Scripture Standard

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Myllin's Baptistery LLanfyllin, Wales.

Photograph taken by Jonathan Ashurst

WAS MYLLIN REALLY "THE FIRST"?

High above the town of Llanfyllin is a restored pool for immersion which was used by a 6th. century gospel preacher name Myllin. The town's name, Llanfyllin, means 'The Church of Myllin.'



The sign begins with the words:

FFYNNON SANT MYLLIN
DEFNYDDIODD MYLLIN (MOLING). Y CYNTAF I
FEDYDDIO TRWY DROCHIAD YM MHRYDAIN.
Y FFYNNON HON YN Y 6ED GANRIF.

The English translation reads:

ST. MYLLIN'S WELL
ST. MOLING (MYLLIN), THE FIRST TO BAPTISE
BY IMMERSION IN BRITAIN, USED THIS WELL IN
THE 6TH CENTURY.

A Canon said to me "What we hate is 'born again Christians.' Once you have been baptised you have been baptised." I replied "But you do not bury them in water so that they rise to newness of life." He paused thoughtfully and then said "No - We have changed all that." You see, the church of Rome firmly believes that it has Divine authority to change things, of which baptism has been one.

At the beginning baptism was always immersion in water of a repentant believer in Christ for sins to be forgiven. So they could start a new life (Romans 6:3-5, Acts 2:37-39). But they "have changed all that." A member of their church said: "It seems as though all history has been re-written."

In the late 6th. century, Pope Gregory commissioned a monk, named Augustine, to bring the British churches under the Roman see. I recall that when I was a child we were taught that he brought Christianity to Britain. Whereas Christianity had long been established in Britain.

The earliest record of Christianity coming to Britain is in the Welsh Triads. In the first century, Silurian prince, Carradog (Caratacus) was baptised, whilst in Rome visiting his father king Bran who was under house arrest. Carradog brought the Gospel back to Britain. In the middle of the 5th. century Patrick took the gospel to the Isle of Man and then to Ireland. All this time immersion in water of believers was the regular practice. In the 12th century Anglo-Norman invasion was instrumental in bringing Irish churches under the Roman see making significant changes.

The New Testament contains a body of teaching called "the faith" to which we ought to return. Jude emphasised the need to contend for the genuine original "faith".

Jude's letter, verse 3

"Beloved, [whilst I am] diligently writing to you about the mutual salvation, I need to write to you urging you to contend for the faith [that was] originally entrusted to the saints." [DIRECT TRANSLATION]

Jude introduced no new teaching. He was concerned that we should not be drawn away by new teaching.

Europe

Ian S. Davidson, Motherwell

Europe is becoming less godly. 21% of Europeans say that God plays an important role in their lives compared with 60% in the United States and 90% in Muslim countries. Secularism is widespread in many European countries. For example, in Britain, two-thirds of people between 18 and 24 describe themselves as non-religious and almost one-half do not regard Jesus as a historical figure. In France, one in ten says they are religious, but only one in twenty attends a religious service once a week. In Sweden and Denmark only 5% regularly go to church. Poland is one of the exceptions. There, Catholic seminaries are full and priests abound.

I take no joy in living in a godless society. In fact, I believe that godlessness is at the heart of our problems. As a result, many of the European nations are morally, spiritually, politically and economically bankrupt. The situation in the old continent is worrying for many. Greece, Ireland, Spain, Portugal and Cyprus are in genuine trouble and many of the rest are not far behind. People are asking: "When are things going to improve?"

CHRISTIANITY

In Acts 16: 9-12 we read:

"And a vision appeared to Paul in the night; There stood a man of Macedonia, and prayed him, saying, Come over into Macedonia and help us. And after he had seen the vision, immediately we endeavoured to go into Macedonia, assuredly gathering that the Lord had called us to go and preach the gospel unto them. Therefore loosing from Troas we came with a straight course to Samothracia, and the next day to Neapolis; and from there to Philippi...."

In other words, Paul took the gospel to Europe- a momentous event in the history of Christianity. Paul wrote letters, amongst others, to churches in Rome, Thessalonica, Corinth and Philippi – all, of course, in Europe. It is interesting to note that we do not read of a congregation in Athens despite Paul's efforts. People steeped in worldly philosophy apparently find it difficult to accept the true wisdom of God. Later, Paul had his sights set on Spain (Romans 15:28). Things were happening in Spain and, as ever, the apostle wanted to be where the action was.

There is an important statement found in Paul's letter to the Colossians. We read:

"If you continue in your faith, established and firm, not moved from the hope held in the gospel. This is the gospel that has been proclaimed to every creature under heaven, and of which I, Paul, have become a servant" (Colossians 1:23, N.I.V.)

Most commentators find it difficult to accept Paul's statement at face value. But if we do take his words at

face value then, by the time he wrote the Colossian epistle, everyone, not only in Europe, but also throughout the whole world, had heard the good news about Jesus. A staggering thought!

CHRISTENDOM

Historical works on Europe speak about "Christendom." The Encyclopaedia Britannica defines it as "that portion of the world in which Christianity is the dominant religion." Of course, for hundreds of years in Europe the dominant form of Christianity was Roman Catholicism. Then there was the Reformation, an attempt to reform the Roman Catholic Church. Please note that the Reformation was not about reforming Christianity, but the Catholic Church.

Christendom was shaken to its foundations as the result of the work of Martin Luther and others. But, the truth be told, the reformers only partially succeeded in their endeavours. The Catholic Church fought back with the Counter-Reformation and held on strongly in various countries like Italy and Spain. Today, secularism ("the doctrine that morality should be based solely on regard to the well-being of mankind in this present life, to the exclusion of all considerations drawn from belief in God or in a future state" [O.E.D.]) is everywhere in Europe. I see this as a disaster for the continent and, indeed, for the whole world.

EUROPA AND THE TRUE GOD

Europe is named after Europa, who in Greek mythology bore Zeus three sons. Europa is a myth, but the true God is no myth. He is the "unknown God" of whom Paul spoke to the Athenians (Acts 17:23). What a change there would be in Europe if the people of all the nations within it worshipped Him in spirit and according to truth! After all, the Father seeks such to worship Him (John 4: 23). God is interested in every nation in Europe.

"And has made of one blood all nations of men to dwell on all the face of the earth and has determined the times before appointed and the bounds of their habitation..." (Acts 17: 26).

Personally in Europe, I have visited France, Holland, Belgium, Spain, Portugal, Switzerland, Czech Republic, Austria, Italy, Greece, Malta and Turkey. I pray for all of these nations and all the rest, including, of course, the United Kingdom.

The true God has a lot to say about the nations of the world. For example:

"When the Son of man shall come in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then shall He sit upon the throne of His glory: and before Him shall be gathered all nations and He shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divides his sheep from the goats..." (Matthew 25: 31-32).

The gospel is for all and, one day, Jesus will judge all. Nations of Europe – and of the world – get ready!

No Time For Anger.

V. Sujatha, Stretford.

Anger is something, which is in all of us. It is in our nature to be angry and God knows it, that's why in Ephesians 4:26 he said "be angry, and do not sin." Some can control their anger and some cannot. Some take it out on others

and hurt others and some keep it inside them and hurt themselves by repeatedly thinking about it. I think we should be concerned about our problems rather than be worried or angry. By 'concerned' I mean realize what the problems are and calmly take steps to meet them.

Worrying or being angry means going around in madness and hurting people, saying things that we don't mean. We have to give account of every word we say whilst here. We will be judged by our words (Matthew 12:36,37). We should not go around taking out our anger on others, thinking it will calm us. Nothing can bring us peace but ourself. But I guess the ability to 'think" at that time becomes difficult. We just want to throw words at others. Paul advised Timothy:

"A servant of the Lord must not quarrel but be gentle to all, able to teach, patient." 2.Timothy 2:24.

A man is foolish who can't be angry but a man is wise who won't be angry. It might seem to us that we are angry for the right reason but we hurt ourselves by hurting others. When we are angry, we fail to realise that there is a polite and harmless way to put our message across to the other person.

"A soft answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger." Proverbs 15:1.

Let's not be upset or get angry about little things in life. Life is too short to be small-minded. In this short span of life let's use our words to tell others how much we love them, because one day we may realize that we never took time to say a few loving words to our loved ones and by the time we realize this, it could be too late. Let's show them that we care for them before it is too late. Say to ourselves, let me be a little kinder to the people around me, let me speak the tender words of love to those close to me, let me be a little blinder to the small faults around me, for I will not get to live these moments again.

James son of Alphaeus

Jonathan Ashurst, Byron, GA

Of the twelve apostles, James the son of Alphaeus is the most elusive. Though we have minimal information about him, we know that his service for Christ has had a great impact upon the world. Let's examine what the New Testament tells us about this little-known apostle.

1. Who was he?

In the New Testament, there are several men named James. This can lead to confusion about which is which. In his commentary on the epistle of James, Guy N. Woods seeks to clarify the distinctions between the different men named James. Here is a list based on Woods' explanation:

- 1) James, son of Zebedee and Salome, brother of John (Matt 4:21, & 10:2; Mark 1:19, Luke 5:10, & 6:14). He is the better-known apostle. Once, he and John were nicknamed "Sons of Thunder" (Mark 3:17; Luke 9:54) and another time they asked for prominence in Christ's kingdom (Mark 10:35). This James was one of the "inner circle" whom Jesus often took aside (Matt 17:1, Mark 5:37, 9:2, 13:3, & 14:33; Luke 8:51, & 9:28). He was also the first apostle to be martyred (Acts 12:2).
- 2) James, son of Joseph and Mary, "half-brother" of

Jesus. He is listed in Matthew 13:55 and Mark 6:3 as one of Jesus' brothers. During his ministry, Jesus' brothers did not believe on him (John 7:5), but after his resurrection, they became believers (Acts 1:12,14; 1 Cor. 9:5; Gal. 1:18-19). In fact, Jesus appeared to James soon after the Resurrection (1.Cor. 15:7).

It seems this was the same James who spoke at the council in Jerusalem (Acts 15:13) and was prominent in the early church (Acts 12:17, Acts 21:18, Gal. 2:9,12). He was likely the author of the epistle James, and his brother was likely the author of the epistle Jude.*

3) James, son of Alphaeus (and Mary?). This James was the ninth in the list of Jesus' apostles (Matthew 10:3, Mark 3:8, Luke 6:15, Acts 1:13). Church tradition identifies James' mother as one of the women at Christ's crucifixion, "Mary of Cleophas," (John 19:25), also referred to as "Mary the mother of James and Joses" (Matthew 27:55-56) and "Mary the mother of James the less and of Joses" (Mark 15:40). (It is probable that Alphaeus and Cleophas refer to the same man.) If so, then Jesus' ninth apostle was also known as "James the Less."

2. What did he do?

James the son of Alphaeus was chosen as one of Jesus' twelve apostles. His mother was likely present at the crucifixion. His father may have been one of the two people to whom Jesus appeared on the road to Emmaus (Luke 24:18). James probably had the nickname "James the Less." (In Greek the term for less is "mikros,") meaning "little"; perhaps James the Less was shorter or younger than James the son of Zebedee.) Beyond this, nothing is mentioned of James specifically. However, we

can read about what the apostles did as a group and know that James was participating in these activities. He followed Jesus, saw the risen Lord, and shared the good news with many.

3. What can we learn from his life?

We can learn much from the life of James the Less. As John McArthur says, "we might say that his distinguishing mark was his obscurity." (MacArthur, p.172). We do not have to be outspoken or well-known to make a positive difference in this world. There have been millions of people who have followed Christ faithfully through the ages. We do not know of most of them, but their impact is still felt. Though other people may not be aware, God knows and appreciates everything we do for Him (Col. 3:22-24).

References:

* Ashurst, Allan. 'A Study in Jude.' Simply Christians, Stretford UK. Accessed June 29, 2012, from http://www.eusebos.eu/d4web4s/extrainf/judentsq.htm MacArthur, John. 'Twelve Ordinary Men.' W. Publishing Group, Nashville TN. 2002.

Woods, Guy N. 'James.' Gospel Advocate Company, Nashville TN. 1991.

A Living Faith

J. Lee Roberts, Lubbock, Texas.

Real faith, even as small as a mustard seed, is adequate to give access to God's marvellous grace. But simple belief in the existence of God is not enough. One must see the whole context of what living faith requires.

REAL FAITH MUST INCLUDE:

- Knowledge: We must know God. His deity and divine power can be known to us by observing His creation, but FAITH comes from hearing His Message as He and His will are revealed to us in Scripture and through Jesus Christ. Jesus is the ultimate revelation of God. John 17:3; Rom.11:20; 10:17; John 1:18; 2.Peter 3:18.
- Action: Belief in the existence of God can and must grow and bring about the obedience of faith. Rom.1:5; 16:26. The WORD must become incarnate in us as we become living epistles. Without appropriate deeds (dynamism) faith is dead! This activity must involve obedience to the message of Christ crucified! Faith becomes alive when it is made complete by deeds of obedience. 1. Peter 1:22,23; Luke 17:5,6; Mark 9:24; 2. Cor. 3:2,3; James 2:14-26; 1:22-25; Hebrews 5:9. James 2:19. BELIEVING IN THE EXISTENCE OF DEITY, AS DO THE DEMONS. IS NOT LIVING FAITH!!
- Trust: The walk of faith is not one of sight. It does not find roots in empirical proof, but in total confidence in God's faithfulness. Faith sees the invisible and accepts with complete assurance things that are not seen! Faith knows that God keeps His promise to intervene in our lives, to answer our prayers, to reward us when we seek Him, and to abide with us forever. 2.Cor. 5:7; Hebrews 11:1,6,27; Phil. 4:6,7,19; 2.Thess. 3:3.
- Love: There is a faith dynamic enough to move mountains, but worthless when it lacks proper

motivation (1.Cor. 13:2). From the beginning God has wanted us to practice real love. Faith without that fundamental element is barren and useless. We must love God, the very object of our faith, and love our neighbour as ourselves. Obedience that is not from the heart can not receive divine approval. What counts is faith working through love. With this faith we can have access to His wonderful grace! Rom. 5:1,2; 6:17,18; Gal. 3:24-29; 5:6.

"But do you want to know, O foolish man, that faith without works is dead?"

"And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing."

"For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything, but faith working through love."

DOES THAT LIVING FAITH ACTIVATE ME?

The Beatitudes (2)

Derek Daniell, Tunbridge Wells

"Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied"

Matthew 5:6.

The hunger in this beatitude is speaking about spiritual starvation that can lead to death. Most people are motivated by the hunger of the body, but few recognise

the hunger of the spirit and seek to fill the void that sin produces. The righteousness that should be sought is of a right relationship with God through forgiveness and justification, Romans 5:1-5. Their desire is not only to feel right but to do what is right, as presented later in this sermon, Matthew 5:20, 48; 6:1. There is in every human being a built in and inescapable need for God, see Psalm 63:1. Unable to meet our fundamental need we find money, pleasure and even worldly wisdom leaves us empty and unfulfilled, see Ecc.1:12-14. What we need is "to be filled" with *righteousness*. This "beatitude" is a call for a change of priorities, to have a right relationship with God which is the important part of "the good life" that all should seek. Let us then:

"Fear God and keep His commandment, for this the whole duty of man," Ecc. 12:13.

"Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy"

Matthew 5:7.

Mercy is not entirely unknown in the laws of man, but the mercy that Jesus praises here is the awareness of one's own need of mercy, not simply from man but especially from God, his mercy should show a compassion to the helpless, like the Samaritan did to his Jewish neighbour, (Luke 10:33-37). It should be a mercy that extends forgiveness to the one who repeatedly offends, Matt 18:21-22. We need to remember our own need for mercy from our Father in heaven, who:

"demonstrated His own love to us, in that while we were still sinners Christ died for us"

Romans 5:8.

The kingdom citizen should not forget their former self as we are reminded in Titus 3:1-5:

"when the kindness and love of God our Saviour towards man appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit."

Mercy toward our fellow man does not mean mercy from God; but it is evidence of our penitent spirit, which is the divine condition of forgiveness, Matt 18:23-35. The kingdom citizen should live among his fellows as a forgiven and forgiving citizen of heaven.

"Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God"

Matthew 5:8

The purity in this beatitude does not refer to perfect righteousness of life but the attitude of a single minded devotion,,

"Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners and purify your hearts you double minded." James 4:8

Those who will **see God** are those who have an honest and single heart toward God, Matt 6:22-24; 2 Cor 11:2. They will see God, not as Israel did at Sinai, but in the full understanding of their covenant relationship with Him. David in Psalm 24:3-4, says:

"Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord, and who shall stand in his holy place?. He who has clean hands and a pure heart, who does not lift up his soul

to what is false, and does not swear deceitfully."

When Jesus was asked by his disciples, "show us the Father," He replied:

"If you had known me, you would have known my Father also. From now on you do know Him and have seen Him". John 14:7-9.

Have you seen God?.

(To be concluded)

Who On Earth Am I?

James Neil, Skelmersdale

In Matthew 16:13, we read of Jesus asking his disciples this question "Who do men say that I, the son of man, am?" Jesus received a variety of answers "Some say John the baptist. Some say Elijah. Others say Jeremiah or one of the prophets." Then Jesus put another question to them, "But who do you say that I am?"

It was Simon Peter who made the famous statement "You are the Christ, the son of the living God"

Our Salvation depends upon that statement made by Simon Peter being correct, after all if Jesus was not the son of God, the whole foundation of our faith is torn from beneath us and we have no hope.

Of course Simon Peter is not the only person in scripture who, directly or indirectly made that statement and Jesus himself verifies it with his own words in vs.20 of Matthew ch.16 when he instructs his disciples to tell no man that he was Jesus the Christ.

To give further evidence from the words of Jesus himself as to who he was...and of course still is, we can see in the gospel accounts where Jesus leaves no doubt as to who and what he is, for example in the gospel as recorded by John:

John 6:35.... "I am the bread of life" John 8:12 "I am the light of the world" John 10:9 "I am the door" John 10:11 "I am the good Shepherd."

At the resurrection of Lazarus Jesus said:

"I am the resurrection and the life, he who believes in me, though he may die, he shall live, and whoever lives and believes in me shall never die."

John 11:25-26

We could go on with further examples of scriptural proof as to who Jesus is but the important thing is do we believe it, more to the point is to consider this question as though it is directed at each of us individually ...because that is where, in reality it truly is directed and our salvation depends not on the answer from our lips but the answer from our heart.

Jesus knows who he is, and what he is, but, do I know who and what I am?

Does my life show that I know who and what I am?

Does the example I set others show that I know who and what I am?

Does my faith show that I know who and what I am?

Do my prayers show that I know who and what I am?

The Apostle Paul in his letter to the Romans ch.8:14-17 tells us what we are as followers of Christ.

"For as many as are led by the spirit of God Are sons of God"

"The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God and if children then heirs...heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ"

As Christians, we need to know who and what we are, but this in itself is not enough, we need to let others know.

It seems at this point in time, that Christianity in its true sense is being attacked and undermined at every turn but let us not get disheartened as we look around us but rather we should remind ourselves ... and others of who and what we are, and never forget whose earth it is anyway.

And who on earth are we? We that is you and me....are children and joint heirs with Christ, of the one who created it !!!

Treacherous Intrigue

[70x7 Charts, June issue page 19] Allan Ashurst, Stretford, Manchester

My apparent Dilemma

When I was calculating the number of years from 7th year of Artaxerxes' reign to the baptism of our Lord I was always one year short until I discovered that Artaxerxes (also called Longinamus) did not access the throne in the year Xerxes died but in the following year. Then everything fitted into place.

Artabanus' Short-lived Seditious Coup

The Achamenid emperor of Persia, Xerxes, died in August

BC 465, but his heir apparent, Darius, did not succeed him to the throne - Why? It was his second son, Artaxerxes, who acceded to the throne but not until well into the following year, BC 464 - Why?

The most powerful man in the Persian court was a man in charge of the royal bodyguard named Artabanus. He was called 'Hazarapat' which means 'Commander of a Thousand.' He put his seven sons in key positions and intended to dethrone the Achamenids. He conspired with Xerxes' general, Megabyzus, and the chamberlain of the royal bedchamber, Aspamitres, to assassinate Xerxes.

In August BC. 465, Artabanus, with his sons, gained entry to the royal bedchamber and murdered Xerxes. He then accused Darius, of murdering his father. He had motive. He hated his father for having seduced his wife. So Darius was executed on the charge of patricide.

Artaxerxes was only eighteen years of age. So Artabanus was able to gain control of the empire. He then schemed to assassinate Artaxerxes. Seven months later, in BC 464, alarmed by this turn of events, Megabyzus betrayed Artabanus to Artaxerxes. A fight ensued. Artabanus and his sons were killed and Aspamitres was tortured to death. So, the year following Xerxes' death, Artaxerxes was able to accede to the throne and restore the Achamenid dynasty.

This one year makes all the difference in pinpointing the exact year the Lord Jesus was baptised. In his 7th year, during the latter half of BC 458, Artaxerxes issued the decree, to not only rebuild the city, but also to restore it to its former glory as the City from which the Law of the LORD would be administered (Daniel 9:25, Ezra 7:7-9). 383 years

later in the Autumn of AD 26 The Lord Jesus was publicly anointed by the Holy Spirit, declared to be the Son of God in whom He was well pleased, and the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world (Luke 3:22, John 1:29-36).

Artaxerxes - The Nature Of The Man

Some think that Artaxerxes was a very amenable person to grant such privileges to his subject nations.

Artaxerxes ruled the empire for forty years and exacted such heavy taxes that many of his subjects and senior citizens became bankrupt. In Bactria, a younger brother, Hystastis, staged a revolt. Artaxerxes defeated him and then made sure that all his remaining brothers were killed.

One might ask How is it that such a nice picture is painted of Artaxerxes, as the emperor who enabled subjects of many nations to return to their homeland and to worship their own gods? More importantly: How was it that Ezra gained such favours from the type of man we see in history? How was it that such a man granted to Ezra all that he had asked for?

Ezra's explanation for this is that the hand of his God was upon Artaxerxes. (Ezra 7:6, cp. verse 27).

Daniel 9:24 to 27 is a truly amazing prophecy. It was written more than 500 years before the predicted events and translated into Greek (LXX) over 200 years before the events. It predicted the exact year, even the part of the year, when the Messiah was publicly anointed and when He rendered obsolete the rites of sacrifice.

(To be continued)

NEWS and INFORMATION

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QUESTION BOX NOTICE

Brother Frank Worgan is happy to receive Bible questions requiring urgent answers by telephone, letter

or e-mail.

Questions warranting a larger audience might be printed in the Scripture Standard. But the questioner's name will not be

disclosed.

The Editor

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