

The SCRIPTURE STANDARD

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

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THE TIMES OF THE GENTILES

Presumably because of what I said in August's article, about Abraham having received all the promises made to him, I have been asked by our good brother John Wood, Dunfermline, to deal with Luke 21:24 and Romans 11:25. I am very grateful for this request not only because these verses are difficult and worth another look. Those holding pre-millennialist views regard these verses as supportive of a future resurgence of Jewish religious life in Jerusalem, return of all Jews to Palestine and a reinstatement of Israel to its former glories as God's chosen.

Luke 21:24 says, "**And they (Israel) shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led away captive into all nations, and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled ...**" These words of Jesus refer to the sacking of Jerusalem in AD70 by the Romans. Romans 11:25 says, "**For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits, that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in.**"

I'm sure that brother Wood wants us to notice that Jerusalem would be trodden down of the Gentiles "**UNTIL the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled**", and that blindness (in part) is happened to Israel "**UNTIL the fulness of the Gentiles be come in**". The presumption is, no doubt, that things are going to change AFTER "**the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled.**"

Before considering precisely **what** changes are likely AFTER "**the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled,**" we should establish exactly what is meant by the phrase itself. The RSV renders it, "**Until the full number of the Gentiles come in**" (to the church).

Moses Lard says, "Until the full sum of the Gentiles come in: that is, in to the Church. 'Full sum' — the words denote that portion or large number of Gentiles that are to enter the church before the conversion of the Jews takes place."

Macknight says, "I (Paul) must show you this secret, that blindness of the Jews, in part, will continue only till the generality of the Gentiles come into the Christian church."

Barnes says, "It means until the abundance, or the great multitude, of the Gentiles shall be converted ... Probably the meaning is that this blindness of the Jews is to continue until great numbers of the Gentiles shall be converted and until the gospel is extensively spread: then the conversion of the Jews will be a part of the rapid spread of the gospel."

E.M. Zerr says, "Fulness of the Gentiles means until they have had a full time with the gospel, all to themselves while the Jews are out. Just **when** that fact will be accomplished the apostle does not say."

William Barclay in his translation on the N.T. says, "**until the time allotted to the**

Gentiles runs its course."

From these random examples we can see that there seems a general consensus among some Bible commentators that the phrase **"until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled"** refers to a certain length of time during which the Gentiles would take advantage of the blessings brought by Christ, whereas the Jews during that time would spurn the gospel. However, a time, yet future, seems to be envisaged by these same Bible commentators, from Rom. 11:25, when the blindness upon the Jews will lift and **"all Israel will be saved."** When this process will begin and **how long** it will take no one seems prepared to guess. After all, for well nigh 2,000 years the Jews have shown no particular interest in Christ or the gospel and so we must still be in **"the times of the Gentiles"** and, who knows, may yet be for another few thousand years. And how many thousand years will the conversion of **"all Israel"** take thereafter? Those who believe that the **"end of the world is near"** better think again. Needless to say there are many Bible students who do not agree with the above interpretation of Paul's words.

If **"all Israel"** is to be saved, the vast millions of Jews who have already lived and died during the last 2,000 years in rejection of Christ, will surely knock a great hole in the term **"all Israel"**.

The Context of Paul's Words

To understand the drift of Paul's statement (Rom. 11:25) we require, as always, to notice the context of his words. Ideally we should read Chaps. 8,9,10 and 11 of Romans, where Paul draws on all manner of arguments to contrast the limitations and failings of the Mosaic Law with the virtues of Christ, His gospel and His church; and where Paul proves to the Jews that even the O.T. predicted the time when God would accept the Gentiles on equal terms with Jews Paul, at this time, reflects gloomily upon the spiritual state of his own people, Israel, and laments that Christ, as predicted, had proved a stumbling stone to them, and that because **"of their unbelief"** they, generally, had declined to enter the Kingdom of God. However, he quotes Isaiah as saying that **"Though the number of the children of Israel be as the sand of the sea, A REMNANT shall be saved."** Indeed Paul insisted that his own **"heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved"**. (Presumably if **"all Israel"** was going to be saved, Paul need not have worried himself in this way.) **"For I bear them record that they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge. For they, being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves to the righteousness of God."** (Rom. 10:1). Paul continues through Chap. 10 to illustrate the shortcomings of Israel regarding God's Messiah (regularly quoting Moses and Isaiah) and shows that when Isaiah said, **"Who hath believed our report?"** he was, in fact referring to Israel's refusal to accept the gospel of Christ. Moses, himself, predicted that God would provoke the Jews to jealousy by promoting the Gentiles: **"by them that are no people, and by a foolish nation I will anger you."** (10:19).

In Chap. 11 Paul begins by postulating a question which may have entered the minds of the recipients of his epistle: i.e. Has God then, in effect, **"Cast away His people, Israel?"** He quickly answers it, **"God forbid. For I also am an Israelite"**. In short, if Paul (an Israelite) could be saved by the gospel, so could the rest of the Israelite nation: in exactly the same way. By elevating the Gentiles to a position on level terms with the Jews God had not **cast away** the Jews: they, with the Gentiles, had equal opportunity to embrace the gospel and enter the Kingdom of Heaven. In the event, the Gentiles had quickly grasped the opportunity, whereas the bulk of the Israelite nation had treated the blessings of Christ with disdain. Paul, elsewhere in this epistle, reminds everyone that **"the gospel of Christ"** is God's only power unto salvation, **to the Jew first** and also to the Gentile, and that the Kingdom of Heaven had been preached by the twelve, and the seventy, exclusively to the **"lost sheep of**

the House of Israel". Likewise, when the gospel of Christ was preached, subsequent to Pentecost, it was preached firstly to Jews. Although Paul was to be "a light to the Gentiles" he laboured initially with Jews and when travelling the first place he made for was the Synagogue. In fact, until Philip preached to the Samaritans and Peter preached to Gentiles (Cornelius), the church consisted solely of many thousands of Jews. And so the Jews had every opportunity to receive the gospel and enter the church, especially bearing in mind that the gospel was to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. Paul eventually became disenchanted with the Jewish reaction to the gospel, and when the Jews at Antioch "spake against those things which were spoken by Paul, contradicting and blaspheming. Paul and Barnabus waxed bold, and said, **IT WAS NECESSARY that the word of God should FIRST have been spoken to you: but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles.**" (Acts 13:46) To support his contention that "a remnant" of Israel would, in fact, be saved (and this is a far cry from "all Israel" being saved) Paul quotes the occasion when Elijah, in hiding, complained to God that the children of Israel, after throwing down God's altars, forsaking God's covenant and slaying God's prophets with the sword (so that Elijah was the only one left): were now intent upon finding Elijah to put him to death. **"But what saith the answer of God unto him? I have reserved unto Myself seven thousand men, who have not bowed the knee to the image of Baal. Even so then AT THIS PRESENT TIME ALSO there is a remnant according to the election of grace."** (11.5). And so, it seems, that the saved "remnant" was in process in Paul's day and not something reserved for "the Millennium".

The latter part of Chap. 11 strikes a note of caution directed towards the Gentiles. Although Israel, by and large, had fallen by the wayside, and the Gentiles had proved to be ready beneficiaries of the gospel, God would use the situation by trying to provoke the Jews to jealousy (11:11). Under the O.T. economy Israel had had the pre-eminence and the Gentiles "had been strangers from the covenant of promise, having no hope and without God in the world." But now, in the gospel age, the roles seemed reversed, in that the Gentiles were now pre-eminently followers of God's Son, whereas the Jews had not only spurned Him but crucified Him. Paul hoped that even he, personally, might "by any means, provoke to emulation them which are my flesh (Israelites), and might save some of them". Paul hoped, by the preaching of Christ, to save some of his countrymen and states that "if they abide not still in unbelief" they can be reconciled again to God. That was a big "IF" and 2,000 years have passed without any appreciable change in the attitude of Jewish indifference. That was how things stood in Paul's day, but what did Paul say of the future? This brings us to the verses mentioned by Brother Wood, where Paul, cautions the Gentiles not to be smug or complacent in their favoured position, because the roles could easily be reversed again and the Jews, "if they abide not still in unbelief", could be restored again to God's favour. "For," says Paul, (the verse at issue) "I would not brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits: that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in. And so all Israel shall be saved ..."

Conclusion

And so, where does all this take us? At the end of the day we must all make up our own minds as to what is meant by "until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in", and David Lipscomb in his Commentary agrees "it is a difficult question and so receives different answers from different people".

Space is dwindling but certain points should be noted:—

(1.) We are not told how long "the times of the Gentiles" would last, whether 100 years: 1,000 years or even until Christ returns. As remarked earlier, 2,000 years have already passed wherein the Jews have shown little interest in the gospel. We should

also note that the word "Until" does not always signify some activity thereafter. For instance Michal had no children UNTIL her dying day (2 Sam. 6:23): she certainly had very few children after her dying day. "UNTIL the time of reformation" (Heb. 10:9) does not suggest earthly activity thereafter nor does "UNTIL the times of restitution of all things" (Acts 3:21). Thus "UNTIL the times of the Gentiles" might not signify activity thereafter.

(2.) "And so all Israel shall be saved" does not mean that every Jew will be saved any more than every Gentile will be. Paul says he agonised that "he might save some of them". Why agonise to save "some" if "all" are going to be saved. The phrase "And so" all Israel will be saved, means "in this way". "All Israel" will be saved, in this way if they are going to be saved at all. In what way? the rest of the verse tells us: by faith and acceptance of the "Deliverer": Jesus Christ. That was how "all Israel" would be saved. It also depends upon what Paul means by 'Israel' for, earlier, he says, "For they are not all Israel, that are of Israel, neither because they are Abraham's seed, are they children." (Rom. 9:6), and "For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly" (Rom. 2:28), and "they that are of faith (in Christ) the same are the sons of Abraham" (Gal. 3:7). In any case, Jesus, Himself, said the broad road to destruction contains the masses, and few would find the K. of G. FEW (not "all") will be saved.

(3.) There is nothing to be gained by Jews returning to Palestine. Jews must become Christians (and lose Jewish identity) and they can be Christians equally well in any part of the world. Paul, on his travels, made hundreds of Jewish converts, but did not seem to advise them all to "head for Palestine": in fact, they established churches in their own locality.

(4.) If, after "the fulness of the Gentiles be come in" there is a period of time when Jews are converted in great numbers: this, as stated previously, will surely be cause for great rejoicing but they will receive no special dispensation, and will have to embrace the gospel like anyone else. This possibility does not, however, bolster any idea of a "millennium" or "1,000 years reign." The Jews will require to undergo their dramatic conversions prior to the coming of Christ, for, on that day, all opportunities of obeying the gospel will cease. We are presently living 'in the last days' or 'last times' (Acts 2:17) and there will obviously be 'a last day' (John 6:39) when momentous events will occur. Christ will return on that day, "For the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God, and the dead in Christ shall rise first." (1Thess. 4:16). The General Resurrection will also take place that day (John 6:44). That day will also be Judgment Day (Matt. 25:31). This will not happen over a period of time but "in the twinkling of an eye". The then living will join the resurrected dead to meet the Lord in the air and all shall be changed. The earth will be destroyed that same day (2 Peter 3:9) " ... the earth and the works therein shall be burned up". The gospel is to be preached in all the world until Christ returns: thus there seems little room for 'A Millenium' or "1,000 years reign". Luke 21:24 gives no information re Jerusalem's future but Peter says "the earth" (with Jerusalem, New York and London etc) will be destroyed. Rom. 11:25 says nothing about Jews returning to Palestine, and National Israel will never be reconstituted: even if it could be. Surely no rational Bible student can really believe that the Levitical Priesthood will again preside over animal sacrifices in Jerusalem at a literal altar in a temple of stone: when Christ the Lamb had already died for sins. Surely the church even in N.T. times suffered greatly from Judaizers, and Paul wrote much to counteract such influence, expressing amazement that Christians would want "to turn again to the weak and beggarly elements whereunto ye desire again to be in bondage." If, after "the times of the Gentiles" the Jews come to Christ in great numbers; this will be wonderful but it will have to happen before Christ's return on the 'last day'. The Jews are certainly not "written off" by God: for He still loves them and will save them, like all others, through the gospel of our Lord and Saviour.

EDITOR.

GLEANINGS

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

Called Out

"Ye are an elect race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession, that ye may show forth the excellencies of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvellous light"

1 Peter 2:9 (R.V.)

The Church

"I have been asked to speak on 'The Church' — a term which to twenty people might mean twenty different things, so carelessly is it used, not infrequently by Christians. It may mean anything from a little stone building at the end of the village street, to the highly-organised, world-wide institution under the Papacy. As this is a Bible School concerned with truth, shall we see first of all what the Bible has to say about the Church? We will not concern ourselves with dictionary definitions at all, but how the word came to be used and what was obviously meant by those who used it, and understood by those who heard. That the subject is an important one is clear from the fact that the term is employed nearly one hundred and twenty times in the New Testament Scriptures: and what it stands for is more important still, when we note what is said about it, and we find out all that has been done for it, and the wonderful promises that have been made concerning its glorious future.

In every instance (except the obvious mistranslation in Acts XIX. 37, which has been corrected in the Revised Version) the word is a translation of the Greek *ekklesia*, made up of *ek*, meaning 'out' or 'from,' and *kaleo*, to call or summon forth, hence an assembly called out from among others. The word is found only three times in the Gospel records, on each occasion spoken by the Saviour and recorded by Matthew. After the great confession by Simon (which Jesus said was not of his own imagination but a God-given revelation), the Lord said: **'Upon this rock I will build my church.'** The Church is a building then; the Saviour said so! If we look at Matthew 18, we read the instructions Jesus gave concerning offences among brethren: **'And if thy brother sin against thee, go, show him his fault between him and thee alone: if he hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. But if he hear thee not, take with thee one or two more, that at the mouth of two witnesses or three, every word may be established. And if he refuse to hear them, tell it to the church, and if he refuses to hear the church also, let him be unto thee as the Gentile and the publican,'** which immediately dispels the idea of a stone or brick building, for the command is, **'tell it to the church.'**"

F.C. Day.

Ye Are — That Ye May

"An elect nation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession." As an elect race the Church consists of those who are the kin of Christ, sharing His life, As the Church realises what it means to be a royal priesthood she is equipped for being the **instrument of Christ**. As the church enters into all the values of the fact that she is a holy nation, she is revealing the **kingdom of Christ**, the realm of Christ. Finally, summing up all the other things, as the Church is indeed a people for God's own possession, she reveals to the world the **victory of Christ**. Christ — Christ — Christ! But **"God was in Christ,"** and it is through that revelation as I have said, that the Church will fulfil her great vocation in the world."

Campbell Morgan.

"EXCEPT the Lord build the house they labour in vain that build it: except the Lord keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain!"

Psalms 127:1

Our Strength

“GOD IS OUR REFUGE AND STRENGTH.” “The Lord is the strength of my life.” “Strengthened with might (according to the wealth of Christ’s glory) by His Spirit in the inner man.” “It is God that worketh in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure.” **“Buildd together for a habitation of God by the Spirit.”** Unless this is true of us collectively and individually, all else is folly. As the body without the spirit is dead, so, speaking hypothetically, the body of Christ and the members in particular must be animated by the presence of the Divine Spirit, or else the members are paralysed and the body is hastening to decay. Ichabod is already written upon it. The glory has departed. May God in the wealth of His mercy save us from such a doom.

OUR STANDARD — the Bible, all the Bible, and nothing but the Bible. Whilst others are called upon to defend their creeds and to uphold their standards, we, with the Bible only in hand, make asking our fellowmen to follow us through the labyrinths of human speculation, we say, in the language of grand old Paul, **“Beware, lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ; for in Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily, and you are complete in Him.”** We all know the advantage we have, in thus being able to put forward the positive declarations of Christ and his Apostles in answer to the conjectures and sophistries of men. In public and in private, we find and rejoice in this our strength.”

J. Grinstead.

First Peter: Chapter Two

“But when we build upon Him, when He, and He only, is ‘the preciousness,’ when all our personal aims are merged in line with His, when we have the Spirit of Christ, then are we bound into a gracious communion, into a vital and fundamental unity. And into what is He prepared to build us? This chapter is overflowing in the wealth of the figures by which it seeks to express the glorious mission. He will build us into a **“spiritual house,”** a spacious home, enclosing but one tenant, the gracious Spirit of God. He will distinguish us as **“an elect race,”** moving in the word, yet not of it, standing out in strong relief from the discordant and fragmentary life by which it is surrounded. He will endow us with all the dignities of **“a royal priesthood,”** having kingly and priestly prerogatives, reigning with Christ in the realm of the spirit and exercising a powerful ministry of intercession in the most holy presence of God. He will constitute us **“a holy nation,”** a people whose policies shall be purities, and whose statecraft shall just be the enlightened administration of large and unselfish minds. This is what our God is prepared to make of us. It is a great ideal, but then we have a great Father and a great Saviour and a mighty Spirit, and vast ideals are native to the very spirit of our redemption. It is a grand house which the Lord would build, if only He had the stones the majestic edifice would speedily be reared.”

J.H. Jowett.

Leonard Morgan.

LIFE OF CHRIST (3) (JOHN THE BAPTIST)

Before we consider the next glimpse of Jesus we will very briefly consider John who was to baptize Jesus.

John the Baptist was a prophet and a descendant of the daughter of Aaron on his mother’s side and a descendant of Abijah from his father’s side. John’s parents were both righteous before God. Their home was in the hill-country of Judea, near Qumran.

John was born six months before Jesus. It has been suggested that Zechariah was

in sympathy with Qumran community and when he and his wife died John was brought up a Qumran. This cannot be proved.

John was still in the wilderness of Judea when "the Word of God" called him to preach. This was between A.D. 26 and A.D. 28. John dressed in rough garments and ate simple food which was available in the wilderness. He wore a leather girdle which is reminiscent of the dress of Elijah, and may suggest that John was conscious of the call to a ministry like that of Elijah. He did not go to Jerusalem or any city but stayed in the wilderness and preached in the open. For his baptism he wanted running water which was one factor in determining where he preached. To fulfil his God-given mission he lived a life of stern hardship. John made no claims about himself, he denied being Elijah, he was simply the warning voice of one crying in the wilderness.

The warning was urgent, for prior to the coming of God's final Kingdom would be stern judgment carried out by one mightier than John. It would bring blessing to those who were prepared but the fire of devastating judgment to the wicked. Instead of delivering the Jews from their foreign oppressor and honouring them, it would strike Israel first of all. Descent from Abraham would be no protection. Jews, as well as Gentiles, were sinners. The only way to escape was to repent, turn from sin and change one's entire attitude and way of life. Those who did this and were baptized received forgiveness. The repentance had to be real and thorough for the repentant person had to bear fruits of repentance. They had to share their goods and foods. Tax collectors were to be honest, soldiers were to refrain from extortion and be content with their pay. When we study all the ancient practices and washings, none explain the origin of John's baptism. His baptism was something new. John's baptism was for penitent Jews who confessed their sins, renounced their old way of life, and looked expectantly for the coming of God's mightier One to establish the divine Kingdom. A fruitless tree must be cut down. The Jewish nation, by refusing to accept Christ, sealed its' own doom. John's special mission was to prepare the way for Jesus and no history of Jesus can be complete if it omits the history of John. Matthew's record is very definite in telling what John was doing, where he preached and what he preached. John began his ministry in A.D. 26 which was a Sabbatical year, the people were not occupied in the cultivation of the soil and gathering in of grain. They were resting, unemployed, therefore they had plenty free time to hear the new prophet the voice in the wilderness. John had been busy in his ministry for several months when Jesus came from Nazareth in Galilee to be baptized.

A point worth noting here, for the benefit of those who are of the opinion that baptism is not necessary, Jesus was prepared to walk 65 miles to be baptized. Why should Jesus the sinless One, come to John to be baptized? We know that Jesus did not walk 65 miles to be baptized from feeling of personal sinfulness, neither because of His personal connection with impure people, nor merely to receive the divine declaration that He was the Son of God. Jesus was baptized because it was the will of God for Him to be baptized and He came to do the will of God. John was, at first, opposed to baptizing Jesus. He did not forbid Jesus but he had it in mind to prevent Him. The original Greek means that he was for hindering Him. At this point we should read the Bible account of the baptism of Jesus in Matthew, chapter 3.

Let us note from this chapter that the baptism of Jesus was a duty not only for Jesus but also for John. It was his duty to baptize Jesus. In verse 15 we find from a literal translation that Jesus was saying "permit it now, never mind the contrast between John and Jesus". Jesus asks that John let Him take the place of the less, or inferior, for the present. We must also remember that the baptism of John was not of men but from heaven (Matt. 21 v 25). John saw the force of Jesus's words and they waded out into the waters of the river Jordan where our Lord was buried in baptism. When He came up out of the water immediately the Spirit of God descended like a dove, lighting

upon Him. Note that Jesus is standing in the water. The Holy Spirit is descending in a bodily shape like a dove and the voice of God is speaking from Heaven. The Father, Son and Holy Spirit, the three persons of the God-head, were all present on this occasion.

Graeme Pearson,
Dunfermline.

EVANGELISM

Christ's mission on earth was to "seek and save the lost" (Luke 19:10). He said of himself, "Even as the Son of Man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many (Matt.20:28). Paul wrote, "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners ..." (1 Tim. 1:15).

Jesus knew what his objective was and he died to accomplish it. The writer of Hebrews said of Him, "But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of Death, crowned with glory and honour; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man" (Heb. 2:9). In his death Jesus exemplified a truth he had earlier taught his disciples. He had said, "The hour is come, that the Son of man should be glorified. Verily, verily I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone; but if it die it bringeth forth much fruit" (John 12: 23-24). Every person who has ever been saved, and every person who will ever be saved is a fruit of Jesus' death.

What Christ has done, he now invites his followers to do. After making the statement concerning dying wheat and producing fruit he said, "He that loveth his life shall lose it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal. If any man serve me, let him follow me; and where I am, there shall also my servant be; if any man serve me, him will my Father honour" (John 12: 25-26). Jesus is telling us that to follow him we must do what he did. He laid down his life for others, so we too must lay down our lives for others.

In the words of the Great Commission we are told by Mark, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature." (Mark 16:15). The Commission is clearly stated. God's desire is for "every creature," every person, to hear the gospel of Jesus. But, even with the clear-cut instruction to tell others about the crucified and risen Saviour, the job is not being done. What is it that keeps God's people from telling others about Jesus? What hinders us?

Failure to be Specific in Goal Setting

Our goal should be to share the gospel of Christ with "every creature" – every person within our own city first then the country, then the state, then the whole world (Acts 1:8). How many are you going after in your community? One thing is sure, we won't reach any more than we go after. Likely we will reach less than we go after. Too often we limit ourselves by the size of the church building, but it is apparent that the New Testament church had no such physical limitations. It reached a membership of 3,000 the first day. In a short time there were 5,000 men. They went after every person in Jerusalem and literally "filled" their city with the doctrine of Christ (Acts 5:28).

Jesus is Lord! He is the goal giver. He has given us the assignment – "every creature." "And why call ye me, Lord, Lord and do not the things which I say?" (Luke 6:46). In the first century God's people were faithful and "preached the gospel to every creature under heaven" (Rom. 10:17-18; Col. 1 5-6, 23). As we look at their strategy we see that they started in Jerusalem, went out into Judea, then Samaria, and finally to the "ends of the earth." They were involved "daily" (Acts 2:46; 5:42) and had a strong emphasis on "personal involvement" (Acts 8:4)]. There was emphasis

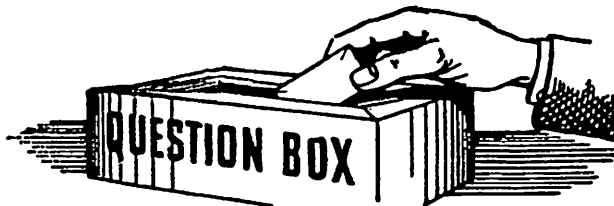
placed in “prayer” and “the ministry of their word” (Acts 1:14; 2:42; 3:1, 4:24, 31-33; 6:4; 12:5).

The people we read about in the Book of Acts were a “community” of believers. They were a “fellowship”! They started out as a small group of 120 (Acts 1:15), but quickly expanded to 3,000 (Acts 2:41), and then 5,000 (Acts 4:4) and then there were “multitudes” added to their number (Acts 5:14), and then they “multiplied” (Acts 6:7). Those who were being saved knew they were “passing from darkness to light” (Col. 1:13). Having received salvation themselves they could not stand by idly while their friends and relatives walked blindly into eternity unprepared to meet God. They had truly “found it” and they engaged themselves in the business of helping others to “find it”.

Acts 4:12-13 serve as a kind of commentary on the Book of Acts revival. Here Peter was before the most esteemed religious leaders of the city. They were down on him, being “grieved” that he preached Christ as the Messiah. Before this pompous assembly he shared the simple gospel of Jesus closing his remarks with the statement of verse 12, “Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.” Verse 13 describes the reaction of the Council, “Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were unlearned and ignorant men, they marvelled; and they took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus.”

Peter and John did not display arrogance before their esteemed audience, but they did display a polite confidence. They knew the words they shared were true, so they had an unembarrassed freedom of speech. We stand today where Peter and John stood in the Book of Acts. As Peter says “We cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard” (Acts 4:20).

J. Woodell.



Conducted by
Alf Marsden

“1 Tim. 4:10 says that Christ “is the Saviour of all men, especially those that believe”. How can all be saved, and some saved ‘especially’?”

It is as well to quote the whole verse which reads, **“For therefore we both labour and suffer reproach, because we trust in the living God, who is the Saviour of all men, specially of those that believe”.**

Godliness

The first point we notice in the verse is that it is God who is said to be ‘the Saviour of all men’. If we refer to 1 Tim. 1:1 we read the same thing, **“Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the commandment of God our Saviour, and Lord Jesus Christ, which is our hope”.** Now you may say to me, “Come on, Alf, you’re splitting hairs. If Jesus is God’s Son, and a true manifestation of the Father (he that hath seen me hath seen the Father), then salvation must be attributable both to Son and Father”. That is true, as far as it goes, but I believe the Bible portrays salvation as from God, in His ‘providential’ capacity, and through Christ, in His ‘executive’ capacity. Why do I make this distinction? Because it is God who gives ‘life’ and you will notice, of course, that Paul says, “we both labour and suffer reproach, because we trust in the living God.”

In v8 he speaks about godliness, “**For bodily exercise profiteth little** (take note, all ‘keep fit’ enthusiasts; the Holy Spirit says it, not me); **but godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and that which is to come.**”

There is a sense, of course, in which all men are partakers in the life that God gives; I direct you to Acts 17:28 ff. “**For in him we live, and move, and have our being; as certain also of your own poets have said. For we are also his offspring. For as much then as we are the offspring of God, we ought not, etc** And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men everywhere to repent: Because he (God) hath appointed a day, in the which he (God) will judge the world in righteousness by the man whom he (God) hath ordained; whereof He (God) hath given assurance unto all men, in that he (God) hath raised him (Christ) from the dead”. The bracketed words are mine. These scriptures make the issue quite clear. God gives life to all men, and had graciously provided sustenance for that life; if man mis-uses and mis-appropriates what is provided, then that in no way nullifies the **provision**, nor does it nullify the **grace** of the Giver. However, we can also see that the God-life, which is the ‘new’ life which comes by and through the death and resurrection of God’s Christ, is conditional on man’s repentance. The distinction in the types of salvation is quite marked, and this leads us on to the crux of our question.

Potentiality

A definition of the above word would be, ‘inherent, latent, capacity for development’. To illustrate, perhaps we can use the analogy of an electrical circuit.

Let’s consider the circuitry for a simple door-bell or chimes. In its simplest form, this comprises a battery and a circuit including a push-switch on the outside of the door; the contacts of the switch are normally open. In this state, the terminals of the battery have a ‘potential’ to force an electric current through the circuit and so energise the bell or chimes, but will only do so when the circuit is completed through the switch, i.e., when someone presses it. It will be readily understood, of course that when the push-switch is open, there will still be a ‘potential’ but it will be ‘latent’. Can we now use this crude example and give it a spiritual application relevant to our question?

Obedience calls for some sort of response on the part of the individual. If ‘to obey’ involves **internal** and **external** responses which are mutually dependant, then usually we take the **external** response as being motivated by the **internal** response; if this is **not** the case, then the external response is seen as being ‘blind’ obedience to a command ‘**to do**’. This, I think, can be clearly seen in an individual’s response to the dual command ‘repent and be baptised’. If there is no internal response regarding repentance, then being immersed in water is simply an external response to a direct command. The serious spiritual implications of this can be understood without any further comment from me. Taking this reasoning a stage further, if ‘being dead’ in trespasses and sins means **total depravity**, then it is difficult to understand **how** any meaningful response can be made to love and compassion, as exemplified in God and Christ, by a person who is totally depraved (I am thinking of **Satan** as being totally depraved, but of man as being **enslaved** by him, but capable of making responses for good or evil). Therefore, there is **always** the potential in God to save, and there is that in man which can respond to what God requires as shown in His Word, the Bible.

In answer, then, to the part of the question which asks, “How can all be saved”, my answer would be that God is ‘potentially’ the Saviour of all men, but all men will **not** be saved **in spite of themselves**. God is the Great Provider of salvation; Christ is the Great Bringer of salvation. Man must ‘close the circuit’, so to speak, by a responsive obedience to the Gospel; it is only then that he will enter the mainstream of the new God-life in Christ Jesus. It is then, and then only, that he will be saved.

Actualization

From the foregoing, the second part of the question which says, ‘**especially of those that believe**’ ought to be straightforward to answer. The word ‘especially’ expresses the pre-eminent; the particular; therefore, we are talking about a pre-eminent and particular salvation, not a ‘potential’ one. The ‘believer’ has made some sort of internal response to the Gospel. He has given assent to the truth of the Gospel, but his assent will not be purely ‘passive’, because believing, so far as the Bible is concerned, is always coupled by ‘doing’. When the Ethiopian Eunuch heard and believed the Gospel, it was he himself who asked for baptism. When the Philippian jailer was told to believe with all his house on the Lord Jesus Christ, the scripture goes on to say that Paul spoke the word of the Lord to them, and the jailer and all his household were baptised. (See Acts 8; and Acts 16). So you see that in this part of the question we are speaking about the ‘particular’ or the ‘actual’ as regards salvation, and not the ‘potential’.

To sum up, then. In answer to our question we can say that God is ‘potentially’ the Saviour of all men, but ‘actually’ the Saviour of those who believe and obey Him relative to His Christ, and the terms and conditions of the Gospel.

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

BE STEADFAST

1 Cor. 15:58.

“Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord ...”

BE YE STEADFAST

This means to be firm, settled, unmovable, and having the spirit to keep going on, in spite of the darts of the devil trying to defeat us in our work for the Lord. We are to purpose as never before in our hearts, to do God’s will. We must align our plans to His divine purpose. It should be God who orders our step, way, direction It must be His way that we travel. In this we overcome the work of Satan and the enemy about. In this day and age we are surrounded by depressing circumstances and make no mistake about it, this is when we are susceptible to the powers of the Devil. Today is no time to give up or have a failing heart. We cannot afford to quit labouring for the Lord. We cannot become discouraged to the point of falling away from our first love. This is no time to flag in our efforts for the kingdom. The word of God exhorts us to be steadfast.

UNMOVABLE

Unmovable means “not to be shifty,” we are to stand fast, keeping strong the faith that lies within us. In this, the bustle of unfavourable circumstances will not direct us away from the true path. We need to remember that the Lord has freed us from sin; the world and powers of the evil one. Brethren we have provision over all this in the guise of the Holy Spirit. He is there to help, guide and overcome the works of the fallen angel. So depend upon Him.

ALWAYS ABOUNDING

The word means “in exceeding measure”. In other words something above the ordinary. Now here is a promise of God. Think of it, any work done will never be unproductive. Its a promise of God. The work of the Lord WILL make progress. It may be we will never see the fruits of our labours, but nevertheless success will be the result somewhere. God’s word makes it known that all will be seen in glory. We have to endure the task, the labour, the hardships and yes, the stress, regardless of

how many darts the devil throws. We need to reassure ourselves that our labour will not be in vain. The word of God declares it; accept and believe it. Beloved DO TAKE TIME to be holy, take time to Labour for the Lord, keep the faith. We in this day and age, must be vigilant. It is in the end-times we live. Battles exist. One is against the Devil and his angels. The other is our own; i.e. we are fighting the good fight of faith. Brethren, make sure your hearts are stayed on the Lord. We must overcome. To the work brethren as never before

Andrew P. Sharp,
Newtongrange.

DO WE REALLY MEAN WHAT WE SING

"Praise the Lord! For it is good to sing praises to our God; for he is gracious, and a song of praise is seemly." (Psalm 147:1).

Over the years I have often heard it said that we do not mean what we say in the songs that we use. Recently I came across this unusual comparison someone has made:

We sing "Heavenly sunshine" and stay away from services when it's too hot.
 We sing "Onward Christian soldiers" and have to be drafted for His service.
 We sing "Hiding in Thee," and then go and hide from Him.
 We sing "Marching to Zion," but fail to march to Bible class and worship services.
 We sing "I love to tell the story," but never mention it to anyone year after year.
 We sing "Blest be the tie that binds," and then let the slightest offence sever it.

JESUS' ENDORSEMENT OF THE OLD TESTAMENT

The history of the earthly ministry of Christ testifies that he endorsed the Old Testament Scriptures. He even endorsed the threefold division of the Old Testament — the law, the prophets, and the Psalms. "These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning me" (Luke 24:44). Hence, Christ endorsed the Pentateuch and the history of the Old Testament; he gave full endorsement to the prophets; he frequently said concerning the prophecies that they "must needs be fulfilled." This could not be truthfully said if the Old Testament was written by uninspired men. Christ fulfilled the prophecies concerning himself; he was the antitype of the types of him in the Old Testament. Frequently Matthew refers to the birth of Jesus and says that this was done that "it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet" (Matt. 1:22).

Christ endorsed David and said that he spoke by the Holy Spirit. "And Jesus answered and said, while he taught in the temple, how say the scribes that Christ is the Son of David? For David himself said by the Holy Ghost, the Lord said to my Lord, sit thou on my right hand, till I make thine enemies thy footstool." (Mark 12:25-36). Christ then endorsed the Psalms and that which David prophesied. A further endorsement of the Old Testament is observed in that Christ spoke of it as "the word of God" (John 10:35). "If he called them gods, unto whom the word of God came, and the scripture cannot be broken." Christ could not call the Old Testament Scriptures the word of God if they were not inspired. Again, the fact that he came to fulfill the law and the prophets shows that he regarded "the law and the prophets" as inspired. "Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets; I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill." (Matt 5:17). Again we have John bearing testimony and saying, ". . . The testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy." (Rev. 19:10). Again, Jesus said, "Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life; and they are

they which testify of me." (John 5:39). The evidence that Jesus endorsed the Old Testament is cumulative; however, we need no further proof of the testimony of Jesus to the inspiration of the Old Testament.

Dr. Harry Rimmer has calculated the number of quotations that Christ used from the Old Testament. Matthew contains 1,181 verses; 603 verses are the words of Jesus; this is fifty-one percent of all the verses. Eighty-three of these verses are Old Testament quotations, fourteen percent of the verses used by Jesus are from the Old Testament. Mark contains 609 verses; 275 of these are quotations of Jesus; thus forty-five percent of the verses in Mark are the words of Jesus; thirty-four of these verses, or thirteen percent, are from the Old Testament. Luke contains 1,251 verses, of which 570 are the words of Jesus; this is forty-five percent of the verses; forty-two of these verses, or seven percent of his quotations are from the Old Testament. John contains 879 verses; 417 of these, or forty-nine percent, are quotations from Jesus; twenty of these quotations of Jesus, or five percent, are from the Old Testament. The four gospels contain 3,290 verses, and 1,865 of these are the words of Jesus; this is forty-eight percent of all the verses; of his quoted conversation, 179 verses are literally Old Testament words. *Ten percent of the daily conversation of Jesus was Old Testament verses literally quoted.* Truly Jesus endorsed the Old Testament as inspired.

Selected.

SCRIPTURE READINGS

Nov. 3	Deut 18:9-22	Luke 24:13-35
Nov. 10	Hosea 6	Luke 24:36-53
Nov. 17	Daniel 7:1-14	Revelation 1
Nov. 24	Numbers 31:1-18	Revelation 2:1-17

THE TWO ON THE ROAD TO EMMAUS

This encounter between Jesus and the two on the road to Emmaus is a fascinating one. It should be carefully studied. I wonder what it would have been like to be present with the Master as **"He expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning Himself"** (24:27). Personally, it would have been a thrill of a lifetime. No wonder their reaction was to say: **"Did not our heart burn within us, while He talked with us by the way and while He opened to us the scriptures?"** (24:32).

These men were witnesses of the risen Christ. They were so filled with joy that they hastened back to Jerusalem to share the good news with others. Brothers and sisters in Christ, may we today be equally anxious to tell others that Jesus is alive.

REVELATION

The book of Revelation is an awesome work. It was penned under the in-

spiration of the Holy Spirit probably around A.D. 96 by the last surviving apostle — John. John had been banished to the island of Patmos (1:9) probably by the emperor Domitian because he was regarded as a dangerous man in the pagan Roman Empire.

Revelation is a book of prophecy and is full of signs and symbols. We read: **"The Revelation of Jesus Christ (not the Revelation of Saint John the Divine!), which God gave unto his servant things which must shortly come to pass; and he sent and signified it by his angel unto His servant John: who bare record of the word of God and of the testimony of Jesus Christ and of all things that he saw (1:1-2)."** The interpretation of these signs and symbols will be our task in the coming months.

The book is divided into four sections: Introduction (chapter 1); **The Letters to the Seven Churches** (chapters 2-3); **The Fate of the Roman Empire** (chapters 4-11:18); and the **Triumph of the Kingdom of God Over All Earthly Kingdoms** (11:19 - 22:21). Two key words in the book are **"Throne"** and **"Lamb"** and the theme is **VICTORY IN JESUS**. Robert Wallace Orr had written: **"The book of Revelation has to be considered against its background of Roman government and Greek culture. It was given**

to its first readers to strengthen them for faithfulness and victory in their own time. Its primary significance was for the near future: it was given to show to Christ's servants 'what must SOON take place' (1:1)".

THE LETTERS TO THE SEVEN CHURCHES

All of these letters have things in common. First, there is the order to write. Second, each has a picture of Jesus. Third, each is informed: "I know your works." Fourth, there is a description of the condition of the congregation. Fifth, there is a promise to those who persevere. Sixth, there is the command to hear what the Spirit says. **Ephesus** was the forgetful congregation; **Smyrna**, the suffering congregation; **Pergamum**, the false congregation; **Thyatira**, the immoral congregation; **Sardis**, the dead congregation; **Philadelphia**, the faithful congregation; and **Laodicea**, the lukewarm congregation.

EPHESUS

Ephesus is first mentioned probably because it was the greatest city in the region. In ancient times, it was described as the Gateway to Asia, the Light of Asia and the Market of Asia. Its population probably numbered around two hundred and fifty thousand. Here was sited one of the wonders of the ancient world — the temple of Artemis or Diana. The apostle Paul was attacked by her followers on one occasion when the cry went up "Great is Diana of the Ephesians" (Acts 19:28)! The temple was associated with male and female prostitution and drug-pushing. Criminals sought refuge in this vast edifice.

The congregation was commended for its labours and patience. The Greek terms indicate labour resulting in weariness and patience synonymous with steadfast endurance. They had lost their first love (probably for one another) and they hated, as God did, the deeds of Nicolaitanes, who are also mentioned in the Pergamum letter. The majority of the early church historians identified this group with Nicolas of Acts 6:5, who ob-

viously had later become an apostate. Someone has said "If their teaching had become successful then the world would have changed Christianity and not Christianity the world". The importance of remembering and repenting is also seen in this letter.

SMYRNA

Smyrna was described as the loveliest city of Asia. Other titles given to it were: the Ornament of Asia, the Crown of Asia and the Flower of Asia. Its beautiful harbour was world famous. Smyrna became the first city in Asia Minor to erect a temple to the cult of the city of Rome and it always showed great loyalty to the emperors. Its famous monuments included a stadium, a theatre, an aqueduct, a temple to Zeus and a gymnasium, which was reported as the most magnificent in all of Asia. Smyrna was also the birthplace of Homer (a contemporary of Elijah) and the place of martyrdom of Polycarp, who probably had known John.

The Smyrna saints were the subjects of tribulation (from the Latin *tribulum*, a threshing instrument). Such persecution must have separated the true followers of Christ from the nominal believers. They were also described as being in poverty (Greek: *ptocheia*, synonymous with destitution). But they were rich in another sense because they had come to know Jesus, who is possessed with unsearchable riches (Ephesians 3:8). Certain Jews are mentioned, who were guilty of blasphemy (a sin of the tongue), and who were described as being of the synagogue of Satan (a terrible phrase).

We read: "Be you faithful unto death and I will give you a crown of life (2:10)." What a promise to those who lived in the crown of Asia!

PERGAMUM

Pergamum was the capital of Asia and possessed at that time the second greatest library in the world (the first was at Alexandria in Egypt). Pliny once described Pergamum as by far the most famous city in Asia. Here parchment

was developed because of export restrictions of papyrus by Egypt. Pergamum housed the famous sanctuary of Asklepios, the god of healing, and this attracted people from all over the world. R.H. Charles has described the city as the "the Lourdes of the province of Asia". Incidentally, the emblem of Asklepios was a serpent and to this day this same emblem is found in doctors' surgeries. Galen was born in Pergamum — revered as one of the most illustrious physicians in the ancient world.

The sharp sword with two edges is mentioned and immediately the word of God comes to mind (Hebrews 4:12). The book of Numbers (especially chapters 22-24) should be studied to appreciate the comments on Balaam and Balak. A white stone is referred to. In ancient law courts, white and black stones were used for registering the verdict of juries, black for condemnation, white for acquittal.

Ian S. Davidson,
Motherwell.

GHANA REPORT

There is a mixture of good and bad news from Ghana this month. I will begin with the bad news. Earlier this year I sent out 3 complete sets of six volumes of E.M. Zerr commentaries and 200 Bible correspondence courses and only a part of this parcel had been received to date, and that was about 2 months ago. I have, therefore begun enquiring into this matter. If part of this consignment had gone missing it will be our first loss since the appeal began.

The good news from Aflao is that the membership has grown to eight and this increase did not come about from gospel meetings but by personal contact by brother Amesinu.

Brother Bill Cook has distributed the money sent out for medical aid. Some went to a sick sister in Koforidua, part went to pay the hospital bill for a brother from Huhunya and the remainder was split up to top up the medical funds in the various areas where meeting places exist. At present there is only £10 in the medical fund and it would be ap-

preciated very much if this fund could be topped up to keep it going.

There is nothing left in the building fund and all the money collected for this has been sent to Ghana. In the past month I have received a few photographs from Bill as he continues to travel around Ghana. The congregations are all at various stages in their building programmes. Most have their own land now. Some are still clearing the trees and dense vegetation from the site. A few are still making concrete blocks. Some have their foundations built and others are up to floor level.

There are three congregations whose progress I am uncertain about because Bill has not yet visited them due to their isolated geographical location.

While the average wage in Ghana is £1 per day the cost of a bag of cement is the very same as in Great Britain — £4. Cement is probably the most expensive part of their buildings as it is required in their foundations, block-work, mortar and render.

In the early days of the Ghana Appeal for building the money was being divided between two congregations and very quickly plots were purchased and boundary walls were erected. With the rules of registration where it became illegal to have open-air meetings and churches had to have their own buildings, we tried to equally divide the funds to all congregations who had need. This has effectively slowed down the progress of others. I am aware of the criticism that this invites and that I have already received. Assuming the gifts for this appeal continue at the same level for the next (for arguments sake, say) 12 years, we have a choice of completing one building per year or take our time and build 12 buildings in 12 years time. I see no reason to rush nor to bestow favour on one congregation above another.

If we get the programme started, and we have, then surely the enthusiasm of the local assemblies will determine the rate of progress and we will, in a small way, let each congregation know that

even although they live in a remote village away from the cities they are still our brothers and sisters in Christ and they are not forgotten.

Having sent out £1,600 to Ghana on 26th August 1991 to date there is £111.17p in the bank balance (9/9/91). With the exception of £10 for medical aid the rest is allocated to Gospel work. I would, therefore, appeal this month for money either for medical aid or for the building programme. Please send cheques, crossed, to "Graeme Pearson Ghana Appeal" to 13 Fairways, Dunfermline, Fife, KY12 0DU. Tel: (0383) 728624.

P.S. Please remember brother Bill Cook and his work in Ghana in your prayers. Thank you ANON for £50 received 4/9/91 which was allocated receipt No. 257.

COMING EVENTS

NEWTONGRANGE: The church in Newtongrange intends holding its Annual Social on Saturday, 12th October, 1991 at 4 p.m. in the Meeting-place. Speakers: Bro. Ian Davidson, Motherwell, Bro. David Ferguson, Easthouses. Chairman: Bro. Joe Currie. We look forward to a rich time of fellowship with the churches and our Lord.

Joe Currie, Treas./Sec.

120th ANNIVERSARY: The 120th Anniversary Meeting of Hope Street Chapel, London, will take place on Saturday 5th October, 1991. Afternoon Meeting at 3 p.m. Tea, 4.45 p.m. Evening Meeting, 6.30 p.m. Bro. Philip Partington speaking, also on Sunday. All welcome.

SUBSCRIPTION RATES INCREASE

I am sorry to have to announce an increase in the price of the Magazine. The new rates are shown on the back page of this issue.

The price was last increased in June 1987. Since then there have been a number of increases in printing and postage costs which make it essential that the Subscription Rates are increased. The Overseas Rates have also been revised and brought into line with current Exchange Rates and postal charges.

I have been reluctant to pass on increases in the past but an increase is now unavoidable if we are to stay in print. I hope you will continue to subscribe and that we can contribute to your spiritual life.

John Kneller, Treasurer.

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