

# The SCRIPTURE STANDARD

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

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## HOW CAN THESE THINGS BE?

The annual Wimbledon tennis tournament is with us again, with high jinks and the usual high drama. Already one umpire has had his face slapped by the wife of one irate loser; one player has been carted off the court on a stretcher and one player has "disappeared" just prior to a very crucial match. All good fun. I was however, for the purposes of this article, interested to hear one of the T.V. commentators describe one prominent player as a "born again Christian" and it occurred to me that one hears that description quite often these days. All kinds of prominent people: sporting personalities, actors and actresses and even politicians, turn out to be "born again Christians". For example I'm sure I've heard Ronald Reagan (former USA President) referred to in this way; and the German golfer Bernhard Langer; and the American heavyweight boxer Mike Tyson; and the T.V. Actress Joanna Lumley. I live a sheltered life but I'm sure other readers, especially our American cousins, could greatly add to that brief list.

One has to wonder, however, as to what exactly is meant by those who use this terminology, and what they understand to be Christians "born again," especially when they apply it to men like Mike Tyson and his present life-style: (sorry, Mike, just joking). The N.T. certainly talks about "born again" Christians and the dire necessity of being born anew, but, since this is *the only kind of* Christian recognised in the N.T. it would seem logical to dispense with the adjectives: "born again." In short, if a person has not been "born again" they can not be regarded as Christians. It was Jesus who said "Ye **MUST** be born again" and it follows from that, that we can not be Christians if we have not been born again. Obviously people use the term to try and draw a distinction between "born again" Christians and those who claim to be Christians but have never been born again. Plainly the whole of Christendom claims to be "Christian" when, in fact, the whole, of Christendom would vehemently reject any call "to be born of water and the Spirit". And so, I suppose, people revert to this phrase to indicate those who have learned the necessity of being born again *and have taken the step* and those who have not. But what is involved in being "born again"?

### HOW CAN THESE THINGS BE?

We are indebted to John's gospel (Chap. 3) for a record of this highly important conversation between Jesus and Nicodemus: the latter having come to Jesus by night, seeking a conversation on spiritual things. Jesus greatly surprised Nicodemus by saying, "Except a man be born again he cannot see the Kingdom of God." Nicodemus, understandably thinking in physical terms, wondered how a man could possibly return to

the womb and be re-born. Clearly, an explanation was called for and Jesus said "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit he cannot enter into the Kingdom of God". Thus to be "born again", one must be "born of water and of the Spirit". Nicodemus, still mystified asked, "How can these things be."

Nicodemus would, of course, be very surprised because, apart from anything else, the need for a re-birth would be totally incomprehensible to a Jew. Nicodemus was a good man; a very religious man; a Pharisee; a member of the Sanhedrin and a teacher in Israel. He was upright and righteous; kept the Sabbaths and Feast days; tithed; prayed; and studied the scriptures. Surely if the Kingdom of God had now come, Jews like himself would be the best qualified for entry. Jews placed great store upon their *fleshly* birth. Their blood-line to Abraham, and lineage, entitled them to all the blessings, promises and privileges of God. The Children of Israel were after all the chosen race; the people of God, and if anybody deserved priority in entering the Kingdom of God it should be them. However, Jesus' words completely short-circuited this viewpoint and must have come as a considerable shock and disappointment. Jesus had said that any man and every man must be born again, and so was placing Gentiles on the same footing as Jews. The Jews, it seemed, had lost their special relationship with God.

Nicodemus was not only amazed he was also mystified. "How can these things be?" Quite apart from the element of controversy which, even now, surrounds these words of Jesus, there is also a genuine element of mystery, and so Nicodemus was not unique in being mystified. If any of us knew as much as God knows we would, of course, be God, and anybody who really studies the Bible is quite likely to be "mystified" several times a week. "But," someone might ask, "how can I be expected to accept something I cannot understand"? and of course the answer to that is that, every day we readily accept any number of things we do not understand. Many of us watch T.V. with only a very meagre idea of how it works, and the same goes for radio, for X-ray machines and computers etc. etc. Quite apart from the mystery of a *spiritual* re-birth, there is a great deal we do not understand about *physical* birth. Indeed there are many things about procreation that the best gynaecologists don't know, but this does not stop men and women having families. When faced with a proposal to have a family, very few couples reject the idea of childbirth just because they can't understand it. They manage. In any case, although we may not fully understand the part that God plays in our re-birth, we can easily accomplish the part WE are required to play: i.e. to be "born of water" is a simple procedure. We accept a whole host of things that mystify us; things like sleep, fear, motherlove; friendship, hope, a sense of humour, jealousy, death and life itself. Who can claim to fully understand any of these things: yet we have no trouble in accepting them.

### REGENERATION

"Birth" refers to the beginning of new life, or the beginning of life in a new environment. In the context of Christianity, the N.T. uses the term "regeneration" twice (Matt. 19:28 & Titus 3:5) implying new beginnings, and elsewhere the N.T. refers to Christians as "new creatures" and "newborn babes". Many passages in God's word describe the Christian life as a re-birth and the Christians as "born anew" or "born of God" or "born from above". Paul says, "If any man be in Christ, HE IS A NEW CREATURE, old things are passed away; behold ALL THINGS HAVE BECOME NEW." (2 Cor. 5:17). We are born (or begotten) by the gospel: by God's word. The apostle Peter talks (of the re-birth) of "Being BORN AGAIN not of corruptible seed (as in natural procreation) but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever". (1 Peter 1:23).

Sometimes a distinction is drawn between "begotten" and "born". A child is *begotten* of

its father and *born* of its mother, and obviously men can never give birth. In this sense Jesus was the only begotten of the Father" albeit Christians are "sons of God". (1 John 3:1). A man's spiritual begettal takes place when he believes the words of the Holy Spirit (1 John 5:1) but having received the incorruptible seed of the gospel, he is "born" of the Spirit only if he acts upon it. Anyone who hears and believes the words of the Spirit, is "born" of the Spirit only if he acts upon it. Anyone who hears and believes the words of the Spirit and obeys them, by repenting and being baptized is "begotten of the Spirit, but "born of water": because "born" means "to come out of". Paul (in Rom. 6) tells us that the "old man" or "old person" is "buried by baptism" into Christ's death, but the new (regenerated) man rises to walk **IN NEWNESS OF LIFE.**" This is spiritual regeneration. We were "dead" in sin, but we are now "alive" unto God. So says Paul (in v.11) "Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be **DEAD** unto sin, but **ALIVE** unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord."

And John, referring to the fact that Jesus came to His own and His own received Him not, says, "But **AS MANY** as received Him, **TO THEM** gave He power **TO BECOME** the **SONS OF GOD**, even to them that believe on His name. Which **WERE BORN** not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but **OF GOD.**" The renewal of good government we might describe as Revolution the renewal of morals as Reformation; the renewal of interest as Revival; the renewal of a building as Restoration; the renewal of a prime position as Restitution etc. etc. but all those grand and glorious words, great as they are, are swallowed up in the greatest concept of them all: **Regeneration: man not so much repaired as reborn.**

#### **BORN OF WATER AND THE SPIRIT**

Regeneration is a fundamental doctrine of the gospel and just as we are born naturally into a physical world we must also be born spiritually into the spiritual world. Clearly we must, first of all, desire to be born again and willing to take the requisite steps. As Jesus explained to Nicodemus (v.6) "That which is born of flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the spirit is spirit. Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again." We have all been born into this earthly world: we did not ask to be and we had no say in the matter; but we shall only enjoy the next world because we want to, and because we strive to get there. Thus WE have a part to play in being re-born, just as God has a part to play. Plainly there are two quite separate ingredients in man's spiritual regeneration: i.e. "water" and "the Holy Spirit." In what way can we be "born of water"?

Paul writing to "those already born again," and describing how fortunate they were, by God's grace, to have been rescued from their former vices, adds, "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, **BY THE WASHING OF REGENERATION and RENEWING OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.**" (Titus 3:5). Surely all will agree that, here, we have mention of both ingredients: i.e. the "washing of regeneration" (man's contribution) and the "renewing of the Holy Spirit" (God's contribution). As we can imagine, a certain amount of controversy has been engendered over this verse by those who believe in "faith only" and who would deny that "born of water" involves actual water. However, very few eminent Bible scholars deny that "born of water" refers to immersion in water. Johnson in *The People's New Testament* says (p.333) "all agree that the birth of the Spirit refers to the inward, or spiritual change which takes place, and all candid authorities agree that born of water refers to baptism. So Alford, Wesley, Abbott, Whitby, Olshausen, Tholuck, Prof. Wm. Milligan, The Episcopal Prayer Book, The Westminster Confession, The M. E. Discipline and writers of the early Church all declare." (unquote). The Jews were, of course, quite familiar with the symbolic use of water and their religion consisted of a large variety of washings and cleansings. They were

accustomed to speak of the "water of purification"; and the "water of separation": the former meaning water that could purify a person, and the latter that could separate a person: and so would have no great intellectual problem in accepting a term like "water of regeneration," and understanding that literal water was being talked about.

It is interesting to note that in Titus 3:5, (quoted above) where the term "washing of regeneration" is employed, the Greek word for "washing" is *Loutron*. *Loutron*, according to Young's Concordance, means "A laver, a bath or washing vessel" and appears only twice in the N.T. (here and in Eph. 5:26). Vine defines *Loutron* similarly, i.e. "a bath or a laver (akin to *Lou* which signifies "to bathe or wash a body"). Macknight renders the phrase as "the BATH of regeneration" and says, "Baptism is called the 'bath of regeneration' not because any change in the nature of the baptised person is produced, but because it is a token of the purification of his soul from sin. Hence Ananias, in allusion to the emblematical meaning of baptism, said to our apostle (Acts 22:16) 'Arise, and be baptised and wash away thy sins . . .'" (Unquote). The other passage in which *Loutron* is employed, as previously mentioned, is Eph. 5:26 where Paul urges husbands to love their wives "Even as Christ loved the church and gave Himself for it. That He might sanctify and cleanse it with THE WASHING OF WATER by the word." Macknight renders the latter part of this verse as ". . . That He might sanctify her having cleansed her with a bath (*Loutron*) and with the word."

### CONCLUSION

How can we sum up? The first requirement in man's regeneration is to hear, believe and embrace the gospel. James says, "Of his own will begat He us WITH THE WORD OF TRUTH". God's word can transform our lives but we must apply it. Jesus could have said to Nicodemus, "only believe" but, as we know, He said nothing remotely like that. Jesus said that everybody "MUST be born again" and emphasised the matter by saying "EXCEPT a man be born of water and the Spirit he CANNOT enter the Kingdom Of God." It must be difficult to misunderstand that. To Jesus the terms of entry into the Kingdom were non-negotiable. Those who insist that "born of water" does not refer to baptism, and the use of literal water, must often have wondered why John the Immerser spent most of his time, up to his waist, in a very literal river, baptising tens of thousands of converts. John himself explained that he spent years doing this, not because he was a local eccentric, but because GOD had sent him into the world for this very purpose: that he might baptise penitents for the remission of sins. "John did baptise in the wilderness and preach the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins. And there went out unto him ALL THE LAND OF JUDEA, AND THEY OF JERUSALEM and were ALL BAPTISED of him in the river of Jordan, confessing their sins." (Mark 1:4). The conversation between Jesus and Nicodemus is recorded in Chap. 3, and in the very next chapter, John tells us that Jesus baptised even more converts than John, and so nobody can say baptism was confined to John's ministry. Were Jesus and John wasting their time? What rational person can really believe that John and Jesus preached a "Faith only" message, in view of the above, or that "born of water" does not involve actual water?

There is, of course, another way of looking at this matter. The Kingdom of God is just another name for the Church, or body of Christ, and the terms of entry into the one are just the same as the other. Entering the Kingdom of God is precisely the same as entering the Church. Those 3,000 who formed the nucleus of the Church on Pentecost (Acts 2) had heard the gospel from Peter, believed it and had called out, "What shall we DO". Peter's answer is as valid today as it was then: "Repent and be baptised everyone of you, for the remission of sins and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit". Water (and the Holy

Spirit) is mentioned here and equates with Christ's words to Nicodemus: "born of water and the Spirit". "And with many other words did Peter testify and exhort, saying, **SAVE YOURSELVES** from this untoward generation. Then they that gladly received his word were **BAPTISED** and the same day there were added unto them 3,000 souls . . . And the Lord added to the Church daily such as were being saved". Common logic should tell us that we can't enter the Kingdom of God by "faith only"; yet be required to enter the Church by faith, repentance and baptism.

Doubtless we shall continue to hear of all kinds of personalities being referred to as "born-again Christians", and we can only hope that such a description will be an accurate one, for, according to Jesus, there is no other kind of Christian. "**EXCEPT** a man be born of water and the Spirit he **CANNOT** enter the Kingdom Of God".

EDITOR.

## GLEANINGS

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

### DAY BY DAY

*"As thy days, so shall thy strength be." Deuteronomy 33:25*

### THE BIBLE SPEAKS

"Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof." Matthew 6:34.

"That which they have need of . . . let it be given them day by day." Ezra 6:9.

"For at that time day by day there came to David to help him, until it was a great host of God." 1 Chronicles 12:22

"Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night sheweth knowledge." Psalms 19:2.

"So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom." Psalms 90:12.

"Who then is willing to consecrate his service this day unto the Lord?" 1 Chronicles 29:5.

"Rejoice evermore." 1 Thessalonians 5:16.

"Pray without ceasing." 1 Thessalonians 5:17.

"In everything give thanks." 1 Thessalonians 5:18.

"Quench not the Spirit." 1 Thessalonians 5:19.

"Despise not prophesying." 1 Thessalonians 5:20.

"Prove all things." 1 Thessalonians 5:21.

"Abstain from all appearance of evil." 1 Thessalonians 5:22.

### WE QUOTE CAMPBELL MORGAN

"The Bible itself does not exhaust Him, and in every successive age He creates new records of His grace in the experience of trusting souls. He is able to do this in you and for you . . . for He is the exhaustless one."

### WE QUOTE J. H. JOWETT

"The background of every day is grace, and the more tremendous the day the more abounding is the grace. And therefore we can interpret our difficulties as the index of our resources. Our mission betokens our capital in the bank, and we can draw upon "the unsearchable riches" to the last demand of our needs. 'As thy days, so shall thy strength be.'"

### SOMEONE HAS SAID

"I would give nothing for the Christianity of a man whose very dog and cat were not the

better for his religion." Rowland Hill.

"Christianity is something more than humanity." Matthew Henry.

"We do not know how cheap the seeds of happiness are, or we would scatter them oftener." Lowell.

"To improve the golden moment of the opportunity, and catch the good is that is within our reach, is the great art of life." Dr. Johnson.

Inscribed in an old-fashioned watch:

"Tis mine the passing hour to tell.

Tis thine to use it ill or well." F.B.

"HERE'S A THOUGHT: "While no one can afford to quit because the road gets rough, anyone can afford to take a second look to find a smoother road to the same destination." Shaw's

"Father, hear the prayer we offer,  
not for ease that prayer shall be,  
but for strength that we may ever,  
live our lives courageously."

#### TALES WORTH TELLING

A young society girl said to a woman of eighty, who still attracted all in spite of her snowy hair, "Tell me the secret of your charm, and teach me to fascinate people as you do." "My child," was the gentle response, "remember just this: in the alphabet of charm there is no such letter as T, it is all 'US'".

Selected by Leonard Morgan.

## MOUNT OLIVE SPLIT - (Part I)

(A Study In Zechariah)

### THE DANGER OF THE FALSE DOCTRINE

Zechariah 14:14: "And his feet shall stand in that day upon the Mount of Olives, which [is] before Jerusalem on the east, and the Mount of Olives shall cleave in the midst thereof toward the east and toward the west, *and there shall be* a very great valley; and half of the mountain shall remove toward the north, and half of it toward the south."

Many Jews and evangelists firmly believe that this passage predicts a yet future event when the Messiah will physically set foot on the Mount of Olives, establish His throne in Jerusalem and begin a world-wide reign. This entails either that the Lord Jesus was not the Messiah, or that his ministry was only partially successful; a second attempt being necessary. Such views defame Jesus and demean his work.

Orthodox Muslims believe it was not the Lord Jesus who was crucified; but someone else was mistakenly crucified instead of him, probably Judas Iscariot. They say that God took the Lord Jesus from the earth before the crucifixion. Some of them claim that God did this because the Lord Jesus had failed to carry out his mission properly and that Mohammed was a second and successful attempt.

### THE ABSURDITY OF THE FALSE DOCTRINE

A *literal* interpretation of ch. 14 vv. 16-21 (Feast of the Tabernacles etc.) necessitates the restoration of the temple, the re-introduction of animal sacrifices, and annual pilgrimages of people, including Gentiles, from all over the world cramming into the environs of the city of Jerusalem. Asserting that God must fully restore physical Israel in

total, as a nation, for His name's sake (Ezek. 20:44), presumes that He is obliged to vindicate Himself by "might" (hb. warfare) and physical "power".

On the one hand it is easy to show the folly of that mode of exegesis. On the other, should the retort be "what does it mean then?", weakly replying with "I don't know but it doesn't mean what you say," though true, could be construed as admission of defeat.

At best a controversy is established but the benefit of the passage is lost. The wonder underlying this prophesy should not be missed.

### THE SETTING OF THE PASSAGE

#### The Captivities

BC 721 Israel taken captive into Assyria.

BC 606/587 Judah taken captive into Babylonia for 70 years.

BC 585 The temple and Jerusalem are devastated and the Jews become dispersed amongst the nations.

#### The Rebuilding of the Temple Begins

BC 536/4 Consequent on a decree by Cyrus, Zerubbabel commences the rebuilding of the Temple.

#### 20 Years On And Only Up To Formation Level

BC 519 Twenty years had passed and the building was not yet above floor level. The young (under 30) prophet Zechariah proclaims the contents of chapters 1 to 6, prophetic visions designed to instill confidence and enthusiasm.

### THE TIME IS RIGHT, GET ON WITH THE WORK

(Zechariah chapter 1 verse 1-2)

"In the eighth month, in the second year of Darius, came the word of the Lord unto Zechariah, the son of Berechiah, the son of Iddo the prophet, saying, The LORD hath been sore displeased with your fathers."

1:3 The Lord appealed for them to turn back to Him and He would turn back to them.

1:4 Their ancestors had refused to reform. They were advised not to be like them.

"Be ye not as your fathers, unto whom the former prophets have cried, saying, Thus saith the LORD of hosts; Turn ye now from your evil ways, and [from] your evil doings: but they did not hear, nor hearken unto me, saith the LORD."

1:8-11 There is a vision of horses with their scouts searching the earth. They report back that the earth is at rest. They had found no evidence of war, famine or plague. The time was right to get on with the work without fear of hindrance.

1:16-17 The temple would be completed and the cities of Palestine would become prosperous.

Note the spiritual principles evinced in these exhortations:

2:4, 5 Jerusalem would need no battlement walls. God would be its protecting wall of fire. The LORD would dwell within Jerusalem and be its glory (shekinah). The departed glory of the Lord, the shekinah, was to return to Jerusalem.

2:10 So the Jews had every reason to be full of confident zeal.

"Sing and rejoice, O daughter of Zion: for, lo, I come, and I will dwell in the midst of thee, saith the LORD."

The word "Zion" means "barren, desolate". The Lord was going to come and dwell in the midst of that desolated place and transform it.

### BUT LOOK AT THE PROBLEMS

The country was still in a state of desolation and after twenty years of adversity the building had not risen above floor level. There were few Jewish craftsmen and labourers in the country to progress the work. The formidable task of building the superstructure, the

joinery, and the decorative fixtures and finishes, all lay before them. To what degree had the problems of those twenty years caused them to waver?

How would the seemingly insurmountable task be brought to fruition?

#### BY MY SPIRIT SAITH THE LORD

4:6 "Not by might (warfare) nor by power (physical strength) but by my spirit saith the LORD."

What spirit? The answer to this, is the clue to chapter 14.

We must realise that fundamentally, the issues were *spiritual*. They were to trust the Lord implicitly.

4:7 The mountainous obstacle will become a plain.

4:8-9 Zerubbabel had started the work 20 years previously. They were still only up to floor level. Even so, he would have to complete the whole superstructure in four years. Then they would know for sure that they could trust the words of the prophet of the LORD.

4:10 When serving the LORD, we are not to despise the day of small things, however formidable the task ahead might seem, even if the difficulties are mountainous.

Matthew 17:20 "Jesus said unto them . . . If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you."

#### THEY START ON THE TEMPLE SUPERSTRUCTURE

BC 517 Two years later the work is in full swing. Craftsmen and labourers of the dispersion have returned in droves to assist in the work. Zechariah delivers the contents of chapters 7 to the end.

In chapters 7 to 10 are Zechariah's words of encouragement for them to persevere in their faithfulness. He portrays reassuring visions to instil dedication, visions promising an immediate prolonged period of glory for the whole nation. Beyond these he visualizes the even more Messianic hope.

BC 515 In four years the superstructure has been completed and the temple dedicated.

#### GOLDEN YEARS ARE PROMISED

8:3-5 To a nation which had endured 70 years of exile, returning to a desolated land, he promises tranquillity. They had not known what it was like for children to play free of care, in their city streets and for men to grow old gracefully instead of being slain in their prime.

vv 4-5 "Thus saith the LORD of hosts; There shall yet old men and old women dwell in the streets of Jerusalem, and every man with his staff in his hand for every age. And the streets of the city shall be full of boys and girls playing in the streets thereof."

This promised extended period of tranquillity was itself prophetic of an even more future Messianic glory.

9:9 "Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: behold, thy King cometh unto thee: he [is] just, and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass." (Matthew 21:5).

The promised LOWLY MONARCH is assurance of the imminent national stability which in turn is prophetic of the one whose "dominion [shall be] . . . To the ends of the earth" v10. This was to be accomplished by means of "THE BLOOD THY COVENANT" v11.

#### THE SILENT/THE GOLDEN YEARS

The dispersed Jews returned to Palestine and the nation enjoyed unprecedented prosperity and absence of trouble from other nations, for over 300 years. Without any intrusion by the Persians the Jews basked under their protection until BC 330.



When Alexander the Great conquered Persia he did not trouble the Jews but left them to conduct their own affairs without interference and under his protective guardianship.

This happy state of affairs continued under Greek Ptolemaic rule until BC 180.

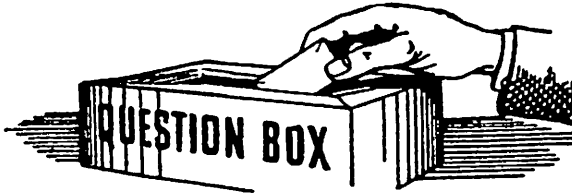
They were so cocooned from risk that they did not even have to consider having a defence force of their own. Never before had the Hebrews enjoyed such a blissful existence for such a long period of time.

Sadly with prosperity and freedom from tyranny came corruption.

*(In Part II we shall comment on the decline and the "Day of the Lord.")*

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Conducted by  
Alf Marsden

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**"Acts 2:38 says that we receive the gift of the Holy Spirit when we are baptised. How can this be harmonised with Acts 8:14-16. Verse 16 says, 'For as yet He had fallen on none of them. They had only been baptised in the name of Jesus'?"**

We must begin our study by stating those salient points which are quite clear in the text. Perhaps when we have done this we shall be able to explain them.

- a) There was a great persecution against the Church at Jerusalem. They were all scattered abroad throughout Judaea and Samaria; all, that is except the Apostles.
- b) The ones that were scattered went everywhere preaching the Word.
- c) Philip went to Samaria and preached Christ. The people were greatly impressed by the miracles which he performed.
- d) When the people believed Philip preaching the kingdom, and the name of Christ, they were baptised.
- e) The question infers that the people did not receive the Holy Spirit.
- f) Peter and John had come from Jerusalem to impart the Holy Spirit by laying on hands, See later comments.

#### FURTHER COMMENTS

We must understand that the 'Philip' being spoken of here is Philip the Evangelist and not Philip the Apostle. If it had been Philip the Apostle then there would have been no need, seemingly, to have waited for Peter and John to come and 'lay on' hands. An insight into the Apostles before they received 'the power from on high' is given by John. When Jesus was speaking to them about His relationship with the Father, Philip appeared not to understand; "Lord, show us the Father, and it sufficeth us". The answer of Jesus is explicit, "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father". John 14:6ff. Well might Jesus say that the Holy Spirit would guide them into all truth.

Philip the Evangelist was evidently of good standing in the early Church; he was one of the number chosen to be appointed to see that the Grecian widows were not neglected, Acts 6:5. He was one on whom the Apostles at Jerusalem had 'laid hands'. He was evidently one of the Pentecostal or post-Pentecostal converts, and presumably had received the same

Apostolic promises as all the other converts. We know from Acts 8 that he was able to perform miracles (vv6,7). We now have to ask ourselves:

- a) were those miraculous powers as a result of the 'gift of the Holy Spirit' when he was converted?
- b) were they imparted by the 'laying on' of hands by the Apostles or
- c) was the 'laying on of hands' merely to set the seven apart for specific work?

We are told in Acts 6:3 that the people were asked to look out seven men 'of honest report, full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom'; Stephen gets a special mention as "a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit" (v5). How had they become 'full of the Holy Spirit', and what does this portend? How did the people recognise them as being 'full of the Holy Spirit'; by their ability to perform miracles, or by their standard of life? If the latter, then it would seem that the operation of the Holy Spirit was on the heart, and not an outward manifestation; this view would be consistent with the way we understand the operation of the Holy Spirit in our own lives today. It says in Acts 2:41-47, that they - the converted - 'continued in the Apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread and prayers'. There were 'signs' and 'wonders' done, but these were done by the Apostles See v43.

### THE SAMARITAN EXPERIENCE

We might ask ourselves, "What was Philip doing preaching in Samaria when he had been appointed to look after the affairs of the Grecian widows? Had he been sent by the Apostles at Jerusalem, or was he one of those 'scattered abroad' during the persecution. Was Samaria, in fact, a 'special case' (refer to John 4).

We must follow all the steps in this experience in Samaria, and tie them in with others. All the people had given heed to Simon the Sorcerer; they looked upon him as 'the great power of God' (not too far removed from idolatry). The people then believed Philip when he preached the things concerning 'the Kingdom of God'; they accepted Jesus, the Christ; they were then baptised. To me that sounds like obedience to the Gospel. I cannot conceive of a situation in which - when the Gospel is faithfully preached and received - the promised grace of the in-dwelling Spirit will be denied. So why the laying on of hands?

Let's look at the reaction of Simon as recorded in Acts 8. The scripture says, "And when Simon saw that through laying on of the Apostle's hands the Holy Spirit had been given . . ." (v 8). Now what did Simon see which convinced him that the Holy Spirit had been given? It must have been something which the recipients were able to do which they were unable to do previously. This is in line with what happened at Ephesus when Paul found those who had previously been baptised under John's baptism. He taught them about Christ; they were then baptised in the name of Christ; he then laid hands on them, they received the Holy Spirit, and they spake with tongues and prophesied. I believe these were special gifts given by the Holy Spirit at that time to confirm the authority of the Gospel. This also confirmed Apostolic authority, because they were the ones to whom 'the power from on high' had been given in the first place. You will recall that on the Day of Pentecost, Peter said of Christ, "Being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, he hath shed forth this which *ye now see and hear*" (Acts 2:33). Had not Jesus promised the Apostles this before He left them? Read John 16:1-16.

### SOME OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

We must remember that we are looking at a very volatile period in the early history of the Church. Christians had been scattered during the persecution, and had taken the Good News with them. The Apostles, no doubt, would have reports coming in from various regions, and would be trying to keep track of events. We don't know all the details of what was happening, but we do know that in Corinth there was a Paul party, a Peter party, an

Apollos party, and even a Christ party (presumably to off-set the others). There are some things, however, we can say.

1. When a person responded to the Gospel by making a public confession of faith in Christ, that person was forthwith baptised 'into the name of the Lord Jesus'. There was probably a spoken response to a definite question. It is perhaps unfortunate that the R.S.V. and the N.I.V. use the non-amplified text in Acts 8 concerning the conversion of the Ethiopian eunuch. They omit v37 which reads, in the A.V., "And Philip said, 'If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest.' And he answered and said, 'I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.'" My belief is that if Philip had preached thus to the ones in Samaria, then they would have received the gracious gift of the in-dwelling Spirit. The 'laying on' of the hands of Peter and John would then have been for some other reason; we dare not think anything else otherwise our own conversion might be in jeopardy. Don't forget; there had been, and was, great antipathy between Jews and Samaritans. Perhaps the Apostles were confirming the Gospel to Samaria.
2. There can be no question of Holy Spirit baptism in Samaria. This could only be done by Divine Omnipotence; even the Apostles could not administer Holy Spirit baptism. There are only two recorded instances of this type of 'falling'; the first was on the Day of Pentecost, the second was on the household of Cornelius. Peter confirms this in his defence at Jerusalem, "And as I began to speak, the Holy Spirit fell on them, as on us at the beginning." See Acts 11:15.

Well, I hope I have said something useful on the question. If the Bible supplied definitive answers to the questions it poses, then no further questions would need to be asked. It doesn't, though, so we shall have to study to find answers based on firm biblical evidence. To give speculative answers to important questions is an insult to readers, and practically worthless to understanding.

(All questions, please, to Alf Marsden,  
20 Costessy way, Winstanley, Wigan, WN3 6ES)

## STAND YOUR GROUND

(EPHESIANS 6:11-14)

Brethren the times we live in are troublesome, and of consequence we need to stand firm in the faith. Often we have found ourselves in situations when it seemed our faith was weak, ineffective and had no power to overcome.

As mere mortals, no doubt we have all experienced such times . . . but be certain of it, God hasn't left us without help. 1 Cor. 10:13 reads this-wise:

*"There hath no temptation taken you such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; and with the temptation, also make a way to escape."*

God has never failed anyone standing steadfastly on his word. When we stand by, and in, the word of God, the word will stand by us. In down times when our walk/faith seems weak and victory lost, God's word tells us what to do; stand our ground.

Brethren we need to recognise that Satan is opposing everything we do. He is trying to discourage the believer. We need to be taught how to stand against the devil, and his angels. Make no mistake about it, the devil is arrayed against us, but praise be to God, we can stand against him, because Jesus defeated him (for us) on the cross at Calvary . . .

At times, brethren, we have the tendency to try and struggle on in our own strength. It

never works; all that we experience is failure. Think about it. Standing strong and faithful to God's word, victory and overcoming is assured. It is a promise of God.

**"All the promises of God are yes, and amen in Christ."** (2 Cor. 1:20).

It is known that fear, doubt, and unbelief will cause the soul to be lost. We need to shun such things, because they are not of God.

*"For God hath not given us the spirit of fear: but of power, and of love, and sound mind."* (2 Tim. 1:7).

If we want to walk in victory according to the word, and enjoy the blessings of God, we must quench the spirit of fear and harness the source of power. *Brethren be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might by standing your ground, faithful to the word.*

As the song says, *Stand by your man . . .* Jesus. Stand your ground on the promises of God's word, and God's blessings will be yours to enjoy. It is God's will to bless His own. Believe it, accept it. God wants His people to be happy, contented and blessed. If anything is amiss, the fault lies with us. Beloved, re-read the text.

Andrew P. Sharp, Newtongrange.

## SCRIPTURE READINGS

Sept. 3	Genesis 22:1-19	John 8:31-59
Sept. 10	Isaiah 5:8-21	John 9:1-34
Sept. 17	Ezekiel 34:1-16	John 9:35-10:21
Sept. 24	Psalms 82	John 10:22-42

### CHILDREN OF ABRAHAM AND THE DEVIL

The Jews in Jesus' day took great pride in the fact they were descended from Abraham. Abraham is one of the greatest characters of the O.T. Scriptures. It was he who was called by God to leave his own country and go to an unknown land. God made a covenant with him. As one writer has pointed out: "It appears that Abraham (as he then was), of all men on earth in his day, possessed that one quality which commended him to the Lord as the progenitor of a covenant people, whose relationship would be established upon the basis of faith."

Many of Abraham's children failed to live up to their father's faithfulness to Jehovah. Tragically, Jesus found this to be the case far too often. Instead of readily recognising and welcoming Abraham's greatest son, they rather turned against

Him with murder in their hearts (8:37). They just could not see that they were enslaved to sin and the devil, whom Jesus described as "a murderer from the beginning" (8:44). Jesus spoke the truth to them, but they preferred lies because they were of "the father of lies" (8:44).

We all know the truth can hurt sometimes and very often people's reaction to it is hostile. We must remember that Jesus not only spoke the truth, but is the Truth (John 14:6). Personally, I believe that when Jesus said: "And you shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free" (8:32). He was actually referring to Himself. Truth is ultimately personal. Truth is Jesus. Truth is God.

I have recently been undertaking in Motherwell a study in depth of Satan. I believe it is important to know what he is about and what methods he uses to destroy the plans and purposes of Almighty God. Paul wrote on one occasion: ". . . for we are not ignorant of his devices" (2 Corinthians 2:11). Certainly, Jesus knew everything about the evil one and all the Master's references to him I found particularly helpful. John 8:44 should be read again and again so that the character and work of Satan are never forgotten. We see from this verse that all lies originate

ultimately from a person - and that person is the devil himself. Brethren, take great comfort from the fact that one day he will be destroyed. John later wrote: "And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever" (Revelation 20:10).

### THE CLAIMS OF JESUS ABOUT HIMSELF

Jesus' enemies described Him as a Samaritan and demon-possessed (8:48). In other words, they hated Him with an unbelievable intensity. To them, Abraham was the greatest and Jesus was the lowest. But as Jesus pointed out to them: "Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day: and he saw it and was glad" (8:56). Their response was: "You are not yet 50 years old and have you seen Abraham?" (57). Jesus said: "Verily, verily (in the Greek Amen, amen), I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I am" (58). (I note that the Bible of the Jehovah's Witnesses translates the latter words as "Before Abraham came into existence, I have been". Such a translation is no surprise, coming from a cult that rejects the deity of Jesus. A better translation is that of J. B. Phillips "Before there was an Abraham, I am!")

Jesus in saying He was the great "I AM" was clearly revealing to the Jews that He was Jehovah in the flesh. I recall here the words of God to Moses: "I AM THAT I AM: and God said, Thus shall you say unto the children of Israel, I AM has sent me unto you" (Exodus 3:14). The Jews opposing Jesus knew full well the significance of His words. They knew from what He said that He was making Himself equal with God, which to them was blasphemy. That is why we read in the next verse: "Then took they up stones to cast at Him: but Jesus hid himself and went out of the temple, going through the midst of them and so passed by" (8:59).

### JESUS HEALS A MAN BORN BLIND

There are many characters of the Bible who have my sympathy and this healed blind man is certainly one of them. He got into terrible difficulties with the Jewish authorities simply because Jesus had restored his sight on the sabbath day. The event should have led everyone to the inevitable conclusion that this man Jesus was indeed the promised Messiah, the Son of the Living God. Tragically, it did not. There is none so blind as he who will not see (9:39-41).

We read at the conclusion of Pharisees' investigation that "they cast him out" (9:34). I take it that this means that they excommunicated him. Of course, this was the continuous threat hanging over anyone who confessed that Jesus was the Christ (9:22). I like the fact that Jesus later sought out the man with the clear intention of revealing to him exactly who He was. Worship of the Lord was the result.

### THE SHEPHERD AND HIS FLOCK

I was listening the other morning around 6.00 a.m. to a religious programme in which someone pointed out that the Bible had a lot to say about shepherds, sheep and lambs. I checked Cruden's Concordance - and how right he was! Jesus spoke of Himself as "the good shepherd" (10:11,14) and His followers as "sheep." He also described Himself as "the door" (10:7,9). We read: "I am the door: by Me if any man enter in, he shall be saved and shall go in and out and find pasture" (10:9). I understand that in those days a shepherd would lie across the opening to a sheep-fold at night and thus protect the flock. Nothing could get out or in except over his body. Quite a door! Jesus' words clearly reveal His love, care and attention for His followers.

We also read: ". . . the sheep hear his voice: and he calls his own sheep by name and he leads them out. And when

he puts forth his own sheep, he goes forth before them and the sheep follow him: for they know his voice. And a stranger they will not follow, but will flee from him: for they know not the voice of strangers" (10:3-5). A. C. Bouquet has written: "Whereas in England a Cumbrian shepherd uses his dog to move the sheep about and gives the dog his instructions by voice or whistle, the Syrian shepherd will call the sheep to him, or tell them to disperse, or order them to come down to the stream and drink, and even, when they are about to do so, shout to them to stop, and the sheep will instantly obey. . . All this throws much light on the metaphor of the Good Shepherd in the gospel. It is intended as a symbol of the relationship between the follower of Jesus and the Leader Himself. The follower, in fact, is not blindly driven, but intellectually led, yet nevertheless renders implicit obedience to the call of his leader, whom he trusts and knows."

#### THE UNBELIEF OF THE JEWS

Again we read of the antagonism of the Jews towards Jesus. The charge of blasphemy is repeated (10:33). Jesus counters by appealing to the miracles He has performed, which are proof-positive that the Father is in Him (10:25, 32, 38). To deny Jesus is to deny God. This was true in the first century and is true in the twentieth. And remember Jesus' words: "But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father who is in heaven" (Matthew 10:33).

IAN S. DAVIDSON,  
Motherwell.

#### THE GREATEST OF THESE

In last month's *Question Box* the question as to why Paul deems love to be 'the greatest' in 1 Cor. 13, was very ably handled by Bro. Alf. May I just

supplement what he said with a very brief thought.

Paul was addressing things which are temporary (prophecy, knowledge and tongues) with those of lasting value (faith, hope and love). The former died out when 'that which is perfect' came: i.e. the complete revelation of God's will in His Word. Faith and hope will last until the close of the age and Christ appears again. As soon as that happens 'faith will be lost in heavenly sight' and hope will be fulfilled for the righteous, and for ever lost to the damned. Thus faith and hope are destined to disappear. 'Love, however, never ends'. It is here now; it was here when Paul wrote 1 Cor. 13; it will sweep on and on past Judgement Day and the end of the world. It is eternal and will be everlasting when faith and hope have long gone.

That is why, to me, it is the greatest and, I suspect, why it was for Paul.

Graham A. Fisher,  
6 Grenville Road, Southcourt,  
Aylesbury.

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#### TEST YOUR BIBLICAL KNOWLEDGE

1. Where did Job live?
2. Where did Saul and his sons die?
3. Who was the secretary to Jeremiah?
4. Who asked: "What is truth?"
5. What was Barnabas' home island?
6. At what age did Job die?
7. For how long did the Israelites eat manna?
8. Who went to heaven in a whirlwind?
9. Who was martyred at Pergamum for his faith?
10. What does "Immanuel" mean?

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#### APPEAL FOR BUILDING ASSISTANCE

Greetings from the saints here in Minna to you all in the name of our Lord

and Saviour Jesus Christ.

Since the establishment of this congregation we have been roaming from place to place, from private homes to government owned public building.

And we have been strongly warned against further religious worship in the schools. Presently we are worshipping in an uncompleted batcher at the back of central bank staff quarters Tunga Minna.

With this rat-race, we have lost some members, while others become weak, some new converts ceased coming and some others find it difficult to locate us as to rat-race which involves us in compulsory house-to-house meeting. But through the effort of some brethren and meagre income of the church, we are able to acquire a piece of land for our permanent place of worship.

In view of the hardship faced by the church here in Minna, which has long being hindring the growth of this church and is now threatening the stability of the congregation.

Therefore, we are forced to request for assistance from your congregation and individual christian or some other congregation of the Lord's church to supplement our effort by donating generously toward this building project so that we may not loose the land and our initial effort of purchasing it. With the high cost of building materials in our country we find it difficult to erect a house for a place of worship through the contribution for the saints here in Minna.

Under this present circumstances, we are strongly appealing to you to rally round and encourage us to build our permanent place of worship which is our most press need, after thinking souls.

Please you can respond to us or send help through our Minister, brother Joshua O. Otola, Church of Christ, P.O. Box 389 Minna, Niger State, Nigeria.

We know your co-operation will be a great source of encouragement to us.

Thank you for such care and selfless spiritual sacrifice in regard to this. God bless you all.

In his service:

Bro. D. K. Arukwe (Secretary)

Bro. Nse Akpan (Treasurer)

Bro. Duro Oshokun (Member)

Bro. J. O. Otola (Minister).

## OBITUARY

**Tranent:** It is with great sadness that we record the passing of our sister Elleen Kerr on Sunday, 25th June. Her death was unexpected and came as a great shock to us all. Elleen was baptised into Christ at the early age of 12 and served her Lord faithfully for 45 years. Of a quiet nature Elleen had served the church as Sunday School teacher and she enjoyed helping out at church functions. As a regular attender at church services she will be greatly missed but we do thank God for her life and her faithfulness. We commend her family and her mother, Sis. Jean Brown, to the comfort of our heavenly Father. Bro. John Kneller conducted the funeral service at the Meeting Place and also at the graveside.

John Colgan, Church Secretary.

## COMING EVENTS

### ANNUAL SOCIAL

Newtongrange

Saturday, 7th October, 1995

4.00 p.m.

*Speakers:* Graeme Pearson, Dunfermline.

Mark Plain, Tranent.

We look forward to a rich time of fellowship with the various congregations.

Joe Currie, Sec./Treas.

### KIRKCALDY SOCIAL

20th April, 1996

### KIRKCALDY LADIES DAY

18th May, 1996

## GHANA APPEAL

Since this appeal began in 1989 we have made every effort to help the church in Ghana on a broad basis and we have not been involved in supporting individuals. About two years ago, however, we did take on a possible long term eye treatment for a brother in Angu.

I have received a letter in the past week requesting long term care for a brother who has developed a mental illness which will require hospital fees of around £15 per week. I have written to the brother who informed me of this case and I informed him that the Ghana Appeal was not set up to deal with these types of needs, but I promised to put a special appeal in for this brother and whatever is raised will go into the church account to pay his hospital bills until it runs out. I know the question which will be in the readers minds will be . . . what then? I don't have the answer, let us leave that in the hands of the Lord.

Anyone wishing to assist in this particular case please contact Graeme Pearson, 13 Fairways, Dunfermline, Fife. KY12 0DU. Tel. 01383 728624. Cheques should be made out to "Graeme Pearson Ghana Appeal". I would ask you to clearly indicate your gift is for "SAMUEL".

## "FORGIVING, EVEN AS FORGIVEN"

A shamefaced employee was summoned to the office of the senior partner to hear his doom. The least he could expect was dismissal. He might be sent to prison for years.

The old man asked if he were guilty. The clerk stammered that he had no defence, and must throw himself upon the mercy of his employer. "I shall not send you to prison" said the old man. "If I take you back, can I trust you?" When the surprised and broken clerk was about to leave the senior partner said, "You are the second man who has fallen and been pardoned in this business. I was the first. What you have done, I did. The mercy you have received, I received. God help us all."

*Christian Endeavour World*

10. God with us (Matthew 1:23).
9. Antipas (Revelation 2:13).
8. Elijah (2 Kings 2:11).
7. 40 years (Exodus 16:35).
6. 140 (Job 42:16).
5. Cyprus (Acts 4:36).
4. Pilate (John 18:38).
3. Baruch (Jeremiah 36:4).
2. Mount Gilboa (1 Samuel 31:8).
1. Uz (Job 1:1).

## ANSWERS

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