

# The SCRIPTURE STANDARD

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

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## A TALL ORDER

According to this morning's newspaper, trouble is escalating in Jerusalem between Jew and Palestinian, and the death toll for this week alone is 67 civilians. Only yesterday, as Israelis offered prayers at the Wailing Wall (on the eve of the Jewish New Year) they were viciously attacked by Palestinians hurling bottles, bricks and iron bars down upon them. The attack, which left several dead and about 100 injured, began as thousands of Moslems left their lunch-time prayers in the Al-Aqse Mosque on the temple Mount, and launched their missiles on the Jewish worshippers 50 feet below. The rioters then tried to break through the Mughrabi Gate and gain access to the Wailing Wall plaza but were forced back by Israeli troops. And so it goes on. There have been three temples built at this site. The first and original was, of course, built by Solomon in 950BC but was destroyed by the Babylonians in 586BC (2 Kings 25:8) when the Jews were taken into captivity in Babylon. The second, and much inferior, temple was built by Zerubbabel at the same spot in 515BC by the "Remnant" returning from the captivity (6th year of King Darius). The third was built by Herod The Great, in rivalry with Solomon's, and was started in 20BC. In spite of many thousands of artisans and labourers, it was not completed until 63AD and so the work would be in progress when Jesus was walking around in Jerusalem. Just 7 years later, after all the work and expense, Herod's temple was completely destroyed by the Roman armies under Titus in their war against Jerusalem. Part of the western wall (itself a part of the platform of Solomon's temple) is all that is left - i.e. "The Wailing Wall."

Anyone who has seen the wall can well understand how it has earned the name given to it, for there is a constant stream of Jewish pilgrims, especially on Fridays, who stand at the base of the wall, working themselves up into a state of great emotion, moaning and groaning in their prayers and readings, and loudly lamenting the past glories of Israel. Whether aware of it or not, these Jews are actually lamenting the total demise of their religion; a religion which will never return. The Jews today still have the deaf ears their forebears had in Christ's time, but if they would just read the N.T. once or twice, they would not waste time in trying to breathe new life into a very dead spiritual corpse. Paul said that his most ardent prayer and desire for Israel was "**that they might be SAVED**" (Rom. 10:1). He did not envisage a revival of the Jewish religion: he had moved on and was trying to SAVE the Jews by the gospel of Christ. And so the Wailing Wall remains and continues, as a testimony to the disappearance of not only three Jewish temples, but the end of Judaism, extinguished for the last two thousand years.

Perhaps the saddest thing about the Wailing Wall is that it is obviously frequented by those who, like their forefathers, do not believe that Jesus was the Messiah and have nothing, therefore, in which to rejoice. By contrast, believers in Christ have much in which to be glad and rejoice. They have no Wailing Wall. One would think that the Jews, who have been studying their scriptures for centuries, would have come to realise that Christ fulfilled all prophecy to the very letter, and must have been their Messias. Apollos was well versed in O.T. scripture and **"mightily convinced the Jews, and that publicly, showing from the scriptures that Jesus was the Christ"** (Acts 18:28). And so it can be done. It is possible to show from O.T. scripture, especially prophecy, the ordained credentials of the one who would meet the claim of being the Messiah.

### JEWISH EXPECTATIONS

Let us consider what the Jews, who do not believe that Messias has yet to come, must be looking for. Assuming that they believe the Old Testament scriptures and that these scriptures are yet to be fulfilled - what must they each day be expecting? For what must they be looking? Well, first of all the Messiah for whom they are looking will, in terms of lineage, have to be *of the seed of Abraham* for **"In Abraham's seed would all the nations of the earth be blessed"** (Gen. 18:18; Gen. 12:3). That promise was transferred to Isaac and to Jacob (Gen. 17:19; Num. 14:17). He must also be **of the tribe of Judah** (Gen. 49:10). Where today, or in the future, will the Jews find such a one? I am not sure if a Jew could, today, trace his lineage back as far as Abraham, or prove his pedigree. Also the Christ yet to come would also have to be **the Son of David and heir to his throne** (Isaiah 9:7; 2 Sam. 7:13). Jesus of Nazareth was all of those things. The early books of the New Testament set out, for all, and any to investigate, His ancestry. He was Abraham's seed (Matt. 1:1; Luke 3:34). He was of the seed of Isaac and Jacob (Matt. 1:2, Luke 3:34). **He was of the tribe of Judah** (Luke 3:33). He was **the son of David** (Matt. 1:1; Matt. 1:6). Surely the Jews must know that it is now unlikely for a man of such lineage to come round the corner.

If such a man comes round the corner one will have to have had his **origins at Bethlehem**. In Micah 5:2 the Messiah's birthplace is prophesied thus, **"But thou Bethlehem Ephrathah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall He come forth unto me that is to be the ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from old, from everlasting."** Not only, then, will the coming one have to have the lineage previously described but he will also have to be born at Bethlehem. Strangely enough, Jesus Christ was born there (Luke 2:4-7). Not only will this child have to be born in Bethelhem but will have in infancy, **"to be taken into Egypt"** so that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet saying, **"Out of Egypt have I called My son"** (Matt. 2:15; Hosea 11:1; Ex. 4:2,23). When this child, looked for by the Jews; returns from Egypt, he will have to **take up residence at Nazareth** in order to fulfil **"that which was spoken by the prophets, He shall be called a Nazarene"** (Matt. 2:23, Judg. 13:5; 1 Sam. 1:11). This is to say nothing of the problems of fulfilling **"that which was spoken by Jeremy the prophet, saying, In Rama there was a voice heard, lamentation, and weeping, and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children, and would not be comforted, because they are not."** The fulfilment of this scripture is described in Matt. 2:16 as occurring when King Herod slew all the children, two years old and under, both in Bethlehem and all the coasts thereof.

### PROPHET, PRIEST AND KING

We can perhaps begin to see how difficult it will be for the Jews to see, in the future these scriptures coming to pass in the person of someone yet to come, but we have not

yet really got started on the theme. There is the question of the time of the coming of the Christ. Dan. 9:25 says, "Know therefore and understand that from the going forth of the commandment to restore and build Jerusalem unto the Messiah, the Prince, shall be seven weeks and threescore and two . . ." and the same prophet said (2:44) "And in the days of these kings shall God set up a kingdom . . ." And in the days of what kings? To what kings do the Jews consider the prophet refers?

This man for whom the Jews await will also have to experience *a unique birth*, i.e. be born of a virgin, so that he might fulfil Isaiah 7:14 "Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign; behold a virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call His name Immanuel." This man assuming he fills all the considerable requirements so far, will have to be prophet like unto Moses (Deut. 18:15) but will require to be a priest, and not only a priest, but a priest for ever after the Order of Melchizedek" i.e. without parentage and without beginning or ending. Jesus of Nazareth was born of a virgin (Matt. 1:18) and was a prophet like unto Moses (John 6:14; Acts 3:19-26) and was a priest after the Order of Melchizedek (Heb. 6:20).

### HE MUST BE REJECTED

It is ironical that this man the Jews are so eagerly awaiting will also have to be rejected by them if the scriptures are to be fulfilled. The Jews will have to reject Him and even crucify Him. For instance Isaiah 53 describes how unattractive the Messiah will be to the Jews when He does come, e.g. "He is despised and rejected of men, a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief and we hid as it were our faces from him; He despised and we esteemed Him not." This same chapter says a whole lot of things concerning what will befall the Messiah and what He will accomplish. *He will bear our griefs and carry our sorrows; on Him will God lay the iniquity of us all; He will be afflicted and oppressed and will be silent at His slaughter as a lamb before her shearers is dumb; He will be taken from prison and judgement and make His grave with the wicked and His death with the rich; His soul shall be an offering for sin and He shall bear the iniquity of the world and shall be numbered with the transgressors.* Before all this befalls Him He shall have to make a triumphal entry into the city of Jerusalem, not in a Rolls Royce, but "upon an ass and a colt the foal of an ass" (to fulfil Zech. 9:9). He shall require to be betrayed by a friend, "Yea mine own familiar friend" (to fulfil Psalm 41:9): He will have to be betrayed for 30 pieces of silver (an unlikely price of treachery today) to fulfil Zech. 11:12: this same 30 pieces of silver will require later to purchase the Potter's Field (which incidentally is already in existence) and at His trial He will have to be scourged and spat upon and have the hair plucked off His cheeks (to fulfil Isaiah 50:6) He will have to be put to death by crucifixion (to fulfil Zech. 12:10) and that alongside malefactors (to fulfil Isaiah 53:12). He will also have to be given gall and vinegar to drink (to fulfil Psalm 69:21) and have His side pierced (to fulfil Zech. 12:10) but have no bones broken (to fulfil Psalm 34:20; Ex. 12:46) and His executioners will have to gamble for His vesture (to fulfil Psalm 22:18).

### DILUTION OF SCRIPTURE

Now these are just a few of the prophecies any aspiring Messiah of tomorrow would have to fulfil, and there are a great many more. I wrote an article on this subject many years ago, but the passage of time merely strengthens the unlikelihood of any man coming along and filling the bill. It is difficult, of course, to ascertain from the Jews exactly what their expectations are, in this matter, for one finds them fairly reluctant to discuss their religion. Some time ago, I sent a short list of some of the main Messianic prophecies to a local Rabbi, asking for his comments. Eventually I had a short reply

which dismissed most of the prophecies as having no reference to a Messiah, and on the "virgin birth" question, he said that the true translation was "young woman," not "virgin." In my reply I quoted Isaiah's words, viz. **"Therefore, the Lord Himself shall give you A SIGN, Behold a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Emmanuel,"** and pointed out that for a "young woman" to have a child would not constitute much of a sign, (it happened every minute of the day). The whole point of the "sign" from God would be that a virgin would give birth. This dismissive attitude to Messianic prophecy by the Jews, is probably a knee-jerk reaction to claims by Christians.

### HOW FEASIBLE NOW?

However, given that the Jews refuse to believe that their Messiah has yet to come, and given, therefore, that all of their Messianic prophecies are yet to be fulfilled, the Jews must be expecting the following person to come along. He will have to be born in Bethlehem, his mother will have to be a virgin; he will have to be of the tribe of Judah; he will also have to be able to trace his lineage back to Abraham through King David; he will have to be whisked off to Egypt in infancy, for a few years, and return to take up residence in Nazareth. He will have to be a prophet like Moses, and a priest after the order of Melchizedek. He will also have to be King of Kings and Lord of Lords. "The government" will also have to be upon his shoulder, and he will have to be worthy of being called "Wonderful, Counsellor, The Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace." He will also have to make a triumphal entry into Jerusalem on the foal of an ass. In accordance with Isa. 53 and Ps. 22 he will have to be violently rejected by the Jews and go to his death quietly: "as a lamb to the slaughter." His betrayal will have to be brought about by a friend, who will sell him for 30 pieces of silver prior to his crucifixion and previously he will have to be spat upon, give his back to the smiters, and offer his cheeks to those who would pluck off the hair. He can't be crucified on his own but will require two malefactors to die alongside him. During his crucifixion he will require to be offered vinegar and gall to drink and will have to have his side pierced. Those carrying out his crucifixion will have to gamble for his clothes; "vesture." After his demise he will have to be buried in a rich man's tomb and will have to rise again from the dead "according to the scriptures." Indeed, all of this is "according to the Jewish scriptures." A tall order.

This, then, is the kind of man for whom the Jews wait: and this is the unlikely scenario which marks the Jewish hope as extremely bleak and forlorn. The real truth is that the Messiah has come. He came into the world 2,000 years ago and fulfilled every scripture to the very letter. If Jesus had failed in any degree, even a small degree, to fully come up to the expectations and predictions of all the O.T. prophets, or had His lineage been flawed, there were plenty of Jewish enemies around at the time who would have been quick to object and exploit the situation. The apostle Paul preached to large numbers of the learned men of Israel and, like Apollos, **"mightily convinced the Jews, and that publicly showing from the scriptures that Jesus was the Christ"** (Acts 18:28).

And we should also bear in mind that to fulfil Mal. 3:1 & 4:5 and Isa. 40:3-4, the Messiah will require to be immediately preceded by the appearance of "Elijah" (a John the Baptist) and so the Jews are looking for, not one man but two. An even taller order. If only the Jews could see that Jesus was indeed the Christ, the Son of the living God, and a fulfilment of all their scriptures, then instead of sadly wailing at the wall, they could, with us, be exceeding glad and rejoice in the hope of glory.

## GOD'S STRATEGY FOR HIS PEOPLE

The desire of Christians to see the Church succeed is only matched by their ingenuity in devising new programmes for Church growth. And surely, Christ expects His people to be imaginative in responding to the special opportunities and features of each age (Mt. 10:16). At the same time there must be a concern for the persistent tendency to replace the wisdom of God with the strategies of human thinking.

History documents two extremes in religious development: the **cult** and the **hierarchy**. The objective of the **cult** is to subject, control, and manipulate its people. Mind control is the method leaving the communicant a mindless follower of the cult leader's commands. The objective of the **hierarchy** is to subject, regulate, and dominate its people. Assumed authority and claims of special grace are advanced as a means of keeping the people under. What these two opposites have in common is centralized control and human power.

It must be understood that God's strategy for his people focuses on **individual effort** and divine strength.

Paul states the goal of the Church in developing its people - maturity for each Christian. "**We proclaim him (Christ), admonishing and teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present everyone perfect in Christ.**" (Col. 1:28). The word "perfect" is translated "mature" (NIV) in Ephesians 4:13, and maturity is defined as "attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ."

### THE INDIVIDUAL

Setting men free in the liberty of Christ is the true goal of each congregation, elder, evangelist, and Bible teacher. The subjugation of each Christian to an earthly religious authority is not in God's plan. No man is to stand between the Christian and his God other than the Lord Jesus Christ (I Tim. 2:5). God has made his people a kingdom and priests, and only Christ is king (Rev. 1:6; Lk. 23:3).

The passage from infancy to adulthood requires changing relationships between the parent and the child - from total dependence to whole independence. There is also a changing relationship between the Christian and his teachers as he moves from spiritual infancy to maturity in Christ. The mature Christian while respectful of his elders and responsive to his brothers, is at the same time competent to move out into a dangerous world, resist temptation, discern between right and wrong, handle accurately God's word, and effectively share the good news of redemption in Christ to the converting of others.

Could it be that the presence in many congregations of numbers of docile but ineffectual Christians reflects the failure to clearly define the goal - "to present each man mature in Christ"?

It is God's strategy that **each Christian** is to be a participant in the work of the kingdom. The teaching gifts listed in Ephesians 4:11 are provided "**to prepare God's people for works of ministry (service)**". The picture is of all Christians ministering, rather than that of Christians grouping together to employ one or a few ministers to accomplish the work of the kingdom. The Church is the body of Christ (Eph. 1:23). This is taken by many to imply that "corporate", (i.e. group, organized), work is the only proper work of the Church. And organized efforts place a premium upon able leadership and supportive followers. Whereas, Paul in talking about body growth is accomplished, "**as each part does its work**" (Eph. 4:16). He introduces the section where he talks about the teaching gifts of Christ by stating, "**But to each one of us grace has been given as Christ apportioned it.**" (Eph. 4:7).

Elsewhere, speaking of the body, Paul stresses the importance of the individual **“member”**: **“The body is a unit, though it is made up of many parts; and though all parts are many, they form one body. So it is with Christ. Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it.”** (I Cor. 12:12,27). **“Just as each one of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, so in Christ we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others. We have different gifts, according to the grace given us.”** (Rom. 12:4-6a).

### USING OUR GIFTS

It is a mistake to relegate works accomplished by Christians individually to a secondary position to those accomplished in an organized programme, and to identify the latter only as **“Church work”**. It is wrong to identify the Church as existing only when it is assembled (Acts 14:27). The Church is working when individual Christians scattering to their homes, their work places, on their travels, and in their innumerable individual contracts with people, willingly, ably, and quickly share their faith. Men and women are not called by Christ to gather into buildings, but into a spiritual kingdom that is prepared to go out into the world and do battle with the enemy.

The vision must be gained of multiplied disciples - lives, talents, gifts, opportunities all sanctified to the glory of Christ - fanning out in the many worlds represented by the spheres of their individual influence, infiltrating even into **“Caesar’s household”**, extending the exposure of the Church’s front-line combatants many times over.

The tragedy of national recession is the waste of energies and productive skills because of under-employment or unemployment. The tragedy of a church limited to a few **“church programmes”** of human devising is the under-employment of the Christian work force.

Confidence must be established that the Christian when he functions individually is performing as importantly as when he serves collectively in a team effort.

Motivation for the Christian to be **“ready always and everywhere”** to speak a good word for his Master should not come by more sermons designed to whip up guilt feelings, or to enlist more workers for the latest band-wagon project. but by teaching that deepens the Christian’s awareness of the grace of God through the crucified, resurrected, enthroned Christ which floods his life and which holds the hope of the world.

### SOURCE OF POWER

Ample power is available for each Christian to pursue the special work that God assigns him - this is the gift of His Spirit (Eph. 4:14-21).

This is not an appeal for rugged individualism, nor for Christians to serve in splendid isolation. Rather, it is to call attention to the fact that the first century Church grew not through **“projects, programmes, and organized efforts”** but because, **“those who had been scattered preached the word wherever they went.”** (Acts 8:4). The one who **“grows up in all things into him who is the Head, that is, Christ,”** will surely support the whole body as it **“grows and builds itself up in love.”** (Eph. 4:15,16).

G. ELLIS.

## MAN IN THE BIBLE

The Bible is the result of both human and divine activity. More than one Bible reader has been embarrassed by the activities of people described in Scripture.

Somehow they think that because the Bible is the most spiritual of books it therefore should record the lives of perfect men who are models of human behaviour. Anything less than that would be below the dignity of a spiritual book.

This is not a new problem for Bible readers. The early Christian writers also faced this incongruity and their comments on Scripture were often evidences of their prejudices. Instead of commenting on the actual morality of the persons they turned instead to allegorization. The result was a marvel of fantasy rather than a study and explanation of Scripture.

### JUDGING THE POTTER

“But”, you say, “even God in the Old Testament is not as ideal as he ought to be.” The God of the Bible is not the ivory-tower God of the Greek philosophers. Rather God is an intensely personal Being, one who is alive, fearsome, active and sometimes unpredictable. Otherwise He would be just the “read-out” of our fallible, finite human programming. The Bible message tells what God has done - not what we think God ought to have done. The Scripture passes judgement on us when we hasten to “judge the Potter”, criticizing His actions as if we ourselves were God! Shall the pot say to the Potter, “Why hast thou made me thus?” (Romans 9:20).

### ONLY ONE IS PORTRAYED AS PERFECT

The Bible does not set forth men as the examples of perfect behaviour. Indeed, the Bible contains only one ideal human example! Neither Moses nor David, nor even Paul, are said to be above reproach. The human race is not much advanced today beyond the moral activities of Lot's daughters (Gen. 19:30-38). If you read current novels or watch television or cinema you are fully aware of that!

One important thing to keep in mind while reading the Old Testament is that the individual is measured by his effect on the clan. The individualist is a modern entity rather than an ancient “left-over”. The behaviour of the individual was judged by the effect he had on his circle of society, rather than on his intention or motivation in the action. The community was absolute, the individual was subordinate. Whereas we might think a thing to be heroic, or terrible, the community evaluated the action as it related to itself. Occasionally the individual did break out of the mould, and often the “break” brought more violence that would have otherwise been demonstrated if directed by the clan. Religion provided a motive to break out of the ordinary, and occasionally the individual did brutal things in the name of God or in his zeal for God (see the activity of Jehu in 2 Kings 10:18-27).

### A FRANK PICTURE OF HUMANITY

The Bible is not above truthfulness. It frankly portrays humanity in weakness. The fact that it does says to us that God is interested in men of flesh and blood, passion and sinfulness. God is a Father who deals with wayward children. We can see ourselves in those people. We wrestle with the same forces that lined up against them: Joseph dealt with the hatred of his brothers; Moses grew angry with Israel and struck the rock; Samson was the strong man with feet of clay; Rahab was the prostitute with faith in Israel's God; Abigail was the attractive and quick witted wife of a brute.

### DAVID - THE BEST AND THE WORST

Standing above and below all of them is David, uniting in one person the best and the worst in morality and spirituality. What is David's charm? Is it his triumphs or his failures? Is it the beauty of his repentance or the innocence of his background? Do you marvel at the depths to which he fell or the heights to which his love for God led him? Few who went before him gave any hint of the character of the Messiah - but David, sins notwithstanding, more completely prefigured the Christ than all others. At once he

was sensitive to God, trusting in His promises, peace-loving and heroic, plus sensual, rebellious, warlike and cowardly. His family life is not to be held up as "Christian behaviour". His slaughter of the Philistines is not what we are to "meditate upon day and night". Certainly his activity with Bathsheba is shameful. But that is where the paradox is struck. He is so entirely human and mundane, yet so godly and spiritual is his eager and importunate clamouring for salvation and forgiveness from the very depths of his soul.

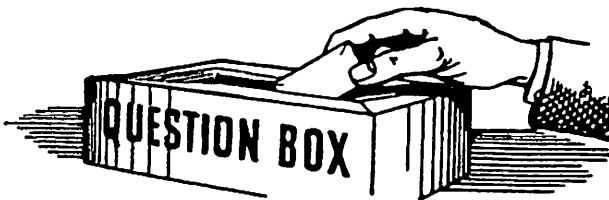
There would be not another person like him again who stood so near to the two basic patterns of man: the evil man who is so easily twisted and moulded into a sinner, and the saint who struggles on so courageously after the bitter experiences of the "flesh" have won for a time. Christ is called "Son of David" (Matt. 21:15). That is shocking, isn't it? The spiritual reader does not need to be reminded that Christ is the side which is closest to God - close to God because of the bitter and sad experiences which David learned "by suffering as a son" and "learning obedience by the things he suffered" (Heb. 5:8).

### IS GOD TESTING US?

This may not solve the dilemma created in the mind of the reader of Scripture when Biblical persons are described as less than ideal humanity. God may have used them in order to "try" us: in order to test us to see if we are aware of the inconsistencies and lack of perfection which they exhibited. Perhaps it was intended that we be just a bit "confused" or "disappointed" in our reading. Perhaps we are to react more than "just a bit" - perhaps we ought to react violently and out-spokenly because the Bible has created within us a strong morality that will not permit such things to go unchallenged. Whether or not that is the motive for such examples to be included in Scripture, if such is our reaction we have learned to be more "spiritual and godly" and the training we have received is surely a gift from God.

We have given long consideration to the matter of Biblical example and how it is to be used as guidelines where no direct command has been given. We have not been trained to use Old Testament examples as our guidelines, and that is probably a good move. Surely if we do not use them as "approved examples" for our conduct, we can deal with them more objectively, and refrain from the urge to defend what is not worthy conduct. We are taught to "**Think on things lovely, pure, just, honourable, or good report . . .**" (Phil. 4:8), and to make our lives over into those patterns. When we see what is less than perfect and ideal, let us recognize it as such - and call it by its first name, rather than feeling that we must justify it. God cannot be glorified by what is not perfect and good in motive, yet we hope that our own imperfections in motive and action are seen by Him with mercy that triumphs over judgement.

P. PENNINGTON




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Conducted by  
Frank Worgan

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*"Paul talks of a time when "that which is perfect" would come.  
To what does he refer?" (1 Cor. 13:10)*

This quotation, as you will have recognised, comes from that beautiful and familiar



exposition of the superiority of Love. But whilst 1 Cor. 13 is a chapter powerful and important enough to stand alone, it should really be studied in context with chapters 12 and 14. Misunderstandings arise when the 13th chapter is read out of context and studied in isolation.

If we always bear in mind that when the books of the Bible were written they were not divided into chapters and verses, we shall be spared a great many of the problems which arise from a device which was intended to be a help to us.

**1. Turning, first, to chapter 12,** we find that Paul is continuing to respond to the series of questions sent to him by members of the Church in Corinth. He has now reached an issue which appears to be a major preoccupation with the Corinthian brethren; a question concerning the relative importance of the various miraculous gifts, bestowed by the Holy Spirit Himself (v.11).

Those who possessed such gifts as other tongues, the interpretation of tongues, healing and prophecy, believed that their gifts were the most important of the nine 'charismata' ('grace gifts') which Paul lists in this section of his letter. These were the gifts which attracted most attention and which enjoyed a profile higher than the less dramatic and less ostentatious gifts, such as those of miraculous knowledge or wisdom.

The apostle's first concern, therefore, is to make the brethren recognise that whatever gift a person possesses, it has been bestowed on him, not for his personal elevation, but for the edification of the entire Body of Christ, the Church.

Indeed, this is the illustration he uses. He presents an analogy which portrays the Church as a body comprised of many members, each of which has its distinctive function and which occupies its own special place (vv. 12-27).

Incidentally, we should notice that in vv. 29-30 how effectively he dismisses the view, still held today by many of the so-called 'Charismatic' groups, which says that anyone who does not possess a spiritual gift has not received 'the second blessing' and may well be regarded as a kind of 'second-class' Christian.

**2. Then, in ch. 13,** Paul urges the brethren to desire the 'better gifts' = '*kreittona*', or the 'greater gifts' = '*meizona*'; that is, gifts which are 'better' or 'greater' than the things about which they are so concerned. These better, more desirable possessions are Faith, Hope and Love, of which the greatest is Love (v.13).

**3. The conclusion which remains** to be drawn is that the Corinthians were taught, by Paul, that one could be a true Christian without possessing any miraculous gift, but there is one spiritual endowment - one Christ-like virtue - which is indispensable, because it is a virtue which 'abide'. The word '*meno*' literally means 'to remain when other things have ceased'.

Here we come to the nub of the matter, because in verses 8 to 11 Paul assured his Corinthian brethren that whatever miraculous gifts of the Spirit they possess, those gifts are transient and they *will* inevitably pass away.

'Prophecies', in the plural and referring to a range of abilities which included both *forth-telling* and *fore-telling*, would be 'abolished, end, be caused to cease'. The A.V. states that prophecies 'shall fail', which is an unfortunate rendering, liable to give the wrong impression, because Spirit-inspired prophecy never 'failed'. For prophecy to 'cease' is an entirely different matter.

The gift of tongues, also was destined to 'cease', as was miraculous knowledge, because Paul assigns all of them to the Church's infancy and declares that, like the playthings of childhood, they will one day be 'put away'.

And when would this 'cessation' occur? The question has drawn our attention to that time, 'when that which is perfect is come' (A.V.).

#### 4. The 'end of the age'? The Coming of Christ?

This phrase has sometimes been taken to refer to the end of the age, when Christ returns, and if this were a correct interpretation it would be a strong argument for the continuance of spiritual gifts.

But it is *not* correct, because Christ cannot be described as a 'thing' - as '*that* which is perfect'. The word 'perfect', in this form, '*teleion*', is neuter and would never be used to describe a mature person. It is a form which was used to refer to a baby, or a child.

For example, in Luke 1:35, the A.V. reads, 'that holy *thing* which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God'. Strange as it may sound in our ears, in those days all children were described in the neuter gender until they reached the age of puberty, from which time they would be referred to in masculine or feminine forms, as the case required.

Therefore, the word 'perfect' used here in 1 Cor. 13:10, cannot possibly refer to Christ and His return.

Furthermore, if the Holy Spirit had intended us to understand this as a reference to Christ, it would have been easy for Him to have said, 'when He who is perfect', or even, 'when Christ comes again'.

**5. The Perfection of Heaven?** This is another explanation which has been suggested. We are asked to believe that the phrase refers to the future life in Heaven and to the state of perfection to which the believer looks forward.

But it is difficult to fit this view into these three chapters, dealing, as they do entirely with the way in which the Church should behave here, on earth! And, in any case, this word, 'perfect', common though it is in the New Testament, is not once used with reference to heaven's state of perfection.

6. What, then, does the phrase mean? Well, the word, '*teleios*', from '*telos*', meaning 'an end', has to do with reaching maturity and the attaining of a purpose or goal. Therefore the contrast is between something that is incomplete, in part, and therefore transient (see v.9 again), and something that is complete and abiding.

Paul has pointed out to his Corinthian brethren that they know 'in part'. They are living in a time when God's will and purpose is in process of being revealed 'through His holy apostles and prophets' (Eph. 4:4-6). Bear in mind that the apostles had been promised that the Holy Spirit would guide them into all truth, teach them all things, and bring to their remembrance the things they had been taught by the Lord (John 15:26; 16:13).

As we look back from our position today we see that during that period, the gifts of the Spirit were bestowed in order to support and strengthen the infant Church (Rom. 1:11). Indeed, it might be said that the spiritual gifts were the things that belonged to the Church's infancy, which would be one day laid aside.

That time came when the apostolic age ended as the last apostle completed his work.

We have, today, in the New Testament Scriptures, in the inspired writing of the apostles, all that the Holy Spirit desires us to possess and know. We have the full and final revelation of God's will for His people. The complete; the 'mature'; the 'perfect' has come. The miraculous gifts, which the Holy Spirit clearly indicated as of limited duration have passed away, and today, as James tells us, we look into 'the perfect law, the law of liberty' (Jas. 1:25).

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

## “EVERYBODY’S DOING IT”

One of the most frequently used excuses for engaging in questionable conduct is, “Everyone else is doing it. Why shouldn’t I?” Young people are not the only ones that ask this question. Those in the older generation sometimes use it to try to justify cheating the government, beating an insurance company, stealing from an employer, or committing some other sin.

Nearly every teenager has said at some time or other something to this effect, “Aw, Mum, why can’t I? Everyone else at school is doing it. I will be the only odd ball in the crowd.” In some matters of custom this statement may largely be true. And wise parents will allow their children to fit into wholesome company. But if a thing is wrong or even tends towards sin, the excuse “Everybody is doing it” is not logical or valid.

Right and wrong cannot be decided by majority vote. When Adam was chided by God for his sin, he could have said truthfully, “Well, everyone else (Eve) was doing it!” But that would not have made it right.

Had Noah done what “everyone” was doing, he and his family would have been destroyed with that generation.

A majority of Joseph’s brothers sold him into slavery. A majority of the Israelites rebelled against God and Moses in the wilderness. A majority transgressed God’s laws in the days of the prophets. The faithful often were referred to as a “remnant” of the nation. And it was a majority - a unanimous mob - that crucified Jesus Christ. If you had been there, would you have “got in on” what everybody else was doing?

If one lived in an area where most people were cannibals, would that justify cannibalism? If one were in a heathen culture, would that warrant heathenism? The Biblical fact that everybody has sinned does not excuse sin. Every moral issue must be decided by principle, not by vote nor deed. True morality must be based on God’s Word.

**“Prove all things; hold fast that which is good. Abstain from all appearance of evil,”** 1 Thess. 5:20-21. Even if everyone else in the world should do wrong, God still wants YOU to do right. But the simple fact is that everyone else IS NOT doing wrong. Many fine young people do not smoke and do not intend to start. Millions of young people know that drinking alcohol is sinful and foolish. Many refuse to gamble, to cheat, or to swear. Thousands do not dance because they do not want to be tempted or to lead others into temptation. Millions of wise teenagers flatly disapprove of narcotics, immodest apparel, reckless driving, and other ridiculous behaviour. It always has been so.

The young Joseph was faithful to God when far from home and under trying circumstances. Daniel overcame temptation and hardship when others were yielding to sin. Esther bravely pleaded for her people, the Jews, when others were trying to destroy them. The list of godly young people in the Bible is long, and there are many today who place truth and righteousness above pleasure and popularity.

God knows that there is much sin in the world. There has been since the earliest generations of humanity. Therefore the Lord always has demanded a certain separateness of His people. He called Abraham away from his background and family in order to develop the Jewish nation out of his descendants. He called the Jews out of Egypt to live in their own land separate from pagans and infidels.

### CALLED OUT FROM THE WORLD

Christ has called his disciples out of worldliness into righteousness. The word “Church” is translated from a Greek word that literally means “called out.” Christians

are in the world, but we are not to be of the world. This means that if all of the world sins, we are not to follow the world. We are to follow Christ (1 Peter 2:9-10; Ephesians 4:1; Colossians 3:1-11).

"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God" (Romans 12:1-2).

"Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and will be a father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty" (2 Corinthians 6:17-18).

Are you willing to stand up for Jesus even if others do not? Are you brave enough to be a Christian, even if the crowd is determined to do wrong? Are you mature enough to bear a cross of loneliness and rejection if need be in order to live as Christ would have you to? Being right is a thousand times more important than being in "the majority."

Christ called on his disciples to enter the narrow gate and to travel the difficult way that leads to heaven. Other ways are easier and more pleasurable, but they lead to destruction (Matthew 7:13-14). Christ did not promise ease or pleasure. He calls for self-denial and dedication. Christianity is not for sissies - those too cowardly to buck the crowd. It is for those who are man enough and woman enough to do right and to trust God to see them through.

Can you meet the challenge - even if "everybody else" is doing otherwise?

O. COSGROVE

## SCRIPTURE READINGS

Dec 3	Isaiah 7:1-17	Matthew 1:1-2 & 16-25
Dec 10	Zechariah 3	Matthew 2
Dec 17	Isaiah 40:1-11	Matthew 3
Dec 24	Deut. 6:1-19	Matthew 4
Dec 31	Exodus 20:1-21	Matthew 5:1-26

### GENEALOGY OF CHRIST

The Genealogy by Matthew begins with Abraham (1:2) and concludes with Joseph, the husband of Mary, to whom He was born (1:16). Luke, in his record, begins with Jesus and ascends through Eli or Heli, who was the father of Mary (3:23) and ends with Adam (3:38). Clearly, Jesus was a descendant of Abraham and David. There are differences in the two records. In fact, they differ from David down, but agree from David up. "It ought not to be overlooked that it was necessary that the virgin

mother of the Saviour of the world should be traced to David, as that any other prophecy given concerning the Messiah should be fulfilled . . . Now Luke the evangelist very consistently traces Mary up to David by her father and thus makes good the sign promised to the house of David, that the virgin should bring forth a son. That Matthew aimed at no more than giving the ancestry of the husband of Mary, is incontrovertible from the close of his roll of lineage, and thus he showed his legal right to sit upon the throne of David. But that the Messiah was to be of the blood of David, was necessary to the completion of the prophecies as that he should be the son of Abraham. Luke gives this detail in full from Eli up to David. So that the most perfect harmony is found in the two rolls of lineage" (Alexander Campbell).

### THE BIRTH OF JESUS

Jesus is unique. He came into the

world, not by procreation, but by incarnation. He was born of Mary, but begotten of the Holy Spirit. This made Him uniquely the Son of God. **"And, behold, you shall conceive in your womb and bring forth a son and shall call His name JESUS . . . The Holy Spirit shall come upon you, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow you; therefore also that holy thing, which shall be born of you shall be called the Son of God"** (Luke 1:31,35). These are words of the archangel Gabriel to Mary.

John wrote: **"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God . . . And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld His Glory as of the only begotten of the Father) full of grace and truth"** (John 1:1,14). I often find it quite staggering to think that the Word, a personality of the God-head, was willing to be born of a woman and to enter this world as a baby and to grow up to manhood just like me. Surely, it is the greatest story ever told - and it is true in every detail! Some have problems with the virgin birth or, rather, the virgin conception. Personally, I am not ashamed of the circumstances of Jesus' birth. I have never really doubted them. To me, the Biblical accounts have a ring of truth about them. I especially like to read Luke's record in the knowledge that he was a physician who had thoroughly investigated all the evidence. But Matthew's gospel is of equal validity.

#### THE VISIT OF THE MAGI

The magi were wise men from the east (2:1). Their sighting of the star of Jesus had brought them to Judea to worship the new-born king. How had they known about all this? Could it have been all down to Daniel while an exile in their region? "Allowing the star to have appeared at the birth, some considerable time must have been spent by all

the philosophers in preparing for, and performing their journey into Judea. Ezra spent full five months in travelling between Babylon and Jerusalem, a journey not much above half the length of what philosophers had to make if they came from Persia . . . we may reasonably fix their arrival eight or ten months after the birth" (James Macknight).

The wise men brought gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh (2:11). All of these would be very useful to the family in the land of Egypt to which they fled. Frankincense and myrrh were used in the embalming process. The wicked Herod was thwarted in his attempt to destroy the young child. God protected Him. After Herod's death, he was brought to Nazareth, where He grew up. Bethlehem and Nazareth will always be associated with Jesus. They were also the subject of Old Testament prophecies.

#### JOHN THE BAPTIST

John the Baptist's ministry came at the conclusion of the Jewish age. His coming was the subject of prophecy **"The voice of him that cries in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God"** (Isaiah 40:3). **"Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord; and he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse"** (Malachi 4:5-6).

John made a great impact upon his fellow Jews. His message was of reformation and many responded to his teaching by being baptised for the remission of their sins. He also proclaimed that the Messiah was soon to appear; nay, that He stood among them, though they knew Him not, and that they should believe in Him. His immersion differed from that instituted by Jesus in four respects: it was by the authority of God

and not by the authority of Jesus; it was into no name; it was not into the Christian faith; and it brought no man into the kingdom of heaven. "The state in which John's immersion left his disciples was a state of preparation for the kingdom of heaven . . ." (Alexander Campbell).

### THE TEMPTATION OF JESUS

Satan did everything to prevent the Messiah entering the world. He, of course, did not succeed. However, Jesus faced the wiles of the devil all through His life and ministry. A verse I often think about is Hebrews 4:15 **"For we have not a high priest who cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin."** I see Matthew 4 as revealing a great showdown between Satan and the Saviour. Of course, Jesus triumphed in the strength of the word of God. His appeal to Scripture on this occasion is an example to us all. Edwin W. Rice has pointed out: "The first Adam had a conflict with the tempter and was overcome; Christ, the second Adam, had a similar conflict, and was victorious." The apostle John wrote of **"the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life"** (1 John 2:16). His words well describe the forms of temptation undertaken by the devil against Jesus.

### THE BEATITUDES

The so-called Sermon on the Mount has been described as "The Ordination Address to the Twelve," "The Compendium of Christ's Doctrine," "The Magna Charta of the Kingdom" and "The Manifesto of the King." "The Sermon on the Mount has a unique fascination. It seems to present the quintessence of the teaching of Jesus. It makes goodness attractive. It shames our shabby performance. It engenders dreams of a better world" (John R. W. Stott). "All the articles of our religion, all the canons of our church, all the injunctions of our princes, all the homilies of our fathers,

all the body of divinity, is in these three chapters, in this one Sermon on the Mount" (John Donne). "It is the original draught of essential Christianity" (Canon Liddon). It does not take long to read, but it could change people's lives for ever.

The Sermon begins with the Beatitudes. "For most people the Sermon on the Mount is the essence of the Christian faith and life; and equally for most people the Beatitudes are the essence of the Sermon on the Mount. It is therefore not too much to say that the Beatitudes are the essence of the essence of the Christian way of life" (William Barclay). We have blessings on eight categories of people; the "poor in spirit" (3), "they that mourn" (4), the "meek" (5), they who do "hunger and thirst after righteousness" (6), the "merciful" (7), the "pure in heart" (8), the "peacemakers" (9), and they who are "persecuted for righteousness sake" (10). One could write a sermon on each one. In character, these beatitudes are revolutionary. They turn the accepted priorities upside down. They are a radical challenge to all.

Space permits me only to touch on two of the eight. "Blessed are the poor in spirit; for theirs is the kingdom of heaven" (3). The Greek word for "poor" is *ptochos*, which describes, not one who is simply poor, but one who is completely destitute. They are those who, "conscious of their own inadequacy, rely on God's grace, lacking material wealth, they are inwardly rich" (F.F. Bruce). **"Blessed are the meek; for they shall inherit the earth"** (5). The Greek word for meek is *praus* and is a word that speaks of strength under control. Actually, it has to do with selfless anger. It describes one who is always angry at the right time and never angry at the wrong time. Meekness is certainly not weakness! The man who is truly meek is the man who is under the discipline or

control of God. the reward is in line with Psalm 37:11: **"But the meek shall inherit the earth; and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace."**

IAN S. DAVIDSON,  
Motherwell.

## TEST YOUR BIBLICAL KNOWLEDGE

1. What was found in Benjamin's sack?
2. He raped Dinah
3. Which is the shortest Psalm?
4. What is the longest Psalm?
5. Name the two birds first mentioned in the Bible?
6. Who succeeded Joash?
7. Who was Drusilla's husband?
8. What is like a day to the Lord?
9. Who wrote the book of Hebrews?  
10. Nicodemus was a member of which sect?

## OBITUARY

**Haddington:** The church here regrets to record the passing of sister Margaret McLuckie, on Saturday, 7th October, 2000 at Stirling Infirmary, after a brief illness. Formerly of Dunbar, our sister spent the last two years or so in Airth Nursing Home, where she was well cared for. Margaret was, of course, the dear wife of our late, and highly esteemed, brother John McLuckie. The funeral service was held at Falkirk Crematorium on Wednesday, 11th October.

## COMING EVENTS

### CHURCH AT PETERHEAD Gospel Mission

Due to indisposition of Brother Worgan  
- mission cancelled.

**Special Weekend** - with Bill Mair,  
November 18th & 19th

7 pm Sat., Sun. 10 am, 11 am & 6 pm

## CENTENARY CELEBRATIONS

This year, the church of Christ at Dalziel Street, Motherwell, is 100 years old, and intends holding a Celebratory Meeting in the Meeting-house on

**Sat., 18th November, 2000 at 3 pm**  
*All Welcome*

## CHANGE OF ADDRESS

The new address  
of Jenny and Bobby Kirk is:  
Inchview, 49 Bowmont Street, KELSO.  
TD5 7DZ. Tel.: 01573 224087

## APPEAL FROM BELFAST

I am writing on behalf of the newly established Newtownards Church of Christ.

We have been meeting since April 1999 at Newtownards Orange Hall but have had to vacate the premises from July because of building work and the political unrest. We then moved to Brother Sam Stirling's home and within a very short period of time have outgrown the room available. From the off-set it has always been our goal to purchase a building of our own. Unfortunately we could not find anything that was suitable or affordable.

After months of searching for a building to no avail, we eventually acquired a building site on the Newtownards peninsula. We currently have a bank balance of £5,000 but unfortunately need another £60,000 to erect a suitable church building.

We are currently making an appeal to other Churches of Christ to help us in any way financially that they possibly can. We would be most grateful for your help no matter how little and look forward to hearing from you as soon as possible.

*In Christian Love,*  
SAM STIRLING, 5 Abbeydale Avenue,  
Co. Down, Northern Ireland.  
Tel: (02891) 820662

**GHANA APPEAL  
UPDATE**

I know I said a few months ago that that would probably be my last article on Ghana. I write to reassure those who continue to send money that I continue to write receipts and that "parallel running" is currently working well. I have received the £100 cheque on 9/9/00 from IMB and the £100 note on 2nd October postmark Glasgow, receipts 1373 and 1376. Thank You. The transition to step back from this work has not been easy for me and I would like to thank those who have anonymously written words of encouragement in the past few months, they were appreciated.

On 14th September the church in Dunfermline had an informal gathering to hear first hand the latest from Ghana when Wanda Spiers who was travelling home to Canada from working in Kumasi, dropped in to see us. We heard and saw on video a thank you expressed from David Fobi whose operations were financed from appeal funds. He is fine now and back home. David belongs to the Abosamso congregation which was established by John Mensah Bonsuh in April, 1998 and David was baptised in October that year. John baptised Kwame

Agye in that church on 17th September, 00. Further down the road in September, 00, John baptised 5 men and 4 women in a place called Asarekrom 25 miles from where John lives. The church will meet for the first time on 1st October and John asks that we remember them in our prayers. I would like to sincerely thank everyone who continues to make this appeal a success. Without your help this work could not even have begun. I would ask that you continue to support the new management and especially remember them in your prayers. The work is rewarding but very time consuming. May the Lord bless those who continue in this work. Graeme Pearson, 13 Fairways, Dunfermline, Fife. KY12 0DU.



- 10. Pharisees (John 3:1).
- 9. Writer is unknown.
- 8. 1000 years (2 Peter 3:8).
- 7. Felix (Acts 24:24)
- 6. Amaziah (2 Chron. 25:1).
- 5. Raven and dove (Gen. 8:7-8).
- 4. 119
- 3. 117.
- 2. Shechem (Gen. 34:2).
- 1. A silver cup (Gen. 44:2).

**ANSWERS**

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