

The SCRIPTURE STANDARD

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

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May 2002 be a Year of Blessing for all our Readers

God Bless Thy Year
Thy Coming In, Thy Going Out:
Thy Rest, Thy Travelling About:
The Rough, The Smooth,
The Bright, The Drear,
God Bless Thy Year.

THE NEW AND LIVING WAY

Another brand-new year stretches out before us in 2002. It is difficult not to associate this time of year with new beginnings; new opportunities and new resolve. As one page in the book of life has been turned over, a new page is about to be written. There is, at least to me, something very fascinating and exciting about something completely new. Even just to walk through virgin snow and be the first to place our footprints in a large expanse of new snow is a great event for small children (and some adults) but nothing, I suppose, to the great thrill experienced by the first men to walk on the moon. We might think also of the high sensation, in days gone by, experienced by all those astronomers, scientists, explorers, physicians who, after years of hard toil and much disappointment stumbled upon some new truth, law or principle. Things ranging from the discovery of microbes and blood circulation to the finding of electricity, radio-waves, X-rays, insulin, etc.: even the discovery of the continent of America. A certain Archimedes certainly got excited enough to leap out of his bath shouting "Eureka, Eureka" when one of the laws of hydrostatics dawned upon him. However to come back to a more mundane level. I can still remember the general sense of anticipation (excitement is too strong a word) when the teacher gave out *new jotters*. Each sheet was so white and empty (just like a landscape of new snow) and the invitation seemed to be there to accomplish great things on these waiting pages. The reality was somewhat different, however, and three weeks later, silent parents were thumbing through these jotters cringeing at all the wrong sums and spelling errors. I can also vividly remember, at the annual school gala-days, all the children receiving a brand

new penny and how we all gazed with admiration at the gleaming metal, bright, pristine and straight from the Royal Mint, and how we all made a very short-lived resolution to keep it and never to spend it. Nor can I ever forget my first new suit of clothes (when I was about seven years of age) and I can still remember not only the shop but the very counter. The suit was grey (so as not to show dirty marks) with two pairs of (short) trousers. I suppose everybody could bore everybody else with indelible memories associated with very unusual events or new acquisitions; our first new boots, camera, car or house, etc. Unfortunately for poor little mites in Africa, their abiding memory, if they survive, might be their first decent meal. It is all relative, I suppose. And what, under normal circumstances, could be more exciting than a new baby? I suppose every parent looks upon their off-spring as the best baby ever to see the light of day and a source of great optimism and promise for the future. This child, after all, could well be the next Prime Minister, or at least a rich merchant banker, and so great hopes are sometimes pinned upon a little bundle in swaddling clothes. It's not new: Mary, (and the world) with good reason, pinned all their hopes and human aspirations on a certain new baby, a long time ago in Bethlehem and were not disappointed. **"And Mary pondered all these things in her heart"** (Luke 2:19). Yes, there is interest in things that are new.

LOOKING FOR SOMETHING NEW

The world lives and thrives on that which is new. Indeed the central theme of media advertising (from junk food to soap powders) is that **"it's new!"** We have, therefore to apply a little intelligence in discerning exactly what is actually new, and what is just something old but in a new wrapper. There is, in fact one accredited school of thought that says that **nothing** is really new. One of the very wisest of men said, **". . . the eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor the ear with hearing. The thing that hath been, is that which shall be, and that which is done is that which will be done; and there is no new thing under the sun. Is there anything whereof it may be said. See, this is new? it hath been of old time, which was before us."** (Ecc. 1-9). This was Solomon's finding and is certainly largely true of the general levels of human endeavour. As young men in the Church we sometimes, no doubt, had the conceit to think that we were advocating some new thought (something centuries of Bible students had missed) and yet it had all been said and done a very long time ago. As long ago as early in the first century Paul in Athens, came across philosophers and religious pundits who used to gather (like Speakers' Corner in London, I suppose) to be enthralled or intrigued by some new thing. **"For all the Athenians which were there spent their time in nothing else, but either to tell, or to hear, some new thing"** (Acts 17-21). So, even in the realms of religion, that which is new is exciting and widely sought after today. Consequently the cults are flourishing; especially those who specialise in the occult, mystery and sophisticated hocus-pocus, and who operate behind closed doors. Also popular are those whose meetings are punctuated with banging of tambourines and dancing in the aisles. We are back to the state of the Athenians and are only 'turned on' by the spectacular new thing. At one time men used to **"search the Scriptures,"** to find God's truth. Nowadays people are **searching the churches,** hopefully to find one that will prove suitable to their taste. A visitor attended one of our local congregations for a while and then came no more; explaining to a member that this Church "was not what they were looking for." What are people looking for? What should they be looking for? Surely we should all be looking for the Church that Jesus built, and not merely one suitable and convenient to our plans and our life style. Yes, people are looking for

something "New."

OLD, YET EVER NEW

I am sure that a feeling predominates in the world that the Bible is an old book (which it is) and is, therefore, a thing of the past; a closed history of a derelict nation written in a dead language. There is certainly nothing dead about the language of either the O.T. or the New, and no Book in the world could possibly be more relevant today, not only to the Jews but to Gentiles; to every nation under heaven. The Bible certainly records ancient history but it has always been ahead of its time (even stating scientific facts before men discovered them). It is not dead, it is dynamic. It is full of **"things old and new"** (Matt. 13:52). God's last testament is called the NEW testament and is so dynamic and futuristic that it will never age. It can never get out of date. The N.T. abounds in new concepts and new revelations and contains the very last words of God to man, and so it can never get old. It will never be added to, or subtracted from, and will usher mankind into the next world. God's word is not only perennial, it is eternal, and although heaven and earth are destined to pass away, God's words will abide and prevail. God, in His unlimited grace, has opened up a **new and living way** in the reconciliation of man to Himself; not just new but living (dynamic).

Alexander Campbell met the Rev. W. L. McAlla in an extremely interesting public debate in Washington, in 1842, on the subject of baptism. The Rev. McAlla said that he intended to prove that the N.T. was just a natural continuation of the O.T.: that Abraham and his seed were the divinely instituted, true and visible Church of God; that the Jewish society prior to Christ, and the Christian society after Christ, were **one and the same Church**, just in different dispensations (Christ's Church merely a branch of the Jewish); that Jewish circumcision before Christ and Christian Baptism after Christ was one and the same seal though in different forms; and that the administration of this seal (baptism) upon infants was God ordained. This was how Mr. McAlla tried to show that the sprinkling of babies "was a divine command." Brother Campbell, of course, soon demolished all of these reasonings and showed that Christ's Church was certainly no appendage to the old economy but the NEW covenant promised by the prophets. Jeremiah said that this new covenant would be **quite separate and different from** the old one (the old one made in the day when God rescued the Israelites from the Egyptians). Isaiah talks of many 'new things' to come; a new name; an new song; even a new heavens and a new earth. Ezekiel likewise, adding that God would put a new heart and a new spirit into man. It was not a case of patching up an old Jewish system but was to be entirely new. Jesus said, **"no man putteth a piece of new cloth to an old garment . . . neither do men put new wine into old bottles."** A new patch on old cloth only makes a bigger hole and new wine in old bottles is a disaster. Paul (Heb. 8) says that in any case, if the first covenant had been perfect there would have been no cause to bring in a new one (v. 7) but by employing the word "new" God had of necessity made the first covenant old. **"Now that which decayeth and waxeth old is ready to vanish away"** (v. 13).

THE NEW AND LIVING WAY

This is how Paul introduces (two chapters later) the "new and living way" opened up between man and God, through the death of Jesus Christ. That way was opened up some 2,000 years ago and will never be closed. Many of those men in Athens (previously mentioned) who were ever on the lookout for something new, failed to recognise the sheer novelty of the new things that Paul had brought, for when they heard of the resurrection of the dead some found it hilarious, while others said "We will hear thee

again on this matter" (Acts 17:19). Clearly the 'resurrection of the dead' was something new to these Athenians, (who claimed to be connoisseurs of the new) but was a bit too much for them to take. Is it too much for you, dear reader? What other Book makes such claims and promises? Who can say the Bible is not full of new things?

If we add an 's' to 'new' we get 'news' and although the gospel is, by definition 'good news' it is somewhat surprising that the word 'news' never appears in the N.T. and appears only once in the Old. News there is nevertheless, in the N.T. and glad tidings of great joy; tidings of truth; and hope; and peace; of promise; of reconciliation; ultimate salvation; of eternal life and immortality. These, with forgiveness of sins, are all new to Jew and Gentile alike, and every person entering the world has a right to know about them. Yes, the N.T. is about 2,000 years old but its contents are new to each generation. The fact that 'one and one make two' is a truism as old as time, yet each generation of children has to be told about it. As the hymnwriter says, "These things are old" (certainly) "but ever new." Let us ever seek to publish abroad God's 'good news' to a dying world.

BEHOLD I MAKE ALL THINGS NEW

Not only is the N.T. full of new and wonderful things but it can also effect great works of personal re-newal in those who embrace it. God says, "**Behold, I make all things new**" (Rev. 21:5). That's a promise, ever in the present tense, and which can never lapse or age. This book (Rev.) talks of the new song, the new name, the new spirit, and the new heart, new creatures, a new heavens and a new earth: all coming to pass by the power of God. "Behold I make all things new." And on a very personal level, man also can be 'born anew' and experience a rebirth: the **new birth**. Born of water and the spirit. "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a **NEW CREATURE, old things are passed away; behold all things ARE BECOME NEW**" so says Paul (2 Cor. 5:17). No matter how low we may have sunk into sin; no matter how deep-dyed and tainted with evil we may become, there is always the opportunity for us to arise (like the prodigal son) and return to our Heavenly Father. We cleanse ourselves in the watery bath of regeneration and arise, as new creatures, to walk in a complete newness of life. As Paul says, "**old things are passed away, behold all things are become new.**" Yes we all blot our copy-books. Those nice white empty sheets of paper are quickly covered in our mistakes, blots and blemishes. If, however, in true penitence we take our soiled and sullied pages to our Heavenly Father, He can give us a fresh sheet and we can start again. We can wash our sins away and start with a clean sheet, as innocent as a new born babe (Acts 22:16).

For those who have already become 'new ceatures' and who are 'in Christ' there lies a responsibility to "**walk in newness of life.**" (Rom. 6:4). Old things are passed away and all things are become new, the old style of life must go, and a new and better must begin and continue. We must serve God, not in the oldness of the letter but in the newness of spirit (Rom. 7:6). Each new day gives us new opportunities to live better lives than we did the day before; for God's mercies are "**new every morning**" (Lam, 3:23). Each year, likewise, is one of those milestones on life's journey, whereby we can pause awhile, reflect upon the year gone past, and gaze upon *the new year* stretching out before us. As the challenge of this brand new year beckons to us may we make a really determined effort to make 2002 a very prosperous and profitable year in the Saviour's service.

What's new? "**Behold I make all things new.**"

EDITOR.

DOES THE BIBLE CONTRADICT ITSELF?

Does the Bible contradict itself? Apart from the sceptics and critics of the Bible, many of its followers think it does. From many so-called Christian pulpits and publications, this idea is propagated. A true follower of the Bible believes that it is, altogether without contradiction, a book of harmony.

In the Psalm on the works and word of God, it is claimed that the word of God is perfect, sure, right, pure, true and righteous altogether (Psalm 19:7-9). That rules out contradictions.

Psalm 119:89 claims God's word is forever settled in heaven. The word that spoke the universe into being and counsels all generations stands fast forever, according to Psalm 33:4-11. How could the Bible be firmly fixed, stationed and settled if, as people think, it is bursting its bindings with contradictions?

People who say that it contradicts itself disagree with Jesus Christ. He said, unequivocally, that the scriptures cannot be broken or set aside (John 10:35). The Bible doesn't conveniently cancel itself out by self-contradiction. If it did, it would destroy itself, and one would be justified in setting its broken message aside. But the scriptures cannot be broken. They can be trusted. The Bible is not a broken reed with sharp points of contradiction. It can be leaned on. It is a rod and staff of comfort.

What about 2 Timothy 3:15? That's the verse that says that all scripture is inspired of God and profitable. If it is, where can contradictions come into it? That would be tantamount to God contradicting Himself. If some parts of the Bible are inspired, and some are not, we may expect contradictions in it. But then who is going to sort out the wrong side from the right side of a contradiction? None of the Bible would be profitable under such circumstances.

The Bible claims to be perfect altogether, settled in heaven, trustworthy, and completely God inspired. To profess to follow the Bible, yet to disbelieve its claims by entertaining the idea that it contains contradictions against its integrity, is an untenable position.

Technically there are no problems to our faith in the Bible; but that is not to say that the Bible poses no problems in the minds of its readers. To the mind of every Bible reader who is neither naive nor all-knowing in his thinking there appear to be problems and contradictions in the Bible. It must be emphasised that these problems are apparent (and in the case of sceptics, alleged); they are not real. That is, the problems exist only in the human mind, not in the Divine mind or in the Bible.

Suppose we have such a problem. Let's analyse its nature.

THE NATURE OF THE PROBLEM

The nature of the problem is essentially our own limitations.

The Bible is not a revelation of God's absolute knowledge. It reveals but a very limited portion. For a man to know all the Bible would, in one sense, be to "**know fully**" (1 Corinthians 13:10, 12). But, in the final analysis, there is infinitely much that is unrevealed, and cannot be known, because it was "**not lawful for a man to utter**" (2 Corinthians 12:4). Thus we are limited in what we can know of the mind of God.

But we are further limited, because what we actually do know is less than what we can know. We can know all that is in the Bible, but practically no one knows even half that much.

These limitations in *our* knowledge lie in the nature of the problem. Let's look at some cases in point.

In Matthew 27:5 we read that Judas hanged himself. But in Acts 1:8 it says that, falling headlong, he burst asunder in the midst and all his bowels gushed out. In many minds this constitutes a contradiction. But if we had *more knowledge* of the facts, possibly we would see a connection instead of a contradiction between these two accounts. What if we knew that Judas hanged himself from a rooftop, but his rope gave way, and he fell down, hitting some sharp object and bursting his middle? We don't know, of course, but if we did, there would be no contradiction.

In Genesis 2:17 Eve was told, "Thou shalt surely die." But that statement is contradicted in Genesis 3:4, where she is told, "Ye shall not surely die." Would you believe it? Some people think this is a contradiction against the integrity of the Bible. *More knowledge* of the facts reveals that this is a reasonable contradiction between God and Satan; and if they didn't contradict, there would be a real problem, wouldn't there?

In Genesis 1:3 God saw that His creation was "very good." But in Genesis 6:6 God is not satisfied with His creation. It grieved Him because He has made man on earth. This is supposed to be a contradiction against the Bible's integrity. *More knowledge* dispels the difficulty. The fall of man and many centuries of increasing sin intervened between the times referred to.

In Hebrews 10:31 it says it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God. But in 2 Samuel 24:14 it says "let us fall into God's hands, for His mercies are great." With a little *more knowledge* we see that this is not a contradiction, but that the first statement is true from the point of view of an impenitent sinner, whereas the opposite is true from the believer's viewpoint.

WE NEED MORE KNOWLEDGE

Study the above alleged contradictions carefully, and you will see that the statements are made from different viewpoints, or under different circumstances, or by different persons, or at different times. When we do not *know* this, the contradictory statements may appear to militate against the integrity of the scriptures. But with *more knowledge* we find the contradiction was only in our own minds.

It is human nature to find a distinction, and often a conflict, between what a person says and what he means. Often it is our *interpretation* of what the Bible says that creates a conflict, whereas if we had *more knowledge* of what the Bible *actually said*, we would have no problem.

It may come as a shock to human pride that it is human ignorance and not Divine bungling that is the cause of "contradictions in the Bible". They are only apparent. They are not real. They exist only in our minds where there is a gap in our knowledge. Fill the gap with better knowledge, and the problem is squeezed right out.

Notwithstanding this, there is a limit to justifiable ignorance. We are told to study to show ourselves approved unto God (2 Timothy 2:15). Some people study to show God's word disproved unto men. Their ignorance and lack of comprehension of the scriptures is appalling. Perhaps this explains why the majority of alleged contradictions in the Bible appear to have been manufactured by very stupid and prejudiced people.

I am reminded of a young sceptic who once challenged me with the bromide, "The Bible is full of contradictions." I asked him for just one example. He had to "look it up", like his type do. He had to be prodded and reminded for several days, like his sort do. Finally he offered this:

"In St. Luke, chapter 17, in verse 31, Jesus said He was coming 'in that day'. In verse 34, though, He said He was coming 'in that night' There you are: Jesus

contradicted Himself."

I explained that at Christ's coming it would be night on one part of the earth but day on another part. He seemed surprised that Christ, in His day, would speak as though the earth were not flat.

Our question was, "Does the Bible contradict itself?" To the honest heart, and to the mind filled with Bible knowledge, the answer is "NO."

R. GRAHAM.

OUR JOB: EVANGELISE

Our job is to take the gospel to every soul on earth. No one argues with that, But our actions fall short. We have allowed other activities to sideline our primary obligation. It's so easy to become consumed with other things. Even "church activities" can become sidetracked, and we can become so concerned with "self-feeding" and "self-serving" that we don't reach the outside.

So many of our activities have turned inward. Many of our activities are structured for us. Many of our buildings are built for us.

I HAVE OTHER SHEEP

Earth's population is staggering, there are 4½ billion souls on this planet. Nothing is as important as reaching out to each of these never-dying souls. God's love and grace sent him in hot pursuit of the lost. It should spur us on the same evangelistic mission.

Remember Jesus' words?

"I am the good shepherd; I know my own and my own know me, as the Father knows me and I know the Father; and I lay down my life for the sheep. And I have other sheep, that are not of this fold; I must bring them also, and they will heed my voice" (John 10:14-16).

Jesus looked beyond his immediate disciples. Beyond Jew and Gentile. He looked across centuries and said **"I have other sheep . . ."** He sees his sheep where we do not. Gold is gleaming where we haven't discovered it. Jesus can look at atheists and see them as potential preachers and teachers. He can look with eyes of compassion on drunkards and prostitutes and see them as potential sons and daughters of God. He can look into the darkened corners where we've never dared go and say, "These are my sheep."

They may not have heard His gospel yet. But they are there. Waiting to hear the message. Waiting to be won. They are His. We must claim them for Him.

I MUST BRING THEM

Jesus views these people saying, **"I must bring them."** Hear that imperative note? **"I must bring them."** Jesus lived and died under the pressure of that great must.

What of us? Are we living under this great "must"?

RESULTS ASSURED

The results are assured: **" . . . They will heed my voice,"** he promised. When the gospel is delivered, men will hear it, believe it, obey it. Wherever we go, they will heed it if we will preach it. Not every person. Some may push you away. Some may scoff. Some may remain hard and indifferent. But, praise God, some will heed. No matter what nation. State. Community. Jesus has some sheep there waiting to be claimed.

Paul was terribly discouraged with his work in Corinth because there were no results. The Lord tapped him on the shoulder one day and said. "Paul, don't be afraid, I

have much people in this city." Hallelujah! he must have thought, "I don't know who they are, I surely haven't had much success in finding good prospects. And I don't know where they are. They may be over there in the idol temple. They may be wallowing in moral filth. But they belong to Jesus. I'll search until I find them and bring them to him."

Does he still have sheep which haven't been brought into the fold! Yes. More than ever. Where? Everywhere. In factories. Businesses. Homes. Farms. Hospitals. On buses. Trains. Airplanes. Cars. Everywhere.

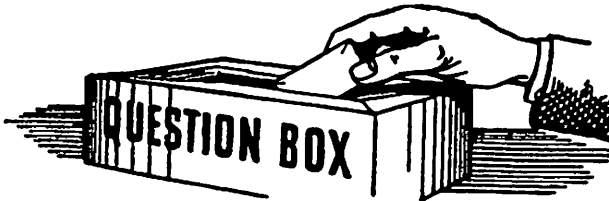
EVANGELISM IS THE ISSUE

George McLeod said it well:

"I simply argue that the cross be raised again at the centre of the marketplace as well as on the steeple of the church. I'm rediscovering the claim that Jesus was not crucified in a Cathedral between two candles, but on a Cross between two thieves. On the town garbage heap, on a crossroad so cosmopolitan they had to write his title in Hebrew, and in Latin, and in Greek. Or shall we say, in English, in Bantu, and in Afrikaans. At the kind of place where where cynics talk smut, and thieves curse, and solders gamble. Because that is where He died and that is what He died about, that is where we as Christians should be and what we should be about."

We must get to the people with the message. There is no time for petty, insignificant issues. The issue is evangelism. Evangelism must be our aim, our priority, our consuming passion. We must lay our lives and our fortunes on the altar for evangelism.

J. R. BARNETT.



Conducted by
Frank Worgan

"Can you basically tell me what happened in the so-called Inter-testamental Period?"

I am truly grateful for the insertion in the question, of that word 'basically'! It is, as most will agree, a vastly over-worked and frequently superfluously used word these days, but it is entirely appropriate and truly welcome in a question relating to the approximately 400 year period of Bible history which falls between Malachi and Matthew; in other words, in that inter-testamental period to which our questioner refers.

This is the period of Jewish history which is greatly illuminated by a study of the book of Daniel, that fascinating book which introduces us to prophecies relating to world history following the fall of the Babylonian Empire to an alliance of the Medes and Persians.

A few 'basic' details will be useful here.

Although Darius the Mede reigned after the fall of Babylon and the death of Belshazzar (Dan. 5:30), it was the Persians who became the stronger partner in that Medo-Persian alliance (11:2), with the Medes gradually fading into the background.

Daniel 11 then predicts the conflict which history developed between the Persians and the rapidly rising Macedonian, or Greek Empire, of which Alexander the Great was the central figure.

After the early death of Alexander at the age of 33, in the year 323 BC, his empire was broken up into four parts, and, as predicted in Dan. 11:4, the power went, not to his family, but to his many generals who fought among themselves for control of what Alexander had created.

Eventually, two of these rulers remained to face each other. They were Ptolemy, descibed by Daniel as "king of the South" which was Egypt; and Syria, the Kingdom of the North, which was ruled by the Seleucid dynasty, whose kings took the name 'Antiochus' and whom Daniel calls "the king of the North".

Remember, however, that these kingdoms are called "North" and "South" only in relation to Palestine, since this scripture is concerned specifically with the history of Palestine and the Jews.

THE STRUGGLE FOR POWER

At first, Judea became part of the kingdom of Ptolemy of Egypt, and, as you will readily see from a map of the Middle East, because of their geographical situation, caught, as they were, between these two warring kingdoms, in the subsequent conflict between Egypt and Syria, the Jews were unfortunately over-run, first by the army of the Syrian ruler, Antiochus, as he made his way south to attack Egypt, and then by Egypt, as Ptolemy struck back.

This spasmodic conflict is described in ch.11, from v.5., and when there was no actual warfare, a state of cold hostility existed between the two kingdoms which continued for just about as long as they both existed.

ANTIOCHUS EPIPHANES

The most notorious of these Syrian rulers was named Antiochus 4th, whose reign covered the period 175 to 163 BC, and who, in 169 BC, took to calling himself "Antiochus Epiphanes". His use of the word "Epiphanes" reveals the man's outrageous opinion of himself. In fact, the full title which he assumed was '*Theos Epiphanies*' - '*God Manifest*', because he thought that he was the incarnation of Zeus. The people, however, called him 'Antiochus Epimanes' - a play on words which means 'Antiochus the Madman'. He is referred to in Dan. vv.21-25.

THE ROMAN INFLUENCE

Antiochus eventually managed to enter Egypt, but his triumph was short-lived, because the Romans, who were the emerging power of the age, arrived in Egypt by sea and ordered him to leave. There is a wonderful story which relates that when Antiochus asked Laenas, the Roman legate, how quickly he must make up his mind about leaving, the Roman, unsheathed his sword, drew a circle around Antiochus and told him, in effect, "Before you step out of this circle!" This is predicted in v.30.

THE SLAUGHTER IN JERUSALEM

The Jews, back in Palestine, meanwhile, had heard a report which said that Antiochus was dead and were joyfully celebrating his decease, so, on his way home to Syria, Antiochus, still fuming at the dismissive treatment received at the hands of the Romans, vented his rage on the Jews and the city of Jerusalem, (which he had already captured on two occasions). He was vicious in his vengeance, inflicting punishment on them by sending an army of 22,000, led by Apollonius, one of his generals, with orders to destroy Jerusalem. Appollonius delayed his attack on the city until the day of the Sabbath when he knew the people would be in their synagogues. When he eventually launched his attack not a man was spared. It is reported that the streets ran with blood.

The Syrians then plundered the city and set it on fire. Furthermore, they deliberately defiled the Temple by scattering 'Swine's-flesh soup' throughout the holy place. And, as

if this were not enough, Antiochus offered a sow on the holy altar and erected an altar to Jupiter in the temple courtyard.

THE MACCABEAN PERIOD. 167-164 BC

It was against this man that the family of the Maccabees raised a rebellion which, led by the great Judas Maccabeas, whom history knows as 'Judas the Hammer', eventually secured freedom for the Jews. (Ch. 12; vv. 6-7).

The period during which the Jews suffered under the cruel Syrian oppression, for which Antiochus 4th was responsible, lasted for three and a half years, or 42 months, or 1260 days (12:6-7). This period which, the book of DANIEL, is expressed as 'time, two times and half a time'. Prophetically, 'time' equals one year, 'times' represents two years, and 'half a time' represents six months, making a total of three and a half years.

SIGNIFICANCE OF MODERN JUDAISM

The persecution under Antiochus Epiphanes, as predicted by Daniel, and their deliverance through the resistance of the Maccabees, is still celebrated by the Jews as one of the greatest events in their history, whilst Antiochus Epiphanes is still regarded as the very embodiment of the evil one.

At the end of that period, Judas Maccabeas cleansed and re-dedicated the Temple and the Jewish celebration of the Feast of Light, or 'Hanukkah', is said to date from that event.

In Jewish history this period is remembered as a time of very real and severe persecution, when the Gentiles oppressed the people of God, but a period which was ended by a great deliverance.

ALLUSIONS IN THE BOOK OF REVELATION

It is interesting to notice, also, that in the book of Revelation, this period is used symbolically of a period of persecution or suffering endured by God's new people, the Church, and, again, it represents a period which ends with their vindication and the defeat of their oppressor. As in Daniel, this period is expressed in terms either of 'days' or 'months' or 'years' or 'times', expressions which occur a total of 5 times.

For Example:

1. In Rev. 11:2, we read that the Holy City would be trampled i.e., violently overrun - by the Gentiles for *42 months*, which is three and a half years, or 1260 days, and this is - a clear allusion to Antiochus' persecution of Jerusalem.
2. The same chapter, v.3, mentions *1260 days*, and notice the reference to "sackcloth", the emblem of grief and mourning.
3. Verse 9 speaks of "*three days and a half*", after which God's Witnesses rise again.
4. In ch.12:6 the Church, represented as a radiant woman, is driven into the wilderness by Satan (the Dragon, ch.20:2), where she is nourished by God for *1260 days*.

It is clear that these verses refer to the same period of time, viewed from different angles and which represents a distinct period of oppression suffered by God's people. But, like that time in Jewish inter-testamental history, it is a *limited* period, because God will bring about His people's ultimate deliverance, and, at the same time, the end of the one responsible for their oppression. (Rev. 20:10).

Much more could be said, but the space is not available.

There are, of course, many books which deal in detail with the period and events we have just sketched. May I suggest that a book which is both readable and comprehensive enough to satisfy the majority of students of this period is "Israel and the Nations", by F.F. Bruce, first published in 1963, but still available.

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

A NEW LAW IN BRITAIN

Although we are fortunate enough to live in a country where our forebears won the freedom to worship according to conscience, we have sometimes experienced mild forms of discrimination such as being called “Bible-bashers” or other names, and perhaps had some vandalism to our buildings.

Now, however, we are told that the law in this country is to be extended to make it a crime to incite religious hatred. This was in the wake of the terrorist attacks of 11th September in the USA and threats to Britain, so as to offer some protection to Muslims who were fearful of retaliatory attacks on them and their mosques. Incitement against Jews and damage to their synagogues is already covered under laws against race discrimination, but Muslims may belong to many different racial groups. Of course this new law must cover all forms of religion, and those who benefit from such a law must also be subject to it. On the face of it, this appears to be a praiseworthy development, but it could have some unexpected side effects.

Our Prime Minister was asked if such a law would stifle dialogue between faiths, and he replied that this was not the intention, as free speech was one of the basic freedoms which must be preserved. But shall we have a crop of court cases to decide at what point permissible criticism becomes religious hatred? Shall we become reluctant to speak out for fear of such a result? The writer’s grandfather many years ago published a tract of his own composition, hinting that many clergy and ministers were “grievous wolves”, as described in Acts 20:29. Would he find himself in prison if he were still living?

This may seem far-fetched, but consider a news item which appeared in a Sunday newspaper on 14th October. A vicar’s wife had been criticised for asking children to pray for Muslims to be converted to Christianity, and the local Bishop had expressed his disappointment at such prayers. This was presumably because it might offend the feelings of local Muslims, although it reads as if this lady were only leading prayers and not taking any other action to spread the Christian gospel amongst them. This is going to ridiculous lengths, as to be consistent the Bishop must also be more than disappointed at the way Jesus upset the Pharisees by calling them hypocrites.

SPEAK WHERE THE SCRIPTURES SPEAK

There is a command to pray for our enemies. **“But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you.”** Matt 5:44. When we pray for them, what better thing can we request than that they should be converted to the truth?

Paul said (Acts 27:20) **“For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God.”** The important word here is “all”. How often nowadays do we hear of anyone preaching against adultery and fornication, when practically every so-called celebrity is involved in it, or of any teaching against lying, when public figures are shown to have committed perjury in court after having taken the usual oath or affirmation on the Bible to speak the truth? How often do we hear anything about the devil and hell and the fate of those who reject salvation?

No doubt most of us would agree that it is best to preach the gospel as good news, but there is also a need to warn sinners to repent, and in these days of low attendances at any form of Christian worship, there is such a fear of alienating critical congregations that sin is scarcely mentioned. We must not allow any new law to make the situation worse. The gospel will always offend those who decide to reject it. **“But**

we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumblingblock, and unto the Greeks foolishness; but unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God.” (1 Cor. 1:23).

This is in fact yet another reason why everyone should speak where the scriptures speak, and be silent where the scriptures are silent. If anyone should be minded to take a preacher to court in the hope of winning compensation, and the defendant can show that he is quoting directly from the word of God, it will be somewhat difficult to sue the original writer for damages!

ROSE M. PAYNE

SCRIPTURE READINGS

Feb. 3	Leviticus 19:1-18	Galatians 5:7-26
Feb. 10	Hosea 8	Galatians 6
Feb. 17	Psalms 102:12-28	Hebrews 1
Feb. 24	Isaiah 8	Hebrews 2

THE WORKS OF THE FLESH AND THE FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT

Many years ago now, and only a few years before he died, I wrote to Professor F.F. Bruce on this passage of Scripture. He assisted me considerably in my analysis of all the Greek terms. He even sent me a tape in which he pronounced each Greek word from “adultery” to “temperance”. As ever, he could not have been more helpful. In addition, he posted to me his favourite book from his library on the Holy Spirit, which I borrowed for a few months. How I greatly miss the great man!

The contrast here between “the works of the flesh” and “the fruit of the Spirit” is stark. The former are of Satan; the latter is of God. We have to be careful with the term “flesh”. It is a translation of the Greek word *sarx* and means human nature weakened, vitiated and tainted by sin. Most commentators see the “flesh” as man as he is apart from Jesus Christ and His Spirit. The list that Paul gives is a terrible, but not exhaustive, one. We should note the phrase: “. . . and such like” in verse 21.

“Uncleanness” is *akatharsia* and

refers to impurity, to a mind that is dirty and soiled. “Lasciviousness” is *aselgeia* and denotes excess, absence of restraint, indecency and wantonness. There are people in this world who have lost not only their self-respect, but also their sense of shame. “Variance” is *eris* and speaks of strife, contention and enmity. There is no sin more destructive of Christian fellowship than *eris*. “Emulations” is from the Greek word *zelos*. “Emulations” are jealousies. These are destructive of personal relations and of individual happiness. One commentator describes *zelos* as a “wrecker of life”. “Sedition” (*Gk. dichostasia*) speak of divisions, dissensions and quarrels. There have always been people around who only want to make pieces of the Church and not create peace in the Church. Paul wrote to the Romans thus: “Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them who cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which you have learned; and avoid them” (16:17).

“Longsuffering” is *makrothumia* and is from *makros*, long and *thumos* temper. It can also be translated forbearance or patience. It describes the response of the Christian towards circumstances and events rather than people. “Gentleness” is *chrestotes*. One commentator has written: “It is the sympathetic kindness or sweetness of temper which puts others at their ease and shrinks from giving pain”. “Faith”

is *pistis* and is the virtue of reliability. There are too many people in this world upon whom one could not depend. But a Christian should always be true to his word and faithful to his promise. His absolute loyalty to Jesus should shine through in everything he does. "Temperance" is *enkrateia* and is a word that is better translated "self-control". Perfect self-control can only come about through God-control or guidance from the dwelling Spirit.

DOING GOOD TO ALL

Peter once said of Jesus: ". . . God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power: who went about doing good, and healing all who were oppressed of the devil: for God was with Him" (Acts 10:38). So the Master was a "do-gooder". He looks to us to follow in His footsteps. "And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not. As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith" (6:9,10).

"Goodness" is a fruit of the Spirit (5:22). The primary idea of *agathosune* is generosity. So the Christian should be generous of spirit at all times. "The man who is *agathos*. . . is generous, open-handed and open-hearted. *Agathosune* is the generosity which springs from the heart that is kind" (William Barclay).

THE LETTER TO THE HEBREWS
AUTHOR: unknown. It has been attributed to such people as Barnabas, Luke, Appollos, Clement of Rome, Clement of Alexandria, Aquila and Priscilla together and Paul. ". . . the weight of evidence, both external and internal, preponderates so greatly in favour of Saint Paul, that we cannot but consider the Epistle to the Hebrews as written by the apostle" (Thomas Hartwell Home).

TO WHOM WRITTEN: probably to

Jewish Christians resident in Palestine.

DATE: before the destruction of Jerusalem. "This it is impossible to fix with absolute certainty, though one may say with considerable confidence that the Epistle was probably written between AD60 and 70" (A.M. Stibbs).

PURPOSE: "The main object of Paul, in this Epistle, is to persuade his Hebrew brethren in Christ to persevere in their begun Christian course . . . The chief danger of the Hebrew Christians arose from the seductive influence of Judaizing teachers" (R. Milligan).

KEY WORD: "better".

CHAPTER ONE

This chapter reveals the superiority of the Son of God to angels. Some cults teach that God's Son is a created being and that He is Michael the archangel. They could not be more wrong. The Hebrew writer appeals to the Old Testament Scriptures to show the superiority of the Son. We have quotes from the books of the Psalms, Deuteronomy, 2 Samuel and 1 Chronicles to prove the point. Why is Jesus superior? He is superior because He has been appointed the heir of all things; He is the one by whom the worlds were made; He is the brightness of God's glory; He is the express image of God; He upholds all things by the word of His power; He purged our sins by Himself; and He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high. "Jesus possesses the power of divine relationship, creative power, reflecting power, divine power, sustaining power, cleansing power, and ruling power. He is both the centre and circumference of the moral universe" (W. Carl Ketcherside).

As we read through this book we shall find many other things about Jesus which reveal clearly that He is far better than angels. For example, He has a more excellent name (1:4,5); an exalted position (6); He wields a sceptre of

righteousness (8); He had a superior anointing (9); He sits at the right hand of God (13); the angels are in service to Him (14).

CHAPTER TWO

The second chapter of Hebrews informs us that the message of Christ is better than that conveyed by angels under the first covenant. Again, the writer quotes from the Old Testament Scriptures to make his point. He calls upon the books of Psalm and Isaiah. We can divide chapter two thus: First admonition: the Gospel and the Law (1-4); the Humiliation and Glory of the Son of Man (5-9); the Son of Man the Saviour and High Priest of His People (10-18).

Jesus had to become like us to save us. For our sake, He was made a little lower than the angels (9a), He tasted death (9b, 14), He suffered and was tempted (10, 18). In other words, He shared in our humanity (14, 16, 17). It is all too wonderful for words! But we have a warning here. As one writer put it; "It is admitted that what the angels spoke was effective. Their message was the message of God, and it was binding. Those who did not pay heed to it paid a penalty for disregarding it. Every transgression and disobedience received prompt and certain punishment. It is reasonable to conclude that, if such were the case under a system proclaimed by inferior beings, there will be no escape from the consequences of disregarding a message proclaimed by the Lord".

IAN S. DAVIDSON,
Motherwell.

TEST YOUR BIBLICAL KNOWLEDGE

1. He was killed in a vineyard and championed by Elijah.
2. She slew her enemy with a nail?
3. Who kept the birds away from her

sons' gallows?

4. He fought at Ramoth-Gilead, with the king of Israel.
5. Joshua's burial place.
6. The scene of Sisera's defeat.
7. He was a false prophet of Cyprus.
8. He was governor of Syria at the time of Jesus' birth.
9. Where was Gallio when he "cared for none of those things?"
10. Name a Roman soldier to whom Peter preached Jesus.

RETIRAL OF EDITOR

After 28 years as editor of "The Scripture Standard", I hope, God willing, to hand over to a new editor by the end of this year (2002). Readers' views regarding the future of the paper, and the possible identity of a new editor will be most welcome. The magazine has had its present format for almost seventy years, and perhaps a change of editor would also be a good opportunity for a new impetus, a new format, and a brighter presentation (keeping in mind the added expense of colour and illustration). Essentially the "S.S." belongs to our readership and so we would welcome comments on the matter from readers. These can be sent either to myself or to John Kneller, Distribution Agent. Thank you.

(Ed.)

OBITUARY

The assembly in Wigan has been saddened at the passing away of Sister Doris Housley, at the age of 81. Doris, the dearly loved wife of Brother Sidney, had been a Christian for 67 years, having been immersed into the Lord at the Old Jackson Square building in Scholes. Doris had been suffering from a number of complaints over the last 10 years, and

her illness had prevented her meeting with her brethren over recent years. However, she remained strong in spirit until shortly before her death. Sid has been a tower of strength over the years for Doris, and he now needs our prayers, as does her sister, Sis. Gladys Ratcliffe. Pray too for her 3 daughters and two sons. We are confident because Doris died in the Lord.

A. MARSDEN.

NEWS FROM THE CHURCHES

Slamannan District: The Quarterly Mutual Benefit Meeting took place on Saturday 1st December, at Tranent meetinghouse, when the subject under discussion was, "What if anything, has the Church to say about modern scientific developments like "cloning", GM Foods, surrogacy, embryonic experimentation". The speakers were John Colgan, Tranent, and Graeme Scobbie, Dennyloanhead (replacing Graham Pearson) and the Chairman was James Gardiner, Haddington.

As usual, after the subject was commented upon by the two speakers, the meeting divided into four groups for mutual discussion. As always many interesting points were raised and a pleasant and profitable time was enjoyed by all.

Our next meeting, God willing, will be at Dennyloanhead on the 2nd of March, 2002, when the subject will be "Is the God of the O.T. different from the God of the N.T.?" The speakers will be Bro. Harry McGinn, New Cumnock, and Bro. Ian Davidson, Motherwell. The chairman will be Bro. Peter Sneddon, Dennyloanhead.

We thank the sisters in Tranent for the excellent refreshments.

H. MCGINN (Sec.)

Wigan: The assembly in Wigan has had further cause to rejoice. Following the decision earlier this year, of Anna Webster, the daughter of Isobel and Chris, to obey the Lord, we witnessed in October the immersion of Becky Marsden, eldest daughter of Robert and Jayne, and just this week we were delighted to hear of the decision of Emma Pickering, the eldest daughter of Wendy and David to begin her new life in the Lord Jesus Christ. Please pray for all our young sisters as they begin their Christian lives, and pray for others who are considering God's offer of mercy and love.

A. MARSDEN.

COMING EVENTS

Special Saturday Night Meeting At KIRKBY IN ASHFIELD

With Bro. Ernest Makin
16th March, 2002
at 7.00 pm

KIRKCALDY LADIES DAY

18th May, 2002
(Details later).

PETERHEAD

(Special Week-ends)

Sat/Sun. 26/27th January
Speaker: Mike Jones, Dundee.
Sat. 7p.m. (followed by refreshments)
Sun. 10a.m. Bible Study
11a.m. Breaking of Bread

Sat/Sun. 23/24th February
Speaker: Joe Nisbet, Aberdeen.
Sat. 7p.m. (followed by refreshments)
Sun. 11a.m. Breaking of Bread
6p.m. Gospel Meeting

Sat/Sun. 23/24th March
Speaker: John Kneller, Tranent.
Sat. 7p.m. (followed by refreshments)

Sun. 11a.m. Breaking of Bread
6p.m. Gospel Meeting

GHANA APPEAL

As we consider the advance of the Church in Ghana since the Ghana Appeal began about twelve years ago we thank the Lord from whom blessings come.

Without the generous help of donors our Ghanaian brethren would still exert themselves to extend God's Kingdom, but with it they have been able to extend further and more effectively. They would have helped one another in their distresses as best they could, but not only have you enabled suffering and death to be reduced, the knowledge that brethren elsewhere care enough to help is a great encouragement to them.

Sickness through snake bite and malaria etc., to name but two, predominate in tropical countries, as well as ailments common in more temperate areas and here, through your help, physical healing is taking place. Although this was the primary objective initially, spiritual healing is also being carried out over a wider area. In fact, the country is

covered from North to South and East to West.

Brethren, over these years lessons have been learned and our understanding has improved with experience. So much has been achieved and so much remains to be done. Let us continue the good work.

Those wishing to contribute please make cheques payable to Dennyloanhead Church of Christ Ghana Fund and send to the treasurer:

Mrs. Janet Macdonald,
12 Charles Drive, Larbert,
Falkirk, Stirlingshire. FK5 3HB.
Tel: 01324 562480.

-
- 10. Cornelius (Acts 10).
 - 9. Corinth (Acts 18:17).
 - 8. Cyrenius (Luke 2:2).
 - 7. Bar-Jesus (Acts 13:6).
 - 6. Kishon (Judges 5:20-21).
 - 5. Gaash (Judges 2:9)
 - 5. Mount Ephraim, north of Mount
 - 4. Jehoshaphat (1 Kings 22:1-40).
 - 3. Rizpah (2 Samuel 21:10).
 - 2. Jael (Judges 4:21).
 - 1. Naboth (1 Kings 21:17-24).

ANSWERS

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