

# The SCRIPTURE STANDARD

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

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## PETER AND HIS KEYS

Last week our congregation at Haddington had a passing visit from some itinerant evangelists of the Christadelphians, engaged on a preaching tour of Scotland. Some attended our gospel-meeting, and later came to our mid-week Bible Study where we conversed about some of our differences. Time was limited and our discussions centred mainly upon "The Kingdom of God — now, or yet future"? Before offering a few thoughts on the subject, perhaps it might be useful, for the benefit of any who might know nothing about Christadelphians, to say a few words on their history. I suppose I could do no better than quote **Encyclopedia Britannica**, viz. "Christadelphians, sometimes also called 'Thomasites'; a community founded in 1848 by John Thomas (1805 - 1871) who, after studying medicine in London, migrated to Brooklyn, N.Y., U.S.A. There he first joined the "Campbellites", but afterwards struck out independently, preaching largely upon the application of the Hebrew prophecy and the Book of Revelation, to current and future events. Both in America and Great Britain he gathered a number of adherents, and formed a community which was extended to several English-speaking countries. They believe that they alone hold the true interpretation of the Scripture. Their theology is strongly millenarian, centring on the hope of a world-wide theocracy with its seat in Jerusalem. No statistics of the community are published."

The above quote from Enc. Brit. sums it up well, but, of course, tells only a fraction of the story. Dr. Thomas set sail for the U.S.A. in 1832 and met Alexander Campbell there in 1833. After a long discussion with the pioneer evangelist Walter Scott, Dr. Thomas was baptised (in the Miama Canal at 10.00 p.m. in the moonlight) and so became a member of the churches of Christ. He started a religious magazine in Virginia called **The Apostolic Adviser** and began to publicise his own dogmatic opinions on prophecy, etc., and was taken to task by Campbell in **The Millennial Harbinger**: who wrote "And now, I fear, we are about to find, or rather have found, in the person of Dr. Thomas, another of those infallible dogmatists so supremely devoted to his own opinions, and his own glory in defending them — so confident in asserting them — so diligent in propagating them . . . he has become a factionalist of the most indomitable spirit." With regard to Dr. Thomas's 'distinctive' approach to properly understanding the scriptures, Campbell said, "Fool that I was, to think that words in the Bible were to be understood by the same rules of interpretation applied to other books . . . Such a system of interpretation (as that of Dr. Thomas) drives both myself, all commentators, dictionaries and the twelve apostles out of the field. Rules of logic, laws of language, criticism to such a reasoner, are as straws to

a Leviathan". Followers of the Doctor were called 'Thomasites' until late in his life (about 1864) when he coined the name "Christadelphian" to save his young men from being drafted into military service in the American Civil War (apparently all sects had to have a 'proper' name and Dr. Thomas chose this one). Dr. Thomas publicly repudiated the baptism he had received at the hands of Walter Scott, something he later denied when questioned by David King and the London church. David King also shows how the Doctor plagiarised one of his many books (*Anatolia*) from the writings of Granville Penn, While claiming in the Introduction that it was "original throughout", thus placing another question-mark upon his personal integrity. (See "History & Mystery of Christadelphianism" by David King).

### THE KINGDOM — NOW, OR YET FUTURE ?

As stated above the Christadelphian theology 'is strongly millenarian' and is based upon their prediction of a "Great Millennial Reign", when, they allege, Christ will reign for 1,000 years in Jerusalem. Consequently they do not believe that the Kingdom of God came into being in N.T. times, nor do they have any regard for the church. Because they maintain that the Kingdom of God **did not exist** in N.T. times, Christadelphians understandably, have difficulty in dealing with the many passages of scripture which state, quite categorically, that the Kingdom certainly did exist in N.T. times. (To save space I will abbreviate the Kingdom to "K.ofG., or K.ofH.)

As to **when** the K.ofG. would come, Daniel (2:44) prophesied that it would come **"in the days of these Kings"** (feet of Nebuchadnezzar's image). What Kings? We could argue about it, but Jesus and John the Baptist ended all speculation when they said **"The time is fulfilled, the K.ofH. is at hand."** (Mark 1:5). Thus it came during the reign of the Roman kings and was not something reserved for the end of the world. Indeed, Jesus said on one occasion, that some of those listening to Him would not die **"before they had seen the kingdom come with power."** (Mark 9:1). Again, Jesus angered the chief priests by informing them **"That the publicans and harlots go into the K.ofG. before you. For John came unto you in the way of righteousness, and ye believed him not, but the publicans and harlots believed him. . ."** If the K.ofH. did not exist in N.T. times one wonders how the publicans and harlots could enter it. Again, Jesus said (Matt. 11:12) **"And from the days of John The Baptist until now the K.ofG. suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force."** It certainly seemed to exist. Again, Jesus said (Matt. 23:13) **"But woe unto you scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, for ye shut up the K.ofH. against men, for ye neither go in yourselves, neither suffer ye them that are entering to go in."** Yes, the kingdom existed and could be entered. The apostle Paul urged the Christians at Colosse to give thanks to God for having **"delivered them from the power of darkness"** and for **"having translated them INTO the kingdom of God's dear Son."** (Col. 1:13).

Examples similar to the above could be greatly multiplied (e.g. Peter was given the keys of the kingdom and told to use them, etc.) but, quite apart from these the parables also teach that the K.ofG. existed in N.T. times. Jesus said, **"The K.ofH. is like a certain king which would take account of his servants"** (Matt. 18:23); or **"was as a travelling into a far country"** (Matt. 25:14); or, **"was like unto a certain king which made a marriage for his son"** (Matt. 22:2); or, **"is like unto a man who is a householder"** (Matt. 20:1); or, **"is like unto leaven which a woman took"** (Matt. 13:33); or, **"is like unto a grain of mustard seed"** (Matt. 3:31); or, **"is likened unto ten virgins"** (Matt. 25:1); or, **"is like unto a treasure hid in a field"** (Matt. 13:34); or, **"is like a net cast into the sea"** (Matt. 13:47); or, **"is like a merchant seeking goodly pearls"** (Matt. 13:45). Clearly these 'kingdom' parables were meaningless if there was to be no kingdom until the end of the world.

## SPIRITUAL OR MATERIAL ?

In reply, Christadelphians quote 1 Cor. 15:50 (where Paul says “Flesh and blood cannot inherit the K.ofG.”) and argue as we are all “flesh and blood” we cannot be in the K.ofG. They also refer to passages like Matt. 25:34 where Jesus, at the Great Assize, will say “Come ye blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you . . .” and argue that if we are yet to “inherit” the kingdom, it follows that we cannot be in it now. This point of view deserves some comment. Obviously there are progressive ‘phrases’ of God’s kingdom and ‘K.ofG.’ is a term which requires thoughtful application. Albert Barnes says, “The phrases ‘K. of G. or K. of H.’ have been supposed to have considerable variety of meaning. Some have thought that they refer to the state of things in heaven; others, to the personal reign of Christ on earth; others that they mean the Church; or the reign of Christ in the hearts of the people. There can be no doubt that there is reference in the words to the condition of things in heaven after this life. But the church of God is a preparatory state to that beyond the grave; a state in which Christ pre-eminently rules and reigns; and there is no doubt that it sometimes refers to the state of things in the church; and it means, therefore, that state of things which the Messiah was to have set-up — **“His spiritual reign begun in the church on earth, and completed in heaven .”** Barnes also describes how the Jews supposed that when the Great Deliverer would come He would rescue them, by destroying their enemies, and restoring them to their former national dignity and ascendancy. However, in the event, He came to deliver them not from earthly foes, but from sin; and He came not to call them to arms and battle, but to repentance, showing the **spiritual nature** of the kingdom.

Brother Crosthwaite maintained that the only safe method of Bible Study was to approach any particular subject with an open (but not a vacant) mind, and, with the aid of a Concordance, examine every relevant passage of scripture. From this, one would form an opinion and would discard all former spurious opinions. He tells of a Correspondence Course conducted by Bro. Lancelot Oliver, some 60 years previously, where the subject was the K.ofG. and where every student had to examine every passage which related to the kingdom (about 150 refs.). Then the students were asked to classify those passages under four main headings: viz. The Kingdom Universal: The Kingdom National: The Kingdom Spiritual: and The Kingdom Eternal. This was surely good advice for unless we appreciate that there are various **phases** of God’s kingdom we shall often be confused. The prophet Micah (4:8) speaks of the “First Dominion” of the kingdom and this presumably pre-supposes other dominions (a second or third). **KINGDOM UNIVERSAL:** Man is the ‘offspring’ of God and in a real sense part of God’s universal kingdom; where God has complete sovereignty. **“His kingdom ruleth overall”** and **“God is king over all the earth”** (Ps. 103:19 & 47:7). **“He doeth according to His will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth, and none can stay His hand, or say unto Him, What doest thou?”** (Dan. 4:35).

**KINGDOM NATIONAL :** In a very particular sense the Israelites, after their deliverance from bondage in Egypt, became God’s unique ‘national’ kingdom. God said to them, **“Now therefore, if you will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then shall ye be a peculiar treasure unto me, above all people, for all the earth is mine: and ye shall be unto me a KINGDOM of priests, and a holy nation.”** Sacred history shows that the Jews did not keep their end of the bargain, but became steeped in idolatry. They eventually demanded an earthly king and in effect rejected God’s rule. Jesus rapidly brought us up to date (in the parable of the wicked husbandmen) when He said to the Jews, **“Therefore I say unto you, the kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof.”** (Matt.21:33-46). Paul (in Rom. 11) tells us that it was **“because of unbelief”** that the original branches (the Jews) were broken off and new branches (The Gentiles) were grafted in.

**KINGDOM SPIRITUAL** : Contrary to Jewish expectations (and some modern sects), Jesus and His apostles taught that the kingdom would be spiritual, not literal. The Jewish 'National' kingdom had **lands with literal boundaries** prescribed by God Himself, but Christ's kingdom, though world-wide in scope, has certainly **no geographical location**, and is not embodied in the lands promised (and given) to Abraham and his seed. Jesus said, "**My kingdom is not of this world**" else would My servants fight. The weapons of His warfare are not carnal but spiritual, because His kingdom is not carnal but spiritual. Jesus also said, "**The Kingdom of God cometh not with observation. Neither shall they say, Lo here! or Lo there! for, behold the kingdom of God is within you**" (Luke 17:20). Peter, using the keys to open the kingdom, called upon men to "**Repent and be baptised for the remission of sins**" and they would receive the gift of the Holy Spirit, thus illustrating again the spiritual nature of the kingdom. This is precisely in keeping with the Lord's words to Nicodemus, "**Except a man be born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.**" Undoubtedly the 3,000 men who responded to Peter's call and were baptised, were, that day, born of water and the Spirit and entered the kingdom.

### KINGDOM ETERNAL

And so we come to the final, or eternal, aspect of the K.ofG. when all operations will be transferred from an earthly to a heavenly sphere. Then Paul says, "**as we have borne the image of the earthy, so shall we also bear the image of the heavenly. Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the K.ofG.**" (1 Cor. 15:49). "**And so we shall all be changed,**" the living and the dead, so that we might be fitted for the new environment in heaven. Peter, writing to those in Christ's earthly but spiritual kingdom, hoped that they might qualify for entry into God's eternal kingdom "**by making their calling and election sure.**" "**For,**" says Peter, "**if you do these things**" (good works) "**So an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the EVER-LASTING KINGDOM of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.**" (2 Peter 1:11).

Those in the O.T. 'National' kingdom, and those in Christ's Spiritual kingdom, will, together with all those in God's Universal Kingdom, stand at the bar of God's Judgement and be adjudged fit or unfit for the **Eternal Kingdom** in heaven. This is confirmed in the parable of the tares when Jesus said, "**Then shall the Son of Man send forth His angels, and they shall gather out of His KINGDOM all things that offend and them which do Iniquity . . .**" Having cleansed and purified His kingdom in this way, Jesus will then hand it over to God. Paul, referring to the last day, (when the resurrection and the Judgement takes place) says, "**Then cometh the end, when He (Christ) shall have delivered up the KINGDOM to God, even the Father . . .**" (1 Cor. 15:24). (Paul seemed to know nothing of a 1,000 years reign). And so the Kingdom of Christ (considered by our Christadelphian friends not to exist) was opened up by the keys of Peter and has continued (and will continue) to open its doors to all desirous of entry. Thus it will continue until the end of the world, when it will be handed over to God and establish itself in its new quarters: in the 'place prepared' by Jesus, in heaven. By God's grace and mercy may we all be worthy of entry.

EDITOR.

## GLEANINGS

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

**LIFT UP NOW THINE EYES, AND LOOK FROM THE PLACE WHERE THOU ART**  
**Genesis 13:14**

"These words were spoken to Abram when he was in a place of peculiar difficulty. He was now in the land to which he was sent by God. Moreover he was there after

a deflection from the pathway of faith, in which deflection he had gone down into Egypt. An hour had come when domestic difficulties had arisen between him and his kinsman, Lot. It had become necessary for them to separate from each other. With the magnanimity of a great soul, Abram had given to Lot the right to choose the place where he could dwell in the land, and Lot had chosen. The result was that Abram, on that level of human arrangement, was excluded from the best of the country. It was at this juncture that God communed with him, and gave him this command. The words are seen in their true suggestiveness when they are put into contrast with those found in the tenth verse, "Lot lifted up his eyes," in doing so, Lot had chosen upon the ground of personal advantage. When he had gone, God said to the man who had chosen not to choose, "Lift up now thine eyes," and directed him to look "northward and southward and eastward and westward," that was to every point of the compass and consequently over all the land, including that which Lot had chosen for himself. All he thus looked upon was then secured by him by the covenant of God. The teaching of the story is patent. Man has no final rights in any possessions other than those which are his by the gift of God. The man who, by faith, leaves the choices of his life to God, is the man who finds his way into possessions of which he cannot be robbed.

Campbell Morgan.

**GOOD AS READY MONEY**

"An active faith can give thanks for a promise though it be not as yet performed; knowing that God's bonds are as good as ready money."

Matthew Henry.

**THE JOYFUL MESSAGE OF GOD**

"The Gospel is not a piece of undirected intelligence, set adrift to float as it may upon the idle breeze, a convenient clipping of unknown paternity to be left to the chances of catching the eyes of some, being overlooked by others, deemed of no particular consequence by any, but only to be taken for what it is worth. No: it has all the authority of an urgent, public, governmental Message from God, challenging universal attention, and requiring immediate action. Being this, and being withal a Proclamation of Good Things, past, present, and to come, it is eminently and distinctively the Joyful Message of God."

J. B. Rotherham.

**THE BIBLE BANK NOTE**

"The Bible Bank Note (Philippians 4:19). (1) Banker's Name, "My God," (2) Promise, "shall supply," (3) Amount, "all your need," (4) Method, "according to," (5) Capital, "his riches" (6) Head Office, "in glory" (7) Cashier, "by Christ Jesus."

H. Pickering.

**AMUSEMENT**

"Amusement is not an end, but a means — a means of refreshing the mind and replenishing the strength of the body. When it begins to be the principal thing for which one lives, or when in pursuing it, the mental powers are enfeebled, and the bodily health impaired, it falls under just condemnation.

Amusements that consume the hours which ought to be sacred to sleep are, therefore censurable.

Amusements that call us away from work which we are bound to do are pernicious, just to the extent to which they cause us to be neglectful or unfaithful.

Amusements that arouse or stimulate morbid appetites, or that cause us to be restless or discontented, are always to be avoided.

Selected by Leonard Morgan

## LIFE OF CHRIST

### (PART ONE)

Almost 2,000 years ago, Jesus entered the human race in a small Jewish community. He was a member of a poor family, and lived in one of the smallest countries in the world. He lived for approximately thirty-three years, of which only the last three comprised His public ministry.

Even today in our age of science and unbelief almost everyone on this planet has heard about Jesus.

Have you ever stopped to think in a quiet time, what makes Jesus so different from other men who led religious orders, name such as Buddha, Muhammed and Confucius?

Have you noticed that you can speak about Buddha and the others and it does not offend anyone, but raise the name of Jesus in conversation and you can virtually be sure to offend someone.

The difference between Jesus and every other religious leader is that Jesus claimed to be God.

When Jesus began His public ministry it didn't take long for the people who knew Jesus to realize that He was making astounding claims about Himself. It became clear that His own claims were identifying Him as more than just a prophet or teacher. He was obviously making claims to deity.

He presented himself as the only avenue to a relationship with God, the only source of forgiveness for sins and the only way of Salvation.

For many people this was too exclusive, too narrow for them to want to believe. Yet the issue is not what do we want to think or believe, but rather was Jesus what he claimed to be? The New Testament clearly presents Christ as God.

In most trials people are tried for what they have done, but this was not the case with Jesus, He was tried for **who He was**.

Each Gospel writer presents Jesus to us in his own characteristic way. The greatness of Jesus could not have been captured in one picture. So we have **four portraits**, each bringing out its own distinctive facets.

**Matthew concentrates on the relationship of Jesus to the Jewish faith.** He shows how Jesus came to fulfil the Old Testament, but at the same time to judge the Jews for unfaithfulness to their religion.

No other gospel denounces, so forcibly, the hypocritical outlook of the Pharisees. The Jews are called to see Jesus as the promised Messiah, the son of David and judgment is pronounced upon them for their failure to respond to Him.

Matthew portrays Jesus very much as a teacher. He has given us systematic accounts of Jesus' teaching for the church's inner life and evangelistic mission.

**Mark emphasises action rather than teaching.** He stresses how Jesus taught His disciples that the Son of Man must suffer and be rejected and that they must be prepared to tread the same path.

Those who tried to understand Jesus as other than a crucified Saviour would misunderstand Him. The Jews expected a Messiah who would be a political leader and figure of glory. They found it difficult to recognise Jesus as the Messiah because He chose the path of humble service and suffering. Only at His second coming will He appear as the King of Glory in the manner they expect but it will be too late then.

**Luke stresses the blessings of Salvation brought by Jesus.** He emphasises the signs of the coming of the Messiah prophesied in the O.T. and seen in Jesus' healing of the sick and preaching of the gospel to the poor and needy.

Luke especially brings out the grace of God revealed in Jesus and bestowed upon those who seemed least worthy of it, sinful men and women, tax collectors and the like.

**The Gospel of John reveals Jesus as the ONE sent into the world to be its Saviour. As the Son, He has His Father's authority, living in close communion with Him. John goes deepest into the things God has revealed and brings out eternal significance of "God become man."**

### THE SILENT YEARS

Before we begin this study, I think we should very briefly remind ourselves of the silent years before the birth of Christ.

From Nehemiah to the beginning of the New Testament times there was a period of 400 years in which no Biblical prophet spoke or wrote.

It is important that we know some of the things which happened from the days of Nehemiah and Malachi to the birth of the Lord Jesus Christ. Interesting historic events were taking place.

When the O.T. history ended a few of the Jews, chiefly of the tribe of Judah, had returned to Palestine under Zerubbabel and about 80 years later another company returned with Ezra. These Jews lived peaceably in their own land. The temple had been rebuilt, civil government was restored and religious ceremonies were performed according to the Law of God.

Alexander the Great had no heir to his throne. Before his death he divided his empire among his four generals. Egypt and later Palestine was ruled by his General Ptolemy.

Great numbers of Jews settled in Egypt, as well as other places ruled by Ptolemy. Everywhere they took with them their knowledge of God and their hope of the Messiah.

During this time, about the year B.C 285, the O.T. was translated into Greek by seventy scholars working in Alexandria, Egypt. This version is called "The Septuagint" and was commonly used by Christ and the Apostles.

As time passed the Syrian Kingdom arose. Conflicts between Syria and Egypt, Antiochus Epiphanes, King of Syria, seized Palestine and bitterly persecuted the Jews.

They were forbidden to worship in the temple and compelled to eat the flesh of swine. The cruelties of this terrible king brought about a revolt of the Maccabees under the leadership of Matthias.

Matthias and his sons roused the patriotism of the Jews who rebelled. Antiochus was defeated in three deadly conflicts, A band of ragged, untrained soldiers, inspired by an undying faith in God, was victorious.

In B.C. 63 Rome gained possession of Palestine which prepared the way and the time for Jesus to be born.

The Jews had much political liberty and self-government but they were required to pay a yearly tax to the Roman government. As far as possible Rome worked through local rulers.

For the first time in many centuries Rome brought peace to the whole world and prepared the way for the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Adam and Eve were created without Mother or Father. We are placed on this earth with two parents, a father and a mother. God chose to send His Son without an earthly father but with a earthly mother. The Virgin birth.

The story of the birth of Jesus is one of the greatest ever written. The world was never the same after His birth. The date of His birth is not known, nor are we commanded to observe it.

Caius Caesar Octavius Augustus was proclaimed the Emperor of Rome in the year 29 B.C. He died in A.D. 14. He is said to have ruled over all the world. This Caesar decreed that the whole world should be taxed every 14 years. Preserved, even to this day, are the actual documents from every Roman census taken from 20 A.D. to 270 A.D.

### THE BIRTH OF MESSIAH

Matthew sets the tone for the entire N.T. with its opening words **“The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ.”** Yet in the course of the telling of the good news only a very small glimpse of Mary’s character is given. One dominant trait stands out however, her faith in God.

When the angel, Gabriel, announced to Mary that she would have the awesome task of carrying in her womb and nurturing the Messiah, the Son of God, and this baby would not be from Joseph but from the Spirit of God, she simply declared in humble, faithful obedience, **“I am the Lord’s servant; as you have spoken so be it.”**

Joseph, the husband of Mary, appears only in the narratives of the infancy and boyhood of Jesus.

There is much speculation that Joseph died before Jesus began His earthly ministry.

Mary and Joseph lived in Nazareth, fulfilling the prophecy of Micah, (5:2). Caesar, with his decree to tax the world, helped fulfil the prophecy that Christ should be born in Bethlehem of Judea.

When Mary returned from spending three months with her cousin, Elizabeth, she was found to be with child.

Joseph could have taken advantage of the law and had Mary punished, but he was not willing to make a public example of Mary.

The angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said to him **“She shall bear a son, and you shall call His name Jesus, for He shall save His people from their sins.”**

This powerful message had an impact on Joseph for we read that he rose from his sleep and promptly took Mary for his wife.

The home of Mary and Joseph, was at Nazareth but they had to go to **Bethlehem** because of the tax decree. This city had been in existence for more than 1,500 years before Christ was born, and was the scene of events which took place in the Book of Ruth, It was the birthplace of David. It is situated six miles south of Jerusalem. The name means the “house of bread.”

Joseph descended from David, hence he went to Bethlehen to register because that little city was known as “the city of David.” Mary, as a wife, did not have to leave home to pay her taxes, but she would need to appear in person to be placed on the roll of citizens according to Roman procedure.

The Bible does not suggest that it was because Mary and Joseph were poor that Christ was laid in a manger. The city was crowded for the census and the Bible simply says that there was no room at the Inn.

When Christ was born the angel of the Lord annouced the birth to nearby shepherds in their fields, From verse 8 (Luke 2) we read :-

**“In that region shepherds were staying out in the fields, keeping watch at night over their flocks.”** The Lord’s angel appeared to them, and the Lord’s glory shined around them, and they became greatly afraid. The angel said **“Do not be afraid, for behold: I bring good news with great joy to all people. Today in David’s city a Saviour is born, Christ the Lord. This will be a sign to you: you will find the baby wrapped in swaddling clothes, and lying in a feeding trough.”**

Suddenly a multitude from heaven with the angel was praising God, **“Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among men of good will.”**

The angels returned to heaven, and the shepherds said to one another, **“Let us go to Bethlehem and see what has happened, which the Lord has made known to us.”**

They left immediately, and found both Mary and Joseph, and the baby lying in the trough. They declared what had been told them about this child. Everyone marvelled at the things the shepherds told. Mary treasured up these words in her memory,



pondering them in her heart.

The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for everything they had seen and heard, even as it had been told to them.

There is one other account surrounding the birth Christ given by Matthew. The account of the wise men. Much has been written on these men.

To conclude this first study on the life of Christ, we should read the Bible account of the wise men from Matthew, chapter 2.

#### A NAZARENE

Perhaps it is worth mentioning that “a Nazarene” is a term of contempt (John 1 v 47 and 7 v 52). The very name of Nazareth suggests insignificance, In the Hebrew it meant “to sprout or shoot.”

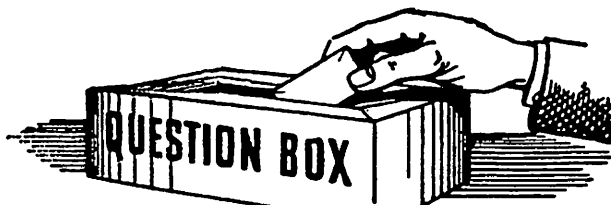
This name is prophetically given to the Messiah. (Isaiah 11:1). The figure of the tree is continued by Isaiah and is applied to the Jewish state.

The fact that Jesus grew up in Nazareth was sufficient reason for His being despised, He was not a lofty branch on the top of a great tree; not a recognised and honoured son of the Royal house of David, now fallen; but an insignificant “sprout” from the roots of Jesse, a Nazarene of an insignificant village.

In the next article in this series, God willing, I hope to give a brief glimpse of Jesus when He was 12 years old and also the meeting He had with John the Baptist before beginning His ministry. Until then let us seek to do the Will of our Master that we may be pleasing in His sight.

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Conducted by  
Alf Marsden

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**Recently in an article on “Forgiveness” it was suggested that we can only forgive those who are repentant: and that God only forgives the repentant. Have we not the power and ability to forgive a wrong done to us by someone far from repentant: e.g., Jesus forgave those who crucified Him?**

I have, of course, read and studied both of the excellent articles on this subject in the April/May issues of the S.S. It is not my usual practice to comment on what others have written, but a specific question has been asked, and it has been suggested to me that I might like to comment, not, I hasten to add, because I can give a definitive answer on the subject, but in order to attempt to shed further light, if possible.

The questioner asks in the second part of the question, “Have we not the power and ability to forgive a wrong done to us by someone far from repentant”? It seems to me that in order to say something helpful we shall have to define what is meant by a ‘wrong’, and then we might possibly have to ask who is meant by ‘someone’, and then quite likely we shall have to differentiate between ‘the someone’ being either a fellow Christian or a so-called non-Christian. But first of all, it might help if we looked at what I call “the psychology of sin, law, and offence”; so let’s start with the One who started it all.

#### GOD

In the first instance, God created two people, Adam and Eve. He gave them

instructions as to what was required of them. They disobeyed His instruction not, we might say, because of any inherent nature of sin, but because of the direct intervention of the embodiment of sin, Satan himself. The real tragedy as I see it, was in the responses made by Adam and Eve; a negative response to God, but a positive response to Satan. We shall return to response later, because I believe it to be extremely important.

Rom. 3 teaches us that **“there is none righteous, no, not one,”** and that **“all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.”** Sin cannot be known as sin unless it is defined and acknowledged as such by someone who has authority to define it as such. That ‘someone’ is God, so far as the Bible is concerned. He has decided that the violation of His supreme authority as Creator and Sustainer of the universe — whether or not that authority and the boundaries of its violation have been made known to His Creation by instruction, decree, or command — constitutes what we know as sin. We define sin as ‘missing the mark’, consequently, when we transgress we ‘go aside from, and then overstep the mark.’ Inferential reasoning must suggest to us that ‘the mark’ is signified to us by some command or law; if there is no law then it is reasonable to assume that there can be no transgression of it, so consequently, Paul is able to teach **“for where no law is, there is no transgression.”** (Rom. 4:15).

A truism which hardly needs stating is that God is different to man. The Common Law of England, for example, was formulated from a base of custom and practice the law of God as we see it in His Word is given by divine fiat. That being so, the violation of the divine fiat must make the violator guilty before God, in fact, a sinner, if sin is the transgression of the law. The overt act of transgression, the sinful act, can be forgiven and forgotten (conditionally by God), but the **guilt** has to be removed, and so we come to the efficacy of the blood of Christ.

It was the law which gave the knowledge of sin because it defined the overt acts which constituted sin, hence Paul is able to say, **“for I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet.”** What the commandment did, according to Paul, was to make sin ‘exceeding sinful’ (Rom 7:13). Up to this point I have tried at some length to explain the nature of sin (it is nowhere defined in the Bible), the guilt which attaches to it, and how man’s responses to it are governed by his knowledge and understanding of it. We now need to see if, and under what circumstances, man can be forgiven, both by God and Others.

### SALVATION

The Word, as I have indicated, sets forth man in his sinful state, lost, without hope, out of communion with God, and guilty. If he is to be saved, then he must do something about it. Personally, he is helpless to work out his own salvation; he must respond to the divine initiative. On the Day of Pentecost, when the people realised the enormity of their crime in giving Jesus over to be crucified, they cried out, **“Men and brethren, what shall we do?”** They were told by Peter, **“Repent and be baptised every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit”** (Acts 2:38). The word APHESIS (remission) means ‘forgiveness of sins’. We understand that God and His Christ are the only Ones who can forgive sins (see Matt. 9:1-8). I know there is a passage in John 20:23 which says **“Whosoever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whosoever sins ye retain, they are retained”** (this is Jesus speaking to the Apostles), but W.E. Vine explains that these words are to be understood in a ‘declarative’ sense, i.e., they have regard to the effects of their ministry of the Gospel. The forgiveness we have mentioned in Acts 2:38 is, of course, conditional. It seems that God had ‘overlooked’ sin on occasion. When Paul spoke about the sin of idolatry at Athens he said, **“the times of this ignorance God overlooked; but now commandeth all men everywhere to repent”** (Acts 17). Obviously, revelation had come in Christ, and there was now no reason

for ignorance. We cannot plead ignorance when knowledge has come.

### FORGIVENESS — THE LUCAN VERSION

The Scripture in Luke 17:1,2 is not easy to explain. Mark 9:42 has Jesus saying, “Whosoever shall offend one of these ‘little ones’ that believe in me” (‘believe’ might imply adulthood). Matt. 18:6,7 has Jesus calling out a ‘little child’, using the child as an example of conversion, and humility, and then going on, “**But whosoever shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me . . . etc.**” Does He mean ‘little children’ as such, or, as He some times did, is He referring to disciples as His little ones? But Jesus **does** obviously see the unaffectedness of children as a mark of true discipleship.

In Luke 17:3, I believe we have to consider the **intent** of the brother who is providing the ‘stumbling block’ which will make someone ‘fall.’ In the article on “Forgiveness” in the May issue of the S.S. the writer introduces a new dimension to the subject (whether intentionally or unintentionally) when he says, quote, “One who feels that a brother’s transgression against him is **too great** to be **overlooked** . . . unquote. Are then transgressions, offences, wrongs — call them what you will — to be judged as a matter of degree? Can some be ‘overlooked’, and others have to go through the process as outlined in Matt. 18:15-17? Presumably, an offence is **always** an offence, but I think most people would agree that the offence can be either exacerbated or mitigated depending on how the offended one views it. What might be viewed by many people as a matter of little consequence could, in the mind of the offended one, assume almost manic proportions. Let me give a crude but simple example. While taking post-meeting refreshments, a brother spills a cup of tea onto a sister’s new frock or coat. The immediate reaction of the offender is to apologise profusely; the initial reaction of the offended one may be to give a tight smile, and to think inwardly, “you clumsy idiot.” The situation is made worse if the garment is ruined and no reparation is offered. But which of the two, on reflection, needs to repent **before God**. The spoken ‘sorry’, or the unspoken (but also unchristian) thought? I have used the phrase ‘before God’ because if the offence is between two Christians, then though it be a personal offence, it is nonetheless an offence against God, since both are ostensibly possessed of the Holy Spirit. God makes it clear what is in **His** mind; we on the other hand are often confused and confusing, and this is what makes the problem of forgiving and repenting between person and person so difficult: but I did warn you that I was going to look at this question from a psychological standpoint.

Perhaps our brother has inadvertently (or deliberately) pin-pointed the crux of the problem. Most ‘offences’ can be settled quite amicably by a warm handshake and a spoken, “Oh, that’s alright. Forget it.” I cannot see that repentance, as we understand it from the Word, is called into question, though it may be inherent. There are, however, offences wilfully and deliberately committed which tend to undermine the faith of individuals and even churches these **must** be dealt with in accordance with the Word. Having said that, I have never in my whole church experience seen the process as outlined in Matt. 18:15-17 actually carried out. That may indicate either our strengths or our weaknesses, I don’t know. I love the Word; I love the precision and clarity of the text. But the **letter** must never hide the spirit **behind** the letter. There may be times when I need the unrelenting scriptures of the text applied against me; there are other times when the Spirit of God through the Word challenges my soul; at such times I probably need help and compassion in my struggle upward, not unhelpful criticism and sledge-hammer textual blows applied with a seeming lack of compassion, and intended as necessary correctiveness. The value-judgements of fellow Christians, when motivated by true fellowship, will detect incipient behavioural problems and ‘nip them in the bud’ before they reach such proportions that the church has to handle

them.

There are one or two instances of what seem to be **unconditional** forgiveness. Ep. 4:32 **"And be ye kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another."** Luke 7:41,42 records the words of Jesus regarding a creditor who had two debtors, **"And when they had nothing to pay, he frankly forgave them both."** In Cor. 12:13 we have Paul asking for forgiveness from the **church** at Corinth.

Yes I believe we can forgive unconditionally. If both are Christian then in the Spirit of Christ appropriate action should be taken with due relevance to the problem. If between a Christian and a non-Christian then that true Christian spirit should be exhibited so that people might be led to that greater repentance which will ultimately save them.

In conclusion, if what I have said in this answer should by any chance offend someone, please forgive me.

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

## ACTIVITY

This is the state of being active, busy, industrious. At the close of 1 Corinthians 15 Paul has this to say "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord."

The world around us is in dire need of such people today; men and women who know what they believe, and are so convinced, that nothing will change, move or hinder them from following the Saviour whom they have chosen to serve. The world to-day does not believe, because of the inactivity of those who profess to be disciples of Jesus. It requires more than lip service to convince the gainsayer, the unbeliever, the sceptic. It demands that our gospel shall be revealed in our lives, in our homes, at work or in times of leisure.

This is the great height we must strive to attain. Too long have we moaned and lamented on the smallness of our numbers, the apathy of the people. Listen to the clarion call of God's Word. "Now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation." Arise! Shine! for "thy Light is come." Let us strive, let us be active in the work of the Lord "Forasmuch as we know that our labour is not in vain in the work of our Lord. We shall indeed reap if we faint not."

"So let our lips and lives express  
the Holy Gospel we profess,  
So let our works and virtues shine  
To show forth doctrine so divine.  
Thus shall we best proclaim abroad  
The honours of our risen Lord,  
When His salvation reigns within  
And grace subdues the power of sin.

Tom Kemp, Hindley.

## SCRIPTURE READINGS

Aug. 4	Nehemiah 2	Luke 19:1-27
Aug. 11	Zechariah 9	Luke 19:28-48
Aug. 18	Psalms 118	Luke 20:1-26
Aug. 25	Psalms 110 & 111	Luke 20:27-47

## ZACCHAEUS

Zacchaeus was described as "the chief among the publicans and rich" (19:1). We must remember that the **publican** in that day had nothing to do with the drinks trade, but were in fact tax gatherers. They were hated by the people because of their involvement

with the Roman occupying forces and well-known acts of corruption. Zacchaeus was very much an exception to the rule. He said to Jesus: **"Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have taken anything from any man by false accusation, I restore them four-fold"** (19:8).

The famous publican must have received quite a shock when Jesus named him and told him he was going to visit his house (19:5). (It would be something like the Queen or the President saying that to you today.) Jesus was criticised for his association with Zacchaeus because, of course, every publican was classified as a sinner (19:7). I like what Jesus said of His presence in the house: **"This day is salvation come to this house, forasmuch as he also is a son of Abraham. For the Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost"** (19:9,10). I wish to emphasise something here: that we are saved by a Saviour. If a man could have been saved by a system of law (and there was no better than Jewish law) then it would not have been necessary for Jesus to enter the world. But, of course, He had to come and salvation is what He was, and is, all about, as His name clearly indicates.

The Master had a deep concern for the lost because salvation today depends on that. John Newton could write: **"Amazing grace! How sweet the sound That saved a wretch like me; I once was lost, but now am found; Was blind, but now I see."**

### **TRIUMPHAL ENTRY INTO JERUSALEM AND THE CLEANSING OF THE TEMPLE**

Jesus received great acclamation as he rode into Jerusalem on the back of an ass. The prophets had foretold such a day (Psalm 118:26; Zachariah 9:9). This dramatic action was a clear message that the promised Messiah had arrived. He came in peace. Only in war did kings ride upon a horse: when they came in peace they came upon an ass.

We read: **"And when He was come near, He beheld the city, and wept over it . . ."** (19:41). Jesus was fully aware of its impending destruction by the Romans and gave some details of the coming events (19:43,44). The sufferings were to be the worst ever experienced in the history of the world (Matt. 24:21).

The centre of Jerusalem in that day was the temple and Jesus entered it to find it in need of Cleansing. The Master did not hesitate to drive out the money-changers and the profiteers, who cared little for the sanctity of the building. Jesus declared: **"It is written, My House is the house of prayer: but you have made it a den of thieves"** (19:46). William Barclay has written: "Jesus cleansed the Temple with such violence because its traffic was being used to exploit helpless men and women. It was not simply that the buying and selling interfered with the dignity and solemnity of worship: it was that the very worship of the house of God was being used to exploit the worshippers. It was the passion for social justice which burned in Jesus' heart when He took this drastic step."

### **CHRIST'S AUTHORITY**

We read that **"the chief priests and the scribes came upon Him with the elders, and spake unto Him saying, Tell us, by what authority do you do these things? or who is he that gave you that authority?"** (20:1,2). It is no surprise that the enemies of Jesus got round to dealing with His authority because the impact on His audiences was so great. We recall, for example, the words of Matthew at the conclusion of the so-called sermon on the mount: **"And it came to pass when Jesus had ended these sayings, the people were astonished at His doctrine: for He taught them as one having authority and not as we scribes"** (7:28,29). C.S. Lewis once wrote something interesting on the subject of authority: "Do not be scared by the word authority. Believing things on authority only means believing them because you have been told them by someone you think trustworthy. Ninety-nine per cent

of the things you believe are believed on authority . . . Every historical statement in the world is believed on authority. None of us has seen the Norman Conquest or the defeat of the Armada. None of us could prove them by pure logic as you prove a thing in mathematics. We believe them simply because those who did see them have left writings that tell us about them: in fact, on authority. A man who jibed at authority in other things as some people do in religion would have to be content to know nothing all his life."

The authority of Jesus was, of course, Divine authority. All that He said and did was according to the will of His heavenly Father. I am reminded here of what He said after His resurrection and prior to his ascension: "All authority is given unto me in heaven, and on earth" (Matt. 28:18). The supremacy of Jesus is clearly seen in that statement. If only His authority had been recognised by all in His day and by all today, then what a different world it would be.

### CHRIST AND CAESAR

There are two backdrops to the gospel records — the Jewish world and the Roman Empire. Daniel had seen the rise of this great empire and said of it, that it "shall be strong as iron: forasmuch as iron breaks in pieces and subdues all things: and as iron that breaks all these, shall it break in pieces and bruise" (2:40). The Lord's enemies were always trying to place Him on the horns of a dilemma relative to the Roman authorities. But as we can see in this section of Scriptures, on the subject of the baptism of John, Jesus could easily turn the tables on them (20:1-8). The question to the Master was: "Is it lawful for us to give tribute unto Caesar, or not?" (20:22). How would He answer such a difficult question?

Adam Clarke outlines in his commentary the difficulties faced by Jesus here in responding "(1) In the presence of the people, who professed to have no other king but God and looked on their

independence as an essential point of their religion. (2) In the presence of the Pharisees, who were ready to stir up the people against Him. (3) In the presence of the Herodians, who, if the answer should appear to be against Caesar's rights, were ready to inflame their master to avenge: (4) Because of the different sentiments of the Jews on this subject; some maintaining that they could not lawfully pay tribute to a heathen government . . . others . . . that it was lawful. (5) If then He should decide the question in Caesar's favour, what idea must the people have of Him, either as zealous for the law, or as the expected Messiah? If against Caesar He is ruined."

Jesus' reply was: "Show me a penny (denarius). Whose image and superscription has it? They answered and said, Caesar's. And He said unto them. Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's and unto God the things which be God's" (20:24,25). In other words. You acknowledge this to be Caesar's coin; this coin is current in your land: the currency of the coin shows the country to be under the Roman government: and your acknowledgement that it is Caesar's proves you have submitted. Do not, therefore be unjust; but render to Caesar the things you acknowledge to be his: at the same time, be not impious, but render unto God the things which belong to God.

### SON OF DAVID

One of the titles of Jesus was the "Son of David". We read: "And He said unto them. How say they that Christ is David's son? And David himself says in the book of Psalms. The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand, till I make thine enemies thy footstool. David therefore calls Him Lord, How is He then his son" (20:41-44)? Lancelot Oliver in his great book *New Testament Christianity* has commented: "This gives the real difference between the position of Jesus and that of the Jews. They differed on the question as to what the Scriptures described as the Nature or Sonship of

the Christ. The Jews did not reject Him because He did not fulfil the Scriptures describing His human nature. But all through they took umbrage whenever He claimed divinity — that is, deity — as when He called God His own Father, making Himself, as they said, equal to God . . .”

Ian S. Davidson, Motherwell.

## NEWS FROM THE CHURCHES

**Slamannan District:** The Quarterly Mutual Benefit Meeting of the District took place at the Tranent Meeting-house on Saturday, 18th May, 1991, when the subject “Can Christians Participate In War” was the topic. Brother Mark Plain was the Chairman and the speakers were Bro. John Colgan, and John Kneller, all from the church in Tranent. As usual an hour’s general discussion took place from the audience, after the speakers had opened up the subject, and some very interesting points of view were raised. This all took place after a very excellent tea and a great time of fellowship was enjoyed. I’m sure we are grateful to those who do all the work behind the scenes and especially the good sisters who do all the home-baking. God willing, the next meeting will be held at Haddington, on 14th September at 4.00 p.m., when the Chairman will be Bro. Harry McGinn, and the speakers will be James Sinclair, Tranent and Ian Davidson, Motherwell. The subject will be “In what ways could we say that Satan appears as an Angel of Light” (2 Cor. 11:14).

Harry McGinn.

**Manchester:** Please rejoice with us on the baptism of Laurel Nathan on Wednesday the 29th of May 1991. Laurel is the third daughter of Brother and Sister Raymond Nathan.

Laurel’s demonstration of her faith has brought happiness to her family and encouragement to us all. We pray that the Lord will enable her to overcome

the many problems young Christians have to face, that she will continue to develop so as to experience much spiritual richness and joy serving the Lord.

Again we are grateful to the church at Longshoot, Wigan for letting us use their baptistery and to Brother and Sister Gordon Melling who at very short notice prepared everything for us.

On behalf of the Church in Stretford, Manchester. Allan Ashurst, Secy.

## OBITUARY

**Beech Hall, Wigan:** We regret to record the passing of Bro. Norman Jones. After meeting with the congregation as usual, on Sunday, his daughter, Anne, found him dead at home on Monday afternoon, underlining for us, the uncertainty of life.

In his 87th year, brother Norman had served in the congregation at Albert Street, Wigan, for many years until its closure, since when he has been a part of the family of God which meets at Beech Hall, Wigan.

We thank God for his zeal, faithfulness and encouragement. “Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord for they rest from their labours,”  
John Partington.

## COMING EVENTS

The church at Motherwell intends holding (D.V.) Special Meetings in August. Details are as follows:-

Place: Meeting-house, Motherwell

Dates: Saturday, August, 24 & 31

Time: Both at 6.30 p.m.

Subject: Wealth, Money, Riches, Poverty, Etc.

Speaker: Bro. Ian S. Davidson.

These Meetings are for eager students of the word of God as Ian, a banker by profession, will concentrate over the two nights on simply what the Bible has to say on the subject.

W. Purcell, Secretary.

## CHANGE OF ADDRESS

The New Address of Bro. David Chalmers is 99 Princes Court, Ayr. KA8 8HX. Tel. 0929 288 356. Bro. Chalmers also intimates that due to diminished members the small congregation at Dalmellington no longer holds meetings there. This is sad after over fifty years of witness there.

The New Address of Derek Mould, is 13 Dunbar Place. KIRKCALDY, Fife. KY2 5QS.  
Tel. (0592) 267285.

## GHANA APPEAL

Bill Cook is well and still extensively travelling around Ghana. A meeting was called in Accra last month and delegates from different congregations met together to discuss the way ahead for the Ghana Appeal. It was unanimously agreed that the greatest need at the present time was money for the spread of the Gospel message. Study Bibles, Concordances and Bible Dictionaries can be purchased at subsidised prices in Ghana.

Anyone wishing to donate to this work, please contact me at the address below.

Cheques should be made out to "Graeme Pearson Ghana Appeal" and sent to 13 Fairways, Dunfermline, Fife. KY12 0DU. Tel. 0383 728624.

## GHANA REPORT

Due to circumstances beyond my control, I have not been able to produce a report in time for this month's Scripture Standard. I have received letters from Bill, posted a week apart, together. I have three long letters which will require time to compose a report from and integrate with the letters received in the past month. I will, however, send regular contributors a copy in the post. Anyone wishing a copy of this report for June and have not received one by the time the July Scripture Standard is published, please contact me.

Graeme Pearson.

## MISCELLANY

Spurgeon tells of a poor old woman whom one of the church members visited to bring a little financial help. He got no answer, however, when he knocked at the door. He went to the back door, but all was still.

When he saw the old lady again in the church meeting, he asked her, "Where were you when I called on you? I came to bring you a gift, but you weren't at home." 'Oh was that you? I thought it was the landlord to collect the rent.'

So men think that when the gospel comes God wants to collect something from them, and do not understand that He has come to bring them the most precious of gifts and blessings.

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