

The SCRIPTURE STANDARD

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

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AS IN THE DAYS OF NOAH

In my Sept. article ("Yet Once More"), on the subject of earthquakes, I remarked that earthquakes (and various other phenomena such as false Christs, famines, pestilences, wars and rumours of wars etc.) would precede and presage the destruction of Jerusalem (which occurred in 70 A.D.) but that omens, warnings, indications, hints, signs would be given to us regarding the end of the world, and that, in short, the end of the world would occur suddenly with no warning whatsoever.

In this connection I have received an interesting letter from brother John Wood, 19 Venturefair Avenue, Dunfermline, taking issue with my remarks and asserting that indications **will be given** prior to the end of the world. Our brother's letter is too long to quote in full but I hope to quote most of it. Br. Wood agrees, of course, that Matt. 24 deals with two quite separate events, (i.e. the destruction of Jerusalem and the end of the world), and says, (quote) "There can be no dispute that verses 15-20 refer specifically to the fall of Jerusalem. In view of the statement in v. 27, however, it cannot be assumed that v's 4-14, 21-26 must also refer to the same event, **"For as the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west, SO SHALL the COMING of the Son of man be."** The parable of the fig tree can apply to either event. It would be passing strange if the Lord gave signs of the former event and none of the latter. Vs. 36-39 refer specifically to the coming of the Son of man and speak eloquently of the conditions prevailing upon the earth at that time. Vs. 37-38 **"But as the days of Noah were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be ... FOR as in the days that were before the flood, they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the flood came and took them all away. SO SHALL ALSO the COMING of the Son of man be"**. If such conditions are not signs of the times one would ask what can be? The salutary warning in Vs. 40-42 that the Lord comes SUDDENLY does not alter the fact that there can, and will be, distinct signs preceding the event. And who can deny there is a need for such signs?" (unquote).

I have to say that I disagree with most of what Bro. Wood has just said (and will explain why, in a moment) but I welcome his comments (and criticism from any quarter). If I make statements in the "S.S." I should stand ready to justify them. None of us are infallible and should critically examine all that we believe and practise, in the light of the N.T. and change our views if required. The older we get the less dogmatic we become and some N.T. passages are difficult to be dogmatic about: Matt 24 being one of them, and there are difficulties: but I don't see any difficulty with this issue before us, i.e. will there be any signs prior to the end of the world?

TWO QUESTIONS: TWO Answers

Perhaps it might be useful to the general reader if we remind ourselves of the circumstances which prompted Jesus to predict the contents of Matt. 24. The disciples had been admiring the architectural beauty of the Temple, and the city in general, but later, in a conversation with Jesus on the Mount of Olives, were aghast with amazement and consternation to hear Him say that, in a relatively short while, the temple and the city would be completely destroyed, i.e. **"There shall not be left here one stone upon another that shall not be thrown down."** (v.2). Once the disciples had recovered their breath they asked, **"Tell us, when shall these things be? And what shall be the sign of Thy coming, and of the end of the world"**. In all probability Jesus said a great deal more than that which is recorded, because the disciples seem to be asking two quite separate questions: and Jesus seems, thereafter, to be giving two different answers, i.e. **"When shall these things be?"** (re the demolition of the city), and **"What shall be the sign of Thy coming; and the end of the world."**

From what follows, in Christ's answers, it seems that Jesus gives **much information** about the signs and portents which would precede the fall of the Temple and the sacking of the city (and indeed the demise of the great and historic Jewish religion), but gives virtually **no information** concerning the end of the world. History agrees that the destruction of Jerusalem was brought about by Roman Legions, under Titus, in 70 A.D. which was some forty years in the future when Jesus had this conversation, and so all of these signs predicted by the Lord had forty years in which to present themselves. Jesus said that within that time, false Christs would abound (v.5); there would be wars and rumours of wars (v.6); famines, pestilences and earthquakes would multiply in many places (v.7); and these would be **just the beginning** of sorrows.(v.8). The disciples would also be hated, prosecuted and persucuted (v.9) and many would betray one another. Many false prophets would arise and the faith of many would wax cold (v.11, 12); the gospel would be preached in all nations (v.14); and when, eventually, they saw Jerusalem encircled by armies they were to flee to the mountains in great haste (v.16, 17). They were to pray that these urgent events would not necessitate their flight in winter, or on a Sabbath Day (when travel facilities were curtailed) and pregnant women and those with small infants would suffer particularly: for there would be **unprecedented tribulation** (**"such as hath not been from the beginning of the world until now, no, nor ever shall be"** (v.21). Indeed the sacking of the city would be so horrendous that none would survive unless the length of siege was foreshortened (which it was) (v.22) and again, forty years after Christ having left the earth, there would be numerous false sightings of Him (v.26). These then were to be the real and tangible indications that the destruction of Jerusalem, (with the vast majority of its occupants), was imminent and the disciples, thus armed with prior warning, would know what to look for, and would be ready to flee to the hills.

Long Answer and a Short One

All of this seems relatively straight-forward, but at v. 29 we are advised, in what seems to be very figurative and symbolic language, of **the effect** that the destruction and tribulation would have: i.e. **"IMMEDIATELY AFTER the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heaven shall be shaken"**. And this verse is followed up by references to the nations mourning because they see "the sign of the Son of Man in the heavens" and shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven etc., which make some readers feel that these references must be taken literally and must refer to the end of the world. But, unless there are some verses in Matt. 24 out of chronological order, **all these events** were to occur in the lifetime of the generation to whom Jesus spoke, for, in v. 33, 34 He says, **"So likewise ye, when ye shall see all those things, know that it is near, even at the doors. Verily I say unto**

you, **This generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled.**" It seems clear, therefore, that all the expressions between v.29 and v.3 must be regarded metaphorically, i.e. the sun being darkened, the moon not giving light, stars falling from heaven etc. As we shall see in a moment, all these terms were used in the O.T. in reference to the destruction of Babylon.

Thus the Lord's answer to "When shall these things be?" seems quite informative, almost comprehensive. However, Christ's answer as to the end of the world is encompassed in a very few words: i.e. that it would come "as a thief in the night". His answer was short because there was nothing to tell. Indeed Jesus did say, "**But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but My Father only**" (v.36). Obviously when Jesus made that statement He was not talking of the destruction of Jerusalem, but the end of the world. **The day, and the hour, is completely unknown to man, to angels, and, it seems, to Jesus:** for that knowledge is in the keeping of the Father only. How then can we even expect to be able to read the signs of its coming?

Similar Symbolical Language in O.T.

A better understanding of Matt 24 is achieved if we also read Mark 13 and Luke 21 (parallel passages). There are difficulties and we can but try to make a sensible differentiation between the two events: one which is long past, and one which is still to come. The difficulties prevent us from being too dogmatic on the subject. Also, it is important that we should treat phrases like "**the Day of the Lord**" and the "**coming of the Lord**" with considerable care. The Lord has had several "Days" and Christ has had various "Comings" or "Appearances". Foy E. Wallace Jr. in his excellent book, *God's Prophetic Word* points out that Christ's promise, all through the Book of Revelation to "come" quickly etc. does not refer to the end of the world, but that "coming of Christ is mentioned in several senses in the N.T." He mentions Matt. 16:27; Matt. 26:64, and the letter to the seven churches (in Rev. 2,3) where, to the church at Thyatira Jesus said, "**Hold fast till I come**"; and to the church at Pergamos said, "**Repent or else I will come unto thee quickly**"; and to the church at Ephesus said virtually the same thing; and to the church at Sardis said, "**He would come on them as a thief**"; and to the church at Philadelphia said, "**Hold fast ... for Behold I come quickly**". Clearly these "Comings" were not literal but spiritual and metaphorical.

Similarly we should not be too perplexed by the striking language used in reference to the aftermath of Jerusalem's destruction; i.e. the sun darkened, the moon not giving her light, the stars falling from heaven etc. for, as previously mentioned, this type of symbolical language would mean more to the Jews than it means to us and was employed in the O.T. at various times with reference to notable events. For instance, the destruction of Babylon is described as "**the Day of the Lord**" (Isaiah 13) and v6 announces that "**the Day of the Lord is at hand.**" Verse 9 says, "**Behold the Day of the Lord cometh, cruel both with wrath and fierce anger, to lay the land desolate; and He shall destroy the sinners thereof out of it. For the stars of heaven, and the constellations thereof shall not give their light; for the sun shall be darkened in his going forth, and the moon shall not cause her light to shine.... v13 Therefore will I shake the heavens, and the earth shall remove out of her place in the wrath of the Lord of Hosts and in the day of His fierce anger.**" And so, we have here in Isaiah, re the sacking of Babylon, language virtually identical to that of Matt. 24, re the destruction of Jerusalem. Whatever these forceful references to the sun, moon and stars meant, they were clearly symbolical, and commensurate with the gravity and immensity of the occasion. After all, the demise of the Jewish religion, and the literal destruction of the Holy City and the Temple was, (with the exception of Christ's birth) the most momentous event of the age: and certainly "Immediately After" these tumultuous events there would be a complete eclipse of Jewish thought and ritual; a great darkness indeed.

It is, perhaps, also worth a mention that in Zech. 14:1 the destruction of Jerusalem is described as “**The Day the Lord cometh.**” See also Isaiah 17, 18 and 19 for the use of much figurative language in reference to the destruction of Damascus, Ethiopia and Egypt respectively: e.g. “**Behold the Lord rideth upon a swift cloud and shall come into Egypt.**” (19:1).

BURGLARS DON'T GIVE CLUES

Is Brother Wood, and doubtless many others, justified in believing that any indications will be given from heaven that the end of the world is near? I **do not believe so. Jesus had every opportunity to encourage us in that belief but did not do so. Indeed He definitely discouraged us in that belief and said that the end would come “as a thief in the night”**; i.e. the thief goes to great lengths to give **no hints or indications whatsoever** that he is going to rob our houses. The fact of the end of the world is certain but the day (and hour) is **unknown** and will not be publicised. Jesus said that conditions in the world prior to the end of the world would be exactly similar to those obtaining prior to the great flood: i.e. people would be “**eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage**” and “**knew nothing until the flood came and took them all away**”. Brother Wood refers to this and asks, “If such conditions are not signs of the times, one would ask what can be”? I must respectfully disagree that these are in any way “signs of the times” or end the world: indeed they are no signs at all. Surely **this was the point** the Lord was making, that the end of the world would be as sudden and unexpected as the flood in Noah’s day. Noah was preaching for years but no one was listening: the people were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage: i.e. engaged in very **normal human pursuits**, and when the flood eventually came it caught them all completely by surprise and all, except eight souls, perished. There is nothing wrong with eating and drinking, or marrying and giving in marriage: these are every-day legitimate pursuits: and mankind will be thus engaged when the end of the world comes and catches everyone completely by surprise.

Brother Wood goes on to say that “The fact that the Lord will come suddenly does not alter the fact that there can, and will be, distinct signs preceding the event ... In 1967 the Arabs attacked the young nation of Israel. The Jews fought back and took Jerusalem in the process of defeating their enemies. That was an event of tremendous significance, because it marks the end of the times of the Gentiles (Lu. 21:24) and we should be naive indeed if we did not recognise this as the most prominent sign of the Lord’s coming Vs. 25-27; Acts 1:11; Ju.14. We must not be blind and deaf to the signs of this age. The nuclear bomb, the rising tide of pollution, population explosion, famine, pestilence, earthquakes, the return of the Jews to Palestine, the end of the times of the Gentiles ...” Brother Wood is well known as a thorough and assiduous student of the Word, and I know that many will agree with these views he has expressed but I certainly don’t. Quite often we hear people say, “Isn’t the world in a terrible state: I think it must be near its end” and some even quote the signs given prior to the destruction of Jerusalem (i.e. the wars and rumours of wars, earthquakes, pestilences, famines etc.) but this, it seems to me, is a failure to distinguish between the two quite separate issues: the end of Jerusalem and the end of the world. Time would fail us to recount, from the Middle-Ages onwards, of the thousands who have had a stab at predicting the day and even the hour of the world’s end, using mathematics, prophecy, astronomy and other calculations but the world has outlived them all. Even allowing for the remote possibility of any “double fulfilment” of prophecy, Jesus Himself said the end would come as a thief in the night: **unannounced; no hints, no signs, no portents** or any other indication. Just like a thief in the night. Occasionally door-to-door salesmen might send us a card saying that they will be operating in our area the following day, but it must be rare for burglars to do that. How stupid would a thief have to be to give us **indications** as to when he will call?

and how stupid would we have to be, to expect it?

EDITOR.

GLEANINGS

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

"This one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus."

Philippians 3:13,14.

The Prize in View

Verse 13 ("I speak the word of pause and of appeal, as if I could stand by you, and lay my hand upon your arm.) I whatever others may think and do about themselves, do not count myself emphatic like to have seized the crown as yet; No, one thing — my thoughts, my purposes, are all concentrated on this one thing — the things behind forgetting, as one experience after another falls behind me into the past, and towards the things in front stretching out and onward, like the eager racer, with head thrown forward and body bent towards his object, seeking for more and yet more, in the grace and power of my unchangeable Saviour.

Verse 14 Goal-ward I press on, "not uncertainly," with no faltering or divided aim, unto, till I actually touch, the prize (1 Cor. 9,24). the victor's wreath, the prize of, offered by, made possible through, the high call of God, the voice of His prevailing grace coming from the heights of glory and leading the believer at length up thither, in Christ Jesus; for through Him comes the "call," and its blessed effect is to unite the "called," the converted, sinner to Him, so that he lives here and hereafter in Him."

H.C.G. Moule.

It Can Be Done

"Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure."

Philippians 2: 12,13.

"You say, my son, "It can't be done!"
Your statement isn't true!
You mean, my son, "It can be done!"
But can't be done by you."
What is the Prize?

"What is it Paul says that he is after? He said, This one thing I do, or, This one thing — forgetting things behind, stretching forward to the things before, I press forward towards what? The goal. Well, what is the goal? The prize. What is the prize? Then follows the amazing phrase. **"The high calling of God in Christ Jesus."** The upward calling, as some speech, "the supernatural calling" That is what he saw. What is this supernatural calling? He says, I have seen it in Christ Jesus. I have not only seen Him in His own glory. I have seen in Him, an interpretation of the possibilities of my own life. The supernal the upward, the on high-calling of God in Christ Jesus."

Campbell Morgan.

Continuance is the Test of Reality

**"If the Saviour's won your heart, and for Heaven you've made a start,
keep your eye upon the chart — AND GO ON.
Buy the truth and sell it not, hold for God the bit you've got;
be content what'er your lot — AND GO ON.
Feed on Christ the living bread, drink of Him the Fountain Head;
think of why His blood was shed — AND GO ON."**

C.G.

The Bible Speaks

"To the weak became I as weak, that I might gain the weak: I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some.

And this I do for the Gospel's sake, that I might be partaker thereof with you.

Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run, that ye may obtain.

And every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible. I therefore so run, not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beateth the air:

But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway." 1 Cor.9:22-27.

"I can do all things through Christ which strengthened me." Phillippians 4:13.

Selected by Leonard Morgan.

"YE ARE GODS" (John 10:35)

People who wish to denigrate the Lord Jesus, claiming that he was merely a man or, at the most, only a Prophet, will quote some of his own words to try to prove their point. The verse quoted in our title is a case in point.

Under the law of Moses the punishment for blasphemy was stoning to death. In this incident zealous Jews in the crowd to whom Jesus was speaking, had picked up stones to stone him to death because he had said:—

"I and the Father are one," (v.30)

The Lord Jesus often referred to God as his Father in a very personal way, so, as they put it, they were going to stone him to death for blasphemy, because **"he being a man made himself God"** (v.33). The Lord Jesus was then, apparently, in a predicament. By referring to God as his Father He had implied that he was God's Son, thus making himself equal with God. How was he going to respond to this situation?

He quoted to them from their own holy book:—

"Is it not written in your law I said, Ye are Gods?"

Then He reasoned with them that if God called those people to whom He had sent his word "gods", how was it that they claimed that He was blaspheming, because He said that He was the Son of God (v.36).

The present day enemies of the Lord Jesus claim that He was implying that just as the people to whom God had said **"ye are Gods"** were only ordinary human beings, so He was claiming to be nothing more than an ordinary human being, even though He had referred to God as his Father. Even when looked at from the most favourable point of view, if that is what Jesus was doing, it puts Him in a very bad light.

At first there seems to be no answer to this. When read superficially, this passage seems to suggest that in order to get out of a predicament that he himself had precipitated (by referring to God as His Father and calling Himself "Son of God") He was suggesting that even according to the Jew's own holy book, His statements implied nothing more than that He was an ordinary man.

The Background

Words considered out of context are readily misunderstood. To appreciate the significance of why the Lord Jesus should quote **"Ye are Gods"**, we need to know something of the passage they were taken from and to appreciate some of the background to the circumstances in which they were recited.

That statement was taken from Psalm 82 verse 6, which was written some 1,000 years before Jesus was born.

Those to whom God had entrusted his word were expected to judge the people according to God's standards (Ez. 44,24). In Psalm 82, the prophet Asaph declares that God is criticizing and condemning the spiritual leaders of Israel for their injustice.

Because God had put them in this responsible position and because to the common people these judges were the mediator between God and themselves, as God's mouth-pieces they were, in a sense, gods themselves to the people. They were then responsible for carrying out justice as God would require it to be carried out.

Instead of saving the poor and needy from the power of the wicked, these so-called judges were showing partiality to the wicked and despising the poor.

"How long will ye judge unjustly, and accept the persons of the wicked? Defend the poor and fatherless: do justice to the afflicted and needy. Deliver the poor and needy: rid them out of the hand of the wicked." (vv. 2,3).

Consequently the poor and needy were in a quandary, not understanding what was going on, and not knowing which way to turn.

"They (i.e. the poor, fatherless, and needy) know not, neither will they understand; they walk on in darkness: all the foundations of the earth are out of course." (v.5).

The foundation of stable society is just government. Their authorities had gone right off the rails, morally and spiritually. Their spiritual leaders had become self-interested, corrupt and arrogant. It was to these depraved leaders that God was saying:—
"I said, Ye are Gods, and all of you sons of the Most High. Nevertheless ye shall die like men, and fall like one of the princes." (v.6).

Thus pointing out to those corrupt judges that however high and mighty they thought they were, as even princes die, just like ordinary men, so they would inevitably die.

The Impact

To understand the impact that quoting this verse **"Ye are Gods"** would have upon the prominent Jewish leaders in the crowd listening to Jesus, we would need to appreciate that they would have been steeped in the Jew's holy book from early childhood. They would know most, if not all the Psalms off by heart. Quoting one sentence from a Psalm would bring the whole Psalm to their mind. These Jewish leaders, like the men of the prophet Asaph's time, were corrupt and unjust. They grovelled to the rich and powerful, and made life difficult for the poor, the needy and widows. Several times the Lord Jesus had openly criticized them for this. So they would immediately understand what he was getting at when he quoted that sentence **"Ye are Gods"** from Psalm 82.

The climax of the Psalm is in its last verse:-

**"Arise, O God, judge the earth:
for thou shalt inherit all the nations"**

They would understand quite clearly that the Lord Jesus was saying to them, you are the wicked judges and I am the answer to this prophecy. I am God arising to judge the earth. No wonder they were incensed. Let us read the remainder of the passage from John chapter 10 verses 36 - 39:-

"Say ye of him, whom the Father sanctified and sent into the world, Thou blasphemest: because I said, I am the son of God? If I do not the works of my Father, believe me not. But if I do them, though ye believe not me, believe the works: that ye may know and understand that the Father is in me, and I in the Father. They sought again to take him: and he went forth out of their hand."

God had specially sent the Messiah, the Lord Jesus, into the world to bring about God's justice. How then, could these corrupt Jewish leaders, dare accuse Him of blasphemy?

Contrary to the suggestion that in this passage the Lord Jesus is denying any claim to deity, he is claiming to be God, arising to judge the earth, the inheritor of all the nations.

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HEAD COVERING AND THE HAIR

An examination of the teaching presented in "The Divine Pattern Advocate" Vol. 2, August 16, 1987, under the heading, "The Hair Ordinance", (herein referred to for brevity as "H.O.").

Notes: This is not the first attempt to justify bareheaded female worship, and will probably not be the last. In recent years there has been a great increase in this practice and it is particularly noticeable in churches with American support, and under American influence. Since this question has to do with the worship of God, it cannot be assumed that the Holy Spirit has left without guidance in such a matter, and sisters in Christ in particular are earnestly advised to give this subject the most serious consideration. All readers are urged to keep the text of 1 Cor. 11:3-16 before them in studying this question.

This writer attended a lecture by the author of "H.O." and noted that no mention was made of veils during the first hour of his talk when dealing with vs. 3-6; yet subsequent discussion revealed that he was quite aware that the word "covered" is from KATALUPTO which means "to cover wholly," i.e. "to VEIL" (Strong). Apparently, it did not suit the author's purpose to mention that a man must not be veiled when praying or prophesying.

One of the main arguments in "H.O." is that in order to be "covered" a woman's hair must not be cut in any way whatsoever. Para. 4, line 6, "Likewise, when a sister cuts off a small amount (or large amount) of her hair, her hair has been "shorn" or (KEIRO). Women are directed not to shear (KEIRO) their hair for it is their God-given covering".

The theory presented is that if a woman shears her hair in the slightest degree she is uncovered, and THAT is the offence for which she brings dishonour upon her head when praying or prophesying. Verily in this context, "What is good for the goose, is good for the gander." So if a man cuts as much as half an inch off his hair, he must also be uncovered, and thus can engage in prayer; the absurdity of which must be apparent to all.

If this "interpretation" is written into 1 Cor. 11:5 we have:- "But every woman that prays or prophesies with half an inch trimmed off the length of her hair dishonours her head, for that is all one as if she was shaved." The absurdity of which is also self evident.

Another argument presented under "The Basis for the Hair Ordinance" Para. 3, lines 10-13, "The man's uncovered head symbolises his subjection to Christ, while the woman's covered head symbolises her subjection to the man." But in Para. 2, lines 9-10 we read ". . . a rejection of the hair Ordinance constitutes a rejection of the Lord's will." Presumably that applies to men and women alike. So, a woman's being veiled is as much a matter of subjection to Christ as a man's being unveiled. 1 Cor. 11:4 reads, "Every man praying or prophesying having his head veiled dishonours his head." One would naturally think that the head which is covered is the head which is dishonoured, but the "H.O." theory insists that a man having his head covered dishonours Christ (as his "Head"), and that a woman uncovered dishonours the man (as her "Head"). According to this "interpretation" which is based on v. 3, there should be some corresponding relationship between Christ and God. Paul mentions none. There is none. A man worshipping God with his head covered dishonours his own head. Likewise also, the uncovered woman dishonours (brings dishonour upon) her own head; v. 5, "For that is all one (is the same in principle) as if she were shaved" — which is a matter of shame for herself!

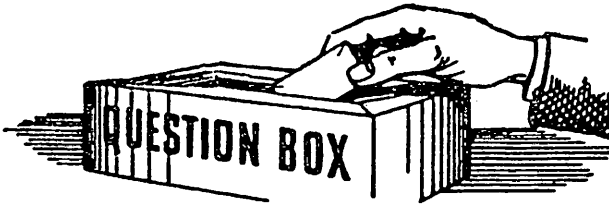
The words “cover” and “covered” in vs. 4-6 are from KATALUPTO, whereas the word “covering” in v. 15 is from PERIBOLAION. One would expect that by using two distinctly different words for “veil” the Holy Spirit is indicating some vital change in SENSE. The “H.O.” theory insists that these words always refer to the hair, and never to any other kind of covering. This will be examined again in more detail.

Under the heading, “**What type of Coverings?**” the idea of an “**artificial veil**” is introduced and requires some consideration as such although it will be referred to again under that heading. That which is “artificial” is something produced by art rather than by nature. The term is applied to things which in some sense are copies of natural things, in order to make them appear the same, or to have the same function, etc. One may have an artificial hand, limb, eye, teeth, eye, and hair. We can produce artificial flowers, pearls, gems, etc., but there is no way one can have an artificial VEIL, any more than one can have an artificial pair of trousers, or an artificial shirt. In the nature of things, it is impossible! A literal veil is an article of clothing. It is a fabric covering for concealment or protection of the head or face. There is nowhere one can go and buy an artificial veil. The term “artificial veil” is meaningless.

We shall now cite some basic “Hair Ordinance” propositions to which answers will be given.

(To be continued)

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Conducted by
Alf Marsden

“Recently at Mecca many hundreds were tragically suffocated (in a tunnel) which Islam described as ‘God’s Will’. We often hear brethren describe everything that happens to them, or does not happen to them, as God’s Will, i.e., whether or not they get a job, whether or not they are ill, etc. What is God’s Will? Should we blame God for everything?”

I read somewhere once — and I believe the source was Islamic — that everything, good or evil, exists by the will of Allah, and that all that is done is done by his will, and what he willeth not does not come to pass. So we can see that a disaster such as the one mentioned would be attributed to ‘the will of God’ (or Allah in the case of Islam).

The question has puzzled and confused people all down the ages, even among Christians, and we have frequently heard such statements as, ‘it’s God’s will’; ‘it’s fate’; ‘it’s what you were born for,’ and so it has gone on. Do we really believe these things, and have many totally misconceived what God’s Will is? There would seem to be undeniable scriptural evidence to suggest that God made judgments against those who displeased Him (Lot’s wife, the blinding of the Syrian army, leprosy of King Azariah, etc.); the punishment was usually as a warning or discipline. However, this wasn’t so in every case. Jesus said that eighteen people were slain when the tower in Siloam fell on them, but He added, “**think ye that they were sinners above all men that dwelt in Jerusalem? I tell you, Nay: but except ye repent, ye shall all likewise**

perish" (Luke 13:1-5). But these judgments have nothing in common with the concept of calamities as expressed in other religions (similar to the one in the question). My personal opinion is that if God **does** act in the way the questioner suggests that some people **believe** Him to act, then there must be what I call 'an unrevealed will of God' for every person. It seems to me, though, that a loving God such as ours would have **revealed** His will, so there must also be 'a revealed Will of God'. We shall need to examine both of these concepts in some detail.

THE 'UNREVEALED WILL OF GOD'

By this I mean that God **must** have a 'will' for every person who has ever been born, who is living now, and who will be born in the future. This must also mean that He will 'fore-ordain' everything which will happen to them individually throughout their lives. Since we are unaware of what is in store for us **during** our lives, then God must keep such things secret until they actually happen.

There is also, in this respect, the very serious problem of prayer to consider. If the counsel of God is immutable, then will prayer be able to change what has already been 'willed'? (The reader will understand, of course, that I am developing this argument from the point of view of those who believed that God 'wills' things for us without prior revelation). But if prayer cannot change pre-determined events, then what is the point in the exhortations to 'pray without ceasing'? Furthermore, there would seem to be little value in the intercessory powers of Jesus and the Holy Spirit. You see the difficulty we get ourselves into if we do not 'think things through'.

Thanking God for 'journeying mercies' is another traditional expression in the Church. I recall a conference which was held in Lancashire many years ago when such thanks was expressed, but unfortunately some who were travelling to the conference were involved in a road accident. Was it God's Will that should happen? Had God **anything** to do with the accident? Did He **arrange** that some should arrive safely and others shouldn't? If that is so, was He more pleased with the ones who arrived safely than He was with those who didn't? If our reasoning on such matters becomes so confused, do we not run the risk of making our Heavenly Father seem to be irresponsible and capricious?

The whole question of Divine intervention in the everyday affairs of peoples' lives is one which is fraught with difficulty. Far be it from me to say that God has **never** intervened: He certainly has the power and the ability to do so, but it seems to me that in most situations in life it is our own **expectations** which are paramount, rather than any exclusive 'will' that God may have for us. We acknowledge with enthusiasm His loving care for us when things work out as we expect them to, but we are 'disappointed' in Him when people with no Christian pretensions seem to prosper more than we do who try to serve Him. This to my mind indicates a disturbing misconception of our relationship with Him. This misconception could lead us into thinking that when a Christian is, say, interviewed for a job, that the interviewer will be influenced in some way by God to choose the Christian; there is an influence there, but surely it comes from the Christian interviewee who has appropriated Christian characteristics into his life which the interviewer sees and approves of. Similarly with written examinations. Are we to conclude that God guides the hand of the Christian to produce a correct answer, or is it rather that the Christian, having been exhorted to be diligent in **all** things, has applied that diligence to his study and done it 'as unto God', so producing **by his own effort** the fruits of such diligent study? So it goes on. Let's not get into the 'God'll Fix It' syndrome, but let us try to understand His **real** Will for us. That, I believe, He has revealed to us in no uncertain way.

THE REVEALED WILL OF GOD

Towards the end of the so-called Sermon on the Mount Jesus said, **“Not everyone that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven”** (Matt. 7:21). You will notice from this statement that the will of God is not something which happens to us, but is something which we must do. Later on in the same chapter Jesus marks the difference between ‘doing’ and ‘not doing’. If we want our lives to stand the test then we must build on the solid rock, and not on the shifting sand (vv 24-27). Furthermore, as Jesus pointed out, it is the difference between entering the Kingdom of Heaven, and not being able to enter. So in the first instance the revealed Will of God tells us that we have to do something in order to gain salvation. We have to build on the solid rock. Has God revealed what this rock is. Well, it would be very remiss of Him, after telling us to build on it, if He hadn’t.

On the another occasion Jesus posed a question to his immediate disciples, **“Whom do men say that I the Son of man am.?”** Some of the disciples gave him various answers but he pressed them further, **“But whom say ye that I am.” Peter answered, “Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.”** Jesus said that this revelation had not come from men, but from His Father in Heaven; He then went on, **“And I say unto thee: That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.”** (Matt. 16:13-19). There are many who say and believe that Jesus was saying that the Church would be built on Peter, but if one studies the passage carefully, one will understand that the rock on which the Church was to be built was the confession that Peter made, that Jesus was the Christ, the Son of the living God. It is on Him that we must build. Later on, after Pentecost, Peter, having been given the power of the Holy Spirit along with the other Apostles, healed a lame man outside the Temple; John was with him when he did this. They were brought to task by the authorities (Jewish) and Peter in his defence said that the miracle of healing had been performed in the name of Jesus of Nazareth. He reminded them that they, the Jewish authorities, had given Jesus to be crucified, but that God had raised Him from the dead on the third day. His next words are very interesting, **“This is the stone (Jesus) which was set at nought of you builders, which is become the head of the corner. Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved”** (Read Acts 4:1-13). Now, I ask you, does this sound like a man who believed that he himself should be the head of the Church? No, he knew that Jesus was to be the Saviour of the world, and the head of the Church. So now we know that God has revealed that we should build on the rock, and He has also revealed who that rock is. Salvation is in Christ Jesus. God offers it to us as a gift and that is how we must receive it, but it is conditional, and His will has declared what those conditions are which we must meet.

CONDITIONS TO BE MET

First, we must have faith in God and His Christ. Shortly before Jesus ascended to Heaven He said to His disciples, **“Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptised shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned”** (Mark 16:15, 16).

Second, we must repent. On the Day of Pentecost after Peter had preached to the people, they cried out, **“Men and Brethren, what shall we do?”** Peter said to them, **“Repent, and be baptised every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit”** (Acts 2 37,38).

Third, we must be baptised. Jesus again spoke to His disciples and said, **“All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit”** (Matt. 28:18,19). Baptism is by immersion in water.

Fourth, we are to live a godly life. Peter teaches us that when we are Christians, we have to, **“Add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; and to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; and to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness love”** (2 Pet. 1:5-8).

These are the conditions to salvation. These are the things we must **do**, because this is the revealed Will of God for us. It is contained in the Bible in the New Testament (Covenant) which He made with us His creation. We should listen to what He tells us, and **then do His Will**.

CONCLUSION

I know that we all rely on God, and it is good that we do so. Many times in life we are perplexed by the things which happen to us, but we shouldn't blame God for the unpleasant things which beset us; there is no evil in Him. On the contrary, He has dealt with sin by sending His Son to die for us; that is the action of a loving Father and an equally loving Son. Let us do His revealed Will, and leave the rest in His hands.

(All questions, please, to Alf Marsden, 50 Costessy Way,
Winstanley, Wigan, WN3 6ES)

WORSHIPPING FROM THE HEART

Two facts concerning worship are continuously impressed upon us from the scriptures. One is that man has always worshipped. From Cain and Abel of the Old Testament to this day, man has always sought to reach out in some way to a higher being. The first act of Noah after coming from the ark, was an act of worship. The Patriarchs worshipped God, and the Jews followed the dictates of Moses' law in worship. Wherever man is found today, he is found worshipping someone or something.

The second fact is, that man has not always worshipped, as God would have him to. Cain's sacrifice of farm produce was not accepted by God, and he was told to change. Nadab and Abihu, sons of Aaron, were burned up by God because of false worship. The Jews continually practiced idol worship, and worship of the gods of the nations that surrounded them. The early church soon fell into problems connected with worship, and the apostasy brought many erroneous practices into the worship of the church. Millions today worship false gods, or falsely worship the true God.

Our Lord Jesus expressed his will on this matter of worship to the woman at the well in Samaria, as recorded in John 4:1-26. There Jesus revealed that God is seeking those who worship Him in spirit and in truth (verse 23). Worship, therefore, to be pleasing to God must be according to truth. God does not accept just any worship, or worship that to men appears right and acceptable. God wants worship that involves both the mind and the emotions.

Three things characterize such worship. These three things concern God himself, others, and our own-selves.

First, we worship to please God, not man. Jesus often condemned worship of his day that was done **“to be seen of men.”** Matthew 6:1-18 and 23: 5-7 record such statements. Christ stressed that true worship was directed to God, to please Him (Matt. 6:4,9,18). When we assemble to worship we come together to praise God. We do this in the way He has directed. Our mind is thus centred on God and His Word, and our emotions are allowed to flow freely to express our love to Him. God is the object of our worship.

Secondly, we edify one another in public worship. The early church began immediately to come together to worship God (Acts 2:42,46). Paul's epistles speak often of different acts of Christian worship. Prayer was to be offered in spirit and with understanding (1 Cor. 14:12-19). Singing was to be done **“with your heart”** (Eph.

5:19; Col. 3:16). The Lord's Supper was to be a communion, or "joint participation" in the body of Christ to remember Him (I Cor. 10:16,17). It was to be observed in a spiritual manner (I Cor. 11:27-29). Giving was to be done cheerfully, as one has purposed in his own heart (II Cor. 9:7). Preaching was to be true to the word, and done in love (II Tim. 4:1-4; Eph. 4:15).

An emphasis of Christian worship is the interaction of the worship experiences upon one another, as the acts of worship originate from the heart of sincere individuals praising God according to His will. Heartfelt worship not only pleases God, but teaches, inspires, and lifts up those who are present as well.

A third aspect of our worship is that it serves to purify our own hearts. Jesus condemned the Pharisees in His day for practising the forms of worship, and leaving out the matters of the heart — justice, mercy, and faith (Matt. 23:23). He did not say forms were unimportant ("these," he said, "ye ought to have done"), but he indicated forms are a means to an end. We must worship with the right forms, but we must also be sure that we practise the "weightier matters."

Spiritual growth should be enhanced by heartfelt worship. Paul indicates that those who fail to understand what they are doing in worship can become sleepy, ill, or even dead spiritually (I Cor. 11:27-30). True worship draws us closer to God, and makes us more deeply aware of His presence. This leads to deeper commitment and consecration in our lives. Proper worship will leave its mark on our daily lives, and help us to live right during the week.

David said of worship, "I was glad when they said unto me, let us go into the house of the Lord" (Psalm 122:1). Christian worship should be an enriching and joyous experience, and looked forward to by all. When seeking honest, sincere, truth-seeking individuals assemble to worship and praise God from the heart, in the ways He has directed us, the result can only be an uplifting and spiritually beneficial to all present. May we worship God in spirit and in truth.

W. SWAIN.

SCRIPTURE READINGS

Dec. 2	Isa. 40:1-17	Luke 3:1-23 & 38
Dec. 9	Isa. 40:18-31	Luke 4:1-15
Dec. 16	Isa. 61:	Luke 4:16-41
Dec. 23	Lev. 14:1-20	Luke 4:42-5:16
Dec. 30	Psa. 34:	Luke 5:17-39

THE MINISTRY OF JOHN THE BAPTIST

John was a great servant of God. He acted as a harbinger for Jesus and prepared the Jews for his coming (3:4). His message was a clear and uncompromising one: "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matthew 3:2). He baptized those who responded (3:3, 12, 16). John spoke of the judgement of God against sinners even those who claimed direct descendency from Abraham (3:8-9) and also pointed to the greater one

who was to come, the latchet of whose shoes he was not worthy to unloose (3:16).

What do the scriptures reveal about John's baptism? It was administered in water (Matthew 3:11; John 3:23); it was of God (Matthew 21:25); it acknowledged His justice (Luke 7:29); it had to be followed by a life of repentance (Luke 3:8); it was superseded by the baptism in water commanded by Jesus (Acts 19:1-7). Jesus himself was baptized of John (Matthew 3:13-17); Mark 1:9-11; Luke 3:21-22), not, of course, to be cleansed of sins, but "to fulfil all righteousness" (Matthew 3:15). It was totally understandable that John was very reluctant to perform the deed (Matthew 3:14), for he felt his complete unworthiness in the presence of the promised Messiah, the Son of the Living God.

Dear reader, please note the importance of baptism in the ministry of Jesus. His ministry began with baptism (3:21) and ended with baptism (Matthew 28:19; Mark 16:16). Personally, I find it strange that many so-called preachers of the gospel never refer to the subject.

THE GENEALOGY OF CHRIST

Luke chapter 3 should be read in conjunction with Matthew chapter 1. Luke begins with Joseph and ends with Adam, who was "the son of God" (3:38). Matthew does not give the genealogy from Adam to Abraham, but from Abraham to David. His list is practically identical with Luke's. The late F.F. Bruce has written: "The Lucan list enumerates twenty or twenty-one generations between David and the Babylonian Exile, and as many between the Exile and Jesus, whereas the Matthaean list enumerates only fourteen generations for each of these periods. But several generations are demonstrably omitted from the Matthaean list in the period from David to the Exile, and others may be omitted in the later period. . . . The main purpose of the two lists is to establish Jesus' claim to be the Son of God, and more generally to emphasise his solidarity with mankind and His close relation with all that had gone before. Christ and the new covenant are securely linked to the age of the old covenant. Marcion, who wished to sever all links binding Christianity to the O.T., knew what he was about when he cut the genealogy out of his edition of Luke."

THE TEMPTATION OF CHRIST

Satan did everything to prevent the Messiah entering the world. But when He came the evil one tried to tempt Him and destroy Him. The period revealed in Luke 4:1-13 was a special effort by Satan, but did not end there, for as we read: "He departed from Him for a season" (4:13).

Satan's ploy is to appeal to the lust; of the flesh, the lust of the eye and the

pride of life. For example, in this way, he overcame Eve in the Garden. The same approach for forty days in the wilderness against Jesus had a different outcome.

The devil, of course, is a very real personality because Jesus conversed with him. Please observe that Jesus' appeal was always to the Scriptures to resist the wiles of this fallen angel. "It is written. That man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God" (4:4; Deut.8:3). "It is written. You shall worship the Lord your God and Him only shall you serve" (4:8; Deut. 6:13; 10:20). "It is written, you shall not tempt the Lord your God" 4:12; Deut. 6:16). It is a good thing Jesus knew what was written! And there is a lesson there for us. If we do not know the Scriptures as we ought then we are duck-soup for the god of this world and the pagan society over which he exerts complete control. So we see the absolute necessity for every Christian to undertake regular Bible study!

THE SYNAGOGUE AT NAZARETH

Two months ago I was in Nazareth, but of course, did not see the synagogue of Jesus' day as it has long since gone. Time changes everything! The concept of the synagogue probably developed in the days of Babylonian captivity and has survived to the twentieth century. Jews everywhere still congregate at their synagogues to worship Jehovah. (I should know, because I joined with one Jewish group recently in Jerusalem in an edifice that cost twenty million dollars. I will tell all about it sometime.)

Jesus in the synagogue read from the scroll of Isaiah (4:18-19; Isaiah 61:1-2). Luke records: "And He closed the book and gave it again to the minister and sat down. And the eyes of all them that were in the synagogue were fastened on Him. And He began to say unto them, 'This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears.'" (4:20-21). I used to misread these

verses. I thought they meant that Jesus returned to His pew after reading from a stand at the front. Now I know that Jewish rabbis sat to address their audience and Jesus did exactly that from a prominent position. (Incidentally, we still today talk about the professorial chair).

It is staggering to read that those Jews in the synagogue of Nazareth were so hostile to His teaching that they wanted Jesus dead (4:28-29). Truth either melts the heart or hardens it. Little did they realise that they were trying to kill the Truth Himself (John 14:6).

MIRACLES OF JESUS

In these verses we read of the healings of the demoniac (4:33-36); Peter's wife's mother (4:38,39) and many at Capernaum (4:40). We also read of the miraculous draught of fishes (5:4-11); the cleansing of the leper (5:12-15) and the healing of the paralytic (5:18-26). In manifesting these powers Jesus showed Himself to be the Christ, the Son of the Living God.

Walter Scott, the evangelist, has written: "1) A miracle must conform to the laws of evidence — observation and experience — otherwise it is the same as if it were not wrought. 2) It must, in its nature and aim, embody goodness as well as power. 3) This end must be worthy of God who works it. The miracles wrought on Christ and those wrought by Him conform to these tests or laws. Having received the Holy Spirit without measure, the exercise of this Divine power was not restricted to a single miracle, or to one kind of miracle, or to any single field of existence, or to any one system of things. . . . He could create bread, blast a tree, subdue a colt, open the blind eyes, unstop the deaf ears, unloose the dumb tongue or recall the dead; create fish, provide a meal, or vanish from supper, discern the thoughts of the heart, detect the traitor, read his treason, and foretell his fate — lunacy and rickets; palsy and the plague;

the crippled or the crazed; the leper and the lame; the deaf and the dead; the demon and the devil; the withered and the halt; the sickbed and the grave; the air, the earth and the sea; rocks, vegetables and animals; men, spirits and angels felt the glory of His presence and responded to His power."

Ian S. Davidson, Motherwell.

NEWS FROM THE CHURCHES

Newtongrange: Our Annual Social was held at our meeting-place on 6th October. Torrential rain fell all day, in fact almost 2½" was recorded here, with the result that flooding took place over a wide area and many roads became impassable.

Some churches experienced difficulty in reaching Newtongrange: as an example one group left home at 2.30 p.m. but did not reach us until 6.10 p.m. We sympathise with those who set out but were unable to complete the journey. We know of one group who sat in a traffic queue for 1½ hours before being redirected by the police and advised to return home.

Thus the start of our Social was delayed by some 20 minutes. Bro. Jim Sinclair Snr. led the company in prayer and thanksgiving. Chairman for the day was John Wilson. Solo's were sung by Sister Grace Coventry and Bro. Harry McGinn, New Cumnock. Our first speaker was John B. Wilson, Slamanan, who based his address on Jer. 6:16 "The Old Paths where there is a better way." He classed the Bible as the Christian's Highway Code, and compass. The one way; the Lord's way; "I am the Way, the Truth and the Life."

Our second speaker was Bro. Steven Farrow, from Hindley, Wigan. He concentrated his exhortation on "Christian Living," stressing the importance of the Christian life in a crooked and perverse world. He referred to Christian marriage and the example it sets in these

days of divorce and loose relationships.

Both speakers gave of their best and left us with much food for thought. Bro. James R. Gardiner closed the Social in prayer and benediction. Despite the inclement weather a rich time of fellowship was enjoyed by all, and we thank everyone who contributed to the success of the meeting.

Joe Currie, Secretary.

Bro. Ian also served the church on Lord's Day, giving further enlightening messages. We are deeply grateful for his unselfish efforts on our account and we pray God that his further studies will be richly blessed and his ministry will be continual source of benefit to all, especially to those we deeply love in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Tom Kemp.

Kirkcaldy: We are happy to announce that brother Bill, and sister Lily Someville have been restored to fellowship. May God bless them.

Ruth Moyes, Secretary.

Hindley, Wigan: What a wonderful weekend we have enjoyed during the visit of Bro. Ian Davidson: Oct. 13th and 14th. His discourse on Saturday was entitled "The Old Testament Scriptures and Their Background," and with the aid of specially prepared 23-page 'hand-outs' gave an interesting talk ranging from Genesis to Malachi; and the progress through the ages of God's plans for His chosen people. We were greatly encouraged by the presence of brethren from other assemblies to whom we record our thanks.

ACT NOW

WAIT not till the leaves are scattered
 Ere you seek the woodland gloom,
 Wait not till the rose is shattered
 Ere you gather its perfume.
 Wait not till the house is emptied
 Ere you call and knock for Peace,
 Wait not till the heart is exempted,
 From all cares and welcomes cease.
 Speak now your word of loving kindness
 Ere the ears are shut and barred,
 Look with love before death's blindness
 Hath that glance of beauty marred.
 Do all good deeds humane and tender
 Now some darkened life to cheer,
 Flowers but mock the tardy sender
 When too late laid on the bier.

*THERE are times when silence is golden,
 and there are times when silence is yellow.
 It is high time the church found out which
 is which.*

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