

The SCRIPTURE STANDARD

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

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*We wish All our Readers a very Happy and
Prosperous New Year*

A PAUSE FOR REFLECTION

JANUS was the ancient Roman deity who kept the gate of heaven: thus he was the guardian of gates and doors. He was represented with two faces, one in front and one behind, and the doors of his temple in Rome were thrown open in times of war and closed in times of peace. The name is used in allusion both with reference to double-facedness and to war.

Thus Milton says of the cherubim:

Four faces each

Had, like a double Janus (Paradise Lost, 11,129).

While Dante says of the Roman eagle that it:

composed the world to such a peace,

That of his temple Janus barr'd the door. (Paradiso 6,83)

We have now entered into January of another year, January is the month dedicated by the Romans to Janus, who presided over the doorway to the year, being the guardian of gates and doors, and, having two faces, was able to look back over the year that was past and gone and also able to look forward with anticipation to the year ahead. Each of us can, and do, emulate Janus in this respect. When we reach the first day of a new January we stand upon the threshold of another brand new year and we cannot help ourselves looking back over the year that is passed and contemplate the year that stretches out before us. It is like a climber climbing a steep and rugged mountain — he looks back with satisfaction over the difficult crevases he has overcome and looks forward to the challenge of those yet to come. It is like the ploughman who reaches the end of yet another furrow and looks back, before commencing another one, to see how straight or otherwise the furrow just completed. It is like the accountant studying the Profit and Loss Account after another year's trading and hoping that he will have good news to give at the Annual General Meeting. A time for examination; and time for reflection. Another milestone has been reached; another chapter in the history book of the life of each one of us has been written. Have we made good progress, like the climber, up the mountain; have we

ploughed a straight furrow: have we got a healthy Balance sheet — are we in the red or in the black? Indeed a time for reflection and a short 'breather' before we tackle the new year. Like Janus we look back over the past year — retrospection. We look at ourselves as we are now — introspection. We look forward to the future twelve months — propection.

Doubtless in retrospection we realise that we have made many mistakes which we will endeavour not to repeat. Things we have done and said of which we are not proud and we shall resolve not to do them again. There is always room for improvement no matter how good we think we are and we shall try to improve upon our record in the year 1981. There are things, however, we have done for the Lord in 1980 of which we can be justly pleased and we hope and trust that our good example will have rubbed-off on others. We often under-estimate the effect our good example has on others and fail to give ourselves a little credit for our efforts in this respect. We are doubtless sure that we can do better.

In introspection we look at ourselves and what do we see? Are we basically better than we were last year at this time? Have we made any progress in our Spiritual development and maturity? Do we seem to have slipped back a little and lost a little ground? If so, what has been the cause? Can we isolate the cause, is it but temporary and are we working on it? Are we losing the battle against the world and are we trying to tackle it solely in our own strength? Have we put on the whole armour of God? I know that self-analysis is a full-time occupation but perhaps January is a good time to take a pulse-reading or a glance at the spiritual thermometer. As at January 1981, in what sort of Spiritual condition are we? "Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith", says Paul (2 Cor. 13:5).

And what of 1981? What is the prospect if, Lord willing, we should live through it, What have we resolved to do for the Lord: what have we determined to accomplish? It is considered by many, with good cause, that the habit of making 'New Year Resolutions' is a bit of a farce seeing that they are usually broken within a few hours or a few days of the making of them and God certainly does not take kindly to men who make vows to Him lightly. Nevertheless shall we quietly and firmly resolve that we shall try to serve the Master better in 1981 than we served Him in 1980, knowing that any such resolution will have our Lord's approval and His support? May it be that this will be our wish for 1981 and that in the coming year we will actively pursue its fulfillment.

Another year is dawning;
 Dear Master let it be,
 In working or in waiting,
 Another year with thee.
 Another year of service,
 Of witness for thy love;
 Another year of training
 For holier work above.

EDITOR.

JEHOVAH IS HIS NAME

(i) One of the most bewildering things for us common folk to understand is that the original Hebrew writing was not vocalised. Vowels were left out altogether so when the name of God was written it, Jehovah, was just the consonants YHWH, or if we put the English equivalents JHVH. No doubt they knew how to pronounce it properly, but that doesn't help us any today. These letters JHVH are called a tetragrammaton. Tetragram means a word of four letters, so tetragrammaton is the four Hebrew consonants that form the name of God. So reverently did the Jews treat

this name, that they came to believe it should not even be named. Basing their fear on Lev.24:16 which they read, according to Louis Berkhof in his Systematic Theology p.49, "He that nameth the name of Yehweh shall surely be put to death." They with superstitious dread replaced the tetragrammaton with Adonai (Lord) or Elohim (God). The Septuagint translation (usually abbreviated by the Roman numerals LXX, L equals 50 and X equals 10, so 50 plus 10 plus 10 equals 70; the supposed number of translators who worked on the translation) a Greek translation of the Hebrew scriptures also substituted the words Kurios (Lord) and Theos (God) for the tetragrammaton. Even our own translators for the most part use the word Lord as a stand-in. When the word Lord replaces Jehovah it is usually distinguishable by the small capitals "LORD". Well, you might be thinking to yourself, if we only have JHVH, how do we know the proper vowels to put with these consonants? We don't! So there could be any number of combinations example JoHeVaH, JeHiViH etc. According to the New Bible Dictionary p.478, the vowels of Adonai were combined with the consonants JHVH to give us the name JeHoVaH. "A form first attested at the beginning of the 12th century A.D. This fact should prevent us being dogmatic on the use of the name Jehovah. It's just an educated guess at the vocalisation of the tetragrammaton.

(ii) The meaning of Jehovah is tied up with the character of God, and can be traced back to Ex.3 and the commission of Moses. Moses said to God, "Behold, I am going to the sons of Israel, and I shall say to them, 'The God of your fathers has sent me to you'. Now they may say to me, 'What is His name?' What shall I say to them?" And God said to Moses, "I Am Who I Am"; and He said, "Thus you shall say to the sons of Israel, 'I Am has sent me to you'" Ex.3:14. Some translate 'I shall be what I shall be'. The name Jehovah is connected with, and derived from the Hebrew verb "Hayah" which means "to be". The full import of the name Jehovah then is, the self-existent One, Who will be all his people need Him to be. God like a blank, signed, cheque is giving Himself as security against any emergency. Whether it be the crushing tyranny of Pharaoh, the might of the Canaanite forces or any such thing; God was more than adequate to save His people and ever faithful to His covenant promises. Let the message ring clear in your ears, our God is adequate for our every need, our every problem. In Him we are more than conquerors! Like the fathers, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, we need to learn to find our all in God, because God is all. Never be content with just a mental acceptance that God is one, remember the demons also believe and tremble, James 2:19. But allowing that belief to work in my life it becomes, as all knowledge of God will, intensely practical. So also with the belief in the name Jehovah. Whenever I begin to doubt my forgiveness; or the prospect of heaven; or my eternal life, then I need to dwell prayerfully on the meaning of Jehovah. He Who was faithful to Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses and the children of Israel is the same "I Am"; ever constant, never changing. The same yesterday today and forever. Every promise in Him is yes! I may doubt myself, but I can never doubt Jehovah. Even when the dark clouds of troubles burst over our heads when no ray of sunshine pierces the darkness then we must remember, "Jehovah is our refuge and strength. A very present help in time of trouble. Therefore we will not fear, though the earth should change and though the mountains slip into the heart of THE SEA. Though its waters roar and foam, though the mountains quake at its swelling pride" Ps.46:1-3. Nothing is too great for Jehovah.

(iii) A most remarkable thing is that the N.T. writers under the inspirations of the Holy Spirit never used the tetragrammaton, nor did they attempt to revive the proper name for God. The reason seems to be that as all things were committed into the hands of Jesus, God was well pleased to make His name, "The name which is

above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those who are in heaven, and on earth and under the earth" Phil.2:9-10, "In order that all may honour the Son, even as they honour the Father. He who does not honour the Son does not honour the Father who sent Him" Jn.5:23-24. The name Jesus means "Jehovah is salvation". He was the one of whom it was prophesied, that He would come in the name of Jehovah, Ps.118:26. Jesus claimed for Himself complete identity with the inner meaning of the name Jehovah, revealed to Moses at the burning bush. In Jn.8:58 He says "Truly, truly, I say to you before Abraham was born, I Am". His timelessness is described in Rev.22:13, "I am the Alpha and Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end." His faithfulness to His covenant promises is assured because "He is the same yesterday, today, yes and forever", Heb.13:8. There are parallel passages from the Old and New Testaments that prove Jesus and Jehovah are one. In Isa.40:3-5 we are told of how the way was to be cleared for Jehovah and how the glory of Jehovah was to be revealed. John the Baptist prepared the way for Jesus, N.1:22-23. It was Jehovah who was valued at 30 pieces of silver, Zach.11:13, but Jesus fulfilled the prediction in the N.T. by being valued at 30 pieces of silver, Mt.27:3-10. Jehovah is the Shepherd of Ps.23, Jesus is the good Shepherd, Jn.10:11. It is said of Jehovah in Ps.102:24-28 that He "Found the earth and the heavens are the work of Thy hands". Yet this prophecy is applied to Jesus in Heb.1:10-12. Clear proof that all that Jehovah stands for and is, has BEEN ACCOUNTED for in Christ. What was lost in the tetragrammaton and its subsequent substitutes has been restored in the person of our glorious Lord Jesus. In true prophetic style, Israel had the shadow JHVH, but the substance belongs to Christ.

GLEANINGS

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

A HAPPY AND PROSPEROUS NEW YEAR

"As the time-honoured wish is spoken or received, it should not be overlooked or forgotten that we are personally largely responsible for the measure of happiness we may enjoy.

"Our lives are songs; God write the words,
 And we set them to music at pleasure,
 And the song grows glad or sweet or sad,
 As we choose to fashion the measure.
 We must write the music whatever the song,
 Whatever its rhyme or metre;
 And if it is sad we can make it glad,
 Or if sweet, we can make it sweeter."

Taking a retrospective view, the records of past years will bear testimony to the truth taught in these lines. Experiences have been very varied, but even when there has been trial, affliction, difficulty, or sorrow, the occasions have been few when it was impossible to raise the spirits or lighten the sorrow by a right effort. The New Year is before us. What will it bring — pleasure or pain? The unthinking would "give anything" to draw aside the veil and see and know what may be in store for them; but the thoughtful have learnt from experience that God is wiser than this and conceals the future from us. Were it possible to know what the coming months have in store it would not be good for us; we should await the pleasant times and joys with unseemly impatience and the anxieties, cares, trials, and griefs with shrinking. We must be satisfied with and live in the present. As the year rolls on the seasons will

pass in their due order; the sun will shine upon the earth, the rain will water it, seed-time will be followed by harvest, and mankind will be blessed with God's fatherly care and bountiful providence. His work for the benefit of His creatures has no slackness or stoppage. His arrangements for our happiness and comfort in the New Year will be complete, nothing wanting.

But in order to perfect happiness we must co-operate with God. In his tender regard of us He supplies all necessary things for our sustenance, comfort, and happiness. He looks for, in return, a love that shall be manifested in trustful obedience to His will. This is the source and means of all true happiness. Not in the pursuit of pleasure, as so many appear to think; not in seeking after the fleeting joys the world offers, but in doing one's duty before God and to those around us lies the secret of a happy life.

The Great Teacher described the happy man as manifesting humility and meekness, having longings for righteousness and peaceableness, and as being "pure in heart." No improvement has ever been made upon this list of qualifications from the day the Lord gave it to the people gathered around Him on the mountaintop side, **NOR CAN BE MADE.** The cultivation of these will most certainly produce a felicity that cannot be obtained in any other way.

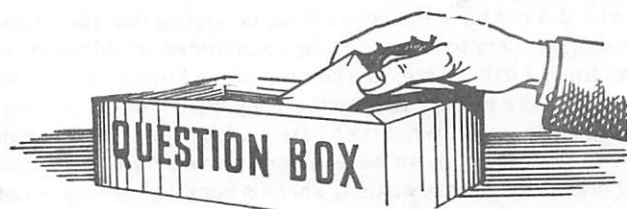
The year is as an open book. It comes to us with 365 blank pages. Before it is closed, if spared, we shall have written on each of these something. What shall it be? Every page can be clean and bright, or it can be the reverse, dirty and dismal; it rests with ourselves. The nearer we live to God, the more we are influenced by His revealed will, the brighter and better will the records be. The psalmist wrote, "Happy are they that keep the Lord's testimonies and that seek Him with the whole heart." Let that be the purpose before us through the coming year, "to seek the kingdom of God and His righteousness," and then we can rest comfortably and happily in the promise "and all these (necessary) things shall be added unto you."

Little hindrances

"It was related recently of an oculist that he had given up cricket purely in the interest of his profession. He was very fond of the game, but he found that playing affected the delicacy of his touch, and made him less ready for the work upon the eyes of his patients. A pianist said that he had given up riding his bicycle because grasping the bars stiffened the muscles of his fingers and affected his playing. The question for a Christian in regard to habits and amusements should not be, Are they wrong? but, Do they hinder my growth in grace? If we are to do all that we do to the glory of God, we must make even our recreations religious.

Bethesda 1907.

Selected by Leonard Morgan



Conducted by
Alf Marsden

"I have been told that crucifixion was a Roman way of execution, but Deuteronomy 21:22 says that cursed is everyone which hangeth on a tree (prophetically of Christ). Could you comment, please?"

This is a good question because it gives us opportunity to correct one or two popular misconceptions regarding crucifixion. The Greek word for cross is *Stauros* and

denotes, primarily, an upright pale or stake. The victim would have his arms extended *above* his head and his hands together, the back of one hand in the palm of the other; the nail would then be driven through *both* hands near the wrists. The feet would also be together with the nail-driven through both feet. Such a death our Lord died. This method of execution was borrowed by both Greeks and Romans from the Phoenicians.

The T-shaped cross, of popular illustration, with the cross-piece lowered, was evidently used as the symbol of the god Tammuz. In the apostate ecclesiastical system of the mid-third century AD, pagans were admitted into the church in their upregenerate state and they brought with them many of their pagan symbols; hence the Tau or T with the cross-piece lowered, was adopted to stand for the cross of Christ.

The Deuteronomy Passage

The Deuteronomists were strict legalists. The Mosaic Law was burned into their hearts and minds; as we read, "And it shall be our righteousness, if we observe to do all these commandments before the Lord our God, as He hath commanded us" (Deut. 6:25). Such was their zeal for the Law.

It was natural, then, that they should observe the law regarding hanging on a tree, and I think we should note this scripture because of the subsequent statement made in the N.T., "And if a man have committed a sin worthy of death, and he be to be put to death and thou hang him on a tree; his body shall not remain all night upon the tree, but thou shalt in any wise bury him that day (for he that is hanged is accursed of God) that thy land be not defiled, which the Lord thy God giveth thee for an inheritance" (Deut. 21:23). The important points to note here are (a) a man must have committed a sin worthy of death (b) he must be put to death (method of death not specified) (c) if he is hung on a tree he is accursed of God (d) his body must not remain hanging on the tree all night. We find the same sort of thing recorded in Joshua when Joshua had the five kings slain and then hung their bodies on five trees; they were cut down when the sun went down and their bodies cast into the cave where they have been hidden (Joshua 10:22-27). In view of what we have said, I think I would tend *not* to look upon the Deuteronomy passage as being truly prophetic of Christ because of the cardinal fact that Christ did *not* commit any sin, and so could not have committed a sin worthy of death. There must have been, therefore, some other important reason why Jesus was crucified.

God's Righteousness

In his Roman letter, Paul argues the relative conditions of Gentiles and Jews. Regarding the Gentiles, who did not have the law of God, he argues that their consciences, even though prompting them to do right things sometimes, could never be an infallible guide *all* the time; furthermore, he shows them as having become so depraved that God gave them over to their depravity. They were sinners and unrighteous. Turning to the Jews he says, "What then? are we (the Jews) better than they (the Gentiles)? No, in no wise: for we have before proved both Jews and Gentiles, that they are all under sin; As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one" (Rom. 3:9, 10). So here we have a depressing picture of a creation totally steeped in sin. Law, obedience, and merit could not produce righteousness; the dictates of conscience could not produce righteousness. The curse of sin, and therefore of death, was upon all mankind.

But what was God to do? He loved His creation, even in its terminal condition of sin, so much that He wanted to show His mercy to them. But how to do it? To just pronounce the unrighteous righteous would be unjust by itself. But God's *mercy*

would not allow Him to leave man to his fate; at the same time. God's *justice* demanded some punishment for sin. The only possible way to save some was by the propitiatory offering of Christ and the call for faith on man's part. God could not let sin go as if it were a mere slip. God demanded the atonement and provided it. As Paul puts it, "To declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus" (Rom. 3:26). Not only had justice to be *done*, but God must *be seen* to be just by the whole world. The punishment was to be borne by Christ. The manifestation of the standard of God's righteousness was to be demonstrated by Christ. To do this, Christ had to be crucified. He had to hang on the tree.

The Curse of the Law

In his letter to the churches in Galatia, Paul says, "For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse: for it is written, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them" (Gal. 3:10). The important words in this statement which are worthy of note are the words "continueth" and "all." We have seen that the Jews did not continue to do all of the things contained in the law and so they became a curse. Now the Judaizers were following Paul around and bewitching the Galatian Gentile Christians to place their reliance upon that law which had been designated as a curse. Paul allied the perverters of the true gospel with the same curse that was upon the law, "If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed" (Gal. 1:9).

Paul then goes on to show how the curse was removed, "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree" (Gal. 3:13). Christ "redeemed" us literally means that He ransomed us or brought us back "out from under the curse of the law." When Paul uses the expression "being made a curse for us" he means that we were "under" the curse but Christ "covered" us or interposed Himself between the curse and us so taking the curse upon Himself. What a wonderful Saviour we have. Paul then makes reference to the scripture contained in Deuteronomy 21:23 but you will notice that he does not say on this occasion "Cursed (by God) is every one that hangeth on a tree." Christ would not and could not be cursed by God because He was the sinless offering for sin. The allusion here, as in the Deuteronomy and Joshua passages, was to the exposure of dead bodies on stakes or crosses; it had nothing to do with the attachment of sin to the Christ in any shape or form. Such an allusion would be monstrous, unthinkable, and intellectually unacceptable. You cannot cancel out sin by sin. Salvation now is by mercy, faith and grace. We receive Christ as a gift, or not at all.

Well, I hope that we might have said something useful on the subject. The whole subject of Justification by Faith is set out by Paul in his Roman letter where he reveals the acute and profound problem of God in dealing with a sinful and unrighteous world, but that is the subject of another study.

(All questions please, to Alf Marsden, 377 Billingsgate Road, Highfield, Wigan, Lancs.)

WHY WORSHIP GOD?

WHILST MANY other Christians have taken up their pens in earnest to put on paper their experiences about Christianity, I thought also I should join the chorus. To the Christian, the word "worship" is not new. What might be new or strange is the method.

When one talks about worship other synonyms come to mind, namely: homage, reverence, adoration, honour, glory, thanks and service. All of these words are important to the Christian. It must be admitted that worship of a spiritual being is difficult to man who is material. How then can this feat be accomplished? The answer is that genuine faith is essential. We are made to learn that this faith comes by hearing the word of God. Worship that is not as "saith" by the Lord is not therefore acceptable because one has to hear the word and then follow the word and making sure that nothing is *added nor subtracted* (Rev. 22:18-20).

It might be said that one should worship God because he has commanded one to do so. Rightly so, but why worship God is the question. Let us therefore consider some of these reasons as we go on in this article. First of all, it is important to recognise that the attributes of God are the basis of worship or adoration. The Word of God, the Bible, is replete with what many might describe as emotional outbursts such as the eternity of God, wisdom, love, power of God; His mercy, holiness, justice, etc. Again the Bible reveals that God preceded creation — "In the beginning God . . ." (Gen. 1:1). Some may disagree with this revelation, namely the infidel and/or 'know-it-all' or Mr fool — "The fool hath said in his heart, there is no God . . ." (Psalm 14:17). For 'Mr know-it-all,' he claims, and I quote: "If there is the creator of the universe, then there must be the creator of the creator, and of that creator and that creator and so on. Where would he end, he ends only in the knowledge as God has given to him. The conclusion of the matter though is that He who is omnipresence (Psalms 139:7-12) has settled the matter when He, through Isaiah said thus — "there is no God else besides me, a just God and a Saviour" (Isaiah 45:21).

Another point to be noted is that God is "worthy" to be worshipped. He is worthy because of His being and His mighty works. Brother John, the author of the book of Revelation has the following to write down for our learning — "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord and our God, the Almighty, who was and who is and who is to come. Worthy art thou, our Lord and our God, to receive the glory and the honour and the power: for thou didst create all things, and because of thy will they are, and we are created (Rev. 4:8, 11). Where then lies the argument of 'Mr know-it-all', that there must be the creator of the Creator! By the time he finds out, the Trumpet of the Lord will have sounded and time will be no more!!

When we contemplate the Wisdom of God as displayed in the whole universe, a wisdom not acquired by Him but inherent in Him, we repeat with David that — "Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high, I cannot attain unto it (Psalms 139:6) "The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament showeth his handiwork" (Psalms 19:1).

THE LOVE OF GOD

Christianity is deeply routed in the love of God, that love that moved God to send His only son to be a propitiation for our sins (1 John 4:10; John 3:16). For the fervour of John 3:16 let us hear it as quoted: "For God so loved the world that he gave His only begotten Son that he who believeth on him should not perish but have everlasting life." Is there any reason why we should not so praise Christ for his love? It is very difficult for man to comprehend the mercy of God as shown by Christ to sinners. Self-righteous man is too proud to acknowledge that he stands in need of divine mercy. He insists on meriting unmerited favour. To Paul, he was grateful after persecuting the church and now the Father of mercies added him into the Kingdom of His dear Son. Paul has this to say — "Now unto the King eternal, im-

mortal, invisible, the only God, be honour and glory for ever and ever, Amen. (1 Tim. 1:17).

Recognising that God is a Spirit and that he that would worship must worship him in truth and in spirit; that He is eternal, holy, loving, merciful and "worthy" of worship and other unequalled attributes, we are forced to conclude with Jude when he penned the following — "To the only God our Saviour, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion and power, before all time, and now, and for evermore, Amen. (Jude 25).

— S. N. Edeagu, Church of Christ, Prince of Wales Road, Kentish Town, London NW5.

BAPTISM AND THE NEW BIRTH

(Author's note: The reason for the article under the above title needs some explanation. In the S.S. of June this year a contribution appeared under the title "The Parable of the Labourers in the Vineyard." At the end of that article I said that, with the Editor's agreement, I would follow with a further exposition to try to show from Scripture how we became labourers in the Lord's vineyard.

That article has never been published and not even written! The reasons why are (1) I was waiting to read the original in print. (2) It has been published in the S.S. and (3) I was on holiday at the time and did not read it because I did not see that issue of the paper until only a few days ago. By the kindness of Bro. Leonard Morgan I have now been provided with a copy. My gratitude and apologies offered to Leonard, to the editor for his patience and to readers of the S.S. for inconvenience borne: the blame I alone am responsible for. Now I submit the article.)

The scripture that obviously comes to mind is in the gospel of John, chapter 3. There are numerous passages in the New Testament on our subject, but we shall concentrate for this article on that chapter. Will you read and read again verses 1-11 so that you will be acquainted with what both Nicodemus and Jesus Christ say in their conversation? We cannot know too well what was said, for every word is vital.

In the first place we note that Nicodemus had never asked any question which required an answer. He had uttered words which recognised the authority and power of Jesus: he had praised and acknowledged Jesus. But Jesus went right to the heart of this Pharisee and ruler. Jesus was dealing with one who, like other men, needed the blessings of the New Life Jesus came to give. Like all others, Nicodemus was a sinner who needed to be forgiven cleansed and renewed. Jesus said "Unless you are born anew (born from above, born again) you cannot see the Kingdom of God." Notice the word 'see,' in this case Jesus means 'perceive,' 'understand,' 'know.' The coming of Jesus into the world was a revelation of the glory, the love of God. The heavenly Father was giving His only son for love of those who put Him to death in order that we, with them, might enjoy the new life, the salvation which Jesus brought from His death, His sacrifice.

He was speaking to one man. The salvation and new life which Jesus gives is through his own death and resurrection from the grave. The crucifixion, burial and rising again of Jesus Christ are the most tremendous events in all history. As mighty as the Creation by God "in the beginning." What Jesus accomplished in giving Himself to men and for men is the New Creation. To be part of that New Creation can be likened to:

A New Birth

Jesus tells Nicodemus that this is exactly what it is. Nicodemus is astonished. He asks Jesus "How?" Can he go again through the process of birth from his mother? He can think only of natural physical birth. It needs to be made clearer to the teacher in Israel. Jesus does so in the exact words Nicodemus needs: "Unless a man is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot *enter into* the Kingdom of God." It was pointed out above that Jesus at first told Nicodemus that he could not *see* the Kingdom unless he was born again. Now Jesus goes further in teaching him. He must not only *see* but must *enter into* the Kingdom, and this entering in is by "water and the Spirit" (capital 'S' for Holy Spirit, Spirit of God).

"Water and the Spirit"

It is a tragedy to witness the divisions, wranglings, debates, even to the tearing into pieces of the Body of Christ, His Church, over that word 'water.' We need not instance them: they are growing worse week by week. What a strange paradox we have in these times! National and worldwide activities are taking place, enormous sums of money being poured out to bring about union in "the divided Body of Christ." It is realised as "a scandal" and is a disgrace to present to a mocking and indifferent world such a spectacle as is apparent in the state of the many religious bodies and denominations claiming to be "all one in Christ Jesus" yet any observant or interested person can discern that underneath this facade of union there is not unity, which is a very different matter.

In Eph. 4 Paul sets out the "seven ones" which display the "unity of the Spirit." He exhorts us to "*maintain* the unity of the Spirit." We hear a great deal about promoting or bringing about unity among Christians but not a word is said about such aims in this great passage. Instead, we are to *maintain* the unity. To maintain is to continue, carry on, what already exists. That is God's doing: it is already accomplished and nothing can break it. It is ours to keep the unity which Christ achieved on the cross. We can maintain it only by understanding and setting forth what our Saviour taught by word and example as we read in the scriptures, in both writings and epistles, and we must start right. Among these seven "ones" is "one baptism."

One Baptism

What is the "one baptism?" How can it be any other than that depicted and practised by the church of the N.T. in apostolic days? Instead of all Christians being now made one in Christ through baptism, we bring about more divisions by insisting upon our various 'modes of baptism.' If we left such theorisings and were content with the obvious meaning of the relevant scriptures, we should know that scripture baptism, that which Jesus Christ taught and carried out, and which His apostles faithfully followed is *immersion* — going down *into* and coming up *out of* water. Only in such baptism is it possible to practice and show forth the act and the meanings of baptism.

In "baptism" of infants many readings are given from the Bible and from "Articles of Religion," Prayer Books, Service Books, Confessions of Faith, etc., which, of course, cannot be understood, or even heard by the one they concern — the babe. The same applies to the action performed. Both reading and actions are, to that extent, meaningless. The clergyman or whoever else is officiating takes the child in his arms, dips his finger in specially prepared water ("holy water") and in these actions and what he recites makes the babe "a child of God." What was the child before? Do those participating ever question the application to the babe? Surely the incongruity of it all must strike those who can see or hear. Yet it is all accepted and perpetuated.

Original Sin

This tenet is based upon the words of King David in Psalm 5 verse 5: "I was brought forth in iniquity and in sin did my mother conceive me." It was without question accepted as true of all mankind by most who are "Christians." We venture to suggest that David never for a moment imagined that his words would be used to build a worldwide doctrine upon. We know of the circumstances under which the king uttered the words we can perhaps better understand them. David had committed adultery with Bathsheba, wife of Uriah, a soldier in the king's army. Even the great king was prepared to stoop to murder by ordering his general to place Uriah in such a dangerous position in the battle line that he would be killed. This was accordingly carried out and David took Uriah's widow as his own wife, in order that it might appear that the resulting child might be regarded as legitimate. But God instructed His prophet Nathan to condemn David for the horror of his crime. Only then does David see what a foul guilt lay upon him in God's sight. In his distress and shame and misery he gives vent to the cry of anguish in his 51st Psalm. Cannot we see that what he cried was true of himself under such circumstances and tension?

Man is Under Sin

There is not any doubt that every human being has the power of sin in his very being, constantly at work within him and hindering and preventing him from doing right and good, and urging him to do that which his whole being revolts against "I know the best and yet the worst I do." This unassailable reality is examined and set before us in its nakedness by Paul in his epistle to the Romans, especially in chapters 5 to 7. In chapter 7 verse 24 Paul sums up the terrible struggle in the agonised cry "wretched man that I am! who will deliver me from this body of death?" The next verse gives the answer. "I thank God, through Jesus Christ my Lord."

But that is not the doctrine of "original sin." The principle of sin marring and defacing everything which is true and honourable and lovely" is too apparent in everything in man's world today to be contradicted. Such inborn tendency is not to be eradicated by what takes place in the meaning (the christening) of a child, or the use of scriptures out of all relationship to their setting. The terrible power of sin over us is to be far more feared than what is presented in infant "baptism." This latter is treated often by its defenders with levity and frivolity. But to deal with man's sinfulness is another matter altogether. "Original sin" and its treatment is a man-made doctrine. What Paul deals with in his Epistle to the Romans is true to the word of God and in our own daily experiences.

CARLTON MELLING.

SCRIPTURE READINGS

FEBRUARY 1981

- 1 I King 17,1-24, Mark 5,21-43
- 8 Numbers 13,16-35, Mark 6,1-13
- 15 I Kings 18,1-18, Mark 6,14-29
- 22 II Kings 4,38-44, Mark 6,30-56

Jesus and Jairus

The arrival of Jesus at the lake-side

was the immediate signal at this time for the crowds to gather. It seems that his boat was watched and the message went far and wide in whatever district He landed. Jairus had the news and, distressed beyond endurance by his little daughter's serious condition. thought of Jesus at once as the One Who could and would help. His position in society was one of recognised importance and respect, but this was of no significance in face of the calamity in his home. Luke tells us she was his only

daughter. The parents were thus in great distress, and, throwing off any pride of position of respectability, he prostrated himself before the prophet of Nazareth. How human, how brief, how poignant is the record — only daughter aged twelve at point of death. How much the child must have meant to the parents — perhaps only those in the same position or equivalent can feel its power. How the kindly heart of Jesus must have responded immediately to the appeal. Incidentally He was not used to such approach from RULERS of synagogues. So Jesus went with him towards his home thronged by the pressing ordinary needy folk, needy for His life and teaching. What must Jairus have felt at the delay. Jesus apparently in no hurry and not only noticing his outgoing of power but stopping to win confession from the unknown seeker. We note here the delay became for Jairus fatal, but there was immediate relief by the words of Jesus — how much accepted we do not know. He made His work for those anxious parents as private as He could by limiting even the number of His disciples, leaving the crowd, sending off the mourners and going into the room with five witnesses only to say the “wonderful words of life”. He commanded secrecy but it could not be hid.

Jesus and the afflicted woman

Picture the eager anxious throng which moves with busy haste along and among them in strict secrecy working her way closer to the sacred person of Jesus with the certainty in her soul that a touch would be sufficient as so many had already found. She must have suffered deeply and long with so humiliating a disease and her thought was quietly to receive the blessing and go away. She KNEW at once but so did Jesus, and it was necessary for her that she should make her public confession — and receive the WORD of blessing. Like Jairus before, she fell at Jesus’ feet. There is no escape from submission and acknowledgement. “Sceptre and crown must tumble down, and in the earth be

equal made with the poor crooked scythe and spade”. The ultimate blessing here and hereafter is to be utterly humbled before Jesus. Do we “Touch Him in life’s throng and press, and we are whole again.”

Price of publicity

This month’s readings take us through the lights and shadows of the Saviour’s public life. They give us the picture of a great popularity making the common people see the SON OF GOD. We view in chapter 6 that most striking of miracles from the question of popularity — the feeding of the 5,000. The facts must have stayed in the minds of all who were there to the end of their lives, and through them its fame must have endured through years and been one of those things which were well known to Caesarean Cornelius — “The preaching of peace and the going about doing good”. It may have become the culmination of the fame of Jesus because it revealed the possibility of outbreak of violence on His behalf. The claim to be the Messiah was no longer a reasonable public proclamation. So the apostles were told NOT to proclaim that (8,29 & 30). The popular excitement was too far from the Saviour’s design. On the other hand we have powers revealed to those who were closer to Jesus which produced the utmost astonishment, the writer almost exhausting language to express it — “sore amazed in themselves beyond measure and wondered” (6,51), see also 4,41. Our concluding paragraph fills out the picture when the landing was in that part of the lakeside known as Gennesarat. In those four verses the healing ministry is described which must have been the story of weeks, months and possibly of years in those days of God’s presence among men.

But it remained true that they sought Him for what they could get materially. Only those who took the spirital food permanently benefitted. They must have been a very large number who formed the “body of Christ” in its initial stages — the basis of the influence which over-

came the forces of evil in a hopelessly decadent society, and triumphed over the material force of a mighty world wide empire, definitely determined to destroy it. We cannot forget it was a populace that cried "Crucify Him!" having forgotten what He had done among them. What influence besides the preaching and miracles led to the ready acceptance of the gospel at Samaria (Acts 8,5: John 4,41)?

Wicked women

The sin which led to the tragic death of the prophet John Baptist began in the heart of Herod Who broke God's law to satisfy his lust, and the woman was equally to blame. We are surprised and pleased that John's preaching while so frank did have influence on the king's behaviour to do many things which were good. Why should the dancing woman cause him to make so foolish a promise? It is so that human frailty brings us into trouble. The pleasure of the moment brought deep sorrow and a heinous crime. Are there occasions when an oath so openly and firmly given, or any promise, OUGHT to be broken? If so, this was the occasion certainly. We are horrified at the detailed demand put forward "with haste unto the king" as though the daughter shared the concentrated hatred of her mother. How dreadful the thought of the heart that made the request and took pleasure in such a deed! We do not know why God permitted His faithful prophet so to die, but have no doubt about his reward — and the devil can never triumph. In God's sight John had fulfilled his part in opening up the way for the King. He appears to have expected a very different king in common with his people, and had to accept the assurance that all was well without understanding it (Matt.11,3). There are "secret things that belong unto the Lord our God" and we cannot know them "but the things that are revealed belong unto us and to our children for ever." (Deut. 29,29). This horrible crime ushered John into the Father's ultimate care.

Satisfied servants

The apostles had their first experience in preaching and teaching and healing, and reported their success to Jesus. Jesus responded by seeking rest for them, which they did not at that time get (6,31 & 33). The seventy likewise reported when they shared the great work later, and it was indeed little wonder that they rejoiced. This great experience was to be temporary — while Jesus was with them — and it served the purpose of awaking the whole nation to expectancy, brought to a head when Jesus entered Jerusalem at the final passover feast (11,1-11). A harder work was to be faced (Luke 22,35) when a consolation would be needed of which Jesus told them (Luke 10,20). The world is still needing the repentance which they first preached, which when practised assures the inscription in heaven.

R. B. Scott

IS THIS YOU?

Sometime when you're feeling important,
Sometime when your ego's in bloom;
Sometimes when you take it for granted
You're the best qualified in the room;
Sometime when you feel that your going
Would leave an unfillable hole,
Just follow this simple instruction
And see how it humbles your soul:—

Take a bucket and fill it with water,
Put your hand in it, up to the wrist;
Pull it out and the hole that's remaining,
Is a measure of how you'll be missed,
You may splash all you please, when
you enter,
You can stir up the water galore,
But stop! And you'll find in a minute
That it looks quite the same as before.

The moral in this quaint example
Is that you do the best that you can.
Be proud of yourself; but remember —
There's no indispensable man.

"Woodstock Bulletin"

"NEW CARTS"

Read carefully 1 Samuel chapters 4 to 6; 2 Sam. 6; and 1 Chron. 13. The ark of God's covenant had been captured by the Philistines. However, while it was in their possession God brought discomfort to them until they returned it to the Israelites. In time king David took steps to bring the ark to Jerusalem where it would be given a proper place of honour among the people of God.

There are vital lessons taught in these incidents to which we "... ought to give the more earnest heed ... lest we drift away from them" (Heb. 2:1). Let us notice what God's word had to say about transporting the ark of the covenant:

"None ought to carry the ark of God but the Levites: for them hath the Lord chosen to carry the ark of God ..." (1 Chron. 15:2). "... but they shall not touch any holy thing lest they die" (Num. 4:15).

From these passages we observe that when being transported, the ark was to be carried only by the Levites, and that even they could not touch it, lest they die.

A good work

When men (sometimes brethren) seek to defend some project, practice, or co-operative or organisational arrangement they have devised in their religious zeal, they are often heard to say, "It is a 'good work'"; or "Look at the 'good' that is accomplished". With this in mind let us consider the circumstances surrounding 1 Chron. 13:10.

Could it not be argued, "Look at the 'good' David and his helpers were doing!" They were bringing the ark to Jerusalem (where the Temple was eventually built) where it would be given a place of honour among the people of God. God had raised no objection when the Philistines had made a "new cart" on which to transport the ark to Bethshemesh; He even miraculously led the cattle which pulled the cart to their destination (1 Sam. 6:12). If it was 'good' in that instance, why not for David? Was not Uzzah seeking to do 'good' when, seeing the ark in apparent

danger of falling from the cart, he put forth his hand to steady it? Well, no doubt the Lord knew all that; but it made no difference to the outcome — Uzzah still died, and the ark remained with the family of Obed-edom for three months until brought to Jerusalem in the manner prescribed by God (1 Chron. 15:2)

The facts are that Uzzah would not have died had he not touched the ark; he would not have touched the ark had it not shaken: it would not have shaken so had it not been upon a cart; it would not have been upon a cart had David followed the orders of the Lord for the transport of the ark (Num. 1:6-9).

Concern for accomplishing good as it should be; but we should be careful lest in our zeal and enthusiasm for accomplishment we stray beyond the "doctrine of Christ" (2 Jn. 9). Remember, *"There is a way that seemeth right unto a man: but the end thereof are the ways of death" (Prov 14:12)*. Remember also it was that same David who prayed, *"Keep back thy servant also from PRESUMPTIOUS sins; let them not have dominion over me: then shall I be upright, and I shall be innocent from the great transgression" (Ps. 19:13)*.

When you hear the expression, "I'd rather have done something and find that I did it a wrong way, than do nothing at all", consider also that "Fools rush in where angels fear to tread". David, in his enthusiasm, had either forgotten or overlooked God's command, or he considered under the circumstances that it didn't matter. He was wrong!

BILL HALL.

NEWS FROM THE CHURCHES

Cape Town, South Africa

"After quite a time, having on invitation and requests, I was able to preach, teach and give my assistance to various congregations, which included gospel campaigns for about a year, with

"fruitbearing results"! But then it was in the year of 1979, of April that I saw the need to go and offer my voluntary assistance to a small congregation in the Bokmakjerie, Athlone area of Cape Town, meeting in a Primary School room.

Those men in the congregation responsible were very thankful for the offer, and to the Glory of God, while the progress is "slowly but surely" going forward, up to date since . . . last April 1979 up till August we have witnessed eight precious souls responding to obey the gospel and be baptised into Christ.

More than that, the regular attendances have been fairly commendable, not only by members but visitors also, especially at our Bible Study on Wednesday evenings in the home of a family who are members! And with the interest exhibited, by visitors we are hopefully looking forward to many more precious souls, being baptised soon!

After having prayed about my decision at the time I decided to give my service, I am fully convinced, and can see that it was a leading by the Lord. With a combined service with an invitation to all congregations here in Cape Town, to be held at a new township namely Mitchell's Plain (where a new work has started), on 7th December, 1980, and I have been invited to be the second speaker for that evening, which will also involve a singing session! Finally, on the 14th December . . . to speak at a congregation in St-Eenberg, which will be after they have shared in a Sunday School anniversary occasion.

And can say, with the year of 1980 almost past and gone, may the blessings we have shared, "too innumerable to mention," may that be our privilege Lord willing during 1981, and may the Lord bless you one and all in lands near and far, as you labour for the Master."

Thos. W. Hartle

Kitwe, Zambia — Night Life

Banned in Zambia

President Kaunda of Zambia has accused South Africa of being behind a

plot to overthrow his Government with the help of such disparate elements as dissident Zaireans and disaffected Zambians. According to President Kaunda, the South Africans were to have crossed into Zambia from Namibia once the gang of dissidents had struck key installations in Lusaka. A well armed gang of Zaireans were discovered south of the capital, carrying maps of Lusaka with key installations marked on them. The discovery of this gang, thought to number between 50 and 200, sparked off Zambia's biggest security crackdown in years and led to the imposition of an indefinite dusk to dawn curfew. President Kaunda confirmed that, in addition to a number of prominent businessmen, three members of the 50 mission work must be slotted between 6 in the morning and 7 at night. At nightfall everyone must be locked in their houses even to sit on the front porch is an arrestable offence. Residential training courses and a youth camp are some of the recent mission casualties. However, life during the daylight hours is very intensive. The towns on the Copperbelt are receiving missionary coverage — but it means early starts and a stock car racing rush to get back to the house before curfew descends because, as one man put it, curfew waits for no man.

"Church Stealing — The Latest?"

Eric Schoeman, member of the Church of Christ in Kitwe, commented: "Car stealing, purse stealing, stealing from stores and banks, wife stealing but church stealing — is this the latest?" A number of congregations have been affected by takeover moves of one kind or another by other missions. In some cases, church buildings have been involved.

New Year's Greetings

The Woodhall family thank you all for your Christmas cards and send you greetings for Christmas and the New Year. Their address remains: Church of Christ Mission, P.O. Box 22297, Kitwe, Zambia.

EVANGELIST WANTED

The Slamannan District of churches require an evangelist and all interested brethren should apply in writing to the District Secretary, Hugh Davidson, 21 Glen Lyon, St. Leonards, East Kilbride, Scotland, GT4 2JJ.

EDITOR'S CHANGE OF ADDRESS

The Editor's address is now: 87 Main Street, Pathhead, Midlothian, EH37 5PT.

Do something useful every day. Don't retire.

Don't think, "How are they treating me?" but "How am I treating them?"

Don't count slights, but count your blessings.

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EDITOR: JAMES R. GARDINER, 87 Main Street, Pathhead Midlothian, Scotland, EH37 5PT

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