

The SCRIPTURE STANDARD

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

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A LESSON HARD TO LEARN

Newspapers tell us that the most popular programme on British TV, at the moment, is the "quiz show" called "Who Wants To Be A Millionaire." Even aged residents in Old Folks' Homes, and others who have no hope of ever appearing on the programme, are, apparently, as excited about the large sums being won, as are the actual winners. Everybody seems to think it quite breathtaking that fabulous sums, even a million pounds, can be won in a few minutes in a warm studio, by answering correctly a few questions, assisted in some cases by the help of friends.

Running in tandem with this programme is, of course, the ongoing National Lottery, where, with similar national excitement, sums averaging two million pounds (and up to ten million) are won every week (or is it now twice a week). Given that the odds of winning the lottery have been likened to being struck by lightning twice on the same day, everybody seems to be doing it. One can understand the abjectly poor and unemployed trying to get a windfall and enhance their sometimes miserable lives, but apparently the very rich are striving to get even more. Indeed, a lady who won a million pounds recently on the "quiz show" (just mentioned) was already very well off and rubbing shoulders with royalty.

Clearly we live in a very materialistic age and the world would look askance at us if we were to mention words like "greed" or "avarice" in connection with these popular efforts to get rich quick. Indeed many churches are more than happy to accept large sums, as handouts from the National Lottery, and have had to alter their teaching on gambling. But is there a great danger of us all being carried away by this widespread, exciting and seemingly harmless spirit of avarice, where "good causes" gain from the Lottery, and where a mere intelligence test can set us up for life? What message does it all give, especially to the young? Is it good for us? Is there merit in getting rich? Is it the spirit of avarice? Is it the spirit of covetousness? Avarice is greed. The desire for something that is another's is covetousness.

Francis Xavier, the 16th Century Jesuit Missionary, said that, in the 'confessional' every known sin had been poured into his ear, sins so terrible that he had never dreamed they existed, "But," he added, "No one has ever confessed to me *the sin of covetousness.*"

A COMMERCIALISED "CHRISTMAS"

Covetousness is an ugly word for an ugly weakness, and essentially amounts to

greed. The Greek (*Pleonexia*) for covetousness, embraces other subtle shades of meaning which includes, 'to defraud', 'over-reaching ambition', 'self-seeking' and 'taking advantage of fellow-men.' *Cupidity* and *avarice* are Latin words which refer to the same sin. Cicero defined 'avarice' as "the unlawful desire for things which belong to another" and includes a general tendency to the materialistic outlook - 'the accursed love of possessing.' We live in a very materialistic world yet we do not hear many 'sermons' of the evils of covetousness. We have just emerged from another Christmas and New Year, and although a little lip service was paid, here and there, to Jesus as a mute little infant (the world prefers their Jesus to remain a speechless little baby) yet any weighty considerations of His birth were effectively edged out by the overall preoccupation with gift hunting. The clinking of money in the tills successfully drowned out the words of some of the (more sensible) carols. A week later, Christmas was followed by the mad rush at the January sales where, at some of the larger stores, some customers slept at the door of the shop (on the pavement: in the snow) during the previous week and where, when the doors were finally opened, there was a real danger of being trampled to death in the stampede. We live in a materialistic world, all right. Doubtless we all appreciate a bargain, but surely we would hesitate to dig somebody in the ribs, or trip them up, to get it. When we consider the really vast sums of money spent on food, gifts and parties at Christmas and then reflect upon how near to God it brings the participants, we might be inclined to join with Ebenezer Scrooge and say "Bah, Humbug." Virtually everything in this world is commercialised and reduced to the terms of pounds shillings and pence. 'Money talks' and certainly did most of the talking over the festive season.

A LESSON HARD TO LEARN

In Luke (chap.12) we read that, as Jesus discoursed with the multitudes, a man out of the crowd pleaded with Jesus to come and confront his brother and force him to share the inheritance due to both of them. After explaining that He had no role as Judge or Magistrate, Jesus went on to warn His hearers, *of covetousness*. "**Take heed and beware of covetousness, for man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth.**" It would be difficult to get the world to accept that statement today. Indeed it is a most difficult lesson to learn, even for Christians. How reluctant we are to acknowledge these sentiments. After all, it is freely understood that goods and possessions are symbols of status. As we know, the world judges men in terms of human values, and is impressed, mainly with the size of a man's house, the cut of his clothes, the health of his bank balance, the make of his car, etc.

In order to reinforce this warning against covetousness Jesus immediately followed up His remarks with that well-known parable of the farmer who prospered so much that he (instead of giving some of the surplus to the poor) decided to build even bigger barns. As the farmer congratulated himself and had resolved to take his ease and "**Eat, drink and be merry**", God who had been looking down upon the scene, said, "**thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee, then whose shall these things be which thou hast provided**". Not content with this parable alone as sufficient illustration of His point Jesus added the abiding assurance that as God feeds the ravens He will assuredly also feed the disciples, and if God clothes the lily and the grass, He will also clothe the sons of men. "**O, ye of little faith**". The farmer was foolish; "**So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God.**" "**Beware of covetousness**".

EXTREMELY RICH BUT VERY POOR

Men talk today about 'controversial subjects' but can we imagine the surprise the teachings of Jesus must have caused. How could anybody be expected to love their enemies, pray for those who ill-used them, or offer the other cheek to the striker? Surely a man's life did consist of the things which he possessed, and surely it was *sensible* (if not *natural*) that a man should seek to lay up treasures on earth? It was surely flying in the face of widely held opinion, and indeed, common sense, to oppose these things; then and even now? The natural tendency of almost every human being is to become rich. Those without the means or the talent must depend on winning the football pools or engaging in crime. I asked a young man, the other day, what he wanted to become when he left school, and he replied. "A millionaire". But millionaires would be the very first to contradict public opinion and agree with Jesus on this question. Examine the lives (and especially the deaths) of any of the well-known millionaires (Henry T. Ford, Howard Hughes, Andrew Carnegie etc.) and the evidence is overwhelming indeed, that man does not live by bread alone, nor does his life consist merely of an abundance of material possessions. Its now 165 years since **Andrew Carnegie** was born and we have been hearing a lot lately about him in the media. As one of Scotland's famous (or notorious) sons, he was born in Dunfermline in fairly poor circumstances and went (as many do) to seek his fortune in the U.S.A.; the 'land of opportunity'. Starting work as a bobbin-boy in a cotton factory, he became a telegraph clerk and performed such feats of memory and skill that he was given a job on the, then new, railways. He rose to eminence in the railways (introduced 'Sleeping-cars') and after the Civil War got a foothold in the steel industry. He formed the Keystone Bridge Works and later bought out the Homestead Steel Works. Having a virtual monopoly of the supply of raw materials he began to make profits faster than he could count them. His business empire survived even the Depression of 1892 (marked by the bloody strike at the Homestead Works) and ultimately all his interests were incorporated in the United States Steel Corp. in 1901, after which he retired. Carnegie always paid low wages (the cause of the strike) and in many parts of the U.S.A. his name 'stinks' even today. Andrew Carnegie was no mere millionaire; he was a billionaire several times over. It seems that his riches did not bring him any happiness and indeed as he grew older he seemed to suffer with a troubled conscience, and sought to give his money to good causes. He gave gold medals to citizens for heroic deeds, bought organs for churches, built Public Libraries (2,505 of them), erected Institutes of Technology, financial help to Universities, Educational facilities for negroes, Trusts and other Institutions much too numerous to mention; and also pension funds for former employees. He wrote *The Gospel Of Wealth* (1900) and various other publications, acknowledging the great responsibility which wealth brings. There are multitudes of good 'quotes' from Carnegie. He said that the men who smile least are all millionaires and the men who become most miserable as they grow old are the ones who made making money their God. "They long to retire, but have nothing to retire to."

PIERCED THROUGH WITH MANY SORROWS

Life's real needs are basically, quite simple. Paul says, "**But godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into this world and it is certain that we can carry nothing out. And having food and raiment let us therewith be content**" (1 Tim. 6:6-12). We don't need midwives and morticians to confirm the fact

that we bring nothing into the world and take nothing out, but that does not stop us from trying to amass great possessions before we die. Paul says that he was content with 'food and raiment' and adds the warning that 'they who would be rich' fall into temptation, and a snare, and into many hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. He also goes on to remark that it is not money, but *the love* of money, which is at the root of every evil "which some, having coveted after, have erred from the faith and pierced themselves through with many sorrows." Paul ends his discourse (v.11) with the words, "But thou, O man of God, flee these things; and follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness. Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life." Readers, can perhaps, appreciate the truth of these words and may, themselves, know some who have indeed set out to seek riches and have ended up as described - pierced through with many sorrows and eventually drowning in destruction and perdition. But, someone asks, how rich is 'rich?' Clearly 'rich' is a relative term and means different things to different people. Obviously the 'poor' in Britain would be considered extremely rich by the 'poor' in India. The actual yardstick, or datum level, is surely unimportant, and if we prefer the pursuit of wealth (whatever conception of that term we may apply) to duty to God, and men, then we are truly engaged in a form of idolatry that can well be described as 'covetous'. Our 'affections' are supposed to be set 'on things above', not on the things on this earth. If we become preoccupied with material possessions, and worldly gain, our appetite for spiritual things correspondingly dwindles. A five-penny piece is a very small thing but if held close enough to our eye it can block out even the vastness of the sun. It is true that we must work to provide for ourselves and our families. Indeed, in this very same epistle (1 Tim.) Paul says (chap. 5:8) that "if a man does not provide for his own, and especially those of his own household, he is worse than an infidel," and "if a man will not work, neither should he eat." This is of course a duty but is surely a far cry from the spirit of avarice.

INVESTMENTS IN HEAVEN

True peace and contentment then, consists not of the abundance of things *around us* but the nature of the things which are *within us*. The godly pauper is richer, by far, than the sensual millionaire surrounded by priceless treasures and his art collections. Nero fussed and fretted in his Imperial Palace, but Paul and Silas sang their hearts out, in the stocks, in a dark and dingy jail. "But godliness with contentment is great gain" says Paul. Obviously covetousness is not something limited to millionaires, or those who would be, but applies to every sphere of activity and every class of humanity. Moses warned against coveting not only a neighbour's house, wife, servant but even his cow or donkey and so covetousness is equally a sin no matter how trivial the object.

Paul could easily have claimed financial support in his evangelistic labours but said, "I have coveted no man's silver, or gold, or apparel. Yea, ye yourselves know that these hands (as a tentmaker) have ministered unto my necessities, and to them that were with me" (Acts 20). Jesus advocated that we should accumulate treasure; certainly He did, but not in a bank here. We should lay up treasure, in heaven, said Jesus, and how can we do that?: by good works. Each faithful and good deed we do is credited to our spiritual Bank Account in heaven. That's no doubt, what Jesus meant when He said, "Sell that ye have, and give alms, provide yourselves bags (purses) which wax not old, a treasure in the heavens that faileth not, where no thief approacheth, neither

moth corrupteth" (Luke 12:33). All good deeds, and labours for Jesus, accumulate in a heavenly purse, incorruptible, thief-proof and not subject to inflation, awaiting us at life's end. The health of that heavenly bank-balance depends therefore, on our kindness, liberality and compassion for others while we sojourn here. Poor old Andrew Carnegie (he was poor, really) said that he wanted to retire but had no where to retire to. What he was really saying was that he did not seem to have much of an Account in heaven to look forward to (most of his wealth was here on earth) and perhaps that was why he started to bestow his wealth on his fellowmen - (I hope that I am not misrepresenting Mr. Carnegie).

"For a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth. Take heed *and beware of covetousness.*" "But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt and where thieves do not break through and steal. For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also." (Matt. 6:20).

EDITOR.

THE PARADOX OF FREEDOM

You shall know the truth and the truth will set you free. (John 8:32).

These stirring words of our Lord Jesus Christ are carved in stone on many a monument in the lands of Christendom. They are chiseled in letters of enormous size across the famous tower on the campus of the University of Texas. The Jews who first heard them misunderstood them and later generations have frequently misinterpreted them since the time of Jesus.

Perhaps the easiest way to distort these words is to take them in a political sense, as the original listeners did. "We are Abraham's descendants; we have never been in slavery to any man. What do you mean by saying, 'You will become free men?'" (John 8:33). This retort by the Jews shows that man very readily assumes "freedom" to mean his personal untrammled right to do as he pleases.

Jesus replied to the Jews that "everyone who commits sin is a slave. The slave has no permanent standing in the house-hold, but the son belongs to it forever. If then the Son sets you free from sin, you will indeed be free" (vv. 34,35). The freedom truth brings, said Jesus, is freedom from sin, not from political oppression.

The crucial insight was perceived by the great Russian writer, Alexander Solzhenitsyn, while he was a prisoner in a Soviet labour camp. "It was only when I lay there on rotting prison straw," he confessed, "that I sensed within myself the first stirrings of good. Gradually it was disclosed to me that the line separating Good and Evil passes not through states, nor between classes, nor between political parties, but through every human heart and through all human hearts."

Solzhenitsyn gives us this startling conclusion to his discovery: "So, bless you, prison, for having been in my life!"

FREEDOM OFF THE ROAD

Since the subject of freedom is often misunderstood, we need to resort to metaphors and parables to see that its meaning is clearly perceived.

Imagine, for the moment, that you are faced with the choice of driving your

automobile either (1) on the road or (2) off the road. You might think me ridiculous for suggesting that anyone in his right mind would consider driving his vehicle off the road. but this is exactly what people do, morally speaking, when it comes to personal freedom.

Funny as it sounds, you *do* have the freedom to drive your car off the road. You may hate rules and regulations so much, you may be so ornery and so defiant that you insist on running your vehicle out into the wilderness where it will encounter trees, bushes, stones, sand, mud, holes, ravines, and all manner of obstacles.

You have the freedom to travel off the road, but the moment you really try it you discover that your freedom to travel at all is ended. Unless you decide to extricate your car from the mud and the brush and get it back on the road again, you will have used your power of free choice to renounce your freedom to journey at all. Freedom off the road renders you immobile.

Students of history have noticed this strange paradox in the rise and fall of nations: the more freedom you have, the less freedom you have. That is, the more you let everyone do as he/she pleases the more you approach a state of anarchy, which, in turn, will produce a reaction to authoritarianism, where freedom is abolished. It's no surprise that conservative thinkers from Aristotle to Hegel have argued that freedom is meaningful only in a context of law. *First you have order, then you have freedom!*

FREEDOM ON THE ROAD

If, on the other hand, you exercise your liberty and choose to drive within the limits of the road, a second kind of freedom opens up, freedom provided by the road itself. As long as you choose to stay on the road, the road will reward you with the freedom to travel smoothly and swiftly to your destination

Think of all the benefits a highway gives you: a smooth surface, carefully banked curves, bridges over waterways, safety signals of all kinds, warnings about road conditions and traffic hazards, bright yellow centre lines, nice shoulders, call boxes, mile markers, and so on. When you freely choose to travel a road, it means you reap the road's benefits but you also accept its limitations. You must stay within the narrow confines of its width; you must go wherever it goes.

Now when Jesus says, "The truth will make you free," He refers to the freedom *of* the road, not freedom *off* the road. To illustrate the difference between these two types of freedom, Christ used His own metaphor: the slave and the free son (John 8:34,35). If you insist on sinning, He said, you make yourself a slave, one who has no permanent place in the house-hold. But if you let the Son, the unique Son, Christ, set you free from sin, you will be truly free, a member of God's house-hold. Freedom to sin brings slavery, while bondage to sonship brings true freedom. This is the meaning of that paradox often uttered by Christian thinkers and ridiculed by hedonists: *true freedom is true bondage.*

FREEDOM AND MAN

This painful choice of freedom off the road or on the road, of being a son or a slave, is the unique possession of man. We often speak of God as being free, but it is hard to imagine Him violating His own nature, i.e. sinning.

But man was deliberately fashioned by the Almighty with the capacity to violate His essential nature. Man is free to miss the target of perfect obedience to the will of his Creator. By deliberate, voluntary, self-conscious choice he has made a grotesque parody of God's original model for his life.

We sometimes speak of "Wild animals" but, as G. K. Chesterton wrote, "Man is the only wild animal. It is man that broke out. All other animals are tame animals, following the rugged respectability of the tribe or type. All other animals are domestic animals; man alone is ever undomestic, either as a profligate or a monk . . . It is exactly where biology leaves off that all religion begins" (*Orthodoxy*, p. 144).

When man abused the precious gift of freedom, it affected the entire cosmos, it unhinged all of nature (Gen. 3:14-19). Paul tells us that when our redemption is complete nature will also be restored to that original created state (Rom. 8:18-23). One might sum up God's eternal purpose as that of teaching man how to practice *freedom on the road*, freedom on the way, on *the Way*, for Christ is the Way (John 14:6). Does this mean that in heaven we'll still be free but never make any wrong choices? Almost impossible to imagine, isn't it? Always free, yet always good. Eternally ethical, yet eternally voluntary in our behaviour.

A. HOOVER.

JOSHUA 22: LESSON IN UNITY

With little doubt, one of the most difficult things for a church to create and maintain is unity. It is difficult for Christians to get along with one another. We are appalled at the persecution the early Church went through. The cruelties they suffered at the hands of Rome are unbelievable. But, Edward Gibbon in his "The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire" makes the sobering comment: "That even admitting, without hesitation or inquiry, all that history has recorded, or devotion has feigned, on the subject of martyrdoms, it must be acknowledged that the Christians, in the course of their internal dissensions, have inflicted greater severities on each other than they had experienced from a zeal of infidels." It doesn't seem reasonable that the great persecutors of Christians are Christians!

The emphasis on unity in the Bible is no accident. God knew and realised that there would be problems and unity, if it were to be created and maintained, would have to be wanted and worked for. One great Bible lesson on unity grows out of Joshua 22.

The tribes of Israel: Reuben, Gad, and half of Manasseh, when Israel was heading toward the promised land, encamped just east of Jordan for a long time. These three tribes looked at the land and decided it was good land. They decided they wanted to stay there and make that their inheritance. In Joshua 22 the land is now secured. Joshua tells them they had fulfilled their promise and they were free to return to their home across the Jordan. As they returned they built an altar of "great size" by the Jordan. When word of this altar got to Israel the immediate reaction is that the altar was built to worship idols. The evils of idol worship had been drilled into Israel. One fear was that just as God punished all Israel for Achan's sin He might punish all Israel for the sin of these tribes. They gather in verse 12 "to make war against them." First, though, they send Phinehas the priest to talk with them. Phinehas learns the altar is not to a god at all, but was erected as a sign to remind future generations they were a part of Israel. The three tribes feared that because they were not in the promised land, future generations might claim they were not a part of Israel. When word of the purpose of the altar reached Israel "it pleased them well." War was averted and peace was maintained.

LACK OF TRUST

What caused the problem? What almost destroyed the unity they had? What destroys unity today?

It is a lack of trust. We read in verses 11-12 that when Israel learned of the altar they gathered for war. Then sent Phinehas the priest to them and his first words were: "What is this treachery which you have committed against the God of Israel in turning away this day from following the Lord, by building yourselves an altar this day in rebellion against the Lord." When they saw the altar what was their reaction? They didn't say, "What's going on? We better go talk with them." It was rather, "They have committed a treachery. They're in rebellion against God." They have espoused a heathen "philosophy."

On the other side of the coin there was not a lot of trust either. In verse 24 they explain why they had built the altar. "Nay but we did it for fear that in time to come your children might say to our children, 'What have you to do with the Lord . . . So **your** children might **make our** children cease to worship the Lord.'" What a difference just a little trust would have made! What a difference a little trust does for relationships today!

NOT THINKING THE BEST

Another thing that destroys peace and harmony in a group is refusing to think the best of one another. This point is already obvious; neither side thought the best of the other. In fact, it was just the opposite. Both thought the worst of each other. Sometimes it is difficult to know which comes first: Does thinking evil cause distrust or distrust cause thinking evil of another? Either one is bad for a relationship. Either one is bad for creating and maintaining the peace and harmony.

The story illustrates all too well what judging other's motives, thinking the worst instead of the best, a lack of trust, and refusing to look for what is right does to the peace and harmony of any group. We need to develop trust; we need to learn to think the best of one another if we are to maintain the peace and harmony the Church needs.

PHYSICAL BARRIERS

Another thing that destroys the peace and harmony within a group is physical barriers. In verse 25, what the three tribes feared is that the Jordan River, something physical and not really a part of their ties to each other, would become a barrier. They "feared" (a lack of trust) that future generations would say, "See, the Lord didn't even let you in the land. You're not a part of us." There are a lot of things that can destroy a relationship, but it is extremely sad when it is something physical. One may decide to that he cannot work together with someone else because there is something doctrinal they cannot agree on. That disrupts unity. But to destroy unity and peace because of personal dislikes or personal feelings about someone or something is sad. Often we let money, education, class, personalities etc., physical things destroy peace and harmony.

There is no Jordan River separating us. We live in the same town or right around the corner, but often there might as well be an ocean between us. We live in a very physical world, We need to be careful that we do not let something physical destroy the spiritual bond that we need to have.

ZEAL FOR GOD

One last thing that very often destroys peace and harmony is a zeal for God. When you first look at it, it sounds crazy! How can a zeal for God destroy peace? As ironic as it sounds it happens a lot. In our story in Joshua 22 it was a zeal to obey God that almost

destroyed unity. One lesson that Israel had finally learned was that they should not get involved in idol worship. God had tried to teach that lesson ever since Israel left Egypt. At this point in time, they had learned it well! In verses 17-18 they remembered the sin at Peor, "From which even yet we have not cleansed ourself." They remembered how Achan had sinned in verse 20 and God punished all of Israel. Their reasoning was that if they did not act to rid Israel of idolatry, God might punish all of them. Thus, out of their zeal for God and out of a zeal to maintain righteousness they gathered for war against the tribes.

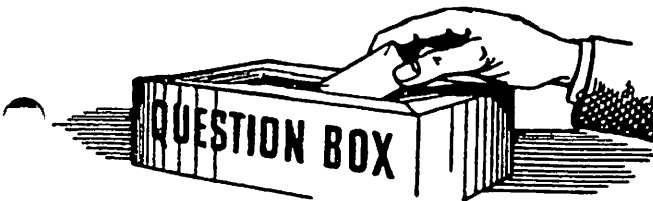
It is obvious from the story what often happens. **A zeal for God leads one to act before he has a real understanding of the situation.** Obviously Israel did not understand why the altar was erected, but they were ready for war anyway. A zeal for God will often lead on to make false accusations which readily destroy peace and harmony. A zeal for God is a beautiful thing. **BUT** if my zeal does not allow me to see and understand, leads me to accuse and accuse falsely before I know what's what, a beautiful thing can become an evil thing.

A FINAL THOUGHT

What destroys peace? Our story suggests four things: (1) A lack of trust (2) An unwillingness to think the best about one another (3) Letting physical things, physical barriers, destroy spiritual ties, and (4) A zeal for God that is not properly controlled or directed.

In spite of all the negative things we've mentioned, there's a very positive side to the story in Joshua 22. **PEACE WAS NOT DESTROYED!** In spite of all the things present in the story that could destroy peace, peace prevailed. Verse 13 indicates a very positive step. Verse 12 closes with Israel ready to make war. But in verse 13 the people first sent Phinehas to talk. The result was that war was averted and peace prevailed. Perhaps the most important lesson in the story is that in spite of all the forces present that can destroy peace and unity (and many of those forces are man's nature, his natural tendencies), if we work at peace, peace can prevail.

C. S. YOUNG.



Conducted by
Frank Worgan

DEMON POSSESSION (2)

A question, left over from last month's topic, which remains to be answered is,
"Why do we read of so many cases of demon possession in the N.T.?"

Well consider for a moment. Let me ask another question,
What, since the Fall of Man, has been the greatest and most important event in human history?

The answer must surely be; the coming into the world of the Lord Jesus Christ. His birth marked the culmination of God's plan of redemption, first hinted at in **Gen. 3:15**, when, after the Fall, He promised that the seed of the women would bruise the head of

the serpent. In **Eph. 1:10**, Paul writes about that redemptive plan, which, he declares, God '*set forth in Christ.*' It was to be a plan intended, '*in the fullness of time,*' that is, *when the right moment ('chronos') came, 'to gather together in one all things in Christ.'*

The phrase, '*in the fullness of time*' in the 'Authorised Version' is the rendering of the word '*anakephalaioo*', a word which literally means '*to head up*' or '*to gather together under one head.*' In his definition of this word, Thayer states that; "*In Eph. 1:10 God is said to bring together for Himself, all things and beings hitherto disunited by sin, into one combined state of fellowship in Christ, the universal bond*".

In other words, God's plan, in sending His Son into the world, was that the unity and harmony destroyed by the first temptation, and constantly opposed by Satan, should be fully restored.

In **Galatians 4:4** Paul reveals that, when the fullness of time came, God sent His Son into our world, '*born of woman*' - that is becoming truly human - born '*under the law*' - that is, Himself subject to law - in order that He might redeem those who are also under law.

To accomplish this restoration, Satan and his works had to be defeated, and this is why the Lord's brief period of earthly life and ministry, was marked by a greater demonstration of miraculous activity than any other period of human history.

The Gospels tell us that, as He presented Himself as God's Champion sent to overthrow Satan, Jesus performed no fewer than 40 miracles, the details of which are recorded for us by the Gospel writers. Furthermore, John explains in **John 20:30-33** and **21:25**, that these recorded miracles of the Lord, represent only a small selection from '*many other signs . . . which are not written in this book.*' These miracles both fulfilled the prophecy and established His Messiah-ship, and constituted a proof of His deity.

The Conflict with Satan

Since, therefore, Satan, who had made himself '*the prince of this world*' (**John 12:31** and **14:30**), was being challenged and was to be defeated, should it surprise us, that the period of the life and ministry of Jesus witnessed an increase of Satanic activity? The aim of Satan has always been to oppose God's plan. He had established a kingdom for himself (**Matt. 12:26**), and had demons who served him (**Luke 11:13**). Is it surprising that he should do anything within his power to attempt to defend his kingdom, and to intensify his efforts to impose his control on men and women?

This is what is signified by the increased number of instances of demon-possession about which we read in the Gospels.

Satan defeated by One stronger than he

2nd Cor. 4:4 describes Satan as '*the god of this world*' and in **1st John 5:19** the apostle states that '*the whole world lies in the evil one.*' Jesus Himself figuratively refers to Satan, in **Luke 11:2**, as a '*strong man, fully armed, guarding his own house.*' But also in that chapter, Jesus is presented as the '*One stronger than Satan,*' who has come into the world to defeat Satan and strip him of his possessions.

Furthermore, the Lord said, '*Now is the judgment of this world; now shall see the ruler of this world be cast out*' (**John 12:31-32**).

That sentence has already been passed, '*the prince of this world has been judged*' (**John 16:11**).

Hebrews 2:14 tells us that, it as by means of His own death that Jesus destroyed that

one who had the power of death, *'that is, the devil'*.

Satan saw this defeat coming, and therefore we read, in **Rev. 12:12**, that Satan has *'great wrath, because he knows that his time is short.'*

In fact, Jesus revealed that the final punishment of Satan is already prepared for Him, when in **Matt. 25:41**, He spoke of *'the everlasting fire, prepared for the Devil and his angels.'*

A Foregone Conclusion!

For this reason I regard cases of demon-possession and satanic activity, about which we read in the Gospels, as Satan's most intense and most futile attempt to prevent the Lord Jesus from accomplishing His great purpose.

Although a defeated and weakened Satan continues to seek to do as much harm as he possibly can before he is eternally destroyed, (**Rev. 20:10**), his resistance was certain to fail, because of God's promise in **Gen. 3:15**.

In his book, familiarly referred to *'the Pilgrim's Progress'*, John Bunyan likens Satan to a defeated, toothless giant, who sits in a cave, impotently gnashing his teeth at the pilgrims to whom he can no longer do any harm!

Satan may still be roaring! But he can do no harm to those who have been *'delivered from the dominion of darkness, and translated to the Kingdom of His beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins'* **Col. 1:13**.

*(All questions, please to: Frank Worgan, 5 Gryfebank Way,
Houston, Renfrewshire, Scotland. PA6 7NZ).*

REJOICE EVERMORE

The exhortation of the first Thessalonians 5:16 is to **"rejoice evermore."** A common thread running throughout the scriptures is for God's people to be happy, thankful and glad. The Greek word used here is *chairō* and is used 74 times from Matthew to Revelation.

The word is found in Matthew 2:10 when the wise men saw the star over Bethlehem. It is said they *rejoiced* with exceeding great joy. When the prodigal son returned home the father told his elder son **"it was meet that we make merry, and be glad"** (Luke 15:32). In Philippians 2:17,18 the word is translated *joy*. When Gabriel came to Mary he said, **"Hail, thou that are highly favoured, the Lord is with thee; blessed art thou among women"** (Luke 1:28). The word "hail" here is the same as rejoice. James sent *greeting* to the twelve tribes scattered abroad (James 1:1). The word is translated *God speed* in 2 John 10,11. At His resurrection, Jesus met His disciples, saying **"all hail, and they came and held Him by the feet, and worshipped Him"** (Matt. 28:9). As Jesus talked with Zacchaeus, he came down out of the tree **"and received him joyfully"** (Luke 19:6). It is also translated *farewell* in 2 Corinthians 13:11.

CAUSES FOR REJOICING

Our rejoicing should be continual. Let us note some things about which we should rejoice. Just as many rejoiced at the birth of John the Baptist (Luke 1:14), even so should we rejoice at the birth of Jesus (Luke 1:10,20); for without it, He could never have walked this earth to give us a perfect example. We should rejoice at Christ's triumph over death and the grave, for it was not possible that He could be held by it (Acts 2:24).

We should rejoice in the forgiveness of sins (Matt. 26:28). We certainly rejoice in salvation as did the Ethiopian in Acts 8:39. We rejoice evermore because our names are written in heaven in God's book of life (Luke 10:20). We ought to be as the apostles who *rejoiced* "that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His name" (Acts 5:41). "Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution" (2 Tim. 3:12). We are to rejoice in spite of meanness and persecution. "**Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you**" (Matt. 5:10,12). We rejoice when fruit comes forth from our labours (John 4:36). We rejoice evermore because of the hope of eternal life (Rom. 12:12). We are happy and glad because of the obedience of people whether they be alien sinners or children of God (Rom. 16:19). We are glad when we enjoy the fellowship of brethren of like precious faith (1 Cor. 16:17; Phil. 2:18).

In the "*Pulpit Commentary*" we read: "Joy is that feeling of delight which arises from the possession of present good, or from the anticipation of future happiness; and in both respects the believer has abundant reason for constant joy. He possesses the blessedness of forgiveness and the sure prospect of eternal life, and he has the consciousness that all things work together for good to them that love God (Rom. 8:28). God wishes His people to be happy, and does not suffer them to be indifferent to their own peace. He commands them to rejoice, yea, to rejoice evermore" (Vol. 21, page 105).

Christians are not remorseful. Christians have more over which to be happy than others in the world. The happiness of the world is only temporary and earthly. We seek that happiness to be found in Christ Jesus both in this life and the one to come hereafter. In believing of Christ's return to this earth to claim His own, "**we rejoice with joy unspeakable**" (1 Pet. 1:8). "**Rejoice in the Lord always; and again I say, Rejoice.**" "**Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord**" (Phil. 4:4; 3:1).

G. ROBINSON.

SCRIPTURE READINGS

March 4 Ezekiel 34:1-16 Matt. 9:18-34
 March 11 Genesis 19:12-29 Matt. 9:35 to 10:16
 March 18 Micah 7:1-13 Matt. 10:17 to 11:1
 March 25 Mal. 2:10 to 3:5 Matt. 11:2-19

JAIRUS' DAUGHTER

We also find this account in Mark 5:22-43 and Luke 8:41-56. Both these passages include the healing of the woman with a persistent haemorrhage. Jairus was a ruler of the synagogue. His duties would have included supervision of the building and of the services held in it. It is interesting to read that he came to Jesus at this time. He must have been

in a desperate state because he was speaking to one who was opposed by the religious authorities. His approach in faith resulted in his daughter being raised from the dead. We can only imagine how he felt at the conclusion of the miracle. The "minstrels" (23) or flute-players were professional mourners who were commonly hired in these days to share in the grief of the family. We also wonder how they all felt in seeing this girl restored to life. Surely it must have left a lasting impression upon them. I like the content of verse 26: "**And the fame hereof went abroad into all the land.**"

THE GALILEAN HARVEST FIELD

In this passage (9:27-38), we read of Jesus restoring the sight of two blind men and exorcising the dumb demon.

Such incidents are only a fraction of all that He did in His ministry (John 21:25). The wicked Pharisees claimed He could only cast out demons through the "prince of the demons" or Baal-zebul (34). This is the blasphemy against the Holy Spirit which is not forgiven (Matthew 12:31-32; Mark 3:28-30 and Luke 12:10).

Jesus showed great compassion on the people. He healed them, but He also preached to them and taught them (35). It must have been wonderful to see His deeds and hear His words. He was concerned about the few workers available to carry out the work (37). Does He have similar concerns today? There is a hymn we often sing:

*Hark! the voice of Jesus crying,
Who will go and work today?
Fields are white and harvests awaiting
Who will bear the sheaves away?
Loud and long the Master calleth,
Rich reward He offers free;
Who will answer, gladly saying,
'Here am I; send me, send me?'*

I wish I had the space to detail the whole six verses of this hymn. The writer goes on to point out that doing nothing is not an option. I like the line: "Let His work your pleasure be." We have to work now. Our rest is in the next world.

MISSION OF THE TWELVE

Jesus chose twelve apostles. It is interesting to note that there were also twelve tribes of Israel. Numbers should not be disregarded in the Bible. The names of the twelve special envoys of the Master are given here (10:2-4). Other lists are found in Mark 3:16-19; Luke 6:14-16 and Acts 1:13. They had instructions to follow, which are clearly detailed in this section of Scripture (5-42). The early verses reveal that they had to concentrate on the Jews and that they

had to take no provisions for their journey, but to depend on charity. "Consider: The Twelve had first to witness to their own people. It is a serious delusion to think that the 'flop' at home will be a shining success in the mission field" (F. F. Bruce).

"Viewed in whatever light we may, the Apostles, and first propagators of Christianity, are the most extraordinary men the world ever saw . . . They appear to have been selected, not only because they were obscure and illiterate, but because they were men of the humblest capacity. I have often admired the wisdom of the founder in selecting such advocates for His cause. He wanted *eye-witnesses* and *ear-witnesses* and selected men from a calling which was more favourable to the production of good eyes and ears than perhaps any other" (Alexander Campbell).

PERSECUTION AHEAD

Verses 16-23 tell of persecution ahead. Jesus' words were, of course, shown to be true. They persecuted Jesus and they were going to persecute His followers. "They" included "councils" (17), which were local sanhedrins, and "governors and kings" (18), which might be Roman governors and Jewish kings like Herod Agrippa. Domestic division was also to feature strongly in the early days of the Church (21: 35-37). "**Now the brother shall betray the brother to death and the father to son; and children shall rise up against their parents and shall cause them to be put to death**" (Mark 13:12). There were going to be difficult days ahead and things would be far from easy. However, the Holy Spirit would inspire their message (19-20). (A good example is found in Acts 4).

Later on, there were ten major perse-

cutions of the saints in the Roman Empire. Nero was one of the worst perpetrators. the famous work *Foxe's Book Of Martyrs* is quite an eye-opener on the subject. We read: "The first persecution in the primitive ages of the Church was under Nero Domitius, the sixth Emperor of Rome, A.D. 67 . . . The barbarities inflicted on the Christians, during the first persecution, were such as excited sympathy of even the Romans themselves. Nero nicely refined upon cruelty, and contrived all manner of punishments for his victims. He had some sewed up in skins of wild beasts, and then worried by dogs until they expired; and others dressed in shirts made stiff with wax, fixed to axle trees, and set on fire in his garden. The persecution was general throughout the Roman Empire; but it increased rather than diminished the spirit of Christianity."

WORDS OF ENCOURAGEMENT

The Master goes on to offer words of encouragement to His disciples. Jesus knew all that lay ahead for them. Despite everything, they were not to be afraid. They would face death (some even by crucifixion), but they had not to fear those who can kill the body, but cannot kill the soul. Rather, they had to fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell (28). God loved them and would be with them. He would reward them for all their commitments, labours and endeavours on behalf of His Son. Denial of Jesus would lead to denial by Jesus before His Father in heaven (33). Jesus looked for unswerving allegiance and obedience. Nothing was to get in the way of their way of service to the Master - not even family ties. With Jesus, it was all or nothing. In fact, they had to lose their life to find it (39).

I know some people today who think

they can pay lip service to Christ's demands. (I have spoken to them and they are generally from a denominational background). All in all, they appear rather disinterested and apathetic. They drag themselves out to meetings, but are glad when they are finished so they can return to the comfort zone of their home to resume their television viewing. They could name all the characters in their favourite soaps, but could not name all the twelve apostles if their life depended upon it. It is all rather tragic in the light of Jesus' words here. They should remember that eternal life is in the question and joy through eternity.

JESUS AND JOHN THE BAPTIST

John the Baptist is an important figure in the history of God's people. His task was simple - to prepare the way of the Lord. This is why he has also been described as John the Harbinger. He came in the spirit of Elijah (11:14). When we think how powerful a figure Elijah was then we begin to realise how unique and powerful a figure John was. Jesus said of him: "**Among them that are born of women there has not risen a greater man than John the Baptist; notwithstanding he who least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he**" (11). John himself did not see the kingdom established, but he was a key worker in bringing this about.

John's faith needed reassuring in prison. The message from Jesus was: "**The blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached to them**" (5). Surely this was clear proof that Jesus of Nazareth was the promised Messiah.

IAN S. DAVIDSON,
Motherwell.

TEST YOUR BIBLICAL KNOWLEDGE

1. Where did Elijah challenge the prophets of Baal?
2. In what country did Abram pretend that Sarai was his wife?
3. How many tribes of Israel settled on the east side of the Jordan river?
4. Who refused to let Israel pass through their land?
5. In Daniel's vision, what did the bear have in its mouth?
6. Who was the elder: Jacob or Esau?
7. Which city did Jesus use as His base after leaving Nazareth?
8. With which island is Titus associated?
9. Matthew was also called by what name?
10. Who is the rider of the pale horse in the book of Revelation?

COMING EVENTS

Manchester: Rejoice with us over the baptism into Christ of Laura Morris, at Longshoot Church of Christ, Wigan, on Saturday the 9th of December, 2000. Laura, who is now 15, has been a friend and neighbour of Lindsay Nathan since their primary schooldays. She has regularly attended meetings since she and Lindsay went to a youth week-end in Bristol in November, 1999. From the start we have been impressed by her pleasant and sensible disposition.

The meeting was conducted by Brother Graham Gorton and attended by her father, mother and several young Christians, some of whom had travelled long distances, even from as far as London, to be at the baptism.

Laura has a deep faith and we pray that the Lord will continue to bless her with spiritual wisdom and growth in his

service and guard her from the evils of this present age. We thank God for the faithfulness of Lindsay and the Nathan family which has been an excellent example to Laura of Christ-likeness. We are grateful to the brethren at Longshoot for hosting the baptism.

ALAN ASHURST.

NEWS FROM THE CHURCHES

PETERHEAD:

Special Weekend:

Dates/Times:

Saturday, 24th February, 7 p.m.
 Sunday, 25th February, 10 a.m.,
 11 a.m., 6 p.m.

Speaker: Bill Mair (Buckie)

Annual Social:

Dates/Times:

Saturday 14th April, 3 p.m., 6 p.m.
 Sunday, 15th April, 10 a.m.,
 11 a.m., 6 p.m.

Speakers: S. Worgan (Livingston)
 and J. Mooney (Livingston)

Gospel Campaign:

With Harding Students in June.
 (Dates and Times still have to be confirmed)

Speaker: Jack Strachan (East Kilbride)

A warm welcome awaits all.

TRANENT SOCIAL

17th March, 2001

GLENROTHES MEN'S DAY

3rd February, 2001

BOOK FOR SALE

ALEXANDER CAMPBELL'S

"FIVE DAYS IN FIFE"

The Kirkcaldy church has just published the second book written by Robert Hughes, under the above title. It contains

a diary of the events and repercussions of the visits which Alexander Campbell made to the churches in Kirkcaldy, Cupar, Auchtermuchty and Dunfermline in August, 1847.

The contents include newspaper reports and discussions, letters, posters, etc., relating to his persecution by the Scottish Anti-Slavery Society. It is a must for anyone who is interested in the life and works of Alexander Campbell and has many original items and illustrations. The book contains over 12,000 words and 10 illustrations. It is a companion book to the previously published "Churches of Christ in the County of Fife, Scotland."

We ask that a donation is made to cover the cost of printing, postage and packing of £1.50 (UK only) payments made out to "Church of Christ"

Copies of "Churches of Christ in the County of Fife, Scotland," which was published 2 years ago to mark our 200 year celebration are still available for £4.00 per copy.

Both books can be purchased for £5.00 including postage and packing (UK only). Prices outwith UK on application.

GHANA APPEAL

The Work continues to flourish in the Volta region in particular. The brethren are grateful to those who donated to this ongoing work.

Thank you IMB for your cheque I have received. Receipt No. 1391 on 8th January.

GRAEME PEARSON,
Dunfermline.

GIVING

There is no need for commands and rules as to how much the members of the Church in New Testament times should part with, how it was to be contributed, and such like. They gave *what* was needed, *when* it was needed, and *all* that was needed. (Wm. Crockart at Ann Conf. of churches of Christ, 1897).

1. Mount Carmel (1 Kings 18:20).
2. Egypt (Genesis 12:11).
3. Two and half (Numbers 34:15).
4. Edomites (Numbers 20:14-21).
5. Ribs (Daniel 7:5).
6. Esau (Genesis 25:25-26).
7. Capernaum (Matthew 4:13).
8. Crete (Titus 1:5).
9. Levi (Mark 2:14; Luke 5:27).
10. Death (Revelation 6:8).

ANSWERS

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E-mail: john@kkneller.freeserve.co.uk

Telephone: (01875) 853212 to whom change of address should be sent.

EDITOR: JAMES R. GARDINER, 70 Avon Street, Motherwell, Lanarkshire, Scotland. ML1 3AB. Telephone: (01698) 264064