerusalem as capital; and the remaining tribes constituted a northern kingdom with Samaria as capital. From that time, and for about 250 years thereafter, the northern kingdom exhibited great indifference to God and were overcome, and taken into captivity, by the Assyrians from which few, if any, returned. Some think 'a remnant' returned but Josephus (B XI C5 p2) says, "the ten tribes are beyond Euphrates till now, and are an immense multitude, and not to be estimated by numbers." Various books, with just as many theories, have been written as to what became of the 10 tribes. The southern kingdom (2 tribes) after some 400 years of similar infidelity to God were conquered and taken away captive into Babylon (for a predicted 70 years) after which they returned. I mention these matters because it is obviously important to know at what period a prophet spoke: whether before the kingdom was divided, during the captivity, or after the period of exile (and during the return).

It is, therefore, interesting to note that Nehemiah, who was a post-exilic prophet (i.e. near the end of the O.T.) commented on the original promise made to Abraham (quoted earlier from Gen. 15:18) and said, "Thou art the Lord God, who didst choose Abram, and broughtest him forth out of Ur of the Chaldees, and gavest him the name Abraham; and foundest his heart faithful before thee, and madest a covenant with him to give him the land of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, and the Perizzites, and the Jebusites, and the Girgashites, to give it, I say, to his seed, and hast performed thy word, for thou art righteous." (9:7). Nehemiah, it will be noticed, enumerates all the territories mentioned in the promise made to Abraham and his seed, and says that "God is righteous" and had 'performed His words': i.e. had fulfilled His promise.

It is also worthy of the mention that, when commenting on the military conquests of David, Samuel (2 Sam. 8:3) says that "David smote also Hadadezer, the son of Rehob, the king of Zobah, as he went to recover the border at the river Euphrates." Evidently Hadadezer had encroached upon David's land and he went to retake it (recover his border) — and where was this border? — at the river Euphrates.

Also in 1 Kings 4:21 we find that "Solomon reigned over all the kingdom from the river unto the land of the Philistines, and unto the border of Egypt: they brought presents and served Solomon all the days of his life." Here we are informed that Solomon reigned over all land from the river (Euphrates) to the land of the Philistines (west of Jerusalem) and all the way to the borders of Egypt: in fact, all the land that Abraham was promised.

Thus from these few examples we can see that the 'land' promise made to Abraham was given to him, and to his seed, and they occupied the land and dwelt in it. If the Jews do not occupy it today it is not because God failed to live up to His promise. God's promises were, and still are, conditional upon man's strict obedience and singleness of mind towards God, and any period of Jewish history shows that they consistently failed to keep their part of their compacts with God.

### THE LAND RESTORED

Notwithstanding the above, there may be some who will still insist that God's promise of the land was to be 'for ever' and that there were 'Restoration' promises.

Moses, throughout the book of Deut. gives Israel God's ultimatum — the choice between Life and Death: between Blessing and Cursing: all contingent upon obedience. In one such place (Deut. 4:26,27) Moses says, "And I call heaven and earth to witness against you this day, that ye shall soon utterly perish from off the land whereunto ye go over Jordan to possess it; ye shall not prolong your days upon it, but shall utterly be destroyed. And the Lord shall scatter you among the nations, and ye shall be left few in number among the heathen, whither the Lord shall lead you." Thus Moses predicts the scattering of the Jews amongst the nations: elsewhere he foretells their rescue.

Nehemiah (900 years later), a post-exilic prophet (of the return from Babylon) comments upon Moses' words and agrees that God did scatter the Jews amongst the nations but brought them back again. He prayed thus, "Remember, I beseech Thee, the word that Thou commandest Thy servant Moses, saying, If ye transgress, I will scatter you abroad among the nations: but if ye return unto Me, and keep My commandments, and do them; though there were of you cast unto the uttermost part of heaven, yet I will gather thee from thence and will bring them into the place that I have chosen to set My name there. Now these are Thy servants and Thy people, whom Thou hast redeemed by Thy great power, and by Thy strong hand." (Neh. 1: 8-10). Nehemiah says that God had 'redeemed' those who had been scattered by His 'great power' and His 'strong hand'. The promise of 'Restoration', according to Nehemiah, had also come to pass. Both Ezra and Nehemiah describe in detail Israel's return from captivity to Palestine.

It should also be borne in mind that the words "for ever" in the scriptures do not always mean "eternal" and many instances may be given where 'for ever' merely means 'age-lasting' or even an indefinite period. For instance the Passover was said (Ex. 12:14) to be kept an ordinance among all the generations of Israel 'for ever' but we know that Jesus observed the very last one (the last one with God's sanction, that is). The Psalmist also uses the term a great deal and says that he will sing the praises of God 'for ever' (i.e. over an entire but indefinite period). There are a great many similar examples.

### JEWES ARE JEWES NO MORE

Jesus had ample opportunity, while He was here on earth, of teaching what 'pre-millennialists' teach but did not appear to do so. He could have reminded the Jews that He would sit on David's literal throne in Jerusalem and rule the nations but He never did. Indeed He wept over Jerusalem and predicted its total destruction (one stone would not stand upon another). This destruction came to pass some 40 years later. He also said, in His discussion with the woman at Sycher's Well, that God was Spirit and that those who would worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth: the actual place was immaterial. He said "Neither in this mountain" (the mountain sacred to those in Samaria), "Nor yet in Jerusalem" (place sacred to the Jews) would God (in future) be worshipped. So much for the fuss 'pre-millennialists' make about Jerusalem. As far as an earthly (national) kingdom of Israel was concerned, Jesus said, with His feet firmly planted upon Palestinian soil, "I go to prepare a place for you". The place is certainly not the Holy Land for it is evident that Jesus went into heaven to make His preparations. This is in keeping with His words to His disciples to take adversity with cheerfulness for great would be their reward — in Palestine? No, "in heaven".

Indeed Jews no longer exist (as such) and Paul says a Jew is not a Jew outwardly (but inwardly) and circumcision has now no validity or purpose. (Rom.2) Jew and Gentile are now on equal terms in God's eyes and if they are to be saved they must be saved through the gospel of Jesus Christ. There is no other way. The gospel is God's power unto salvation: to Jew and Gentile. In the church of Jesus we are now 'all one' and 'the promise' is not a parcel of land but life everlasting in heaven. Christians are 'the seed' (spiritual) of Abraham.

"For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptised into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female, for ye are all one in Christ Jesus. And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed and heirs according to the promise." (Gal. 3:26,29).

Paul says we are no longer born physically (as were the Jews) into God's family but by the spiritual birth (faith in Christ Jesus and baptism for the remission of sins). Just as many, says Paul, as have been baptised into Christ have put Christ 'on'. Those who 'are in Christ' through baptism (whether Jews or Gentiles) are now 'Abraham's seed' and 'heirs' according to the promise.

Will we ever be able to begin to comprehend the great honour and goodness that God has showered upon us, unworthy as we are? Oh, What love: what manner of love: the Father hath bestowed upon us — to call us Sons of God.

EDITOR.

**WHICH BONE ARE YOU?** Someone has divided Church members into three general classes: the WISHBONES, the JAWBONES and the BACKBONES. The Wishbones languidly hope that the Church will prosper without their help. The Jawbones do the criticising. The Backbones get under the load and carry it along. Analyse yourself and see which you are.

— Selected.

## GLEANINGS

*"Let her glean even among the sheaves." Ruth 2: 15.*

### THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT

"The more we live and try to practise this Sermon on the Mount, the more shall we experience blessing. Look at the blessings that are promised to those who do practise it. The trouble with much holiness teaching is that it leaves out the Sermon on the Mount, and asks us to experience sanctification. That is not the biblical method. If you want to have power in your life and to be blessed, go straight to the Sermon on the Mount. Live and practise it and give yourself to it, and as you do so the promised blessings will come. 'Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled.' If you want to be filled, don't seek some mystic blessing; don't rush to meetings hoping you will get it. Face the Sermon on the Mount and its implications and demands, see your utter need, and then you will get it. It is the direct road to blessing."

### BEING WELL — PLEASING IN HIS SIGHT

"One of the essential and most obvious things about a Christian is that he is a man who lives always realizing he is in the presence of God. The world does not live in this way; that is the big difference between the Christian and the non-Christian. The Christian is a man whose every action should be performed in the light of this intimate relationship to God. He is not, as it were, a free agent. He is a child of God, so that everything he does, he does from this standpoint of being well-pleasing in His sight. That is why the Christian man, of necessity, should view everything that happens to him in this world entirely differently from everybody else."

### WITH REVERENCE AND GODLY FEAR

"The Christian is a man who always walks in the fear of God — not craven fear, because 'perfect love casteth out' that fear. Not only does he approach God in terms of the Epistle to the Hebrews, 'with reverence and godly fear', but he lives his whole life like that."

### RIGHTEOUSNESS IS BEING RIGHT WITH GOD

"What the world says about the true Christian is that he is a weakling, an apology for a man, or that he isn't manly. Those are its expressions. The world believes in self-confidence, self-expression and the mastery of life; the Christian believes in being 'poor in spirit'. Take the newspapers and see the kind of person the world admires. You will never find anything that is further removed from the Beatitudes than that which appeals to the natural man and the man of the world. What calls forth his admiration is the very antithesis of what you find here. The natural man likes an element of boastfulness, but that is the very thing that is condemned in the Beatitudes. Then, obviously, they must be different in what they seek. 'Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst.' After what? Wealth, money, status, position, publicity? Not at all. 'Righteousness.' And righteousness is being right with God."

### WE PREACH NOT OURSELVES

"'We preach not ourselves,' says Paul, 'but Christ Jesus the Lord.' When he went to Corinth, he tells us, he went 'in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling'. He did not step on to the platform with confidence and assurance and ease, and give the impression of a great personality. Rather, the people said of him, 'His appearance is weak and his speech contemptible.' How far we tend to wander from the truth and the pattern of the Scriptures. Alas! How the Church is allowing the world and its methods to influence and control her outlook and life. To be 'poor in spirit' is not as popular even in the Church as it once was and always should be. Christian preachers must re-think these matters. Let us not take things on their face value; let us at

all avoid being captivated by this worldly psychology; and let us realize from the outset that we are in the realm of a kingdom which is unlike everything that belongs to this 'present evil world'."

#### IT IS WHAT ISAIAH SAID

"What is the positive aspect of being 'poor in spirit'? I think the best way to answer that question is to put it in terms of Scripture. It is what Isaiah said (57:15): 'For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones.'"

D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones.

Selected by Leonard Morgan.

## CHRIST THE DIVINE CHALLENGE

As an introduction to the above topic, we ask the question, or you dear reader may ask the question, "What makes this challenge Divine?" (1) The prophecy concerning Christ's birth was of Divine Origin. (Isaiah 7:4). A sign brought to pass notice again in Matthew (1:23). (2) His birth was of Divine origin "For that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost". (3) His Mission or purpose was Divine when He said, "For I came down from Heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will, of Him that sent me" (John 6:38). (4) John the Baptist bore testimony giving Christ the pre-eminence "He must increase but I must decrease", "I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness... but there standeth one among you, whom ye know not; He it is, whom coming after me is preferred before me, whose shoe's latchet I am not worthy to unloose". "Behold the lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world. This is He of whom I said, after me cometh a man which is preferred before me" (John 3:30-31; 1:23-30). (5) His teachings were Divine, and were commended by scholars in His day and time: "The people were astonished at His doctrine" (Matt. 7:28). "Whence hath this man this wisdom?" (Matt. 13:54) "From whence hath this man these things?" (Mark 6:2) "The officers answered, never man spake like this man" (John 7:46). We are certain that these reasons are logical and plain, and show the reason why we say Christ, The Divine Challenge! Almost 2000 years ago, just before the crucifixion of the Christ, multitudes of Jews were faced with these challenging words, "What shall I do with Jesus which is called Christ"? (Matt. 27:22) The same vital question ... or challenge, stands out in the 20th Century! They gave their answer, "Let Him be crucified"! What is the answer today?

As humans we are faced with many challenges in life, and we must have a ready answer! But Christians should bear in mind, "Ye are not your own, ye have been bought with a price" (1 Cor. 6:10-20). And as we meet the challenges in life, our decision shall determine our end! The attitude we adopt will be evidence as to how much courage we have. (Rom. 8:31). Indeed "If God be for us, who can be against us"? BUT it will depend on how MUCH we are for God. (See Romans 8:28 and Phillipians 2:12-13). OUR reply MUST be "Yea Lord," followed by humble obedience. We are human, subject to hardships and adversities of life, therefore challenges do come to us not to crush our spirits, BUT to try us, to challenge us.

Paul's statement applies here, "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me" (Phill. 4:13). We can read of, or follow, no greater example than that of Christ. What difference whether it were by word or by deed against Him, the Hebrew writer penned these words, "Who for the joy that was set before Him, endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God" (Hebrews 12:2). And the Apostle Peter testifies of Christ "For even hereunto were we called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that we

should follow His steps, who when He was reviled, reviled not again; when He suffered he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously". (1 Peter 2:21-23).

His betrayal by Judas was a challenge! His denial by Peter was a challenge. His disciples all forsaking him was a challenge, His thirst upon the cross was a challenge. Dear brother or sister, are we sincerely "following in the steps of the Master" amid the challenges of life? Especially when our Saviour, our Divine Challenge, has obligated us to fulfill His commands? There are many O.T. examples like David and Goliath, when David said, "Let no man's heart fail because of him"; and Abraham, when challenged to present his only son to God as a burnt offering, said, "Here I am". Shadrach, Meschach and Abednego answered the king "Our God is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace".

A great many challenges came to Paul shortly after he gave himself to Christ, but in a few words he said "None of these things move me, neither count I my life as dear unto myself". So whether in the Old Testament or New Testament times the men of God were human, but when these challenges came to them there was no hesitation, they had the ready answer.

Their attitudes, and how they suffered, proved it. After citing much of the sufferings Paul went through he could acclaim, "If I must needs glory, I will glory of the things concerning mine infirmities. Most gladly therefore will I ... rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me" (2 Cor. 11: 30; 12:9). The Martyrs came to the Lord because they were willing to face the challenges. Yes, we can see that all these challenges were not an unkind destiny, but came to each one for weakness or for strength. Let us, by the grace of God, endeavour to imitate Paul and others like him, that we may give Christ the pre-eminence at all times under all circumstances. Challenges not only test our human feelings but also our Spiritual growth.

But to the unsaved this challenge still comes: "What shall I do then with Jesus which Is Called Christ"? We pray, dear reader, that you may realize you are a sinner; repent of your sins; pledge your humble obedience and allegiance to Jesus, express your faith in obedience to Him, thus doing God's will, confess Christ as the Son of God and to be baptized into Christ for the remission of sins. **CHRIST THE DIVINE CHALLENGE PLEADS WITH YOU, SINNER AND SAINT, WHAT WILL YOUR ANSWER BE?**

T.W. Hartle,  
(Evangelist),  
Cape Town, R.S.A.

## ON BUILDING

HENRY WARD BEECHER, in his "Life Thoughts," says:— "We are all building a soul house for eternity, yet with what different architecture and what various care. What if a man should see his neighbour getting workmen and building material together, and should say to him, 'What are you building?' and he should answer 'I don't exactly know; I am waiting to see what will come of it.' And so walls rush up and room is added to room, while the man looks idly on, and all the bystanders exclaim, 'What a fool he is!' Yet this is the way many men are building their characters for eternity, adding room to room without plan or aim, and thoughtlessly waiting to see what the effect will be. Such builders will never dwell in 'the house of God, not made with hands eternal in the heavens.' Many men build as cathedrals were built, the part nearest the ground finished; but that part which soars toward heaven — the turret

and the spires — for ever incomplete. Many men are mere warehouses full of merchandise — the head, the heart are stuffed with goods, like those houses in the lower streets of the city, which were once family dwellings, but are now used for commercial purposes. There are apartments in their souls which were once tenanted by taste, love, joy, and worship, but they are all deserted now, and the rooms are filled with earthly and material things."

Dr. Bonar, in "*Our Mingled Life*," expresses a similar thought.

"These are the stones with which, O man,

Thou build'st too oft without a plan

Life's lordly hall or lowly cot,

The Babel or the Salem of thy lot."

Jesus says

"Whosoever cometh to me and heareth my sayings and doeth them, I will show you to whom he is like: He is like a man which built an house and digged deep and laid the foundation on a rock; and when the flood arose the stream beat vehemently upon that house and could not shake it; for it was founded upon a rock." (Luke vi. 47-48.)

"Who is a rock save our God?" (Ps. xviii 31.)

"Behold I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner stone, a sure foundation." (Isa. xxviii. 16.)

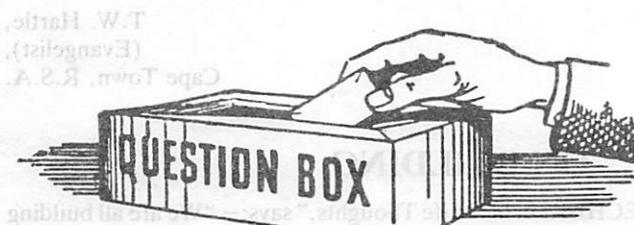
"Let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon, for other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ." (Cor. iii. 10-11.)

"Behold, I lay in Zion a chief corner stone, elect, precious, — the same is made the head of the corner." (1 Peter ii. 6,7.)

Let us so build that with Paul we may *know* "That if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands eternal in the heavens." (2 Cor. v. 1.) "Here have we no continuing city," and, like Abraham, we look "for a city which hath foundations whose builder and maker is God." Those who have put on the Lord Jesus by faith and obedience are likened to lively stones, and with godly fear should realize that they are not their own.

"As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him: Rooted and built up in him, and established in the faith as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving." (Col. ii. 6-7).

A.L.S.




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Conducted by  
Alf Marsden

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**"Can a person obey the Gospel and be immersed into Christ and then go to any church which he or she may choose?"**

The number of queries which I have received following the questions and answers in recent publications of the S.S. lead me to believe that there is genuine bewilderment on the part of some Christians as to who really comprise the Church of Christ. Somehow the idea seems to have infiltrated people's minds that there are, as they put it, 'Christians in other denominations'. The use of the phrase 'other denominations' implies that the Church of Christ is a denomination **among** denominations; this idea I personally reject. I cannot understand why it has become unacceptable to some Christians to

say, "I am a member of the Church of Christ". Some would say, "I am just a Christian". but we know very well that this word has been appropriated by many who have never obeyed the fundamental requirements for salvation as laid down in the Bible. Others would say, "I am a disciple of Christ", but this would raise serious problems in the minds of the uninitiated who would relate the word 'disciple' to the original Twelve of whom they learned in their schooldays (to us in its truest sense the word disciple to describe a Christian would be quite sensible, but to the uninitiated it would be tantamount to saying that we claimed special status). Some others might say, "I am a saint", and this would be perfectly scriptural, but it would certainly imply 'other world' attributes to 'this world' human beings. We can, and should, say that we are members of the Church of Christ, and I believe we can say that because of reasons which are inherent in the answer to the question. The arguments I shall put forward are basic and uncomplicated.

### The Church

It was in the coasts of Caesarea Philippi that Jesus asked His Disciple the question, "Whom do men say that I the son of man am"? (Matt. 16:13). He was given the answer (v.14). He then made the question personal to them, "But whom say ye that I am" (v.15). Peter answered, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God" (v.16), whereupon Jesus said, "Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in Heaven, And I say also unto thee, that thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my Church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it" (vv.17,18).

The use of the pronoun 'my' is both personal and possessive. It is the Church of, or belonging to, Christ, and whatever 20th century people may think of the Church does not alter the 1st century reality of its designation. The Church is exclusive to Christ, and inclusive of those who in faith and obedience respond to the Gospel call.

We are told by Apostolic authority that the Church is the Body of Christ. After Paul had stated what God had accomplished in Christ, he said, "And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him (Christ) to be the head over all things to the Church, which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all" (Eph. 1:22,23). Later in the same letter Paul asserts, "There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling: One Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all" (Eph. 3: 4-6).

Now if the Church is the Body, and there is one Body, then it is logical to think that there should be one Church. How is it, then, that there are so many different churches, teaching and practising so many different things? There is not the slightest doubt that Jesus and God want a united Body, for as Jesus prayed to His Father, "Neither pray I for these alone (the Apostles), but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; that they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me" (John 17: 20,21).

The argument has now developed to this point. The Lord said He would build His Church; His Church His Body; there is one Body so inevitably there must be one Church; that Church should be united in Christ. The identifying marks of that Church are that Christ is the Head of the Body; there can logically and factually be no other titular head; that entry into the Body can only take place when one is immersed into Christ (see Rom. 6: 3-7); and that the absolute authority of Christ and His Apostles reigns supreme in the life and doctrine of the Church. That Church, in effect and in fact, is the Church of Christ. The arguments for the Church are as valid now as they were when they were first given.

### Pentecost and After

We must now look at the events on the Day of Pentecost as recorded in Acts of the Apostles chapter 2. Jesus ascended into Heaven, and His promise of the advent of the Holy Spirit to the Apostles was fulfilled. They then began to preach the Gospel in languages which all the hearers could understand. The hearers, predominantly Jews, when confronted with the enormity of the crime they had committed in crucifying the Christ cried out, "Men and brethren, what shall we do"? Peter gave them the answer, "Repent, and be baptised, every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2: 37-39). Three thousand souls obeyed that call and gave themselves to the Lord. Thus was born the Church. The scripture goes on, "And they (the new-born church) continued stedfastly in the Apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers" (vv. 41,42).

It is now necessary for us to make some observations on what we have learned so far.

### Some Observations

The first thing that we learn is that all Christians were together. In Acts 2: 44,45 we read, "And all that believed were together, and had all things common; And sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need". The question which springs to mind is, 'how can all Christians be 'together' if they are scattered across the denominational world, and how do fellow-Christians know if other Christians have needs if they never meet them'?

Secondly, how can those who return to the church which they attended before their immersion continue in the Apostles' doctrine? If their previous church breaks bread, say, once a month, how does this measure up to the Apostles' teaching of breaking bread every first day of the week? Also, if they return to an ordained priesthood, how does this 'continue' the Apostles' teaching of the priesthood of all believers? And could someone please tell me why a person immersed into Christ would want to return to a church where he/she had not been taught the truth about baptism? How much more error would they subject themselves to? Some make the excuse, "well, all my friends are at my previous church"; but have they ever thought about Gethsemane? As the hymn says,

"There I walk amid the shades,  
While the lingering twilight fades,  
See that suffering, friendless One,  
Weeping, praying there alone".

It is pointless to pledge allegiance to Christ if allegiance to earthly friends, noble though that may be, comes first.

Thirdly, how can a recent addition to the Church 'continue' in the fellowship if they leave the fellowship? It may very well be true to say, as some do, that there are Christians in the Church who, unfortunately, do not seem to have understood what fellowship really means, but that in no way alters the glorious concept of what it **should and can be**. If we have become 'partakers of the Divine nature', why is it that petty strifes and jealousies upset the fellowship so much? Perhaps this is why some want to leave the fellowship. But the concept of God is that love should reign supreme, as John says, "Beloved, let us love one another; for love is of God; and everyone that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God" (1 John 4:7, but read on).

There are many more arguments I could put forward but space does not permit. I for one am grateful that I am a member of the Lord's Body, the Church. I have never wanted to return to the church from which I came, even though the friends of my childhood and youth were there I have always sought the truth and shall go on seeking it till I die. That truth, as I have interpreted it to myself, leads me to question

quite seriously the validity of baptism to a person who wants to return to a church where the truth was not taught. I love the Church of Christ, with all of its self-inflicted wounds, because He loved it, and gave Himself for it. If I fail It, I fail Him.

(All questions, please to:

Alf Marsden, 20 Costessy Way, Winstanley, Wigan: WN3 6ES.)

## IF ANY MAN SPEAKETH

### (1 PETER 4-11)

Last month, amongst other things we learnt the following:-  
from Matthew chapter 15 vv. 1-20.

Teaching human ordinances is futile.

Practising human traditions which contradict God's word is sin.  
from John Chapter 4 vv. 19-26.

God requires the actions of worship to be carried out correctly.

We can "know" what actions of worship are acceptable.

The question remains; how restrictive and how specific are the requirements in the word of God regarding what we may or may not do as worship?

From Matt. ch. 15 it is evidently futile ("vain" – MATAIOS = void of result) piety ("worship" – SEBOMAI = stand in awe of) to teach human ideas and also, practices which nullify God's commands are sin. So for example, the practice of baby baptism is sin because it nullifies God's requirement that repentant believers are baptised. However this passage in Matt. ch. 15, does not condemn voluntary acts of worship which do not contradict or nullify a command of God. For guidance in such situations we must go to other scripture.

John ch. 4 requires all worship (PROSKUNEO – the performed act) to be "in truth" and for truth we must go to the word of God. If the word of God forbids all acts of worship which are not specifically stipulated in the Bible, then we are confined to doing only those acts of worship which are phrased as a direct command, e.g. "Thou shalt ...", and they must be evidently aimed by God at us e.g. "The word of the Lord says to all christians that they shall, throughout their generations..." This is how it was done under the Law.

There are few direct commands in the New Testament relating to worship. Generally it is not compiled or phrased like the books of the Law; Exodus, Leviticus, Deuteronomy and Numbers, where every legislation is stipulated in no uncertain terms. They were told what to do, how to do it and where they were to do it. This distinct difference between the Old the New Testaments should make us cautious not to treat the New Testament like a legally compiled document. At the same time we must not go off at a tangent and assume that liberty means licence.

There are other things we must consider before going on an innovation spree. A more careful look at the Law will reveal that there were some minute items of detail that were not covered. e.g. the weaving and stitch details for the cloth used for the tabernacle and for the priests garments. (Exodus ch.25 ff.). However God filled certain men with his spirit, "in wisdom, and in understanding, and in knowledge, and in all manner of workmanship." (Exodus ch.31 vv. 1-11). Such men would be able to cope with such details. Spiritual wisdom is required under the New Covenant as well.

One very detailed religious performance required of the children of Israel was the observance of the Passover. Exodus ch.12, Numbers ch.9 and Deuteronomy ch.15. According to Smith's Bible Dictionary (under Passover and Lord's Supper) even though there is no mention of wine in connection with the passover in the Pentateuch, the feast had come to be punctuated by the communal drinking of four or five cups

of wine and the Mishna enjoins that there should never be less than four. Luke distinctly mentions two in Luke ch.22 v.17 and v.20. This is an instance of an innovation which did not contradict the commands of God.

Compare that with the teaching that Paul gives (under inspiration) to the Roman christians in chapter 14, particularly verses 5 and 6 "One man esteemeth one day above another: another esteemeth each day alike. Let each man be fully assured in his own mind, He that regardeth the day regardeth it unto the Lord". If a person decided to observe "unto the Lord" some days as more significant than others then we are not to judge him and he is not to judge us for choosing not to fall in line with him.

Evidently then there can be worship performed unto the Lord for which there is no legislation under the New Covenant, provided it does not contradict any command of God. However this chapter shows us that there are other considerations to be taken into account before embarking on an innovation spree. I intend to say more on this in the next issue.

To summarise what we have covered so far with regard to religious ordinances:

1. Teaching human ordinances is futile piety.
2. Practising human traditions which contradict God's word is sin.
3. God requires the actions of worship to be carried out in truth, i.e. according to the word.
4. The Word teaches that those who chose to perform innovations unto the Lord (which do not conflict with God's word) must not judge others or be judged by others.

Please examine what I have said and if you think I have misrepresented the word of God, kindly let me know.

Allan Ashurst,  
60 Kenwood Road,  
Stretford, Manchester.

## SCRIPTURE READINGS

Jan. 3 Psalm 41 John 18, 1-24  
Jan. 10 1 Kings 22,13-28 John 18, 25-40  
Jan. 17 Gen. 37,12-36 John 19, 1-22  
Jan. 24 Psalm 22 John 19, 23-42  
Jan. 31 Gen. 45, 1-15 John 20, 1-18

### Betrayal and Arrest

The dread work of betrayal was not delayed (John 13, 27). Judas knew that darkness and haste were necessary. The time for glorification had come (13, 31). As Jesus and His disciples crossed the brook Cedron Judas had gone to the chief priests and plans were completed. Judas headed a band of officers and soldiers gathered for Gethsemane. It would seem that Judas led the company and hastily went and kissed his Master, but Jesus went boldly forward and met them with the challenge. His unexpected chal-

lenge surprised and frightened them, causing a temporary terror of His power. The attempt by Peter and others to resist was immediately stopped by Jesus Himself, thus the possible arrest of the disciples averted by His rebuke and healing touch, so allowing them to flee to safety. John, and subsequently Peter, followed the crowd to the court; John having influence with staff and using it to get Peter in, and be in sight of Jesus during proceedings (18, 15 & 16 and Luke 22, 61). Jesus was questioned by the High Priest, and referred him to what He had always taught and said in public, and was roughly struck for stating this. Even formal rules of court were disregarded and spiteful treatment accorded to Him once His offenceless attitude was realised. Savage and brutal treatment was given as would not be allowed in truly lawful proceedings. The four accounts present some difficulty in recording the exact

order of events; all being partial and individual, nevertheless TRUE!

#### Denial and Condemnation

We cannot realise the feelings and actions of the disciples because it was impossible for them to understand how their power-filled Master could be powerless against His enemies. They would understand later. Meanwhile the Peter who was willing to die for Jesus came to the point when he denied even knowing Him. When a glance from Jesus shocked him into the depth of grief and repentance "he wept bitterly". Before the Jewish courts there was nothing but deep antagonism moved by hatred and manifested by wordy and physical abuse. John gives a question from the High Priest which He did answer but the official condemnation (backed by the Council) is reported most plainly by Luke (22, 66-71) stating the condemnation for blasphemy, the penalty required by the law being death by stoning. Meantime we can appreciate (while not condoning in any way) Peter's weakness being in the midst of foes with a sense of extreme depression. Three opportunities of confessing loyalty to Jesus missed in abject fear. Let us avoid being in wrong company!

#### PILATE AND ROMAN JUSTICE

The Jews despised and hated Pilate but determined to bring Jesus to crucifixion; the penalty for treason against Caesar. They found his weakness here for treason against Caesar was the penalty and they knew it could bring Pilate into their hands. The approach of the Jews was plainly insolent, an attempt to force surrender to their demand, not to offer any real reason. To this it appears to us to avoid the real issue. Did they want justice at all. There was a struggle of wills, not an attempt to prove a case. They did not have one real case against Jesus, and this appeared to be clear to Pilate. Let us observe some things he must have known — there had been no violence only peaceful crowding together, great crowds of people intent

upon being near and hearing what He had to say. What influence had He upon His listeners. There had been at the beginning of the week an entirely peaceful and happy entry upon an untrained colt. No riots in the GREAT TEMPLE. Riots had happened in the past. Pilate had mingled the blood of the rioters with the sacrifices. There was no sign of such things though the people came in crowds first thing in the mornings. He was out of Jerusalem in the evenings. His followers were the "common people" hearing Him gladly. No doubt some had expectations of leading into conflict but a contrast was visible. Envy was evident by the normal official leaders, and no interruption in the "purification practices" of the Passover pilgrims, from all parts who crowded the city, and prepared to take the feast. This had happened at least three times in these celebrations in which Jesus and His disciples took part. We may be quite sure that the watchful eye of the Procurator had been upon the people, and he well knew that accusations of bad behaviour were trumped up by their envy of a great preacher and healer. Pilate's wife knew this and had a proper estimate of Jesus (Matt. 27,19). Sitting on the judgement seat Pilate received the message but he already knew their evil minds. At some time earlier in his consideration Pilate learned that Jesus was a Galilean, and thought to pass Jesus to Herod for judgement but Herod merely took advantage of opportunity to satisfy curiosity and treated Jesus with questions, receiving no answers, passed Jesus over to his soldiers to treat Him with mockery and cruelty, passing Him back to pilate. (Luke 22, 6-12). That there was anxiety on Pilate's part to learn some truth seems plain from his question "What hast thou done?" Jesus did answer him by telling of His heavenly KINGSHIP which gave him no help — TRUTH was too hard a question. Further suggestion to avoid condemnation failed before the ferocity of the Jews, and apparent success to get all the people roused against Jesus, no doubt

from the fact of His helplessness (deliberate and with calm and determinate will) submission to His Father's commandment. "He was despised and rejected". Pilate had accepted the Jewish condemnation and brought Jesus out — a pitiable object, perhaps indeed intended to soften hearts, only to receive "NOT THIS MAN BUT Barabbas". "BEHOLD THE MAN!" Pilate had accepted the Jewish verdict and joined the tormentors in ordering scourging but still declared that he found no fault in Jesus. He still however maintained innocence of crime, a hopeless contradiction! Having tried with Herod and offered the alternative in Barabbas, he yet delayed the final delivery. All this in a very short space of time increasing the agonies of the Saviour. The claim to be the SON OF GOD faced Pilate as a life and death matter and put great fear into his heart, but it was too late for him. He made his final surrender and with the sad words of pity from Jesus he handed over the victim with the last jibe and challenge "BEHOLD YOUR KING" AND THE DEFIANT INSCRIPTION IN THREE LANGUAGES. So the LAMB OF GOD was led to Calvary there to bear OUR SINS UPON THE TREE.

#### Crucifixion

What an awful thought and word! We think of the angry Jews demanding this death for Jesus, with revulsion and horror. We felt very sorry for Hezekiah when he wept at the thought of death. How many times have we wept at the Saviour's awful trial for instance in facing Gethsemane, the arrest and trials, facing His tormentors at those dread times? The world's pains and sorrows deserve our sympathy even now, and the times of unnecessary suffering which abound. Three times in those dread hours before the final "lifting up" of Jesus, did Pilate say "I find no fault in Him" (18,38; 19, 4 & 6). Did he also look into his own heart for possibly finding away out of his guilt, but finally sat at the judgement seat and gave authority

for death by crucifixion, and handed Jesus over to the soldiers for the awful execution. They commandeered a bystander to carry the cross, for Jesus was unable to bear its weight. It seems He hung there till midday when the darkness came for at least three hours. Before the darkness He spoke His prayer for the forgiveness of those who imposed the suffering, gave His instructions to John for care of His mother, uttered His cry "My God, My God, why hast thou forsaken me" when the darkness lifted, cried "I thirst", called upon God's mercy and finally said "IT IS FINISHED". We are relieved to know that on the way to Calvary many weeping and praying followed and received the sad warning of woes to come!

#### "With the Rich In His Death"

Two who failed to acknowledge Him in life, did do so substantially, after His death and attended to the tomb. Many mourned deeply without expectation of resurrection. The unbelievers who were guilty of His death were to seek His body in vain, and now await a terrible awakening unless their unbelief is reversed. There is a gospel, by which darkness can be removed by ETERNAL LIGHT. How inadequate are we to comment — let us read those wonderful stories again and again so that they become a part of our lives!

#### Death

Yes! JESUS is dead! Make it doubly sure! So, break the legs of those suffering criminals. But the soldiers experienced in such matters had orders from Pilate, ordered by the chief murderers in order to keep the sabbath that holy day. But why? Behold He is dead already, He had delivered up His Spirit already. Do not waste the time, pierce His heart. I do not know why there came forth blood and water. God's inspired Writer assures us of this and there is no doubt at all! No possible juggling with body or spirit. The two honourable believers — but not saved men — are there to insure His death and take the body away. The unused but hewn tomb and

prepared stone are there; in which to bury His dead body. All hope of escape from death now gone — only a suggestion of prevention of robbery by those who loved very dearly both body and soul. "Make it as sure as you can" said Pilate. Did he make a joke at the Jewish expense? The greatest event in history had occurred, and the weeping men and women were utterly unconscious mourners. Thus years of **detailed** truth in fulfilment of prophecy were to be witnessed but were quite unexpected.

### Resurrection

Sabbath over what affectionate loving hands waited to do all they could, reverently handle and embalm the body. But behold the stone is rolled away! The depths of agony, despair and pity through which the apostles and close lovers of Jesus, both men and woman, passed through when witnessing what we have been considering, are beyond our understanding, but the thrill and triumph of resurrection are even harder to realise. All those who shared the experiences must have been in a state of physical, mental and spiritual shock for quite a period. We try to grasp the reality. Jesus was with them for forty days before he ascended from Olivet, going in and out among them. Can we think of them in His own words "those Thou hast given Me" special personal property of a glorified Saviour, every one made so close an associate, feeling His presence so close, yet ought we not also and say truly "What a friend we have in Jesus". The sacred writings relating to **the appearances** to His people need to be often read over to remind us of this most wonderful time of vital intercourse. It was not surprising that the really close friends of Jesus stayed together in one accord in prayer and supplication. While He was likely to be with them at times, what great joy could there be in life, but He was going to leave them and after forty days. They were with Him on Olivet, however when He arose to heaven and a cloud took Him out of

sight. But I am trespassing. The interview with Mary Magdalene and the apostolic race complete my thoughts for this month with the so natural and beautiful revelation to Mary at the tomb, and the dual visit by John and Peter. The bright dawn of the new realisation of what had really happened, in the mind of John, so to speak in a flash — just what the empty tomb meant! Is this not what happens when a soul submits to the gospel?

R.B. Scott.

## NEWS FROM THE CHURCHES

**Kitwe, Zambia:** Lambaland is the area to the west of the Copperbelt. The Lamba tribe lived in the area now known as the Copperbelt but were forced westwards with the development of the mining camps of the copperbelt. Chester Woodhall has been making missionary journeys over a hundred miles radius in the bush areas of Lambaland. A united Church of Zambia preacher has chosen to obey the Gospel in Bible baptism and a new congregation has been planted in his village. The villagers have constructed a church building for the Church of Christ of mud, bamboo and grass.

Peter Muteba, a bush preacher for Churches of Christ, had many Zambian villages seeking him out at his hut with the urgent message: "There is SOS for you on Radio Zambia who want to see you immediately in Kitwe." Muteba rushed to Radio Zambia via the Woodhall's house in Kitwe and discovered that the emergency was that Radio Zambia had run out of his Christian radio programmes in the Lunda language — could he please do some more recorded programmes immediately?

Angela Woodhall,  
Church of Christ,  
P.O. Box 22297,  
Kitwe,  
Zambia.

## OBITUARY

**Newtongrange** : It is with regret that we at Newtongrange report the death of Sister Elizabeth McPhie. Our sister had been confined to hospital for many years. Sadly she passed away in the early hours of the Lord's day of November 1st. She was 83 years of age. Thanks is given to the fine staff who took great care of her at Southfield Hospital, Edinburgh.

Our sister when fit and able was in attendance at all the meetings of the church. She took it badly when she was unable to get about. Nevertheless she had a strong spirit. Sister McPhie was a quiet and reserved person but happy despite the hard life she had experienced. She is sadly missed.

Our thoughts and prayers go out to the family left. The funeral was conducted at Mortonhall Crematorium.

A.P. Sharp,  
Secretary.

## Please Remember

We published this magazine each and every month during 1987, due to the particular generosity of some, and we would like to print 12 copies next year as well, God willing. However a final decision on this will have to be taken early in the new year when we can judge the finan-

cial situation more accurately. We may be obliged to restrict ourselves to 10 copies if our finances so require. Meantime we intend to peg the subscription to what it is at present, i.e. £6 per annum (the last increase being due to increased printing costs and postage.)

The 'Date Your Subscription Expires' is shown at the top-right-hand-corner of your mailing label and **prompt renewal** would save brother Kneller a great deal of valuable time and trouble sending reminders. You can help us greatly just by intimating prompt renewal. Most readers do so at present but we hope **all** readers will make the effort to help us in this way.

Scripture Reading Cards for 1988 are currently being printed and will be available soon — and will be sent to the churches as soon as they come to hand. We thank Bro. Scott for his efforts (and the Davidsons, Motherwell, for checking the draft).

John Kneller,  
Treasurer.

(Brother Kneller (and Freda) expend much time and effort in distributing the magazine, home and abroad, so efficiently. I am sure readers would want me to thank them occasionally. This I am happy to do. Let's help them by a ready response to renewal dates. Thank you. Ed.)

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JOHN K. KNELLER, 4 Glassel Park Road, Longniddry, East Lothian, EH32 0NY  
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EDITOR: JAMES R. GARDINER, 87 Main Street, Pathhead, Midlothian,  
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