

The SCRIPTURE STANDARD

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

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MANY ARE CALLED

Now that the new President of the United States has been called to office, I suppose we can all begin to relax again. No doubt, however, many of us will remain puzzled about the fact that, notwithstanding the vast wealth of able and talented men in the U.S.A., the American people were faced with a choice of either Mr. Carter or Mr. Reagan for the world's top job. Mr. Reagan has been called to an office arguably the most important in the world today and doubtless looked upon by the average American as the highest honour capable of being bestowed upon any human being. Yet there is a calling, abroad in the world today (and every day) which is so high and lofty that it makes even the Presidency of the United States pale into complete inconsequentiality. I refer of course to the "High Calling of God in Christ Jesus" (Phil. 3:4).

A glance through a concordance will convince even the most casual reader that a small article of this size will not be able to do justice to such a subject, but it is possible to make some helpful generalisations. God's call comes to all His creatures in the form of an invitation and in the form of a summons. If all men and women do not eventually hear God's call or die completely unaware of God's call, then it would appear that there has been a dereliction of duty on the part of God's evangelists and someone somewhere will be accountable. Jesus' instructions were that the gospel should be preached to *every creature*. Even as many as the Lord our God shall call. God's call to man consists of an invitation to honour, privilege, to judgement and to duty. Man generally treats God's invitation very lightly (as in the parable) and counts it as being of little consequence. Notwithstanding man's truculence, God's call or invitation is world-wide in its scope and no-one is to be considered as being outside its compass — and praise be to God, we have been included. God is the Author of the calling. Men swell with pride on receiving the plaudits of their fellowmen and yet remain quite unmoved by the news that God invites them into fellowship with Himself. Paul reminds the Christians at Corinth that "God is faithful by whom ye were called, unto the fellowship of His Son Christ Jesus." Paul, on a similar theme to Timothy, points out that God's invitation is entirely based on His grace and completely unmerited by men, "For God . . . Who hath saved us and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ before the world began." (2 Tim. 1-7-9).

Jesus acquired many of His disciples with the words, "Follow Me" and we may construe these words either as an invitation or a command, depending upon our attitude to the words, or perhaps these words form both at the one time. Certainly the call of God is no less than an invitation and the kind of invitation described in Matthew 22 (the parable of the marriage of the king's son) or Simon the Pharisee inviting Jesus to a meal in his house. Young's Analytical Concordance deems the Greek *kletos* capable of being translated 'Called' or 'Invited'. God's call is, however, in many ways more urgent than a simple invitation and takes the form of a 'summons'. If my boss invites me into his office, then that is one thing: if, however, he summons me to his office, that is quite another thing. God's call to man, while being a friendly invitation, is yet more than an invitation, it is a call to service and a summons to duty. While Mr. Reagan may have received a call from the people of America to be President, the apostle Paul was *called* by God to be an apostle of Christ (Rom. 1:1). Jesus says with reference to those who will open the door to His knock (or call) that He "will sup with him and he with Me" yet nevertheless He calls man to order and to service.

It is enlightening to notice some of the attributes of our calling. It is a *high calling* Paul's avowed purpose in life was to "press towards the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus" (Phil. 3:14). It is a *call of hope* (Eph. 4:4) and is an end to pessimism and despair. It is a *divine calling*, originating with deity, with God himself (1 Peter 5:10). It is a *holy calling* — calling men unto repentance and holiness. It is a call, as we have seen, to the *fellowship of God* — Paul says, "God is faithful by whom ye were called, unto the fellowship of His Son Jesus Christ our Lord." (1 Cor. 1:9). It is a *calling of peace* — "Let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to which also ye are called in one body: and be ye thankful." (Col. 3:15). Thereby we are at peace with God and also with our fellow-men. It is a calling to the *grace of God* — Paul marvelled that the disciples at Galatia were "so soon removed from Him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel." (Gal. 1:6). God's calling results in our sanctification (i.e. our becoming saints of God) — Paul addresses his remarks "Unto the church of God which is at Corinth, to them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints . . ." (1 Cor. 1:2). It is a *heavenly calling* — the writer to the Hebrews speaks thus, "Wherefore holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the apostle and High Priest of our profession, Jesus Christ." (Heb. 3:1). The calling originates in heaven and terminates in heaven. It is a *calling to glory* and to the Kingdom of God — Paul exhorts the disciples at Thessalonica to "Walk worthy of God, who hath called us unto His kingdom and glory." (1 Thess. 2:12). Perhaps we begin to see that God's calling transcends any kind of honour that man may bestow and makes even the call to the presidency of the United States appear quite ordinary.

Such a call brings a grave responsibility to man. Man must answer the call — his answer may be a negative one but, nevertheless, answer he must. We must respond to any invitation and even although we simply ignore the offer — we have given our answer. Even although we simply walk away from the call — we have made known our decision. To those who readily embrace God's grand invitation there remains the responsibility of walking worthy of the vocation — "But as He which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation, because it is written, Be ye holy for I am holy." (1 Peter 1:15). "For God hath not called us unto uncleanness but unto holiness." (1 Thess. 4:7). We must make our calling and election sure, for many, said Jesus, will be called but few chosen. The fact that many spurn God's call should not make us too despondent for this was true also of early New Testament days, when Paul was obliged to remark, "For ye see your calling brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called. But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise: and God

hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things that are mighty. And base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and the things which are not, to bring to nought things that are . . ." (1 Cor. 1:26).

Jesus calls us o'er the tumult
Of our life's wild restless sea;
Day by day His calm voice soundeth,
Saying, "Christian follow Me."

Editor

SIGNS

When we look around us, we see many signs that remind us that the Christmas Season is upon us; Christmas decorations, Christmas cards, Christmas trees, Christmas lights; and whilst there is no call on Christians to celebrate Christmas as a religious festival, nevertheless, it is indeed very precious to every christian to recall, with feelings of gladness, the scenes which brought so much gladness into the hearts of God fearing men and women, on that wonderful day long ago.

The Shepherds

A sign is that by which something is known and a sign may be visible or invisible.

The visible sign referred to by the angel in Luke's gospel when he said "and this shall be a sign unto you" was "Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger" and then we read "Suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying, Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace, goodwill towards men."

These gracious words are to us the invisible sign of God's goodwill towards us, and a very wonderful and visible sign to the shepherds, abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night.

The Saviour of the World

"For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour which is Christ the Lord."

How their hearts must have burned within them, when they heard these words, and so "it came to pass as the angels were gone away from them into heaven, the shepherds said one to another, let us now go even unto Bethlehem, and see this thing which is come to pass which the Lord hath made known to us. And they came with haste and found Mary and Joseph and the babe lying in a manger," just as the angel had told them. And as they gazed on the child, each one of them must have thought within himself that the sign prophesied by the angel was indeed true and that here indeed was their promised Messiah and Saviour or as the Samaritans later said "Now we believe and know that this is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world."

The Wise Men of the East

To the wise men of the East, the sign was the star which guided them to that lowly manger in Bethlehem and we all know that wonderful story described in Mathew's gospel of how, when they saw the babe, they fell down and worshipped him and opened their treasures and presented unto him gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh. How their hearts too must have burned within them, how sure they would be that here indeed was the King for whom they had journeyed so far to see.

Simeon

Thirty four days later, we read that Mary and Joseph brought the babe into the temple "to do for him after the custom of the law, when an old and devout man Simeon, who had been promised by the Holy Spirit that "he would not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ", took Jesus up in his arms and blessed God and said "Lord now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word: for mine eyes have seen thy salvation."

Anna

Anna too, a prophetess of great age who was in the temple at the same time, and who "departed not from the temple, but served God day and night with fastings and prayers, night and day. She, coming in at that instant gave thanks likewise unto the Lord and spake of him to all them that looked for redemption in Jerusalem."

How the hearts of both Simeon and Anna would burn within them. How sure they were, as they gazed on the child, that here indeed was the Saviour of the world.

Luke

So it seemed to Luke who was writing these words, for at the very beginning of his narrative he says: "It seemed good to me also, having had perfect understanding of all things from the very first, to write unto thee, in order most excellent Theophilus, that thou mightest know *the certainty of these things.*"

Oh yes they were all certain that Jesus was the Saviour of the world. Are we? And as these were the signs to these people of old, are they not forever also signs to us, that Jesus is indeed, as he was to them, the Saviour of the world?

John

Towards the end of his gospel John says, "Many other signs truly did Jesus in the ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing ye might have life through his name."

It was in John's gospel chapter 4 that we are told how the Samaritan woman at the well saith unto Jesus, "I know that Messias cometh which is call ed Christ: when he is come, he will tell us all things. Jesus saith unto her, *I that speak unto thee am he.*"

Again in John chapter 9 when Jesus asked the blind man whom he had cured, "Dost thou believe on the Son of God?" and the man answered and said, "Who is he. Lord, that I might believe on him?" Jesus answered unto him "*Thou hast both seen him and it is he that talketh with thee*", and he said, "Lord, I believe, and he worshipped him".

Yes, these are the wonderful signs that we also might believe and be certain that Jesus is the Son of God.

Signs of certainty

God has surrounded us with signs right from the beginning of time: signs of his love and goodwill towards us.

"Let there be light in the firmament of the heaven and divide the day from the night and let them be for *signs* and for seasons and for days and for years.

Signs are the means by which things are known and the great significance about these signs is that they are the means by which we know that God *is*. Yes, as we look at the sun, moon and stars we can say with certainty that God who made them *is*. This is what struck the astronaut who went to the moon with such reverent awe and amazement as he gazed on the wonderful works of the Almighty.

"And God saw everything that he had made and behold it was very good. And the evening and the morning were the sixth day and God rested on the seventh day from all the work which he had made."

Gazing on the earth from outer space, what struck the astronaut was its wonderful beauty.

But there are greater signs than these which tell us who we are, whence we came and whither we go.

Moses

When God wished his people to know that he had appeared unto Moses, he caused the rod in Moses hand to turn into a serpent and when Moses caught it by the tail, it turned back into a rod again.

"That they might believe," God said "that the Lord God of their fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob hath appeared unto thee".

Jesus

Jesus made use of this sign, in Johns Gospel when he said "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting lift."

The sign of the cross

Truly the sign of the Cross was the supreme visible sign of God's love for us. The agape or feast of love instituted by our Saviour is the invisible sign of that love.

It is not only a memorial of his death and a constant reminder of the great price that was paid for our redemption, but also a sign of his resurrection. It is more. It is a sign that we are blood bought children of God, and being so, a wonderful sign that shall, like him, be raised to life eternal, to be forever with the Lord.

Signs of God

There are many signs by which famous men and women are known, but none are known by the title of "*Saviour of the World*" yet what a contrast between that title and the one who bore it. Such a great title and yet such a humble, kind and gentle being who bore it.

That in itself is a sign by which true greatness is known. It is not to be found in the great and bombastic displays of men with all their prowess, nor in the titles and honours that men receive of each other, but in the humble demeanour, the generous action, the kindly thought, the welcoming smile of someone who knows you and loves you in spite of all your weaknesses and yet can forgive and help you over the many obstacles in life's path.

These surely are the signs of God and they can be the signs of God in us too, signs of his Holy Spirit dwelling within us and showing to others that he indeed dwells within us and has his abode with us.

"If we live in the Spirit, let us walk in the Spirit" says Paul. Let us not be desirous of vain glory, provoking one another, envying one another. Bear ye one another's burdens and so fulfil the law of Christ".

Jesus himself said: "By this shall men know that ye are my disciples if ye have love one to another". May that love dwell in our hearts, not only in this season of love, but at all times, for these are God's signs by which the heavenly mysteries are made known to us, not by material eyes, but by the eyes of faith.

Those eyes which see that Star of Bethlehem and that babe lying in a manger just as surely as they were seen by the wise men and shepherds of long ago, the eyes that recognise, just as they did, that these were and are the signs of the living God, and seeing we believe in His name.

W. Brown

GLEANINGS

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

The Christian Faith

"Christianity either kills or saves. It is either the brightness of day, or the darkness of night in a man's life. I am afraid we have become so familiar with it externally as to cast by our own spirit and demeanour a doubt upon this veritable proposition. Set it down as the most melancholy of facts that it has become possible for nominal Christian believers to care nothing about their faith. They have degraded it, so that it now chaffers with infidels, doubters, and even mockers. The faith that used to hold no parley with unbelievers is now fagged with much walking on the common road begging, asking leave to hold discussion, and apologising for suggesting

its own revelation. The age has been seized with what is known as a horror or dogmatism. But Christianity is nothing if not dogmatic. It has no reason for its existence if it be not positive.

A Spirit Level to Live By

"A little boy saw his father using a spirit level to see if the board he was planing was "true" and straight. "What's the use of being so careful, papa?" he asked. "It's pretty good, I guess." "Guessing won't do in carpenter work," replied his father, sighting the edge of the board and shaving it the least bit in the world. "You have to be just right. People guess at too many things. God doesn't like that way of living." "I guess there aren't any spirit levels for living by," laughed the little boy. "Yes, there are," said the father, earnestly. "You'll find them in the Bible. Try all your actions by that."

Studying the Word

"The man who would understand God's Word to-day must study the Word with the right object in view, and above all in the right way. Hundreds of men are profound students of God's Word and are deeply anxious to know the truth, but they have no more idea of the real relation of one part to another than new-born babes; hence the Bible is to them a grand jumble, having neither beginning nor end. When they try to interpret or expound the Word they frequently get it as badly mixed as the man who said that "Paul was preaching in an upper room and fell out of the window and broke all to pieces and they went and took up twelve baskets full of fragments."

Bible and Life

"The Bible is the book of life. It is composed of history, but its history is less the history of a nation than it is the memorabilia of men. It is composed of letters, but the letters are written to and by most living persons and upon most vital themes. It is composed of prophecy, but it is prophecy uttered by, to, and about men. It is composed of poetry, but the poetry enters into every emotion of joy and sorrow, of shame and exultation, of hope and despair, which moves the hearts of men. Its first chapters are the stories of the beginning of humanity; its last contain intimations of man's eternal state and condition. It is not a book of science; it has little to tell of astronomy or geology. It is not given to tell us how the heavens go, but one might say in a narrow sense to tell us how to go to heaven. It is a book of man; it is a book of life."

Dr. Charles F. Thwing

True and False Doctrine

"In the Bible the word "doctrine" means simply teaching, instruction. It was a moral direction, a simple maxim, or a familiar practical truth. It certainly was not that thing which theologians have made doctrine to be — a mere philosophical abstraction. The doctrines which the schools teach are no more like those of the Bible than the carved beams of Solomon's temple were like God's cedar trees on Mount Lebanon. But men cut and hew until they have shaped their own fancies out of God's timber, and they get upon them like Judgement-day thrones, and call all the world to answer at their feet for heresies against their idols."

Selected

To-day

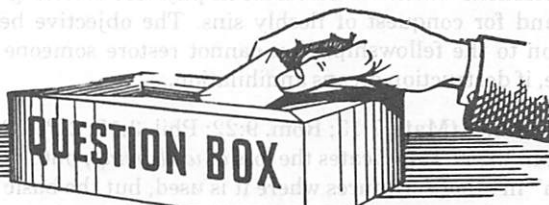
"Life is like the orange tree that blossoms and fruits at the same time. We are gathering the fruit to-day yielded from yesterday's bloom, and the blossoms of to-day have the promise of fruit for tomorrow. But there must be bloom to-day if there

is to be fruit tomorrow. The business of life is with to-day. That alone is ours — ours to use, to enjoy, to get all one can out of it, to crowd all we can into it. And just in proportion as we enrich today we enrich tomorrow. So prospect and retrospect can be filled full of pleasant dreams and pleasant memories.

Bethesda, 1908.

Selected by Leonard Morgan.

It would seem that the literal destruction of the body suffering as in the case of Job (Job 2:8) and for example, the objective behind the discipline was restoration.



Conducted by
Alf Marsden

“Would you please explain what is meant by “the heresy of Soul-sleeping,” and would you please do this in the context of Luke 16: 19-31.”

I think that we should try to answer this question by just giving information relative to the specific question, and not by stating opinions which may or may not be true. The reader can then either accept or reject the evidence, or possibly make the question a subject for private study. Therefore, I shall attempt to define the “Soul-sleeping” heresy, the arguments used to support it, and the arguments used by those who oppose this heresy. Let me say at the outset that this so-called “Soul-sleeping” heresy is not one that has been propounded much in the British Isles, but is one which has had much discussion in the U.S.A. Consequently, I should welcome any correction if I should err in any detail whatsoever.

Soul-sleeping

Those who adhere to the doctrine of Soul-sleeping teach that man is “wholly mortal.” He is made only of dust and will eventually return to the dust from whence he came. Man will die as a mouse or a rat might die; there will be no consciousness after death because there will be nothing left to be conscious. The wicked will be raised at the resurrection and will be totally destroyed (annihilated) after the resurrection. Soul-sleepers teach that there is no “inner man,” there is no hell, there is no punishment for the wicked. It follows, then, that we shall need to ascertain whether or not the Bible teaches this doctrine, and if it does not, what in fact it does teach.

Destruction

Soul-sleepers generally appeal to scriptures which speak about destruction, and they equate destruction with annihilation, i.e., “out of existence.” The word “destruction” occurs twelve times in the N.T. as follows: Matt. 7:3; Rom. 3:18; 9:22; 1 Cor. 4:5; 2 Cor. 10:8; 13:10; Phil. 3:19; 1 Thess. 5:3; 2 Thess. 1:9; 1 Tim. 6:9; 2 Pet. 2:1; 3:16. The noun “destruction” is represented by four Greek words in the N.T., and we would do well to examine these words in order to find their true meaning.

SUNTRIMMA occurs once in Rom. 3:16, “Destruction and misery are in their ways.” Many opponents of Soul-sleeping would argue that “misery” indicates prolonged, severe suffering, and that if “destruction” meant “out of existence” then the word misery would seem to be superfluous.

KATHAIREISIS occurs twice (2 Cor. 10:8; 2 Cor. 13:10). “For your edification

and not for your destruction." We would seem to be on the right path if we read "overthrow" for destruction.

OLETHROS is found four times (1 Cor. 5:5; 1 Thess. 5:3; 2 Thess. 1:9; 1 Tim. 6:9). The passage in 1 Cor. 5:5 speaks about the so-called incestuous brother at Corinth. It would seem that the literal destruction of the fleshly body is not meant here, but remedial punishment which would result in physical suffering as in the case of Job (Job 2:6) and for conquest of fleshly sins. The objective behind the discipline was restoration to the fellowship. You cannot restore someone who has been put out of existence, if destruction means annihilation.

APOLEIA is found five times (Matt. 7:13; Rom. 9:22; Phil. 3:19; 2 Pet. 2:1; 2 Pet. 3:16). This word as used in the N.T. indicates the loss of *well-being*, but not of *being*. It is rendered "perdition" in other scriptures where it is used, but the basic meaning is the same. The verb form of this noun is APOLLUMI and this word occurs ninety two times in the N.T. It is variously rendered by "perish"; by "lose, lost"; and by "destroy". The idea is not extinction but ruin, loss; the loss of well-being rather than being. The force of this verb is made evident in the parables of the lost sheep, the lost coin, and the lost son. In these instances the word would not possibly mean, so far as we can reason, that the sheep, the coin, and the son were "out of existence" because they were "lost" to the Shepherd, the woman and the father respectively.

The only thing that I can advise the questioner and the reader to do is to make a detailed study of these words in the contexts where they occur and then he may come to the conclusion that "destruction" and "to destroy" do not inevitably mean total extinction or annihilation of being, as many people seem to suppose.

Lazarus and the Rich Man

The teaching regarding these two men is to be found in Luke 16:19-31. There are those who say that this is a parable, but Jesus never designated it as such, nor has any other inspired writer, as far as I know, so for the purpose of this study we shall proceed as if it is not a parable until perhaps someone can prove that it is.

The situation as depicted is quite clear. The rich man dies and goes to hell; Lazarus dies and goes to Abraham's Bosom. Soul-sleepers say that in this state there would be no conscious existence; their opponents say that consciousness is indicated in the text. The word "hell" needs a little explanation. In his Expository Dictionary of N.T. Words, W. E. Vine says that "Hades" has been unhappily rendered "hell" in the A.V.; in the N.T. the revisers have always used the rendering "Hades." The word never denotes the grave, not does it indicate the *permanent* region of the lost; to the lost it is intermediate between decease and the doom of Gehenna. The condition, says W. E. Vine, is as indicated in Luke 16:23-31.

The condition, if Luke 16:23-31 is literal, is one of conscious torment for the rich man, and one of conscious bliss for Lazarus in Abraham's Bosom (a place of honour); this conclusion would seem to be fairly obvious according to the text. It is interesting to read what Josephus, the chronicler of the Jews, says regarding this intermediate region Hades, with respect to a description of Abraham's bosom. After indicating that Hades is allotted as a place for custody of souls, Josephus goes on, "For there is one descent in this region, at whose gate we believe there stands an arch-angel with a host; which gate when those pass through that are conducted down by the angels appointed over souls, they do not go the same way, but the just are

guided to the RIGHT HAND, and are led with hymns, sung by the angels appointed over that place, unto a region of light, in which the just have dwelt from the beginning of the world; not contrained by necessity, but ever enjoying the prospect of the good things they see . . . while they wait for the rest and eternal new life in heaven, which is to succeed this region. This place we call the "bosom of Abraham" (Josephus History, page 603). I am well aware that this is not inspired writing, and that Josephus was not even a Christian, but it does serve to illustrate the thinking of that time and gives us some insight of some section of Jewish thought.

What is Man?

In his second letter to Corinth, Paul teaches us that the christian man is dual, "For which cause we faint not; but though out outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day" (2 Cor. 4:16). We reason from this statement that the christian man cannot be *all body*; there is an "inner man" also, and this inner man is sometimes referred to as the soul. At the beginning of Chapter 5, Paul teaches that this "inner man" groans within this earthly tabernacle which is the body, and yearns to be "clothed upon" with our house which is from heaven. So the teaching seems to be that the earthly house (the body) will decay into the dust from whence it came; the "inner man" (the soul) will be "clothed upon" in a continued existence.

But what of the natural man who has not been born again? Is he just to disintegrate into dust. Is *he* all body? In Genesis we are taught that when God created man He breathed into his nostrils the breath of lives and man became a living soul. Jesus Himself said, "And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy (APOLLUMI) both soul and body in hell" (Matt. 10:28). At the close of his first letter to Thessalonica Paul says, "May the God of peace himself sanctify you wholly, and may your spirit, and soul, and body be kept sound and blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Thess. 5:23).

In the O.T. we read, "But this flesh upon him shall have pain, and his soul WITHIN him shall mourn" (Job 14:22). From this scripture it would seem that the inspired writer is saying that the soul is within the flesh.

Conclusion

Well, we have examined scriptures which at face value would seem to suggest that man will be utterly destroyed, and in that condition would not be capable of experiencing anything, conscious or otherwise. We have examined other scriptures which seem to indicate that man is made up of body, soul, and spirit, and in that condition the body would return to the dust but the soul would live on; if we say that the soul *lives* on then we would seem to be saying that such life would have conscious existence *apart from the body*. We have seen that the Revisers have used "Hades" instead of "Hell," and that Hades is designated as the place for departed souls, and is seemingly divided into a region called "Paradise" and "a place of torment" which is sometimes referred to as Tartarus; from Paradise and Tartarus, souls would eventually proceed to Heaven and Gehenna respectively.

As I see it, there are things that we shall not understand fully until we experience the reality of them, but while the scriptures are available to us we must seek to explain them as objectively as we can. I feel that I have only scratched the surface of what is obviously a very deep subject, and if anyone can lead us into a little more light than I would be eager to learn from them. *

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

RESURRECTION AND ASCENSION

WE do not look for the doctrine of man's ascension to Heaven on the face of the sun, or on the moonbeam, or on the surface of the loud sounding sea, or on the golden fruitage or melting vintage of the year, or on the sapphire sky, or shining surface of gems and jewels. No, if we would hear the most charming voice on man's ascension to Heaven, after which he sighs, we must fall back upon the Bible, the grand contour of which is traced in an outline of three consecutive ages, as follows:—

1. The Patriarchal.
2. The Jewish.
3. The Christian.

Now, an ascension to Heaven is not an exclusive characteristic of any one of them. On the contrary, during these three ages we have had three instances of translation — one from each, namely:

1. The translation of Enoch.
2. The translation of Elias.
3. The translation of Christ.

To pious men, who walked by faith, it has been intimated by the Most High in all ages that there remained for them on high a rest. An ascension to Heaven then is not contrary to the experience of the ages that passed away before the age of Christ. A religion that would meet the necessities, and the highest desires, and best wishes of man, must embody an ascension to Heaven as one of its vital elements, or leave man, like an eagle without wings, gazing on the sun.

A translation is but a co-relate doctrine of one of our most celestial instincts — that of beholding all the works of God, and of drinking into the blessed fellowship of angels and the spirits glorified as the reward of virtue and faith in Christ. And if in Adam we are carried down to death and hell, do we reason ill when we reason analogously and say that our great redemption should embody the counterpoint doctrine and disclose in Christ a heavenly ascension?

God's reason for taking the Messiah to Heaven are the following:—

1. To prove His Messiahship.
2. To convict His enemies of sin.
3. To elevate our faith to Heaven.

Christ's own reasons for ascending to Heaven were these, viz:—

1. To appear there in our behalf.
2. To be constituted formally King and Priest.
3. To receive the Holy Spirit.
4. To bless His Church and create His ministry.
5. To obtain universal government.
6. To prepare mansions for His people.
7. To glorify God by the preached Gospel.

Though not belonging to the logic of our discourse, we may ask, nevertheless, will He come again? This is more than a possibility, or even a high probability. It is a joyful certainty.

1. He came once for sinners;
Will He not come again for His saints?
2. He came to suffer;
Will He not come to reign?

3. He came in grace;
Will He not come in glory?
4. He came for fleshly Israel;
Will He not come for the spiritual Israel?
5. He came to bear the Cross;
Will He not to wear the crown?
6. He came to sow;
Will He not come to reap?
7. His jewels are all here;
Will he come to collect them?

It is infinity to unity that He will come. It is a revelation He will come.

1. The pious were waiting for His first advent;
Let us wait for His second.
2. They prepared for that;
Let us prepare for this.
3. The prophets gave the signs of His first advent;
The Apostles gave the signs of His second.
4. The wise of the Jews understood those;
Let us search for these.

"For the Lord Jesus Himself shall descend from Heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel and the trump of God, and the dead in Christ shall rise first." Then we who are alive and remain shall be changed, and caught up together with them to the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air and so shall we be for ever with the Lord.

WALTER SCOTT (A Restoration pioneer).

SCRIPTURE READINGS

FOR JANUARY 1981

4 Isaiah 55	Mark 3, 13-35
11 Jer, 5, 20-23	4, 1-25
18 Jonah 1	4, 26-41
25 I Samuel 16, 14-23	5, 1-20

THE CHOICE OF THE "TWELVE"

It would be wise to read Luke 9, 1 and 10, 1 in this connection so as to have the picture of numbers of followers of Jesus anxious to be close to Him, but to note that Jesus did make a definite choice of twelve men and named them Apostles. This word is applied almost exclusively to them in the N.T., and we cannot help thinking of the twelve tribes of Israel under the Old Covenant. The tremendous success of the ministry of Jesus in Galilee needed a thorough

follow-up, and of course the most vital need was training for these who were to bear the brunt of the gospel work after the resurrection.

Mark names the three main objects of Jesus in His choice of men — 1, They should be with Him; 2, They were to go forth and preach; 3, They were to have miraculous powers. Mainly their work was to be among Jews so that the whole nation would have opportunity to see and hear Jesus Himself and to get His message. We understand that Galilee in particular was thickly populated and the seventy additional preachers would be fully employed. We do not know how long the "campaign" lasted as in this later period Jesus retired from open publicity, giving more time to His apostles and close friends. We do assume He always attended the feasts appointed by the Law. This involved visiting Jerusalem, and meeting continuous and growing hostility by the ruling folk.

Mistaken sympathy

We can understand the consternation with which the pressure of popularity weighed upon the minds of the mother and family of Jesus. Often He must have been physically exhausted — “weighed down exceedingly beyond our power” (2 Cor. 1, 8). We think it was no isolated occasion when He sought solitude in prayer (1, 35), and before making the choice we have considered above “He went out into a mountain to pray (Luke 6, 12). They would also fear for His safety in view of His bold front against religious leaders. Thus they thought it necessary to stop or at least modify His activity. His zeal and unflagging work with the poor and sick seemed to be beyond all reasonable bounds. So his mother and His brothers came to the house where He was teaching in a vain effort to check Him. The reaction of Jesus reminds us of His response to His parents’ worry when He stayed behind in the Temple (Luke 2, 49). Perhaps He did on this occasion consent to see them but it would only be to point the same lesson. He was indeed on the Father’s business — and it is something His church should bear in mind — spiritual teaching and physical well-being should go hand in hand, and generally this is recognised and has been practised.

Parables

We are sure the parables which Jesus used must have worked upon the minds of thinking men and women who first heard them. They have certainly exercised the minds of innumerable folk since. In our short passage this month we have many; some of which we hardly recognise as earthly stories with heavenly meaning. We have The Sower, The Lamp, The Critic, Possessions, Growth of Seed, Harvest, The Mustard Seed. Perhaps a better description would be Word Pictures of which all language is full.

The passage quoted from Isaiah might appear at first sight a statement

that God did not want the people to heed His word, but remember the instruction to the prophet was to say the words to the people. It is good psychology to tell a person he cannot do something to make him do it. If I tell you that you will not listen, you are most likely to do so. The parable may puzzle the hearer but it stimulates thought. Surely this is what the Great Teacher was doing. The apostles’ greatest need — and OURS.

Power over Nature

We must try to realise what supreme physical power the body of Jesus possessed to meet the strain of continuous work. It would seem that at the time He spoke to the crowds from the boat He was bearing a terrific burden. Prophecy tells it — “Himself took our infirmities, and bare our diseases” (Matt. 8, 17). There has been no love like the love of Jesus (a matter of degree). Therefore there has been no such strain of sympathy like His. The true doctor shares his patients’ pains, and has to get hardened to continue his work. So, physically exhausted, Jesus slept on the steersman’s “cushion” or “pillow,” and had to be awakened to still the storm. What fear and astonishment His power must have produced in the hearts of those in the boat! No wonder they could not conceive the possibility of His meekness upon His arrest, humiliation and crucifixion — when that time came. Does not our familiarity with these truths lessen our appreciation of them? It was evening when the voyage across “to the other side” began. We do not know whether it was dark or light when they approached the shore. Did they sleep through the night upon the calm waters of the lake?

Power over Satan

The natives of Gadara (Gerasa or Gergesa) had experienced the power of Satan in the person of the demoniacs. They had found it impossible to restrain them, one of them in particular. They inhabited the desolate places on the

coast of the lake, and ran wild there endangering any who passed that way. No doubt the swineherds avoided them. Supernatural instinct knew Jesus was approaching in the boat, and therefore ran to meet Him. Their attitude to Him was submissive in accordance with the words of Jesus "he will first bind the strong man" (3, 27). Jesus had already done so. He had authority over the demons, and permitted them to do what they wanted for a purpose of His not theirs. He relieved the demoniacs of their bondage and the change must have been amazing. A whole region of the land was appalled and taken with abject fear of the power which would destroy and re-build what no man could hinder or create. One man by the power of Jesus was delivered from Satan and made a messenger of good tidings. Bear in mind while he was a special case, thousands were similarly delivered. We may not know "demon-possession" in this context but we understand what it means when someone, man or woman, "goes beserk." They do violence, and we know what insanity is — "going out of the mind." These are up-to-date facts of life and are demonstrations of the power of Satan. When noble needs and acts of self-sacrifice are done, it is the spirit of Christ manifested. When a welfare state is at work it can only originate from the teaching and example of the Saviour. Such things were almost utterly unknown before Jesus came. Holiness and purity are attributable only to Him, whether carried out by professed unbelievers or by Christians. These virtues are inconsistent with materialism and selfishness, and have never originated with them.

The awful sin of the enemies of Jesus was to attribute to Satanic influence what they knew *beyond doubt* was goodness. The awful sin of Judas is epitomised in the words "then entered Satan into him" (John 13, 27). We may be sure that if we attribute evil to the good deeds of others we are in danger of serious sin. Quoting

Maclear, "The sin (3, 29) ... is not so much an act as a state of sin ... if persevered in and not repented of, excludes from pardon for it is the sin unto death (I John 5, 16)." It is not surprising that this matter has exercised the thoughts of many earnest Christians. Is it not one of the most terrible statements in the Bible? How the heart of Jesus must have rejoiced at the recovery of the afflicted men. "He shall see of the travail of His soul and shall be satisfied" (Isa. 53, 11). For the apostles with Him how great a lesson and encouragement! and to us with a warning.

R. B. Scott.

APPEAL

Dear Brother Editor,

Brethren will recollect that we wrote before of Carole Ashurst's desire to go and work as a nurse in India. Since then she has had to undergo two serious operations which we are glad to say have been successful and for which we thank God. Now that she is on the way to recovery she is anxious to make preparations for going to India. Subject to her doctor's approval she would like to go this winter before the hot season begins to give her the opportunity to get acclimatised before the weather is too hot.

The congregation here commend her desire to go and are willing to assist her as much as they are able. The congregation which meets in our home is very small and is already fairly heavily committed financially in the personal work that is being done in the Manchester area. It will be appreciated that we would be reluctant to pursue the matter of Carole going to India had we not reason to believe that other brethren would be as interested as we are in this venture. So we are appealing to such Churches and brethren to contact us as soon as possible intimating to what extent they would be prepared to assist us.

It is currently estimated that it would cost approximately £15 per week to keep Carole in food and clothing whilst working at Phillips Hospital in Madras. The hospital is prepared to provide her with her own living quarters. The single fare there to Madras would be in the region of £200. We think it is advisable to ensure that a long term return ticket is available should she have need to return urgently to this country. The return fare would be approximately twice the single fare but in the light of rising prices would be a worthwhile investment. We also think that she should be able to return home once a year in the height of the hot season for about four weeks. This would give her the opportunity to recuperate and also share her experiences with us here.

Carole would like to say that she is not going to India as a missionary but rather to express her love to those in need in the exercise of her nursing skills in the name of Jesus.

We have observed that when people experience the expression of genuine love and concern from the followers of Jesus then they desire to know more about him. We are confident that God will bless Carole's work because of the sincerity of her motive and ask you to pray for her in this respect.

Carole would also like to thank all the people who wished her well during her recent illness.

Yours in Christ on behalf of the Church here — Allan Ashurst, 60 Kenwood Road, Stretford, Manchester M32 8PT Tel. 061-865 6540.

NEWS FROM THE CHURCHES

**Church of Christ Mission,
P.O. Box 22297, Kitwe, Zambia.**

Visiting prison and hospital. Churches of Christ in Lubumbashi visit the large hospital. Christian women take part in this visitation of the sick. At the

prison which is about ten miles from Lubumbashi, about 150 prisoners attend Sunday services organised by Lubumbashi Churches of Christ. There are many activities for young people with a strong emphasis upon Bible study and Christian songs. One congregation requests a football for its young people to play soccer but most requests are for Bible study materials. The Christians have organised two elementary schools and a vocational secondary school — without any overseas funding given or requested. The Christian women have a very active programme of both Biblical and social education.

Training of church leaders. There are 14 evangelists in Lubumbashi who are either on local Zaire support or self supporting. They have a monthly preachers luncheon with Bible study. Their main thrust is door to door evangelism which requires good Bible knowledge. Short Bible training courses for the Zaire evangelists are held by Woodhall at residential camp meetings in Zambia with follow up extension studies. There have been four such camp meetings in 1980. A church service in Lubumbashi can be a trifle long — beginning at 8 a.m. and finishing at 11.30 a.m.

13 Shaba congregations. At the most recent count, in October 1980, there are 13 congregations and preaching points in the Shaba Province of Zaire. This recent expansion of Churches of Christ in Zaire is served by the Woodhall missionary family on Zambia's Copperbelt. You can write direct to Church of Christ, B.P. 5155, Lubumbashi III Shaba Province, Zaire. The Zaire congregations would welcome parcels of Christian tracts.

Kentish Town. We were privileged to hold the anniversary of the use of Hope Chapel on September 27th. This was the 109th. It has always been a time for looking backward and forward with gratitude and expectation of further

work, seeking blessing from the Lord.

In the afternoon we had a talk and discussion on the question of reaching people who are not interested at all in spiritual matters.

Invitations to Bible study do affect a tiny minority already interested enough to study or make a try with it, but what of those who are entirely out of touch? The studies are good and show results in a teeming population. Suggestions of door to door campaigning and closer touch with the people's daily needs were mentioned, and experiences given. The church has benefited by the services of brethren from the States and from Ghana and Nigeria — a truly international assembly. Members from Birmingham, Brighton, Corby, Reading and Tunbridge Wells and the other London churches encouraged us by their presence. Between 60 and 70 came together in the afternoon and over 50 in the evening when Bro. Brownie Reaves spoke on the good old plea. The sisters provided amply for a buffet tea between the meetings.

R.B.S.

Newtongrange. On Saturday past, i.e., 25th October, the brethren here at Newtongrange, enjoyed a great time of fellowship and love in the company of visiting brethren and friends. The event being our Annual Social.

The meeting as usual opened with tea. After tea Bro. J. Morris welcomed the visitors and duly introduced the speakers of the day viz: Bro. H. McGinn of Dalmellington, and Bro. J. Nisbet of Ulverston.

Musical interludes were created by the Slamannan district choir under the direction of Bro. J. McCallum. Four pieces were rendered. The home contribution came in the form of a solo by Bro. A. P. Sharp and Sister Coventry. Visiting sisters Jean and Caroline Gardiner sweetly sung a solo, apiece.

Bro. McGinn being the first speaker, chose to speak on the important subject of "The Heart," showing the importance of the natural and spiritual status. This was well received.

In the second half of the meeting, it was the turn of Bro. Nisbet to exhort the assembly gathered. He spoke very ably on the topics general, Salvation, and Satans attack on the church, showing the subtle ways in which this was being done. The lesson proved much food for thought.

The collection of the day realised the sum of £59.21, which was donated to the Slamannan church rebuilding fund.

We at Newtongrange thank all the brethren fellowshiping with us on this occasion, and trust and pray that indeed we might have been blessed mightily in the Lord. The oversight thank the Sisters of the church for assisting in serving the brethren.

It has been the pleasure of the church here at Newton-grange to have had the services of Bro.

David Scott of Tranent. Bro. Scott was the guest speaker at our recent "follow-up" mission to our annual social. Bro. Scott spoke on the evenings of the 26th, 28th, 30th October and 1st, 2nd of November, 1980.

The topics of the day were in the range: "Utterances from the cross" "The challenge of life," "I am the way," and "Supposing Him to be the gardener." A goodly number gathered each night to hear Bro. Scott ably put forth the truth of scripture.

All experienced a great time of blessing and up-lift. To all who helped to make the meetings a success we thank. It is the prayers of the church that Bro. Scott be abundantly blessed as he goes forward in the preaching of the Gospel.

A. P. Sharp, sec.

SUBSCRIPTION RATES for 1981

Owing to substantial increases in printing and postal costs we find it necessary to increase our subscription rates for next year as shown below.

Bro. Scott is again preparing reading cards which will be available later in the year at 5p each.

Church secretaries should advise me as soon as possible of their requirements so that Reading Cards can be sent out and the new mailing list prepared.

United Kingdom & Commonwealth.....£4.00
Canada & U.S.A.\$9.00
Air Mail please add £1.50 or \$3.00 to above surface mail rates.

J. K. Kneller.

PLEASE NOTE...

...That we have revised the subscription rates in line with the increase in our costs. Please use the new rates for 1981.

Reading cards will be available at 5p each. Please order early.

Our warmest thanks are extended for your help and support during 1980. We ask for this support to continue through 1981, God willing.

John Kneller.

STAMPS

Reading bibles for Africa and India — Unfortunately owing to the retirement of the stamp dealer, the recession, the exchange rate and the cost of postage combined, the sale of used stamps has become uneconomical and will be discontinued after the end of 1980. Gifts of money will still be welcome.

R. M. Payne (Miss).

“NOT IN FRONT OF THE CHILDREN”

There are no idle words where children are:

Things spoken in their hearing carry far,
Producing fruit of evil or of good
To our great future human brotherhood.

The word dropped lightly from our careless lips

Into the fertile mind seeps and drips
And intertwines with thought and impulses: so

It may decide the path some soul shall go.

So speak not thoughtlessly when they are by:

Your words fall not on sterile soil nor dry.

Thoughts sown in plastic minds are carried far.

There are no idle words where children are.

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