

The SCRIPTURE STANDARD

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

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DISCIPLESHIP

IN this modern, sophisticated and scientific age where the bulk of mankind enjoy the very maximum of creature comforts the word 'disciple' must seem an almost antiquated word relevant only to an age that has long since gone. Small wonder then that modern man has only a hazy idea of what the word means and knows even less of its full implications. The words of Jesus (in Luke 14:33) are therefore likely to draw us up short, "So likewise whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple". Surely such a statement must make us all think, and not a little rueful about the 'Jaguar' at the door, the 'hi-fi' on the sideboard and the cabin-cruiser out in the bay. It would seem that Jesus understood that being one of His disciples would (and should?) entail sacrifice, self-denial and a fairly ascetic and frugal Life-style. Jesus went just a little bit further when he said, "If any man come to me and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple. And whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me cannot be my disciple" (Luke 14:26). Thus, being a disciple of Christ involves a renunciation of all our possessions, if necessary, our own family if necessary and even our own life if necessary. The words "if necessary" do not, of course, appear in the scripture and have been inserted by me without any authority for doing so. (In Luke 14:26 Jesus is not teaching us to hate father, mother, friends and family but we must love them less than we do Jesus). Clearly it is necessary to remind ourselves from time to time about what Jesus said concerning the kind of disciples He expected for it is so easy, in our day to day living to forget.

From the quotation from Luke 14:26 it appears that to become a disciple, one must 'come to Jesus' rather like the way in which an apprentice enrolls himself under the guidance, teaching and discipline of the master-craftsman. Indeed in classical Greek I understand that the word *mathetes* meant the pupil of a philosopher or teacher. A 'disciple' therefore is one who willingly and gratefully places himself, or herself, under the training and teaching of a master and hopes to be disciplined by that master (for the one word is derived from the other). Such disciplines existed, and still exist, in all forms, and includes all the arts and sciences. By virtue of the definition, many of the world's prominent men have had disciples. John the Baptist had disciples and we read in the New Testament of a verbal conflict between them and Jesus, "Then came to Jesus the disciples of John the Baptist saying, "Why do we and the pharisees fast oft but thy disciples fast not" (Luke 5:33). Similarly we read in John 9:28 of the disciples of Moses and how they reviled the blind man whom Jesus had healed, viz. "Then they reviled him and said, Thou art

His disciple but we are Moses' disciples. We know that God spake unto Moses; as for this fellow, we know not from whence he is". Even the Pharisees had disciples and sent them, with the Herodians, to tempt Jesus (Matt. 22:16). Thus a disciple of Jesus Christ is one who has sought Him out and has expressed the wish to be His pupil and follower. It is possible to be a student in a detached way, studying a subject that gives little pleasure (Like a chemist studying diseases), but discipleship involves more than being merely a student of a master; it means a follower of a particular master. A follower who is prepared to be disciplined by the master; In the realms of music, painting, architecture, sculpture some disciples have outshone and become greater than their masters. The Prentice Pillar at Roslin Chapel is a small example of this but the jealousy displayed by the master in this case must surely be uncharacteristic of masters who are eclipsed by their pupils. Surely most masters must take pride in the progress of their pupils and be very pleased to see evidences of the master's influence in the student's work. Disciples of Jesus will be hard pressed to emulate their Master let alone try to excel Him. Jesus said, "The disciple is not above his master, nor the servant above his Lord. It is enough for the disciple that he be as his master and the servant as his Lord" (Matt. 10:24).

In his book "New Testament Words" Professor William Barclay has some interesting things to say about the 'following' aspect involved in discipleship. He quotes six different shades of meaning which can be given to the classical Greek meaning and usage of the word 'Follow' thus:-

- 1 It is a common and usual word for soldiers following their leader and commander. He quotes Xenophon (Anabasis 7:5.3.) who talks about generals and captains who have followed the leader for whom they are fighting.
- 2 It is used commonly with reference to a slave following or attending his master.
- 3 It is commonly used for following or obeying someone else's advice or opinion.
- 4 It is commonly used for obeying the laws, i.e. to follow the laws of a city is to accept them as the standard of life and behaviour.
- 5 It is commonly used of following the thread of an argument or discourse. When an argument has got into a different position Socrates says, "Come now, try to follow me, to see if we can get this matter adequately explained. (Plato, Republic 474c).
- 6 It is commonly used for attaching oneself to someone in order to extract some favour which is desired.

As professor Barclay says, each one of those meanings throw some light on discipleship. The disciple, or follower of Christ, is as a soldier who jumps at his leader's command and who is prepared to die in his leader's cause. He is also in the position of the slave whose desire is but to please his master. The disciple must ask for the ruling and advice of the Master, Jesus, and try to have sufficient strength to do it. The disciple is one, who, desiring citizenship in the Kingdom of Heaven, is prepared to live according to its laws. The disciple is the learner and the listener to the words of Jesus and who must follow their thread, so that day by day he may learn more of the wisdom of Jesus. The disciple is always in the position of requiring the grace and blessing which Jesus alone can give and who follows Christ because in Christ only he finds all his needs supplied.

The use of the word in the New Testament in no way clashes with its classical use and Jesus used it to summon men from all walks of life, "Follow Me". Fishermen left their nets and as the disciples later pointed out most of them had left their all and followed Jesus. Some, like the rich young man, rejected the invitation and some, like the blind who received their sight, followed out of gratitude, but none the less Jesus promised nothing but a hard road and recommended a counting of the cost. Following Jesus involves sacrifice and might even involve a cross. "Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his Lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you..." (John 15:20).

Jesus, then, requires disciples to be faithful and to be fruitful. "Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit, so shall ye be my disciples". How shall we be his disciples? How shall we glorify God? by bearing much fruit. Have we responded to the call of Jesus - "Follow Me"? If we have how are we making out?

'Take up thy cross' the Saviour said,
 If thou would My disciple be;
 Deny thyself, the world forsake,
 And humbly follow after Me.

Take up thy cross and follow on,
 Nor think till death to lay it down,
 For only he who bears the cross,
 May hope to wear the glorious crown.

EDITOR.

CORRESPONDENCE CLASS

THE EARLY HISTORY OF THE CHURCH OF CHRIST

or

THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

Chapter 4

- 1 In what did the Sadducees differ from the Pharisees? Would that which grieved the Sadducees have grieved the Pharisees also?
- 2 When was eventide (verse 3)?
- 3 Has Luke made a mistake in describing Annas as the high priest? Matt. 26:57 & John 11:49.
- 4 What words of their master were likely to cheer Peter and John as they stood before their accusers?
- 5 Where is the quotation in verse 11 found and on what occasion did the same Council hear these words before?
- 6 What is meant by 'unlearned and ignorant men.' (verse 13)?
- 7 Peter was filled with the Holy Spirit (verse 8), and the twelve were filled with the Holy Spirit (verse 31). What does this suggest re the special gifts exercised by the Apostles?
- 8 What is meant by 'grace' (verse 33)?
- 9 Is there any suggestion that at the beginning the Church was run on a communal system of equality of possessions.
- 10 Explain how Barnabas being a Levite should possess land.

Answers, which should be written on one side of the paper only, should be returned by end Dec.

TALKS ON THE TABERNACLE

No 5. The Holy Place

THERE was a tabernacle prepared, the first, wherein were the candlestick, and the table, and the shewbread: which is called the 'Holy Place' (Hebrews 9:2, R.V.).

In former talks, we have seen that the holy place, where consecrated priests served the Lord, was a type of 'the sanctuary and true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, and not man' (Hebrews 8:2); 'the house of God which is the church of the living God' (1 Tim. 3:15). We will now look into the Holy place, and note its furniture.

The Candlestick or Lampstand

This was made of pure gold, and had seven branches of beautiful beaten work. Oil was to be prepared 'for the light, to cause the lamp to burn alway'. When the tabernacle was set up with its sides of board, and the four sets of curtains drawn across the top, it would be dark inside: the only light came from the golden candlestick. By its light, worship and service were offered to God. There was no light in the candlestick; it was a light-bearer.

In the book of Revelation (1-20) the Church is said to be a golden candlestick. The Church's business is to hold up Him who is 'the light of the world', the 'sun of righteousness'; and 'his word which is a lamp and a light' (Psalm 119:105). Of prophecy, Peter said, 'Ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts' (2 Peter 1:19). Paul said the old covenant came with glory, but it has now no glory by reason of the glory that excelleth ['surpasseth' R.V.] (2 Cor. 3:7-11). The moonlight has faded away before the glorious sunlight. As members of the Church of Christ, 'in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation', we are to be 'seen as lights in the world, holding forth the word of life' (Phil. 2:15).

That Word can dispel all the darkness and gloom in the world. But it is only in so far as Christ and His word dwell in us, that we can shine for Him. We have no light in ourselves apart from Him. We can all by Christlike character and conduct reflect the life, teaching, and glory of the Lord. We must hold up in these dark days the Lord Jesus Christ, and His powerful saving gospel. As the golden candlestick supplied the only light in the holy place, so the Word of God, 'the Scriptures of Truth', are the light by which all worship and service in the Church must be

feeling has prevailed for almost two thousand years among the followers of Christ. Did not the two disciples on the road to Emmaus say, "But we trusted that it had been he which should have redeemed Israel" (Luke 24:21). They had it wrong. Jesus did redeem Israel and anyone else who would accept Him as Saviour. How many times, perhaps, do we get it wrong? Our own stubborn wills and gross egoism cloud the horizons.

New Values

I want to ask you a question. As you look around you in the world today are you encouraged by the values which the world seems to hold? Would you seriously say that the values inherent in Christ and His Church are not vastly superior to those displayed in the world? Then why are you despondent? You must surely be aware that contact with Jesus engendered those new values, and you must be equally aware that loss of contact with Jesus will consistently erode those new values.

During my early years and into my 'teens I had the good fortune to be associated with a fine religious group in Standish where I was born; they taught me many of the values of life which have stood me in good stead. But even so. I found it difficult to live according to those values which I had learned. Ours was a mining community; a great community of people in many respects but not given to exhibiting the finer values of christian living. They worked hard, but they also swore hard, drank hard, gambled with abandon, recounted bawdy sexual jokes. They were a microcosm of much of our present-day society.

You ask me what new values I found in Christ? I'll tell you. Concern for people who see what I do and hear what I say. The ability to elevate my thoughts to a higher plane. The realisation that the divine forces which are for me are far greater than those which are against me. The preciousness of the Church to which I have been added. The knowledge that I am one of the 'earthen vessels' to which God has committed his treasure, the gospel of redeeming love.

Would you sacrifice these new values, together with many others, for the dubious distinction of returning to the old values? I think not!

New Friends

Jesus said, "Greater love have no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends. Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you" (John 15:13,14).

We make many friendships in life. Some friendships start when we are children and go on throughout our lives; these can be, and often are, rich and rewarding. Other so-called friendships are of a more casual nature. They have no real depth and are much too dependent on external circumstances for their continuance. The participants in such friendships may not always be seeking the good of the others.

The 'new friends' that we find in the Church should be different. The base of his friendship (we sometimes call it fellowship) is the fact that we are united with each other and with Christ. Ideally, this type of friendship should be the most rewarding of all; it is based on the eternal love of God and it is extended to each one of His children in the Church. Therefore, in essence, it is God-given and should be, if entered into properly, God-maintained; unhappily, it is sad to relate that once again we ourselves are the limiting factors.

Have you ever considered what a unifying influence the Church should be? We often say that if the world could see a demonstration of the power of God that this would go a long way toward making them believe. Could God do more than to show people His family living on the earth? It is a very sobering thought that when people see the family of God in some sort of dis-array that this inhibits them from wanting to join that family. There is no way in which we can blame God for this; the fault is ours and ours alone. But the ideal is there; it should be recognised and pursued consistently by each one of us.

New Vision?

Yes, perhaps we need this. It is a fact that as we grow older in anything then the newness tends to wear thin. This is a great pity. The gospel should always be as fresh as the morning dew on the grass. The Church in any age should be as new and exciting as it was on the first Pente-

the man Christ Jesus'; who intercedes in the presence of God for us. It is our priceless privilege to approach God through Him, and make our requests known.

'Boldly our heart and voice we raise,
His name, His blood our plea,
Assured our prayers and songs of praise
Ascend through Him to Thee.'

Note the Divine Order: the altar of sacrifice pointing to the Cross of Christ, the laver, typical of believers' baptism; the holy place, now the Church of God; the candlestick, holding forth the Lord and His Word; the table, a type of the Lord's Table in His Church; and the altar of incense, telling of acceptable prayer through Jesus Christ. All this is summed up in Acts 2:41, 42: 'Then they that gladly received his word were baptised . . . and they continued stedfastly in the Apostle's doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers'.

W. CROSTHWAITE.

ASK

I sing the Almighty power of God, That made the mountains rise,
That spread the flowing seas abroad, And built the lofty skies.

"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.

"NOW UNTO HIM THAT IS ABLE TO DO".

**ABLE TO DO EXCEEDING ABUNDANTLY ABOVE ALL THAT WE ASK OR THINK
ACCORDING TO THE POWER THAT WORKETH IN US
THE MIGHT AND MAJESTY OF GOD. ALMIGHTY POWER GOD CREATED**

"In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth". Genesis 1:1. "O Lord our Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the earth! who hast set thy glory above the heavens... When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained".

Psalm 8:1-3

"The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament sheweth his handywork. Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night sheweth knowledge. There is no speech nor language, where their voice is not heard. Their line is gone out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world. In them hath he set a tabernacle for the sun". Psalm 19:1-4

"By the word of the Lord were the heavens made; and all the host of them by the breath of his mouth. He gathered the waters of the sea together as an heap: he layeth up the depth in storehouses. Let a|| the earth fear the Lord: let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of him. For he spake, and it was done; he commanded, and it stood fast". Psalm 33:6-9 Note now how the Psalmist compares the heathen, and their idols, and invites Israel to trust the Lord, "Wherefore should the heathen say, Where is now their God? But our God is in the heavens: he hath done whatsoever he hath pleased. Their idols are silver and gold, the work of men's hands. They have mouths, but they speak not: eyes have they, but they see not: They have ears, but they hear not: noses have they, but they smell not: They have hands, but they handle not: feet have they, but they walk not: neither speak they through their throat. They that make them are like unto them; so is every one that trusteth in them". Psalm 115:2-8.

"NOW UNTO HIM THAT IS ABLE TO DO".

I suppose there are times in all our lives when we feel that our God is far away, that mighty man of God, the greatest of all the men of the east, Job said:- "Oh that I knew where I might find him! that I might come even to his seat! I would order my cause before him, and fill my mouth with arguments. I would know the words which he would answer me, and understand what he would say unto me" Job 22:3-5. Come over with me to the 38th chapter and see how God answered Job, and proved that His power and majesty is infinite and unsearchable:- "Then the Lord answered Job out of the whirlwind, and said, Who is this that darkeneth counsel by words without knowledge? Gird up now thy loins like a man; for I will demand of thee, and answer thou me. Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth? declarē, if thou hast understanding. Who hath laid the measures thereof, if thou knowest? or who hath stretched the line upon it? Whereupon are the foundations thereof fastened? or who laid the

corner stone thereof; When the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy? Or who shut up the sea with doors, when it brake forth, as if it had issued out of the womb? When I made the cloud the garment thereof, and thick darkness a swaddlingband for it. And brake up for it my decreed place, and set bars and doors. And said, Hitherto shalt thou come, but no further: and .here shall thy proud waves be stayed" Job 38:1-11.

Go on and read through the chapter, and on through the 39th, the 40th, and the 41st, and if you cannot be humbled through the might, majesty, wisdom, power of the Almighty, I shall be greatly surprised. Is it any wonder that before God had finished talking to Job, we have these words:- "Behold, I am vile, what shall I answer thee? I will lay mine hand upon my mouth Once have I spoken; but I will not answer: yea, twice; but I will proceed no further" Job 40:4,5. Now see the wonderful character of this man of God, turn to the 42nd chapter, and note his humility, and see how he submits himself to God. "Then Job answered the Lord, and said, I know that thou canst do everything, and that no thought can be withholden from thee. Who is he that hideth counsel without knowledge? therefore have I uttered that I understood not; things too wonderful for me, which I knew not. Hear, I beseech thee, and I will speak: I will demand of thee, and declare thou unto me. I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear; but now mine eye seeth thee. Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes" Job 42:1-6. One of the messages surely of the book of Job is undoubtedly that our GOD IS ABLE, and if you still doubt, turn over to the prophet Isaiah 40:25-26 (RSV) "To whom then will you compare me, that I should be like him? says the Holy One. Lift up your eyes on high and see: who created these? He who brings out their host by number, calling them all by name; by the greatness of his might, and because he is strong in power not one is missing".

GOD? ETERNAL? ENDLESS IN MAJESTY AND POWER IN CREATION

"NOW UNTO HIM THAT IS ABLE TO DO".

"Paul a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God". "For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and wickedness of men who by their wickedness suppress the truth. For what can be known about God is plain to them because God has shown it to them. Ever since the creation of the world his invisible nature, namely, his eternal power and deity, has been clearly perceived in the things that have been made So they are without excuse, for although they knew God they did not honour him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking and their senseless minds were darkened. Claiming to be wise, they became fools, and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man or birds or animals or reptiles" Romans 1:1,18-23 (RSV). May God richest blessing be your portion. LEONARD MORGAN

IMPORTANCE OF THE SCRIPTURES

(PART 2)

THE GREAT VALUE

THE great value of the Scriptures is that they were designed by God for our good. To God's people of old, Moses said in Deuteronomy 6:24 "The Lord commanded us to observe all these statutes and to fear the Lord our God; it will be for our own good at all times, and He will continue to preserve our lives". It is no wonder that David, one of God's prophets of old, also confirms this in Psalm 19:7-10:-

"The law of the Lord is perfect and revives the Soul. The Lord's instruction never fails. And makes the simple wise. The precepts of the Lord are right and rejoice the heart. The fear of the Lord is pure, enduring for ever. The judgements of the Lord are true and righteous altogether"

Our Lord's instructions in Matthew 28:18-20 are even more clear and direct when He says:- "Full authority in heaven and earth has been committed to me. Go forth therefore and make all nations my disciples; immerse men everywhere in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, and teach them to observe all that I have commanded you. And be assured, I am with you always, to the end of time" (NEB).

In Mark 16:15-16, Jesus repeats similar words:- "Go forth to every part of the world and proclaim the Good News to the whole creation. Those who believe it and receive immersion will find Salvation" (NEB).

No wonder Paul, as Christ's Ambassador, writing to Timothy says, in 2 Tim 3:16-17:- Every inspired scripture has its use for teaching the truth and refuting error, or for reformation of manners and discipline in right living, so that the man who belongs to God may be efficient and equipped for good word of every kind" (NEB).

Their Power

Power is the force that enables us to do anything. That may be, in man, for good or evil. The power of God however, if received, can only work for our good.

(a) It is a means to eternal life Romans 1:16-17 tells us:- "For I am not ashamed of the Gospel. It is the saving power of God for everyone who believes, because here is God's way of righting wrong (forgiving sins) a way that is based on belief and addressed to belief" (NEB).

(b) It is a challenge to our way of life. Hebrews 4:12 tells us:- "For the word of God is quick and powerful and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing assunder of soul and spirit and of the joints and marrow and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart". Truly, only the Scriptures can show us whether we are living a right or wrong. As David says in Psalm 119:130, "The entrance of Thy words giveth light". It also gives us power to do what is right.

(c) If received into our hearts and its promptings are obeyed it will save us. James 1:21,22 tells us:- "Wherefore, putting away all filthiness and malice that leads to excess, quietly accept the message implanted in your hearts which is able to save your souls and become doers of the word, and not hearers only, for that would be to mislead yourselves". In John 14:21 Jesus tells us:- "If a man love me, he will keep my words and my Father will love him and we will come unto him and make our abode with him; he that loveth me not keepeth not my sayings". In Matthew 22, Jesus said to the disbelieving Sadducees "You know neither the scriptures nor the power of God. God is not God of the dead but of the living". Truly the Scriptures are important because of their wonderful POWER.

Their Permanence

The Psalmist says in Psalm 119:160 "Thy word is true from the beginning and everyone of Thy righteous judgments endureth for ever".

Isaiah 40:8 tells us:- "The grass withereth, the flower fadeth, but the word of our God shall stand for ever".

1 Peter 1:24-25 quotes this passage from scripture but also adds the very important qualification "and this word of the Lord is the word of the Gospel preached to you".

As we have seen in Mark's gospel chapter 16, Jesus says to His disciples "Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believes and is immersed shall be saved". Jesus also says in Matthew 24:35 "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away".

How glad we should be that God's word is sure and steadfast and that it will last for ever; for its permanence assures us that all the promises of God for us will indeed be fulfilled, for each one of us, if so be it we allow it to be our guide throughout all our lives. Then, when the time comes for us to depart this life, we can look forward with that certain hope of which God assures us in the most unmistakable terms - that hope of entering into that eternal rest which "remaineth unto the people of God" (Heb. 4:9).

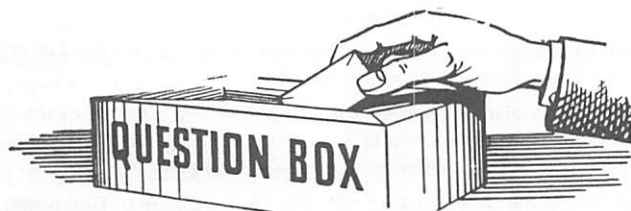
"Let us therefore labour to enter into that rest". This shows us that God requires each one of us to strive earnestly to do so and that this requires an effort on the part of each one of us.

How important are the Scriptures to each one of us.

In making such an effort how essential is it that we study the Scriptures which clearly show us the way to life eternal. Truly, as David said, in Psalm 119:105 "Thy word is a lamp to guide

my feet and a light on my path". Let us then make that effort by earnestly allowing the Word of God to take possession of our whole heart and mind, for by obeying it, we shall not only be better and happier and more blessed in this life, but what is most important to each one of us, we shall be blessed beyond our fondest hopes, by being graciously allowed by God to partake, in all its fulness, of that wonderful and glorious life to come which shall be eternal and when, with all our loved ones who have gone before, we shall be for ever with the Lord. (Concluded).

W. BROWN, Dunfermline.



Conducted by
Alf Marsden

"I have had so many disappointments and frustrations in the Church of Christ that I have lost some of the enthusiasm which I once had. Perhaps it would help me and others if you could please say what the Church has meant to you in your life".

THIS is a cry from the heart that I can well understand. I, too, have known frustration and disappointment and I am quite sure that many others have also, but personally I came to the conclusion some time ago that I would not let these satan-inspired attitudes stand between me and the undoubted blessings which can and do exist in the Body of Christ, the Church. Consequently, I am not looking for the faults in others, but in myself; I am looking for ways to get involved rather than seeking avenues to escape involvement; I am looking for the good points in my fellow-Christians rather than the things with which I can tear them down; I suppose I could say that I am trying to walk in the footsteps of my Master. Let me then try to analyse what the Church has meant to me, because I am quite sure that by doing so I shall help not only the questioner but also myself.

New Horizons

I remember sailing from West Africa to Bombay. Each morning I would look out from the ship and the horizon would be exactly the same; sky and water. Then one morning the horizon was entirely new; land had appeared, and as the ship drew steadily closer so the new and exciting contours of the land became clearer; new people, new buildings, new cultures, made a startling and exciting change from the seemingly endless horizon of sea and water.

Isn't this how we felt when we first came into Christ? I know this is how I felt. I had wandered around in the arid wilderness of sin, my horizons limited by worldliness. Suddenly, when I was added to the Church, all of that changed. As Paul taught the Corinthians, "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new" (2 Cor. 5:17). A completely new way of life was opened up to me; new people, new ideals, new objectives, unlimited horizons. I not only accepted the fact of living, as previously, but also began to grapple with the reasons for living. The Bible, instead of being looked upon as an archaic book for ageing clergymen, became to me, as in fact it is, the living Word. Jesus became a reality.

What I would say to you dear questioner, is this; those new and challenging horizons are, always present when we are in Christ. They are perceived only dimly when they are befogged by attitudes which we ourselves adopt and which are to our spiritual detriment. Have you lost the capacity to love? Then think about Jesus and remember how His love transcended every demonstration of love which the world had seen. DO you feel 'let down' by your brethren? Well, don't write them off and ignore them; talk with them, and rather than having a feeling of distrust you may find something which will explain many things which puzzle you. Do you feel that your conception of the Christian objective has not been met? Then remember, this

rendered. It is a lesson of supreme importance to 'learn not to go beyond the things which are written' (1 Corinth. 4:6. R.V.).

Apart from the written word none, whatever his scholarship attainments, and position, knows what is acceptable to the Lord. If we are at liberty to go beyond that Word, and introduce into worship things not found there, where is the stopping place? The whole Papal system is the result of speaking where the Bible is silent. It is according to the mind of man, not the mind of God.

The Table

On this table were placed twelve loaves, called shewbread, or presencebread, which were 'for a memorial', Aaron and his sons, the priests, were commanded to eat it in the holy place (Leviticus 24:9). The highest authority, the Lord Jesus, said it was not lawful for even David to eat it, 'but only for the priests' (Matt. 12:4).

That table was a type of the Lord's table, which is inside the Lord's Church, On that table, every Lord's Day, bread for a memorial is placed, 'This do', said the Lord Jesus, 'in remembrance of me'. He did not give liberty to do something else which might better please human eyes and ears. This bread speaks of Him who is the Bread of Life sent down from heaven, and which was sacrificed for us. By faith, not in any material, corporeal, sense, we feed on Him.

'On Thee we feast, Thou living bread,
And here would feed upon Thee still;
Here drink of Thee, Thou fountain-head,
Whose streams each thirsting soul can fill'

The Lord's Table, inside the Lord's Church is for the Lord's priests, which under the better covenant are all those who have entered by the door, and have not climbed in some other way. The Lord Himself has set up the only door of entrance: 'Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.'

All societies have their initiatory rites, and conditions of membership. We do not say, 'I can be a member of that society and ignore its rites and conditions'. It is only concerning the Divine Society, the Church of the living God, that men claim the right to membership without complying with Divine terms of admission. When infant baptism was first introduced it was seen that baptism made them members of the Church, and as such, they were entitled to the privileges of the Church. They tried to give them the Lord's Supper, they gave them the fruit of the vine, but they were too young to take the bread. One false move leads to another. So Confirmation by onlaying of a bishop's hands, when they come to riper years, was made the passport to the Lord's Table. Article XXV of the Church of England names Confirmation, among other things, and says: these 'are not to be counted for Sacraments of the Gospel . . . for they have not any visible sign or ceremony ordained of God'. So they belong to those things of which the Lord Jesus said: 'In vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men'.

It is written: 'Upon the first day of the week . . . the disciples came together to break bread' (Acts 20:7). Paul and his colleagues had been in Troas some days but they did not, as some now do, feel at liberty to attend to the Lord's Supper on any other than the Lord's Day, they waited for that day. Then, it was the disciples who came together to attend to that feast. The Lord planned how disciples were to be made (Matt. 28:18-20). Remove the line of demarcation from where the Lord has placed it, and there is no legitimate stopping place.

The Altar of Incense

This was placed 'before the veil' that separated 'the holy place' from the 'holiest of all'; and Aaron shall burn thereon sweet incense every morning . . . and at even . . . a perpetual incense before the Lord throughout your generations' (Exodus 30:1-10). David pleaded: 'Let my prayer be set forth before thee as incense, and the lifting up of my hands as the evening sacrifice' (Psalm 141:2). We read in the book of Revelation of 'golden vials full of odours, which are the prayers of the saints' (5:8). That altar of incense was a type of the golden altar of prayer. Aaron offering incense was a type of our great High Priest, the 'one mediator between God and men.

cost. Can we recapture the vision? Not if we allow ourselves to be distracted by the wiles of Satan. But if we can fix our eyes on the blazing glory of God, then that Light, I am convinced, will warm, enrich, and motivate us to greater heights, than we have hitherto believed possible. I suppose, in the end, it is a matter of confidence in God.

(All Questions please to Brother Alf Marsden, 377 Billinge Road, Highfield, Wigan, Lancs.)

SCRIPTURE READINGS

DECEMBER 1976

5—Malachi 3	Matthew 11:2-19
12—Genesis 18:16-33	Matthew 11:20-30
19—Isaiah 61	Matthew 12:1-21
26—Ecclesiastes 12	Matthew 12:22-37

THE ANSWER TO DOUBTS

TRY as we may we can hardly realise the terrible position of John the Baptist in prison. The physical conditions in the gloomy prison into which his loyalty to God had brought him, were hard to bear, but the confinement of his noble spirit used to the freedom of the open spaces, must have been worse. So with deep sympathy and love for him we grieve that he began to doubt the truth of the vision of the Holy Spirit descending, and the voice from heaven. In similar conditions what would we have felt? The Messiah had come. He was preaching and teaching in freedom, working astonishing miracles but not helping His herald confined to prison unjustly. John had said and realised "He (Jesus) must increase, but I must decrease" (John 3:30), but he naturally expected something more obvious and spectacular than was happening. His disciples came and told him of the wonders wrought among the people by Jesus (Luke 7:18), and he could not connect this with the role of Messiah. Hence he sent two of them to enquire. Could he have been mistaken after all? The answer of Jesus was practical. He "in that same hour" wrought many signs (Luke 7:21) as a demonstration of messianic power quite beyond dispute and told the messengers to report to John. To have the blessing John must be satisfied by the signs. Is not this the solution to our doubts too? Look to Jesus. Experience the results of obedience, and know beyond doubt that "Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God". Through the vagaries of philosophic argument and vain endeavours to prove this and that, comes the prayer of Jesus "Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent and revealed them unto

babes" (11:25). Humble acceptance of revealed truth can alone bring true and abiding confidence.

THE GREATNESS OF JOHN

Elijah was a great prophet. He wrought miracles and was taken up to heaven in chariot of fire. John however was the Elijah of prophecy (Mal. 4:5). John wrought no miracle (John 10:41). He told the truth entrusted to him without compromise. He preached righteousness to rich and poor, king and peasant, and demanded repentance for sin, and practice to, prove it. He used the humiliating act of being dipped in water as a condition of forgiveness. Thousands upon thousands of the nation of Israel heard his strong voice. They came from all parts of the country, all sorts and conditions of men, to hear him and obey his instruction. So the nation was on tiptoe of expectation when the ministry of Jesus began. Elijah ran away from Jezebel. John incurred the displeasure of a sinful woman and suffered death for it. He had no fear of king or consort. What higher honour could he have had than the words of Jesus in our readings? The measure of greatness passes out beyond time into eternity. "Great is your reward in heaven" (Matt. 5:12).

REACTION TO TRUTH

There must have been much heart-searching as a result of John's preaching so that many anticipated the coming of the kingdom and changed their lives. Jesus likewise preached "Repent for the kingdom is at hand", and His disciples were to warn those who rejected their message that the kingdom had come nigh (Luke 10:11). Some certainly took heed, and turned from sin, but the majority failed to grasp its true significance. Jesus said "If ye will receive it" and "he that hath ears to hear let him hear" indicating misunderstanding. They misjudged John because of his extreme earnestness, and John because of His friendliness toward those frowned upon by the respectable (11:19). There is a "respectianity" which is not christianity! The multitudes which followed Jesus during the time of His healing ministry in the towns of Galilee failed to take His

teaching to heart. 'They repented not' (11:20). An insignificant minority really took His teaching to heart. With most it was just a passing phase. Hence the sorrowful and solemn words of doom pronounced upon those who had the greatest privilege. It would seem that Jesus was leaving the district and taking His final journey towards Jerusalem. When we consider the words of Jesus carefully. He warns of a Judgment in which the ancients will in some way share, and we think of our own highly favoured land in which the Bible has been freely available for about four centuries, from which all that is good in our present system of government has come. It is forgotten that all that is good in civilisation comes from the teaching of the Saviour, and the laws of God in the Old Testament. Some of us too have had the privilege of being brought up with the plea for a return to New Testament teaching and practice in our minds. Do we sufficiently recognise our responsibility before God?

THE SABBATH LAW

The Jews over the centuries before Jesus came had believed and practised the requirements, and often suffered for it. It had become an item which separated them from all other nations. However the "doctors" had worked upon it so much that it was hedged about with minute details of practice not really serving its purpose or cultivating its spirit. Hence Jesus with true loyalty to it became involved in apparent disobedience. Meticulous observance of a requirement of God can bring us into conflict with His real purpose. The Pharisaic attitude was fault-finding because the behaviour of Jesus struck across their rules. They thought to bring Him into disrepute with the people by making Him appear to contradict Moses who, was universally respected. We of course see the

absurdity of their complaint about the disciples plucking the ears of corn on the sabbath but to them it was something He should have corrected, As in all their arguments they received a crushing reply. We wonder whether they did think that David sinned seriously when he satisfied his hunger with 'holy bread'. The priest certainly compromised at the point of the sword. However the point was clear, and the incident next recorded gave a still more pointed contradiction of their criticism. Luke tells that there was actual design on their part to bring accusation against Jesus knowing that the man with the withered hand would be

present, and having question beforehand also.

SIN AGAINST THE HOLY SPIRIT

The saddest feature of the criticisms against Jesus surely is that those who made them had a bitter and sinful spirit in their hearts. They must have known well that the work of Jesus was holy and pure. All that was good was manifested in words and actions alike so that accusation of use of devilish power was totally unjustified – and they knew it. How could forgiveness be possible while such motives were working in the heart? R. B. SCOTT

OBITUARY

Hindley: It was with mixed feelings that we gathered together on Wednesday September 22nd. A feeling of grief, because we were saying our last earthly farewell to Sister Doris Irene Breakell, and yet a feeling of joy, because our dear Sister was in Christ and a heir to Eternal Life. It seems but a short time that we have known her, and yet, she has endeared herself to everyone. Of a cheerful disposition, faithful in her attendance to the things of God, given to hospitality, patient in her suffering over the past few months, most of which she spent in hospital. Our hearts go out to her sorrowing loved ones, particularly to her dear husband John, in whose heart there is an aching void which only the Lord can fill. We are assured that His faith will stand the test for his knowledge of God and His Word will bring sweet peace and comfort to his soul.

"Keep watch with me,
When hearts are filled with sadness,
When eyes are dim with tears, and cares
abide,

I am the only one can bring you gladness
And in My Grace you will be satisfied".

TOM KEMP

Manchester! You will remember the baptism of Frederick George Taylor on Monday 28th June 1976, and our request for prayers for him and his family because he was having test at hospital. The test revealed that he had cancer. Christie Hospital did offer hope, and treated him. However in his case the treatment was not proving successful. He was sent home and his wife and children nursed him patiently and lovingly but he gradually deteriorated. Even so

his inner man increased in stature due to his new found faith in Jesus.

He died peacefully at 5.15 a.m. Thursday, 9th September 1976. He was 42 years old. His body was buried at Stretford cemetery the following Monday. The cemetery chapel was full, with people even standing, and they heard how George had fallen asleep in the Lord, awaiting an immortal body, eternal in the heavens.

It's times like this that makes us want to hasten the Lord's coming. "Even so, come Lord Jesus". May I again appeal for prayers on behalf of his wife, children, mother, brother, mother-in-law, sister-in-law, father-in-law, relatives and friends. **ALLAN ASHURST**

MARRIAGE

At the meeting-house of the church of Christ, Kirkcaldy, on the 18th September, 1976, Bro. John Geddes, Buckie, to Sister Elizabeth Jane Roberts, Kirkcaldy. Brother William Mair, Portnockie, conducted the wedding ceremony.

QUESTION BOX

This feature in the "S.S." depends, obviously, upon questions being sent in to brother Alf Marsden. Readers who may disagree with anything said in "Q.B." should, of course, write to brother Marsden directly and not to me. We thank brother Alf for all the hard work involved in keeping the answers coming each month and hope that readers will, in turn, keep the questions coming. If you have a question but haven't sent it because you feel that it may be too elementary or trivial, send it just the same. Often seemingly trivial questions on Bible subjects turn out to be anything but. Ed.

CORRESPONDENCE

Readers will recall that the "S.S." had at one time a 'Correspondence Column'. This was discontinued some years ago, certainly before my time as editor, because, believe it or not, it did not in any way enhance the paper. It seems that when brethren take up some controversy in the 'Correspondence' column they do not look their best. This unfortunate trait may be true of brethren other than British for I notice that few, if any, other religious papers have a 'Correspondence' column. May I therefore remind readers that if they have some doctrinal point to make they should make it in the form of a small (or large) article. Letters which do not raise important or controversial issues I can, however, print such as Bro. Jimmy Grant's letter last month, informative letters about coming events or letters of thanks. In short, continue to write to the Ed. about coming events, marriages, deaths, meetings, requests, thanks, etc. but if your letter be upon some deep issue, likely to lead to other brethren wanting letters printed in reply, then send it, by all means, in the form of an article. Any brother can thereafter express another viewpoint in the form of an article. If on the other hand you feel the 'Correspondence' column should be restored please let me know. ED

THANKS

Handley: May I express my sincere thanks to those Brethren who have sent letters of consolation and sympathy to both Doris and myself during her long illness, and again at her death. Your concern and prayers have helped me considerably. In Brotherly love. J.E. Breakell

COMING EVENTS

Slamannan Social to be held on 16th April.
Chairman Bro. John Wilson, Snr. Further details to be announced later. Miss M.S. Neilson

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