Scripture Standard

Volume 80-3 September 2013

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Pleading for a total return to New Testament principles.

References:

Exodus 13:3,4. 23:14-16. 34:18. Deuteronomy 16:1.

The Month of the Abib [Hebrew: AVIV]

"This month shall be to you the beginning of months. It shall be the first month of the year to you." [Exodus 11:2] This Summer Muslims are observing the fast of Ramadan. Ramadan might occur during any season. Muslim years always have 12 lunar months (of about 29 days each) but the solar year is about 365 days long.

Both Muslims and Jews observe lunar months. So how is it that Jews' first month is always in the Spring and their harvest festivals are always at harvest time? Sometimes they add a month.

Where did the Torah (Moses' Law) authorize the Jews to add extra months? The answer is simple and had nothing to do with astronomy. According to the Torah, the ripening barley harvest signified the first month of every year.

As the children of Israel hurriedly left Egypt they would see fields of barley nearly ready for harvest. To remind them of this, each year when the barley husk was turning light green* the sighting of the next new moon was to be declared the start of a new year. This usually occurred after a 12th. month. If it wasn't turning light green they would wait one more month and then declare a new year. In this way lunar months kept in step with the harvests.

They were always to remind future generations that this was the month in which God brought them out of Egypt. It was to be their first month and it was called the month of The Aviv*

NOTE: *"Aviv" (the A.V. says Abib) is the light green colour of the barley husk when it is almost ready for harvest. [Tel Aviv = Green Mound].

The Kingdom and the Law

Matthew 5:21-48 Derek L. Daniell - Tunbridge Wells

Having outlined the special character of His Kingdom citizen in His sermon on the mount, Jesus now addresses the need for a quality of righteousness that must exceed that of the Pharisees, Matthew 5:20. His treatment is specific that He came to fulfil the Law, not to destroy it, 5:17, this was because He claimed to be the Christ of the prophetic promises. His teaching brought him into conflict with the religious leaders and brought anxiety among the people. They came into conflict with Jesus in the company he kept and over Sabbath observance. So much so that they had already determined to destroy him, Mark 3:6; Luke 6:11. It would soon become clear in his sermon that this conflict was not with the Law, but with their perversion of it, Mark 7:6-8. The concern of Jesus is the fulfilment of God's purpose, not their observance of precepts.

Jesus was destined to be the fulfilment of all the O.T. writings and prophecies concerning him, Luke 24:25-27,44-48; Acts 3:22-26. Jesus was to be the culmination of the laws purpose to bring justification through faith in Him, Romans 10:4; Galatians 3:24-26. The Law was to end and had led, as it had promised, to the establishment of a new covenant with better promises, Jeremiah 31:31-34; Hebrews 8:6-13.

The citizen of the Kingdom of Heaven is now under the law of Christ, 1 Corinthians 9:21; Galatians 6:2. To turn from Christ back to the Law would arrest their spiritual development. The teachings of Jesus do not represent a radical departure from the Law, but are a natural extension of the two greatest commandments which are first found in the Law, Deuteronomy 6:5 and Leviticus 19:18. The great difference between the Law and the Gospel is in the sacrificial death and resurrection of the Son of God.

The Unthinkable Command

Continuing on from Matthew 5:20, Jesus gives many contrasting examples between the moral law as taught by the Pharisees and His moral law under the coming kingdom. The final example of the quality of the citizen of the kingdom of heaven is to many people an unthinkable command to obey.

"You have heard that it was said, you shall love your neighbour and hate your enemy. But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you" [Matthew 5:43-44].

The Law said that they were to "love their neighbour as they loved themselves", Leviticus 19:18. Surely His audience could not have anticipated that they were to love their enemies in the same way as their neighbour. In Luke 10:27 Jesus reminded them as to how they were to love their neighbour with His parable of the Good Samaritan, v28-37. Paul in writing to the church in Rome guoted Proverbs 25:21 to instruct them how they were to deal with their enemies, "If your enemy is hungry, feed him, if he is thirsty, give him a drink, for in so doing you will heap burning coals on his head", cp Romans 12:20. Jesus loved those who were crucifying him and asked His Father to forgive them and set us an example to follow in His steps. 1 Peter 2:21-25. While we were vet sinners. Jesus the Christ loved us so much that he died to save us. Romans 5:9. As citizens of the kingdom of Heaven if we are to love our enemies, then there will certainly be no member of the human race, however different, however distant, however vile, to which we do not owe the best we can give him. Our enemies may persecute us, but Jesus tells us that we will be blessed, and to:

"Rejoice and be glad for our reward is great, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you."

Matthew 5:11-12.

Sharing The Good news

Pilomon Raja - Stretford, Manchester

The good news is the gospel and it is so easily and beautifully declared by Paul in, 1 Corinthians 15:1-5.

Moreover, brethren, I declare to you the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received and in which you stand, ² by which also you are saved, if you hold fast that word which I preached to you - unless you believed in vain. ³ For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, ⁴ and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures, and that He was seen by Cephas and then by the twelve.

The Gospel is not only good news but it is "God's power to salvation for everyone who believes" (Romans 1:16). In Christ only is there salvation because "there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved" (Acts 4:12).

It is very clear from above that Salvation is only through the gospel and through Christ, but you might ask why is there a need for Christ to die and why the resurrection? To understand this we need to go back to the beginning when God created man and woman in His own image, Genesis 1:26,27. We were made in the similitude of God, James 3:9, but we all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God, Romans 3:23.

Sin is lawlessness, 1 John 3:4, and it separates us from God, Sins hide His face from us that He will not hear, Isaiah 59:1-2. We are drawn by our own desires "the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life" (1 John 2:16), and "when desire has conceived it gives birth to sin, and sin when it is full grown, brings forth death" James 1:14.15. "The wages of sin *is* death" Romans 6:23 and no matter what good we might have done, sin always leads to death, Ezekiel 18:24.

We all have sinned, and that is why we need the good news, and that is why we need Christ. Christ was "manifested" revealed, to take away our sins, 1 John 3:5. He was the Lamb of God who was sacrificed to take away the sin of the world, John 1:29. He was in all things made like His brethren, like us, that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for sins of the people (Hebrews 2:17). He is our High Priest who could sympathise with our weakness, and was in all points tempted as we are, yet He was without sin. (Hebrews 4:15). He left us an example that we should follow His steps, and committed no sin (1 Peter 2:21.22).

Jesus was sinless, yet He bore our sins in His own body on the tree, on the cross. He suffered and died for our sins, and by His stripes we are healed, 1 Peter 2:24.25.

He was despised and rejected by men, but surely He has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows. He was stricken, smitten by God, He was wounded for our transgressions and bruised for our iniquities. We have turned, every one, to His own way, And the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all. [Isaiah 53:3-6]

He died for us all and we are healed by His suffering. Jesus died for us! He not only was delivered for our offences, but He was raised up for our justification. He AROSE! Romans 4:25.

Jesus was:

declared to be the Son of God with power according to the Spirit of Holiness, by the resurrection from the dead. [Romans 1:4]

He died for all, that those who live should live no longer for themselves, but for Him who died for them and rose again. God raised Him up, death couldn't hold Him, Acts 2:24, and it is swallowed up in victory, and we have the victory through Jesus Christ our Lord, 2 Corinthians 15:55-57.

This is the good news, that Jesus came in to this world, died for our sins, He was buried and He rose again that we might be justified. He who knew no sin was made sin for us that we might become the righteousness of God in Him. [2 Corinthians 5:21]

God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not reckoning their trespasses to them and has committed to us the word of reconciliation. [2 Corinthians 5:19]

God is calling you through Jesus to be reconciled to Him, this is the good news. You have heard it, all you need to do is to believe it, confess that Christ is the son of God, repent and be baptized to be a new creation.

Hear and Believe:

The Apostle Paul tells us that faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of God, Romans 10:17. We die in our sins if we do not believe that He is, John 8:24. But we, who have not seen Jesus and yet believe that he is the Christ the Son of God, are blessed and by believing we might have life through his name, John 20:29,31. Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God, and he has the words of eternal life, John 6:68,69. We should believe just like the Ethiopian eunuch did that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, Acts 8:37.

Otherwise you will die in your sins:

I said therefore unto you, that ye shall die in your sins: for if ye believe not that I am *he*, ye shall die in your sins. [John 8:24]

Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed. But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name. [John 20:31]

Believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, Acts 8:37.

Peter said to Christ - "who else can we go to. You have the words of eternal life, And we believe and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God." [John 6:69]

Repent:

We need to repent and be baptised, everyone of us, in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and we will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit, Acts 2:38. We all perish if we do not repent, Luke 13:3.

God now commands all men everywhere to repent, because He has appointed a day on which He will judge the world in righteousness by the Man whom He has ordained. He has given assurance of this to all by raising Him from the dead. [Acts 17:30, 31]

Confess:

If you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus, and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead you will be saved. For with the heart one believes into righteousness, and with the mouth, confession is made unto Salvation. [Romans 10:9]

Whoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwells in him, and he in God. [1 John 4:15]

Be baptized into the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

Baptism is immersion, submersion in the watery grave, and coming out of it as a new creation, being cleansed from our sins. Baptism is not removing filth from the flesh, but a good conscience's appeal toward God, 1 Peter 3:21.

We appeal to you as Ananias did to Paul;

and now why are you waiting? Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins calling on the name of the Lord. [Acts 22:16]

He who believes and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believes not shall be damned. [Mark 16:16]

You have heard it, what are you waiting for?

Philip The Evangelist Obedient to God's Directions

Jonathan Ashurst- Byron, GA

In the June issue, we examined the life of the apostle Philip. This month we'll be taking a break from the series on the apostles to study the life of another Philip, the one known as Philip the evangelist.

Not to be confused with Philip the apostle, Philip the evangelist was one of the seven men chosen to help distribute food to widows in the church. Acts 6:1-7 lists these seven and explains how they were appointed. It is noted that these men were to be **"of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom"** (Acts 6:3). As we continue to study Philip's life, we see that these qualities helped him to be submissive to God's will.

After Stephen (one of the seven) was stoned to death, the disciples were scattered from Jerusalem (Acts 8:1). Philip went to Samaria (Acts 8:5) and preached there. Many people gladly accepted the good news, even Simon the sorcerer (8:13).

However, in the midst of this thriving ministry, God called Philip to leave Samaria (Acts 8:26). Not only that, but the place to which God sent him was a desert. It might have been difficult for Philip to understand why God was directing him elsewhere. Nevertheless, he followed God's directions without hesitation (8:27).

On the road that leads from Jerusalem to Gaza, Philip met a eunuch from Ethiopia. This man was a trusted court official of Queen Candice, working as her treasurer. He had come up to Jerusalem to worship and was now returning home. As he travelled, he was reading from a scroll of Isaiah's prophecies (Acts 8:27-28).

The Spirit directed Philip to \\go near the chariot, which Philip did. He began a conversation with the eunuch, who invited him to ride with him and asked him what a certain passage

meant. After explaining that the prophecy had been fulfilled in Jesus, Philip expounded the good news. When they came to water, the eunuch asked to be baptized (Acts 8:30-38).

Philip might have expected to travel with the eunuch and evangelize the people of Ethiopia. However, the following happened instead: "And when they were come up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip, that the eunuch saw him no more: and he went on his way rejoicing. But Philip was found at Azotus: and passing through he preached in all the cities, till he came to Caesarea." (Acts 8:39-40). Philip was willing to go wherever the Spirit led him, and preached wherever he went.

Philip is not mentioned again until Acts 21:8-10. Apparently he had settled in Caesarea, marrying and having four daughters. After their third missionary journey, Paul and Luke stayed at Philip's house. It seems that Philip had shared his faith with his family, because Luke records that all four of Philip's daughters could prophesy (21:9).

It was while Paul was staying at Philip's house that the prophet Agabus warned Paul against going to Jerusalem. "When we heard these things, both we, and they of that place, besought him not to go up to Jerusalem." (Acts 21:12) It seems that Philip and his daughters were among this group. However, Paul was determined to go, no matter what awaited him. "And when he would not be persuaded, we ceased, saying, The will of the Lord be done." (Acts 21:14). It is unclear whether or not the Lord wanted Paul to go to Jerusalem. What is clear is that Philip continued to honour God's will, striving to follow it and encouraging others to do so.

As a deacon, an evangelist, a father, a host, and a brother in Christ, Philip faithfully submitted himself to the will of the Lord. We would do well to follow his example.

"IF"

James Neil - Skelmersdale

IF Is a little word with an enormous influence. Here are some of the striking examples to be found in the Bible:

Genesis chapter 4 verse 7

When Cain was angered at God's rejection of his sacrifice, God **rebuked** him with these words:

If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted? and if thou doest not well, sin lieth at the door. ...

Genesis chapter 8:

Noah ⁸ **sent forth a dove from him, to see <u>if</u> the waters were abated from off the face of the ground;** ⁹ But the dove found no rest for the sole of her foot, and she returned unto him into the ark, for the waters *were* on the face of the whole earth: ... he stayed yet other seven days; and again he sent forth the dove out of the ark; ¹¹ And the dove came in to him in the evening; and, lo, in her mouth *was* an olive leaf pluckt off: so Noah knew that the waters were abated from off the earth. ¹² And he stayed yet other seven days; and sent forth the dove; which returned not again unto him any more.

It was a matter of great importance to Noah to find out if the waters were receding.

Genesis chapter 13:

¹ And Abram went up out of Egypt, he, and his wife, and all that he had, and Lot with him, into the south. ² And Abram *was* very rich in cattle, in silver, and in gold. ³:And he went on his journeys from the south even to Bethel, unto the place where his tent had been at the

beginning, between Bethel and Hai; ⁴ Unto the place of the altar, which he had made there at the first; and there Abram called on the name of the LORD. ⁵ And Lot also, which went with Abram, had flocks, and herds, and tents. ⁶ And the land was not able to bear them, that they might dwell together: for their substance was great, so that they could not dwell together. ⁷ And there was a strife between the herdsmen of Abram's cattle and the herdsmen of Lot's cattle: and the Canaanite and the Perizzite dwelled then in the land. ⁸ And Abram said unto Lot. Let there be no strife. I prav thee. between me and thee, and between my herdsmen and thy herdsmen; for we be brethren.⁹ Is not the whole land before thee? separate thyself, I pray thee, from me: if thou wilt take the left hand, then I will go to the right: or if *thou depart* to the right hand, then I will go to the left. ¹⁰ And Lot lifted up his eyes, and beheld all the plain of Jordan, that it was well watered every where, before the LORD destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah, even as the garden of the LORD, like the land of Egypt, as thou comest unto Zoar.¹¹ Then Lot chose him all the plain of Jordan; and Lot journeyed east: and they separated themselves, the one from the other. ¹² Abram dwelled in the land of Canaan, and Lot dwelled in the cities of the plain, and pitched his tent toward Sodom.

In verse 9 Abraham pleaded with Lot:

IF you will take the left, I will take the right or **IF** you take the right I will take the left.

A CONTEXT OF PEACE KEEPING.

JOB 14:14 Poses the real question of all questions:

If a man die... shall he live again? [Job 14:14]

Jesus, when he was asked if he was the Christ, replied:

If I tell you, you will not believe, Luke 22:67.

Many people today claim to be searching for the truth ... the way but when they are told ... they will not believe it. Jesus said to them:

You will die in your sins...because **if** you do not believe that I am heyou **will** die in your sins [John 8:24].

In other words, Jesus was telling them that he was not speaking empty words but that what they were doubting would cost them their eternal salvation.

LUKE RECORDS THE DEVIL TEMPTING JESUS BY GOADING HIM WITH THE WORDS:

IF you are the son of God, Luke 4:9.

What did the people, who saw Jesus as he hung on the cross, goad him with ?

He saved others; himself he cannot save. **If** he be the King of Israel, let him now come down from the cross, and we will believe him. [Matthew 27:42]

IF HE BE THE KING OF ISRAEL.

IF ... IF IF

What part does the word 'IF' play in your life?

AS AT THE BEGINNING

Allan Ashurst - Stretford, Manchester

These verses are mind blowing:

Therefore says the Lord, the **LORD** of hosts, the mighty One of Israel, ... I will lay my hand on you and purely purge away your dross and take away all your tin, and I

will restore* your judges as at the first, and your counsellors as at the beginning ... [Isaiah 1:24-26].

*The Hebrew word SHOOWB is also translated "restore" in Daniel 9:25 (KJV/AV).

So, in captivity, YHWH purged them, then restored the nation to what it was like at the beginning when he appointed for them judges, Deuteronomy 16:18, 25:1, Ezra 7:25. In asking for a king they were rejecting **YHWH** from being their ruler. Was that idolatry?

This day you have rejected your God , ... and you have said to HIM ... appoint a king over us.' 1 Samuel 10:19.

However YHWH was going to purge the nation, of even that, and restore the city to what it was like at the beginning. Then and only then, it would be called righteous, faithful.

I will restore your judges as at the first, and your counsellors as at the beginning: <u>afterwards</u> you will be called, the city of righteousness, the faithful city [Isaiah 1:26].

It appeared to them that God's way did not work and the surrounding nations were successful. So instead of putting right what had gone wrong they demanded a king.

They said to *Samuel*, Behold, you are old, and your sons don't walk in your ways: now make us a king to judge us, like all the nations [1 Samuel 8:5].

Then God's way was judges. Now God's way is qualified elders in each assembly who oversee, teach, train and shepherd all the flock, Ephesians 4:11ff.

We must not be complacent and assume that the "restoration movement" immediately got everything right. We must remove any dross, resist the temptation to emulate the apparently successful novel ways of proliferating sects.

It up to us, with love, prayer, with God's help and perseverance to continue striving to get back, guided by God's word, to what was intended **at the beginning**.

Astray In The World Sister V.Sujatha - Stretford.

"I cried because I had no shoes, until I saw a man who had no feet"

Everybody is worried about their problems in their life and asks God to make things better for them. But if you see with open eyes, God has taken care of us well. He has given us everything we need.

A person riding a bicycle looks at the one going on a scooter and maybe wants to have one. Someone going on a scooter might envy the one going on a motorbike or in car. The person going in an ordinary car might want to have a luxury car. We feel smaller and smaller as we do this kind of comparison. Why worry about vain things? There is a difference between need and luxury. God gave us legs to walk, and to be different from other four legged animals, which was our requirement. Car, bike, bicycle are the luxuries that we invented to be different. The ones having luxury vehicles are considered to be the upper class people, the ones in ordinary cars or bikes as middle class and the ones with a bicycle or no vehicle at all as lower class. Should we make this difference? Just because some have more money, they are treated differently. Who made this difference? God didn't. He made us in the likeness of his own image. We are to be like Him. We should take a close look at ourselves and our deeds. Are they how God wants you to be?

We might be rich, or powerful or whatever - but we must never forget the way of godliness.

Godliness with contentment is great gain [1 Timothy 6:6].

People should not respect us just because of our big position at the work place or in society but because of our good humble nature. We must be merciful, Luke 6:36. Be humble and obedient like Christ, Philippians 2:8. Let our gentleness be known to all men, Philippians 4:5. It is not the standard of living that is important but the manner of living. We should give equal respect to all irrespective of their position. We must not boast, James 4:16,17. We expect respect then give respect. We will be respected from the heart only if we respect others. As we want others to do to us, we should also do to them likewise, Luke 6:31.

Everyday should be passed as if it were to be our last. For nobody knows the day and hour of the Lord but only the Father, Mark 13:32. Do not get caught up in worldly lust.

The world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever [1.John 2:17].

In the kingdom of God everybody is equal. There is no upper, middle or lower class. Our position or power won't help us to gain a place in heaven.

For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. [1 Timothy 6:7]

The king and the beggar will be treated in the same way. Our riches won't take us to heaven. Do not live for the bread alone but live by every word of God, Matthew 4:4

God opposes the proud and gives grace to the humble. [1 Peter 5:5]

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