

The **SCRIPTURE STANDARD**

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

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THE B. OF M. TRUE OR FALSE

READERS will probably be feeling that they have heard enough for the present about the Book of Mormon and so I shall make this the concluding article. My intention has been to try and provide those with little knowledge of the Book of Mormon with sufficient information to engage Mormon missionaries in conversation about the origins of the book, should the occasion arise. I have absolutely no doubt in my own mind that the Book of Mormon did not, in any way whatsoever, come from God but was the invention of man. Whether the original intention of the author was to gain wealth from the new religion is unimportant, but certainly some of the early leaders of the Mormons died fabulously rich. I have tried in these articles to point out some of the reasons, from the Book of Mormon itself, for believing that it is not a latter-day revelation from God but is entirely the work of a man or men. In this short article I would refer to the language of the Book of Mormon and how far short it falls when compared with the Bible. I would also refer to the obvious mis-use of words in the Book of Mormon and some of the instances of thoroughly bad grammar, indicating to me that not only was the author not God but it was someone not entirely faultless in the use of the English language. If we recall again the claims made for the authenticity and divine perfection of the Book of Mormon at the time of its alleged reception from God then we realise that the Book can not afford such grammatical blunders. Sometimes my own grammar is not too hot either, but then I am not claiming Divine guidance, am I?

The Book of Mormon does not stand any comparison with the Bible. Even in non-religious circles, and institutions of higher learning, the Bible is studied and appreciated as a great literary work. Indeed, no man is considered truly educated unless he has some knowledge of the Bible. The Book of Mormon has no such standing whatsoever. Compared to the beauty of language of the Bible the Book of Mormon is dull, tedious and repetitive and is clearly the attempt of some man to write a book which will pass as coming from God.

For example, the prophet Isaiah in seven verses (Isiah 5:1-7) and the apostle Paul, in twenty verses, (Rom. 11:13-32) gives us a beautiful and practical lesson in the imagery of the vineyard and the olive tree. But in the Book of Mormon (Jacob 5 & 6) an attempt is made to combine these two Bible incidents in a parable of the olive tree that occupies almost nine tedious pages - ninety verses in all.

The Book of Mormon's author's limited vocabulary is revealed in the repetition of his pet expressions. The most frequent expression is, "And it came to pass" used literally hundreds of times, page after page. For example, in 1 Nephi 3:21-29, each of the nine verses (except verse 23) begins with this phrase, in Ether 14 & 15 which consists of 65 verses, the phrase "And

it came to pass" is used 39 times. Other needlessly repeated phrases and expressions include, "Behold"; "the more part"; "harrow up"; "thereof"; and "Insomuch".

Thus human origin of the Book of Mormon is also betrayed by the faulty use of certain words. The word "flatter" is used in two opposite senses in Alma 52:19 and Helaman 1:7. Another example of faulty English is in Alma 27:4, "Now when Ammon and his brethren saw this work of destruction among those who they so dearly beloved, and among those who had so dearly beloved them..." In Helaman 7:8,9 we have the following bad grammar as well, "Yea, if my days could have been in them days... But behold, I am consigned that these are my days..." Also Alma 13:1 says, "And again: My brethren, I would cite your minds forward to the time when the Lord God gave these commandments unto his children". Again in Alma 20:30 "...even until they had arrived to the land of Middoni..." Again in Alma 32:5 "...and the one who was the most foremost among them, said to him..." In Helaman 9:6 we read of a judge being stabbed by his brother by a garb of secrecy and wonder how anyone can be stabbed by a garb of secrecy. One of the most absurd statements in the Book of Mormon is in Alma 46:19 "And when Moroni had said these words, he went forth among the people, waving the rent of his garment in the air, that all might see the writing which he had wrote upon the rent". Please note the very bad grammar "which he had wrote" and that Moroni claims to have written on a rent (a rent in a garment is an opening made by tearing or rending) - it is thus impossible to write on a rent in a garment. It is like the Irishman's hole in the sandbank which, when the sand had been removed, was left suspended in the air.

These are just a few examples, of the many, many defects of the Book of Mormon which would be excusable if the Mormon's claimed the Book to be the work of Joseph Smith but they claim it to be directly from God, by the Urim and Thummim, and that each word was given to Joseph Smith (in English) by God, and had to be correctly written down, before Smith was allowed to move to the next. My desire is not to poke fun at the Book of Mormon - the matter is much too serious for that, but these serious discrepancies must really be pointed out to Mormons, especially the sincere young men who came around our doors. The Mormon authorities certainly recognise the implications and ramifications of these glaring inadequacies in the use of the English language on the part of the author of the book for in the recent editions they have rectified most of the instances I have quoted. My father-in-law's edition of the Book of Mormon, dated 1920, contains all the bad grammar etc. - my recent edition shows that they have now been rectified. This merely substantiates my claim at the beginning of these articles that the Book of Mormon has undergone hundreds of alterations, and constitutes eloquent testimony from the Mormons themselves that the Book was far from perfect when it came from the hands of Joseph Smith, notwithstanding the comprehensive claims made by Smith regarding its absolute perfection.

I have just been scratching at the surface of the subject, really, and the reader who wishes to increase his knowledge of the Book of Mormon will find all kinds of curiosities in the Book if he continues his study. There are, for instance, allusions in the Book to Freemasonry (Helaman 6:21-24) and to Red-Indian-type scalping (Alma 34:13-15) and to a quotation from Shakespeare's Hamlet. Act 3 Scene 1 (2 Nephi 1:14). Not bad - considering that these things came from plates written in 'Reformed Egyptian' brought from Jerusalem about 600 years before Christ.

There is also the grave question of the fact that the Book of Mormon regularly contradicts the Bible, and perhaps this could form the basis of an article at some future time. Mormons try, of course, to play down any suggestion that the Book of Mormon could possibly contradict the Bible and try from the outset to show that both books (Bible and Book of Mormon) are supplementary and complementary to one another. Indeed the first thing likely to be done by the two young missionaries calling at your door will be to prove to you that God prophesied in the Old Testament that the Book of Mormon would come into being, to supplement (supplant, more likely) the Bible. They know that the general public are likely to object to the Book of Mormon knowing that they (the general public) already have the Bible. The missionaries do a kind of verbal Indian-rope-trick with Ezekiel 37:16-28 where the prophet

mentions two sticks. Mormons say that the two sticks represent the Bible and the Book of Mormon (because in olden times parchments were wound onto sticks) and just as the sticks became one, in the prophecy, so the two books are now one, in God's eyes. This, briefly, is the Mormon interpretation of Ezekiel 37. However, should the missionaries try this one on you, point out that the closing verses of the same chapter explains precisely the meaning of the 'two sticks' and that God is talking about the uniting of 'nations' not books. Thus Mormons must try and find a place for the Book of Mormon - to the public they would say that it has a place on equal footing with the Bible but amongst themselves they would say that it has a position much higher than the Bible. The truth is however, (and I hope that these short articles have been able in some small way to show it) that there is no place whatsoever for the Book of Mormon in God's dealings with man.

To my mind the only place for the Book of Mormon would be on the Library shelf marked 'FICTION'.
 EDITOR

ASK

Peace like a river is flooding my soul,
 Since Christ, my Saviour maketh me whole;
 Sweet peace abiding My portion shall be -
 Jesus, my Saviour is precious to me.

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

ASK...WHAT DO I ASK?... "THE LORD BLESS THEE...AND GIVE THEE PEACE".

"The Lord bless thee, and keep thee:
 The Lord make his face shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee:
 The Lord lift up his countenance upon thee,
 and give thee peace". Numbers 6:24-26

ASK.....WHAT DO I ASK? shalom, shalom, peace, peace, perfect peace.

"In that day shall this song be sung in the land of Judah; We have a strong city; salvation will God appoint for walls and bulwarks. Open ye the gates, that the righteous nation which keepeth the truth may enter in. Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee. Trust ye in the Lord for ever: for in the Lord JE-HO-VAH is everlasting strength" Isaiah 26:1-4.

What precious memories these verses bring back to me. Very many years ago, several brethren met together in our meeting house at Hindley, to practise an anthem, with the title 'THOU WILT KEEP HIM IN PERFECT PEACE, by Robert Witty. The cost was Threepence, per copy, (in old money of course,) and may I be allowed to say it, with a sly smile - worth every penny of it.

I can still picture in my mind's eye, the corner of the chapel where the brethren sang so lustily, and I can certainly testify that some of those brethren could sing. But what of the message, which rang out very clearly: "In that day shall this song be sung in the land of Judah...Salvation will God appoint...that the righteous nation which keepeth truth may enter in.." Then on to this wonderful and glorious promise: "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee. Trust ye in the Lord for ever: for in the Lord JE-HO-VAH is everlasting strength". Some of those voices that shared the fellowship of singing that anthem are now silent, having passed over to the other side, but we can thank God for their labour of love, and also rejoice that the truths they sang about still stands, and will stand forever..

ASK.....WHAT DO I ASK? "THE LORD BLESS THEE..... AND GIVE THEE PEACE".

W.E. Vine in his Expository Dictionary tells us that the word EIRENE "occurs in each of the books in the N.T. save 1 John and save in Acts 7:26 ('at one again') it is translated "Peace" in the R.V. It describes:

- A harmonious relationships between men,
- B between nations,
- C friendliness,
- D freedom from molestation,
- E order, in the state,
- F the harmonised relationships between God and man, accomplished through the Gospel,
- G the sense of rest and contentment consequent thereon.

Robert Young, in his Analytical Concordance to the Holy Bible, gives us the meaning of the Hebrew words for peace.

- | | | |
|---|-----------------------|----------|
| 1 | Rest, ease, security, | shalvah. |
| 2 | Completeness, peace, | shalom. |
| 3 | Completeness, peace, | shelam. |
| | Peace, peace, | (shalom) |

So we have this word shalom, shalom, translated in the Authorized Version, the Revised Version, and the Revised Standard Version, as Perfect Peace. Will you stay for a few moments to meditate whether or not, you could find a better word in the English language to describe, shalom, shalom, peace, peace, than the words perfect peace.

W. E. Vine on this word perfect, gives us these thoughts:-

- "signifies having reached its end".
- "finished, complete, perfect".

Oxford Dictionary "Complete, not deficient; faultless;"
"Denoting completed event or action viewed in relation to the present".

Nuttall's Dictionary "Complete in all its parts".

ASK.....WHAT DO I ASK? shalom, shalom, peace, peace, perfect peace.

Please, please, do note, how the word of God gives to the child of God, something extra, shall we consider a few:-

Life	more abundantly	Abundantly.....	exceeding
Riches	unsearchable	Love.....	everlasting
Conquerors	more than	Joy.....	fulness of
More	much	Peace.....	Perfect
Calm	great		

Have you noticed how many spiritual blessing are conditional, shall we take a few examples, for our consideration:-

"The angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear him, and delivereth them".
Psalms 34:7.

"But they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint" Isaiah 40:31.
"Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you"

Matthew 7:7

"Give, and it shall be given you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom. For with the same measure that ye meet withal it shall be measured to you again".

Luke 6:38

"He that findeth his life shall lose it: and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it"

Matthew 10:39

We could go on with many other passages that give us this thought, that the spiritual blessings of God are conditional. This marvellous passage in Isaiah 26 and verse 3 is no exception.

ASK.....WHAT DO I ASK?....."THE LORD BLESS THEE.....AND GIVE THEE PEACE....."

You and I will need to take yet another walk with our Lord to the "pastures of tender grass", and then on to the "waters of quietness", if we desire to glean from God's word some of those "unsearchable riches," "that our heavenly Father wishes to give those who belong to Him. We need to leave the hustle and bustle of the market place, and be quiet for a short time, while we meditate on how we may have this perfect peace. "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee, because he trusteth in thee". "Whose mind is stayed on thee". If you and I want this perfect peace, the peace that passeth all understanding, the solution is in our own hands. There is no doubt of the fact that our loving heavenly Father will keep His part of the bargain, the promise for the child of God is definite, and He is able to perform. The trouble with many of us, is that our minds are very often on other things, rather than being "stayed on thee".

I, I, I, ...MY, MY, MY, ... ME, ME, ME, ... MINE, MINE, MINE,...

Possessions, treasures, money, things, pleasures, homes, gardens, business.....

How many times I have found my mind wandering during praying to my heavenly Father, and even when I have been around the table of our Lord, my mind has wandered away from "the place called Calvary". More shame on me.

Dear Lord and Father of mankind,
 Forgive our foolish ways;
 Re-clothe us in our rightful mind;
 In purer lives Thy service find,
 In deeper reverence, praise.

Drop Thy still dews of quietness,
 Till all our strivings cease;
 Take from our souls the strain and stress,
 And let our ordered lives confess
 The beauty of Thy peace.

Are you yearning for the peace of God, to experience this perfect peace, that we can have through Christ, I can tell you how to get it, but must confess freely to you that I have not yet accomplished this myself:-

"BRINGING INTO CAPTIVITY EVERY THOUGHT TO THE OBEDEINCE OF CHRIST".
 2 Corinthians 10:5.

How can we do this, that wonderful man of God the Apostle Paul, again gives us the answer:- "If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. For you have died, and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory. Put to death therefore what is earthly in you: immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry. On account of these the wrath of God is coming. In these you once walked, when you lived in them. But now put them all away: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and foul talk from your mouth..... Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassion, kindness, lowliness, meekness, and patience..." Colossians 3:3-8, 12 (R.S.V.).

May I confess to you again, that I am too much alive.

ASK.....WHAT DO I ASK? FOR YOU. shalom, shalom, peace, peace, perfect peace.
"THE LORD BLESS THEE... AND GIVE THEE PEACE.

And may the Lord's richest blessing be your portion.

LEONARD MORGAN.

THE GREATEST SHORT STORY EVER TOLD (2)

IN the last article I suggested that the story of the 'Prodigal Son' may not have been a parable but indeed more than a parable and that Jesus was telling of an actual event - an event He describes in exact detail.

Let us consider some of these details. Jesus depicts the repentance of the younger son on four vivid words: "he came to himself". We write our treatises and hold our dissertations and listen to our lectures and our psychological expositions upon Repentance, yet none of them is so clear and simple as those four words "He came to himself". A perfect description of what

Repentance is — “a change of mind leading to a change of life”. Do you recall how Paul was on trial before Festus, the Roman Procurator and Herod Agrippa 11, King of Judaea, as Paul made his defence Festus cried out “Paul, your great learning is driving you to madness. You are beside yourself”. If he was “beside” himself he was “outside” himself, out of his mind. But Paul was the only one in his right mind in that courtroom that day. For when a man is astray from God he is not in his right mind. So of the prodigal: he had not been in his right mind since that day he had left his father. There is a hymn which says “Lord, it is coming to ourselves When thus we come to Thee; The bondage of Thy loveliness Is perfect liberty”.

This young man had experienced his years of “freedom” until he had become its slave. Like countless millions of us he had rejoiced in pleasing himself. My mother used to say when any of us children were defiant or disobedient, “You’ll please yourself until you vex yourself”. This young man was master of his own fate until he realized that he had become its slave. Sometimes we hear parents say of their children “They’re enjoying life while they’re young: they are only young once. They’re just sowing their wild oats”. But after the sowing comes the reaping, and then “What shall the harvest be?” The poet W.E. Henley gloried that “I am the master of my fate, The captain of my soul”, but as another poet writes, “Our lives are ours to make them Thine”. Only when he was ready to yield up his imagined lordship over himself did he find true liberty.

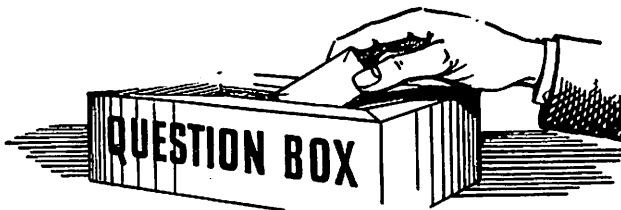
The Elder Brother

It is fascinating to speculate which passage in the Bible has been subject of most gospel messages. I think I should choose John 3:16 — “For God so loved the world...” Very close to it I should place this story from Luke 15. I find it remarkable, however that almost invariably when I have heard it preached from or have preached from it myself, the message has ended with the restoration of the younger son to his former state in his father’s house. Why then did Jesus not end there? What are the reasons why we have the elder brother introduced? We have the answers to these questions in the very first verse of this same chapter, where we read what

sort of audience He was speaking to. Jesus was the perfect teacher who exactly fitted his teaching to the needs of his hearers — on this occasion the Pharisees, priests and elders and, on the other hand Tax gatherers and harlots — two totally opposite classes of people. On the one side the “holiest” and on the other the vilest of men and women. No greater contrast could be imagined than that mixed crowd who were listening. When Jesus spoke to a company they were not a mass, a crowd, nor even (to use his own figure) a “flock”. They were individuals, each a separate person, with his or her life, problems, sins, strengths and weaknesses. And Jesus spoke to each as though he or she were the only one present. Each separate one could say of his teaching “That means ME”. In the parables of “The Lost Sheep” and “The Lost Coin” Jesus had spoken to the sinners; now in the story of “The Prodigal” He speaks to all. The self-righteous and “holy” ones had not yet heard in these parables anything which could apply. (or which they applied) to themselves. Now in the story which they are to hear they will see themselves judged and condemned. Is it not obvious that Jesus introduces the elder brother, not as an artificial appendage to this matchless teaching but as a necessary consummation of what He is showing them of the love of God in its fulness. Thus He brings out the character of this elder brother, not by telling us what the man did but by his self-revelation through what he says to his father. We marvel at the amazing skill with which Jesus reveals the elder brother. He does not labour the man’s wickedness, but in the few words he speaks, his harshness and malice and self-righteousness are laid bare and open. He does not treat the self-confessed sinner as his brother but he says to the father “This son of yours” (N.E.B.). But gently yet firmly the father reminds him “This is your brother...” The elder brother was not in a position to say that the younger had “devoured his living with harlots”. How did he know? He had never had any communication with the young man while he had been away from home: he was not interested in him in the slightest: “Am I my brother’s keeper?” Even his relationships with the father were on a purely business level. He says “All these years I have slaved for you” not as father and Son but as Master and servant — so much wage for so much work, no joy of service. The father points out the true state when he says “Son, you are ever with me and all I have is yours”.

We should like to think that this great story had a happy ending, sometimes preachers allow their imagination free scope in drawing their final picture of the story as a gloriously happy family reunion with all gathered round the festive board. Many readers of novels, especially the womenfolk, like to take a peep at the last chapter to see if the hero and heroine get married and "live happily ever after". But the Bible is not such a book of happy endings. It deals with the things of heaven and "the joys yet to be revealed; and it deals also with the things of earth, its sins and sorrows and sufferings and tragedies. It is realistic, showing life as it is. Many of its finest characters lived lives of suffering and died deaths of agony and tragedy, so that we say "Why do the righteous suffer and die in this way?" The question is as old as the Bible and is unanswerable by us until eternity dawns and "we shall know even as we are known". Saints, apostles, prophets, martyrs, the whole host of those who lived and died in the service of God, and above all, the Lord Jesus Christ testify by their lives and deaths that there remain many questions the answers to which will become clear only in eternity. There are things on earth, to which we have no answers not even in the Bible". It is not for you to know" Jesus told his apostles. Was the elder brother reconciled to his father and his brother? We don't know we are not told. We must leave it with God, Neither do we know what effects our preaching of the gospel, by word or life have upon those around us, but we must do it in faith and leave it with God. "He is faithful".

C. MELLING, HINDLEY.



Conducted by
Alf Marsden

"Matthew 21:21 tells of how the disciples were impressed by Christ's withering of the fig tree. Christ said that if they had sufficient faith they also could have withered the fig tree or even remove mountains. The fig tree was literal did Jesus also mean that they could literally have removed a mountain. What is faith fit to remove mountains? Was it confined to N.T. times as a special gift – if not could men literally remove mountains today?"

QUESTIONS like this one have intrigued christians, and others, throughout the ages. Did Jesus expect us to take literally all that he said, or did he sometimes speak in symbolic language in order to illustrate some profound truth? Did he, in fact, intend that all christians for all time should be capable of doing the things which he said to specific people at certain times during his earthly ministry? I have always understood that the 'golden rule' of interpretation is to give words their ordinary grammatical meaning whenever possible and then see how they relate to the context, and then be consistent in our interpretations and refrain from making the scriptures say what we want them to say in order to fit our particular beliefs and theories. So let us try to analyse what was said, to whom, and why it was said. But before we do that, let us first think about capability.

Divine Power

That Jesus had special powers no one can deny. These powers were supernatural and miraculous and enabled him to do the things which he did. Nicodemus put his finger on it when he said, "Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him" (John 3:2). John the Baptist made it perfectly clear what Jesus had received from the Father, "For he whom God hath sent speaketh the words of God: for God giveth not the Spirit by measure unto him. The Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into his hand" (John 3:34,35). Jesus himself testified to the power which he had received from the Father; concerning his own life he said, "No man taketh it from me,

but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father" (John 10:18).

Regarding divide, miraculous powers, the only people who have problems are the ones that do not accept the existence of God. Once we accept the fact that an all-powerful God exists then we should have no problems at all with miracles. Therefore, it was only natural (in the nature of God, that is) that Jesus should be able to dry up the fig tree, heal the sick, raise the dead, see into mens hearts and minds; we would expect that of him. The question we have to ask ourselves is, "Does man have the same power that Jesus Had?" I think we must answer that with an unqualified no. What certain men did have was power which was delegated to them in order to carry out some aspect of the will of God. Consequently, Luke records that Jesus appointed seventy disciples and sent them out before him two by two. The scripture says that they returned with great joy saying that even devils had been subject to them. Jesus then said to them, "Behold, I give unto you power to tread on scorpions and serpents, and over all the power of the enemy: and nothing shall by any means hurt you" (see Luke 10:1-17; also v.19). Also, before Jesus ascended, he spoke to his disciples and said, "But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Spirit is come upon you" (Acts 1:8). We know how this power was demonstrated on the Day of Pentecost, and subsequently by Peter and Paul particularly, although Paul wasn't present at Pentecost.

I think, then, we can say this. It was possible for Jesus to do anything; natural, supernatural, miraculous. Others could only do such things as were specified to them under the power delegated to them. So let's return to the withering of the fig tree.

What was the problem?

I would recommend that we should read Matt. 21:18-22; Mark 11:12-26; and Luke 17:1-10, in order to see the basic teaching that Jesus was trying to drive home to his disciples. The problem as Jesus saw it was one of faith – complete faith in God. The withering of the fig tree was a salutary lesson to the disciples of what happened when he looked for fruit and found none. We only need to recall the teaching of Jesus concerning the vine, as recorded in John's gospel; "I am the vine, ye are the branches. He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing. If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch and withered". (John 15:6,7). Jesus confirms to whom he is speaking a little later on, "Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that you should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain: that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you" (v.16). This indicates that he was speaking to his disciples

It must also be remembered that Jesus spoke to them about his departure and made statements to them which, on the face of it, seem to be impossible. John records, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto my Father" (John 14:12-14). Now we know that power to work miracles was delegated to the disciples (Apostles), but what were the greater works that Jesus spoke of? I am convinced in my own mind that these are connected with the spiritual life, and find their expression in the gospel and the advent of the Holy Spirit into the life of the believer. The greater works would be possible "because I go unto my Father"; in other words, after the facts of the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus. What Jesus was looking for was a complete and absolute faith in himself and in God. He knew that all the other works which he wrought were only supplementary to his main purpose in coming to earth, i.e., to demonstrate God's power in the gospel.

The power of the Gospel

Many times we underestimate the power of the gospel. Paul never did, and consequently he could write to the saints in Rome, "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth. To the Jew first, and also to the Greek" (Rom. 1:16). The gospel is the 'dynamite' of God. We all know the power of dynamite, and what its impact has been in the world, but the power of the gospel is greater even than this. People would marvel if a man had the power to move a mountain, but what greater miracle is

there than the salvation of souls through the gospel? Have you ever considered what happens when a person is obedient to God through Christ? His sins are forgiven and he is made clean; he becomes a new creature in Christ Jesus; he becomes a joint heir with Christ of the heavenly glory; he becomes a son of deity; the gracious presence of God dwells within him in the form of the Holy Spirit; the glory of God is manifest in him.

What good would be accomplished if christians could move masses of rock and earth into different places? Would not this power tend to glorify self? How much greater to see the beauty of a transformed life in Christ, to the glory of God through the gospel. Do we christians fully realise the power which has been delegated to us through the gospel. In his second letter to Corinth, Paul wrote, "For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us" (2 Cor. 4:6,7). Jesus knew all about the 'mountain' of sin in the world. He knew that it would require a particular type of faith and courage to remove it; that is why he stressed the quality of faith to his disciples, and consequently to us also. To save souls from hell this, says Jesus, is a greater work than withering a fig tree. After all, the Christ did not come to demonstrate his power to wither fig trees, or turn stones into bread; his declared intention was "to seek and to save the lost".

In Conclusion

How, then, shall we summarise? That Jesus could work miracles is very much in evidence in the Bible. That divine power to operate in the field of natural things was granted to certain people for specific reasons connected with the spread of the gospel in early days is also well attested to in the N. T. But I am persuaded that similar power is not delegated to people today, in spite of what some religious groups might say. No, God wants us to have complete and implicit faith in a dynamic Christ and gospel. With such a faith, we have to wrestle with all the expressions of sin in the world; jealousy, hatred, greed, sexual and moral depravity, injustice, man's inhumanity against his fellow men; all of those considerable mountains which mar the sweet plains of righteousness. What did the early christians do; level a few undulations in the ground? No, they turned the world upside down. How did they do it; by working large scale miracles? No, they realised that they were vessels of honour, fit to take the 'dynamite' of the gospel to the world. That same power, the power to turn our World upside down, is still with us today; the power inherent in the gospel. We worship the same God; we serve the same Christ; the gospel has still its ancient power. Jesus says to us, "Have you the faith to tackle the mountain of sin?" Or are we like Simon - and some latter day Simons - who want to have the visible manifestation of miracle-working? Lord, increase our faith so that your will may always be our desire.

(More questions please: to Alf Marsden, 377 Billinge Road, Highfield, Wigan, Lancs).

SCRIPTURE READINGS

MARCH 1978

5-Psalm 95	Hebrews 4:1-13
12-Exodus 28:1-12	Hebrews 4:14 to 5:14
19-Genesis 15	Hebrews 6
25-Genesis 14	Hebrews 7

WHY CHRISTIANS SHOULD FEAR AND THE REMEDY

WE are continually throughout this letter faced with the consequences of unbelief. We

have just been reminded of the terrible fate of those who came out of Egypt, having witnessed the plagues, the driving back of the Red Sea, the destruction of Pharaoh's army in its waters, waters made sweet for their needs, water brought out of the rock, manna every day and terrors of Sinai - hearing God's voice. Surely if anything could stimulate faith and make obedience easy, they had it, but they refused to obey the command to go in and possess the land. There was no escape for them from the judgment of God. They did not enter into the rest of the promised land but stayed in the wilderness forty years and died there. So then, "let US fear!" If they

failed, so may we. It was an earthly rest God promised them but God has a more wonderful rest in view. In some senses we may have it now - **BY FAITH!** There is still the final rest of the redeemed (Rev. 6:11). There is a strange mistake in the A.V. in quoting Psalm 95 in this chapter, having been already quoted correctly in ch. 3:11. There is a Hebraism "If" in the original, but it does not make sense in English. We are reminded here of Paul's instruction to work out our own salvation with fear and trembling (Phil. 2:12). While we cannot win or earn our salvation, it depends upon our faith and obedience just as the entrance into the promised land by the Israelites depended upon their going forward at the word of command (Num. 14:40-45). It is strange too that the A.V. has Jesus instead of Joshua with a marginal note to that effect. God forbid however that we should find fault too readily in a most wonderful translation by fallible though faithful men. They put a marginal note also for the word "unbelief" in 4:11 "Or, disobedience", indicating what we know so well that these are almost inseparable. The Writer here again emphasises his warning by describing the searching character of God's word for it is a **LIVING WORD** with power to penetrate the recesses of the human heart which is deceitfully wicked when allowed its liberty - to wit the permissive society. Its nakedness is a terrible revelation;

PRIESTS OLD AND NEW

Gifts and sacrifices are essential for the favour of a righteous God. In the earliest days of mankind this was recognised by both God and man. Thus Cain and Abel offered sacrifices and Adam and Eve were clothed with the skins of animals. Job and all the patriarchs offered sacrifices. Once man had forfeited full fellowship with God by disobedience, his approach must be thus and the nature of them was decided by God Himself. Indirectly or directly blood was required, signifying the price of sin and its results. The life is in the blood and the shedding of it symbolising both life and death. When God chose a nation to be His own people, He set aside one tribe for religious service, and one family of that tribe to offer gifts and sacrifices on behalf of all the people. The family were priests, and from them was one the High Priest with special functions as representing the whole people before God. He was the

supreme authority. Those Jews who had accepted Christ no longer needed this representation. Jesus was their High Priest, is ours, the other priests being types or pictures of Him. His office is mentioned twice already in our letter (2:17 and 3:1). His incarnation fits Him to stand before God for us because He is our brother man. It was necessary that all High Priests should be fitted by experience to sympathise with those they represented, but all High Priests except Jesus had to offer gifts and sacrifices for themselves, being sinners. There is therefore a measureless superiority in the New High Priest. When we therefore "fear" (4:1), we may come bodily for help for our High Priest has experienced our fears, and Himself suffered fear (5:7) in the most appalling circumstances. The fitness of Jesus for the sacred office is proved. His right as against the High Priests then functioning at Jerusalem is to be dealt with

The Order of Melchizedek

The danger of turning back to Judaism is much in the Writer's mind. He feels that his readers are becoming indifferent to the New Covenant under which they have chosen to live because they are not putting sufficient effort into their new life. They had apparently given good service in the faith to fellow-believers though not called upon to suffer serious harm (6:9 & 10:12:4), and they were failing to grasp the urgency of development of christian character and knowledge (5:11-14). We need also the exhortation that we may not be barren and unfruitful (2 Peter 1:8). They knew the basic truths but much more is needed. His disappointment shows through, and dealing with Melchizedek involves some careful thought. We find it not easy to reconcile some of his teaching with what we would call plain truth. We would say - Was Melchizedek miraculously born, did he live for ever, who chose him to be a priest? The few particulars of his life do not give us the impression that Jewish readers of that day would get, nor perhaps what the inspired writer draws from them. However we can see that so far as records go this man was an outstanding character appearing like a meteor on the historic scene a priest to whom Abraham gave tithes, thus acknowledging his superiority, and certainly in some way foreshadowing Christ in the nature of his priesthood because he was both a king and a Priest. The two quotations from

Psalms (2:7 ; 110:4) both recognised by Jewish teachers to be messianic prophecy, give us God's estimate of Melchizedek's priesthood as having divine approval. That Abraham acknowledged his authority would convince them of the truth that there was a priesthood superior to Aaron's, which is what our Writer is proving. Jesus fulfills the prophecy.

Certainty

It seems that with the proof of the superiority of the New Covenant over the old our Writer has in mind the certainty of the truth concerning Jesus. Those who do accept the gospel have a sure and certain hope of blessing here below and final blessing in heaven "whither as a forerunner Jesus entered for us". It is this of course which all the writings of the New Testament so fully demonstrate, but there are some phrases of particular force to which we draw attention. In describing one fully developed believer in ch. 6:4 & 5 there are five points - enlightened, tasted the heavenly gift, partaker of the Holy Spirit, tasted the good word of God, the powers of the new age. With such equipment how could one turn away? Then he speaks of two immutable things in which it is impossible for God to lie. His warnings so stern may be contrasted with his asseveration that we have a strong encouragement, a sure refuge, an anchor of the soul fastened in heaven itself.

R. B. SCOTT

OBITUARY

Blackburn Mill Hill: It is with sadness that we report the passing away of our Sister Dora Davenport, who died on December 24th 1977 while she was visiting her daughter in Leicester. Dora had been a member of the Lord's people for many years and was the wife of our late Brother Harry Davenport who was an elder of this congregation for some years. Our sympathy and concern is extended to all the relatives and especially her brothers Carlton Melling and James Melling. Dora was 78 years of age.

We know that those that die in the Lord, can rejoice, and our sister can rejoice, because she has gone to join her Lord.

Tony Tyson

NEWS FROM THE CHURCHES

Slamannan District, Scotland: The New Year Social of the churches in the Slamannan District was held on Mon. 2nd January, 1978 at Slamannan. Brethren came from all over, some from south of the border, and a really great time was had. A very large gathering heard inspiring addresses by Brother J. McLuckie, Haddington, and Brother Jim Sinclair (Jnr), Tranent; Brother Leslie Purcell was in the chair. The singing was uplifting and the fellowship was wonderful. Thanks to all concerned.

CORRESPONDENCE CLASS

The early history of the Church of Christ or, The Acts of The Apostles

Chapter 17

- 1 Who were 'they' of the first verse?
- 2 Follow Paul on the journey recorded verses 1 and 9, and describe the places passed through.
- 3 What was the outstanding behaviour of the Bereans?
- 4 Describe Paul's journey from Berea to Athens.
- 5 What were these Epicureans and Stoics?
- 6 What did Paul mean by saying they were 'too superstitious'?
- 7 Why did Paul mention 'your own poets' knowing, as he did, that they were heathens?
- 8 What is meant by God 'winking at the time of their ignorance'?

Answers to Edward Jess, 34 Charles Street, Penicuik, Midlothian, Scotland. Use one side of paper only, please

THINK ON THESE THINGS

YEARS ago, a favourite wall motto read, "Jesus Christ - The Silent Listener to every conversation". What a pity we do not see this nowadays!

Recently, we have heard much about "bugging devices", but Christians must remember that no secret can be hidden from Him with whom we have to deal. Let us get on.

the same 'wavelength' as Christ, and carry out the instructions given by the apostle Paul:-

"Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, **THINK ON THESE THINGS**".

Let our speech be always with grace, seasonable salt. Rose Payne, Reading.

THE PRICE OF A MEAL

IT has been truly said that the Lord's work is often not done because of lack of facilities and lack of financial resources. This must surely be a sad reflection upon our giving, and can church members be held guiltless? How is your giving? Would you spend £3 on petrol for a joy-ride on the Saturday and then give the Lord's treasury £1 on the Sunday? Would you spend £6 on a Saturday on entertaining a friend to a meal and contribute £1 to the Lord's work, on Sunday? Would you spend £4 each month on newspapers and periodicals and give nothing towards the printing of tracts and leaflets? **WOULD YOU?**

Would you give the Lord less than the price of a meal?

WILL HISTORY REPEAT ITSELF?

ONE of the most widely read books is the *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* written in 1788 by Edward Gibbon.

He was not a believer, but the book sets forth five basic reasons why the great civilization of Rome withered and died.

They were:-

- 1 The undermining of the dignity and sanctity of the home, the basis of human society.
- 2 Higher and higher taxes, the spending of public money freely for free bread and circuses for the population.
- 3 The mad craze for pleasure, sports becoming every year more exciting, brutal, more immoral.
- 4 The building of great armaments, when the real enemy was within. The decay of individual responsibility.
- 5 The decay of religion, faith fading into mere form. Losing touch with life, losing power to guide the people.

We hear the statement that "History repeats itself". It makes us wonder, doesn't it?

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