

The **SCRIPTURE STANDARD**

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

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KEEPING IT SIMPLE

In these days of Fax Machines; Mobile 'Phones; Home Videos and Personal Computers the uninitiated are being well left behind. Grown adults sometimes have to call in young children to help them through the complexities of these machines. Equally difficult is the coming to terms with the electronic lingo and coping with words like "software: Rams: Roms: Floppy-disc: laptop: spreadsheet: digital scanner: database: disk-drive: cursor; mouse: modem etc. etc. etc. Increasingly, all kinds of parts and processes in current electronic gadgetry have to be abbreviated into a generally accepted form of jargon.

Every trade, profession or scholastic discipline seems to have evolved its own particular brand of jargon. '*Jargon*' is actually a French word, lifted, without any alteration whatsoever, into the English language and means 'prattle'. In current usage it means, "technical terminology that is unintelligible to the uninitiated, or muddled incantatory speech". New types of jargon arise all the time and are rife in the fast-growing electronic industry. In some work-places, laboratories, factories and offices new employees have no hope of coping with the job until they have mastered the jargon.

I received a lengthy legal document through the letter-box recently and had to read it several times before I began to understand it. Lawyers and Solicitors would strongly deny that they employ any kind of jargon in the legal profession but one can't help feeling that there must be a much more direct way of stating facts and drawing up agreements. Lawyers claim that the 'wordy' nature of legally-binding writs, and contracts, is necessary to cover all possible eventualities, especially if at a much later stage someone challenges the contents of these documents. This is obviously true but it is still difficult to believe that lawyers do not try to preserve an aura of mystery around the legal profession, and an impression of immense complexity in the things they have to do. This all helps to justify the fat fee they will later charge and certainly discourages 'the man in the street' from attempting to do the conveyancing of his own house, or even writing his own Will. Thus the legal profession jealously guard and preserve their use of outdated and archaic terminology to confuse the reader, it would seem, rather than to enlighten him, and so Title Deeds, Wills and Contracts continue to occupy the use of ten sheets of parchment when one would probably do. We have all heard of the Suit of Jarndyce and Jarndyce.

Solicitors are not alone in this, of course, in baffling us with Latin phrases and the

technicalities of jurisprudence, but Insurance Brokers, Estate Agents, Money Lenders and Banks all force us to read carefully the small print and the Warranty clauses.

RELIGIOUS MUMBO-JUMBO

It is no exaggeration to say that there is also a special jargon in the world of religion. If you doubt this to be true just try reading a few of the works written by the well-attested theologians and see what you can make of them. The quest of Philosophy has been described as rather like a blind man searching for a black cat down a deserted coalmine, and theologians certainly seem to bring a lot of human philosophy into their treatise on the Christian religion. It seems that the clergy take that which is simple and make it appear complicated, and take something which is clear, and cloud it over with mysticism. The main purpose of language is that one human-being should understand the other but sometimes, as we all know from experience, language is used to *prevent understanding* and to *conceal* true meaning. Politicians constantly accuse one another of employing words that deceive, and Judges in the courts constantly have to give judicial decisions on the precise meaning of words, and phrases. And so words can be used not only to *convey* truth but also to *conceal* it: intentionally or otherwise. It seems that with reference to God's words, and the importance of their original and true meaning, we spend a great deal of time in defining and disputing over the meaning of words; truth being mislaid in the process. Recently, the 'Minister' who takes the 'Pause For Thought' spot on the radio was accused by the presenter of the programme of turning religion into a mumbo-jumbo and talking above the heads of the general public: and the clergyman readily agreed. It was Spurgeon, I think, who said that the elderly bald-headed men who snoozed through his discourses were bald because of his sermons bouncing over their heads. It certainly cannot be denied that the most common complaint of the average churchgoer who regularly goes to the various places of worship is that they do not always understand the sermon. for it is often well above their heads. Much of religion today is certainly a theological mumbo-jumbo and the 'common people' who heard Jesus gladly have been completely 'turned off' by those in the pulpit, realising that Christ's teaching was much less complicated. The common people know enough about what Jesus taught to know that much of what passes for Christianity today is at odds with the sentiments of the Saviour. There are many who are doubtless hungering and thirsting after the truth but just can't find it. They realise that it must be something much simpler than the vocabulary of the clerics would suggest. After all, the gospel was intended for the common man: the wayfaring man: and a University degree in 'Divinity' should not be a prerequisite.

WORLD'S GREATEST TEACHER

What the Scribes and Pharisees did to the Old Testament, the present-day theologians are doing to the New. It is being locked away in obscurity. Generally speaking, Jesus ignored the niceties and intricacies of Jewish ritual and theology and cut through it all with a loud call for true repentance and genuine love towards God. The Jews had already thwarted the scriptures with the substitution and introduction of their own *'Traditions Of The Elders'*: a document which attracted more respect and attention than God's inspired Word. Christ did not give a long, reasoned and 'not-likely-to-offend' theological discourse on the matter but destroyed the whole evil system with a few well-chosen words, i.e. "**Why do ye transgress the commandment of God by your traditions**". It seems fairly certain that if Jesus were here today He would do the same with all that is currently being palmed off as 'Christianity'.

Jesus, as a teacher, was quite unique in many respects, but mainly for His

simplicity. He made many references to the O.T., and even employed some of its imagery, and phraseology, but all in a direct way and in a new sense. He used plain words and the 'common people' heard him gladly. He spoke in extremely uncomplicated terminology so that even the smallest child could understand. (Likewise preachers should so speak that the very youngest in their audience can understand). He was dealing with profound and sublime themes but made them entirely within the comprehension of the most simple-minded. He never used technical language and most certainly made no use of any ecclesiastical jargon. It surely is a tribute to Christ, as a teacher, that He could make such difficult themes appear so rudimentary. Like a hot knife through butter His words went to the very heart of a matter and could instantly convict or amaze the hearers. Dean Farrer has said, "How exquisitely and freshly simple is the actual language of Christ compared with all the teaching that has gained the ear of the world. There is no science in it; no art, no point of demonstration; no carefulness of toil; no trick of rhetoric; no wisdom of the schools. Straight as an arrow to the mark His precepts pierce to the very depth of soul and spirit. All is short, clear, precise, full of holiness, full of images of daily life."

Jesus highlighted man's tendency to honour God with the lips albeit his heart was far from Him, and much of the religious form and ritual was, in Christ's eyes, so much imposture and humbug. The simpleton who repents and lives a life of praise, obedience and service to God (without necessarily understanding much about the philosophical questions about the nature of man, much less the nature of God) is more pleasing to God than the pomp and ceremony practised by those in high office in the 'established church'. Did not Jesus say, to the religious elite of His day, "**The publicans and harlots go into the Kingdom of God before you**" because the scum of society had more real faith than the religious leaders. Likewise it was the Publican's prayer that God listened to and turned a deaf ear to the Pharisee. Even in Christ's use of parables (designed to enlighten some and keep others ignorant for a temporary period) He demonstrates His consummate skill in couching deep themes in everyday parlance. Prof R.T. Moulton rightly remarks, "What literature associates mainly with the name of Jesus are the wonderful parables: children love them. They are understood at once by the simple; yet the deep thinker, the more he thinks, sees more and more a whole philosophy of life standing out clear from a story of half-a-dozen lines."

It seems that Christ's few years of 'Ministry' were so full of purpose and urgency, His time too short, and His mission too deadly serious, for Him to play with words or toy with oratory. He left all that to the rabbis. Certainly, "**never man spake like this Man.**"

KEEPING IT SIMPLE

Jesus taught as one having authority and not as the Scribes. All His utterances were clearly understood by the wise and unwise, the learned and the wayfaring man, the adult and the child. Jesus warned against the leaven of the teachings of the theologians of His day, and we should apply His words to the theologians of our day. God's will is again being frustrated by human tradition and we should make sure that we are never guilty of any such thing. We should, at all times, try to emulate Christ's simplicity. Even in the Church of our Lord there may still be those who would by "**good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple**" (Rom. 16:17). These were the words of Paul and yet Peter could say that in Paul's epistles "**were some things hard to be understood**" (2 Peter 3:16) and that the unlearned and unstable would wrest them, as they did the other **scriptures**, to their own destruction. Certainly Paul's erudition led him to a wider vocabulary and while some of his argumentation requires much study

and concentration yet, in the main, he spoke quite simply and plainly. **Nothing** he said was **impossible** to understand, but **some things hard** to understand. The same Paul could yet refer to the "**simplicity that is in Christ**" and certainly never confounds us with ecclesiastical jargon.

There seems to be a steady tendency, in some places, for the Churches of Christ to copy the denominational bodies in many respects, and we can see an increasing similarity. We continue to reiterate our distinctive 'plea' but the reality is often something quite different. There is danger of copying the denominations in their forms of music (instrumental as against vocal) robed choirs and the like; observance of 'Special' Services at Easter and Christmas etc., dedication services to buildings and 'ministers' etc.; erection of buildings more to resemble the common conception of a 'church' (with spire and stained-glass windows); college - trained 'educated ministry' dominating the pulpits; women preachers and other similar signs of a desire to be in step and general alignment with the various 'churches' around us. There is also a danger of copying the jargon of these religious establishments. Ira Y. Rice (Jnr.) in his "*Axe On The Root*" referring to the "language of Ashdod" by the "degrees brethren" (Vol. 1 p.29/30) says, "It reminds me of something Joe Barret said recently:- It has been suggested that if Simon Peter had attended a 20th Century 'Seminar' and spoken in the theological jargon which becomes increasingly characteristic of some of our Lectureship Programs, Matt. 16: 15-17 might have sounded something like this - "Jesus said, But whom say ye that I am? And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Messianic Parousia, the Pre-existent Logos, the Eschatological Anticipation of the Cosmos. And Jesus answered and said unto him. The Who?"

Another tiny example (from the columns of "The Christian Advocate" some years ago) was as follows:- "The appositeness of the liturgical pattern of our corporate Communion, with its placing of the 'acts' of Lections, Prayers, Sermons and Offertory all before the Climactic Oblation, itself, commemorative and sacrificial, was brought home in such a conclusive manner as to . . . carry general conviction in setting it forth as an indispensable safeguard against spiritual pride in the Church's presentation of herself to the world she is commissioned to save." One feels that whatever is being said here, could have been couched in simpler terms, and more easily understood. There is always the temptation, and human weakness, of trying to impress others with a show of learning, and this clearly was never evidenced by Jesus or any of the apostles. Jesus could have used 'big' words and impressed us with an amazing vocabulary but He chose, rather, to astound us with simplicity. Seventy-five percent of Jesus' words were of one syllable. May we try to emulate Him. As the hymnwriter says,

"Make the message clear and plain
Christ receiveth sinful men."

And let us heed Paul's warning to the Corinthians, "But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so your mind should be corrupted **from the simplicity that is in Christ.**" (2 Cor. 11:3).

EDITOR.

LET GOD BE GOD!

That we live in the day of the bumper sticker, no one travelling our streets can doubt. So many startling phrases have been observed that one begins to think he would be surprised at nothing that might appear on the chrome of the chariot in front of him. However, an encounter with one reading, "Let God be God" is startling even to the

hardened collector of odd phrases. At first glance this one seems to be the ultimate in meaningless redundancy, but a little reflection brings a realization that these four words are a summation of a great basic truth of the Bible.

What this little expression really says is "Let Jehovah, the God of Abraham, of Isaac and of Jacob, be the God of your life." The idea is that the Creator of our very existence and the earth upon which we dwell must be the controlling influence of our lives. It is an admonition to let the One who is truly God become the functional God of our lives.

The one responsible for this bumper sticker certainly did not originate the idea. Long ago God said, "**You shall have no other gods before me**" (Ex. 20:3). This, the first of the Commandments given to Israel at Sinai, is the real basis of all the other commandments that follow. The reality and the sovereignty of God are briefly, yet firmly established in this statement.

No attempt is made by the inspired writers to prove the existence of God. It is, of course, possible to make very good arguments toward the proof of the existence of God, but the men through whom God spoke did not make such an effort. The simple truth is stated, and is to be accepted. "**Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever thou hadst formed the earth and world, even from everlasting to everlasting, thou art God,**" the Psalmist declared at 90:2. Paul says, "**For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory for ever**" (Rom. 11:36). The fact of God is established simply and finally as the Bible begins, "**In the beginning God . . .**" His creation is considered as sufficient to establish him as Creator.

GOD EVER

Many demonstrations of the power of God backed up that declaration which made claim to being the *exclusive* God of the universe. The delivery of the Israelites from the bondage of Egypt through the Red Sea, the thunderings, lightnings and even shaking of Mount Sinai all were evidences of the power of God which he had declared when he said, "**I am the Lord thy God.**"

The very name by which God chose to be designated emphasizes his claim. G. Campbell Morgan points out that the name "*Jehovah*" is a combination of three Hebrew words that mean "He that will be, he that is, he that was." Should one look back into eternity, he would hear God say, "I am he that was." If one concentrates on the present moment he will hear God saying, "I am he that is." If the future is our target of concern, then God will be saying, "I am he that will be." It is a terrible mistake for man to ever reckon any age and fail to include God.

Simplicity of expression and action are marks of God. He not only identifies himself as "**the Lord,**" but simplifies and personalizes it by adding "**your God.**" What a difference that makes. It is reported that on a wall of a school of theology the following graffiti appeared: "Jesus said unto them, 'Whom do you say that I am?' And they replied, 'You are the eschatological manifestation of the ground of our being, the kerygma in which we find the ultimate meaning of our interpersonal relationship.' And Jesus said, 'What?' " The Lord does not communicate in such confused terminology, but simply says, "**I am your God.**"

GOD'S RIGHT

On the basis of the declaration that he is God, the demand is made that Israel must have "**no other gods.**" Surely he has every right to make that demand and we must never forget that right. God can be God only when we allow him to function in that way. By the fact of His creation, His sovereignty and His redemption He has every right

to demand exclusive consideration when worship is rendered. God had created man and the Psalmist emphasized that **"The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein."** His sovereignty is manifest in His declaration. **"Thou shalt have no other gods before me."** Redemption from the bondage of Egypt was fresh on the minds of the Israelites at the time God made this declaration and should ever be before us in the redemption from the bondage of sin, given in Christ.

It is not the desire of God to frighten man into submission. Taken alone, the scene in which God declares, **"You shall not have any other gods before me"** might lead one to believe that He delighted in seeing man cower in a corner trembling with fear. But when the scene is put into the context of delivery from oppression of the Egyptians it is seen that the God who commands us to serve him exclusively is the God who saves.

God has every right to declare his sovereignty and to demand allegiance of man, yet it is ultimately the decision of man that must make that sovereignty and allegiance a reality. There is no question left as to the desire of God. He wants man to serve and glorify Him, but it is not by force that this is accomplished. He reveals His love and points the way of happiness and peace as opposed to sorrow and grief, but the decision is finally man's. Israel was told, **"I have set before you life and death, blessings and cursing: therefore choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live"** (Deut. 30:19).

Thus it is that man can actually "let God be God." In giving to man the choice of serving or rejecting the right way God made it possible for real glory to come to him by the proper choice on man's part. Let us then choose to serve God, willingly, lovingly and joyfully. In this way will we truly let God be what He wants to be to man.

G. COOK.

ELIJAH'S DEPRESSION

The great prophet Elijah had just enjoyed his finest hour. Queen Jezebel and her weak husband Ahab had promoted idolatry in Israel until it threatened the nation's soul. The miracles performed by God's servants seemingly did not deter the growing menace of paganism. Finally, Elijah challenged Ahab to send the 450 prophets of Baal and the 400 prophets of Asherah that ate at Jezebel's table to Mount Carmel to contest Jehovah's power. Baal's prophets utterly failed in calling down the power of their god. Elijah called upon Jehovah, and the fire of Lord fell and consumed a bullock that had been put on an altar. It also consumed the altar stones, the wood, the dust around the altar, and the water that had been poured on and around the altar. The people fell on their faces in adoration to God. Elijah took the prophets of Baal down to Brook Kishon and slew every one of them.

It seemed that the long nightmare of Jezebel's wicked influence at last was coming to a close. Elijah must have been ecstatic from the great victory he had helped to achieve. Perhaps, finally, Jezebel would relinquish her efforts to destroy God's influence in the land, and the Jews could then restore God's way across the nation. But things were not to be that simple.

When Jezebel heard what had happened, she served notice that she intended to have Elijah killed within 24 hours. The great prophet of God who had stood fearlessly before Ahab and later before hundreds of idolatrous prophets submitted to his first impulse: he fled. He went a day's journey and, after receiving sustenance under a juniper tree, he continued another forty days and nights into Horeb, the mount of God.

Elijah was despondent. He complained to God that all of the Jews had forsaken the Lord's covenant, that they had thrown down his altars and killed his prophets with the sword, and that they were trying to kill him, the only faithful Israelite left. He spoke dejectedly of his great work and zeal for God which now seemed so little appreciated. Elijah had "had it up to here." He was sick of the whole situation; he just wanted to quit and forget it all. He asked the Lord to take away his life; he was in the depths of despair.

ELIJAH'S DEPRESSION

Who has not at some time felt as Elijah did? "I have done my best and no one seems to care! Why should I care? Lord, I just give up!" Elijah was in what psychologists call a deep depression. Depression is an abnormal state of inactivity and unpleasant emotion. It can happen to anyone. In fact, the more idealistic a person is, the more he is subject to despair and disillusionment. This is why the Lord frequently dispelled naive dreams of pleasure in his followers. He wanted his disciples to know that the right way is often beset with difficulty, hardship, and persecution. His Sermon on the Mount indicated that righteous people often mourn and suffer. God did not promise us a rose garden.

Elijah did not really want to die. If he had, he could have just stayed at home and Jezebel gladly would have accommodated him. The great prophet did not know what he wanted. He just knew that he was miserably unhappy.

There were several causes of Elijah's depression. It stemmed from much more than Jezebel's threats, as his own complaints indicated. One factor may have been *fatigue*. Every burden seems heavy to a person who is extremely tired. Fatigue depresses and depression fatigues. Dedicated people often hesitate to rest from their work because they feel that their efforts are so important. But they can defeat their own effectiveness by being constantly tired. Jesus said to his disciples, "Come ye yourselves apart into a desert place, and rest awhile: for there were many coming and going, and they had no leisure so much as to eat" (Mark 6:31).

LOSING FAITH

Perhaps the principal problem was that Elijah had lost faith in his mission. When a preacher wistfully complains that he could have become a lawyer, doctor, accountant, etc., he could well ask himself why he did not. Probably it was because he had a sense of divine urgency for a heavenly mission. If that sense of urgency is lost, a bitterness and resentment may develop in one's feeling that he has "wasted too many precious years" preparing for a work that he now feels is comparatively unimportant. Elijah was disappointed that his years of dedication seemed to be to no avail. Of course, he was seriously mistaken.

Elijah lost faith in his fellow men. We sometimes see this in church today. When a person becomes "down" (depression means "pressed down") on his brethren, he becomes terribly disenchanted. There were thousands of devout Jews left in Elijah's generation. Elijah was just too blinded temporarily by self-righteousness and self-pity to realize it.

Elijah lost faith in God. When he felt all alone, he felt God-forsaken. Think of how many heroes of faith were strongest when it looked as though only they and God were left (Noah, Abraham, Moses, Daniel, Jesus in the garden, Paul in Rome, John on Patmos, etc.).

The effect of psychological and spiritual depression on Elijah were evident: discouragement, fear, inactivity, self-pity, bitterness, and despair. And depression begets

depression. A few depressed individuals can depress a whole congregation of God's people.

Elijah still had much work to do before his ministry would be completed and the whirlwind would take him up unto heaven. When he got up and went back to work, God blessed him and his efforts. Some things that blessed his life can also bless ours when we are depressed:

1. Remember that life's highest calling is to serve God.
2. Realize that God will never leave or forsake anyone who is faithful to him.
3. See the good in your brethren rather than dwelling on their weaknesses.
4. Avoid self-pity and stay busy for the Lord.
5. Be steadfast and unmovable in God's work. Never give up.

Do you ever feel depressed? Look up! Get out from under the juniper. Come down out of the mountain and get to work for God.

C. COSGROVE

GOD IS REAL TO ME

"Our Father who art in heaven, Hallowed be Thy name." Holy, reverend is his name. The rest of that model prayer can mean only as much as you and I mean when we say, "Hallowed be Thy name." God is real - but how real He is to *us* is the prime determinant of our devotions, attitudes, actions. We may have learned that **"faith is assurance of things hoped for, a conviction of things not seen"** (Heb. 11:1) without ever having developed a living, growing faith.

FAITH IN GOD AS GOD

Until each of us has come to that point of complete admission and submission before Jehovah, there is little likelihood that there can be genuine contentment of trust, sincere expectation of faith, fervent exultation in worship, happy hopefulness in service. There is a starting point, a first principle, that a faithful **Job** had not learned thoroughly during all the days of his God-serving life. When he came through that season of anguish and bereavement, of searching and struggle, he realized a moment of total acceptance: **"I know that Thou canst do all things, and that no purpose of Thine can be restrained"** (Job 42:2). Whatever uncertainties or naggings had fomented within him during his travail, whatever self-justifying arguments had surged through his mind, whatever resentments had pulled at his heart, NOW he had totally dropped them. His understanding of what had happened to him and his family was probably no better than it had been, but his surrender of trust had become complete. For the first time in his life he consciously, without reservation, accepted God as God. It is possible that some of us, as disciples of Christ, have not ever really come to that kind of faith, that measure of surrender! The moment of truth - **"O Lord, Thou canst do all things, and no purpose of Thine can be restrained."** Jehovah God, absolute in knowledge, power, presence holiness, love. I want to believe; I do believe.

WHEN GOD IS REAL TO ME . . .

I can honestly accept that which I cannot fully explain: "By faith we understand that the worlds have been framed by the word of God, so that what is seen hath not been made out of things which appear" (Heb. 11:3). I believe.

I can do what he commands without arguments about "Why?": "By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, through which he had witness borne to him that he was righteous, God bearing witness in respect of his gift" (Heb. 11:4). I believe.

I can be well pleasing to my Lord by walking in his revealed way, even though I don't comprehend all there is to be known about death and the hereafter: "By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death; and he was not found, because God translated him: for he hath had witness borne to him that before his translation he had been well-pleasing unto God" (Heb. 11:5). I believe.

I can obey his commands although their reasonableness is not consistent with my previous experiences: "By faith Noah, being warned of God concerning things not seen as yet, moved with godly fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house" (Heb. 11:7). I believe.

I can start the journey of obedience without knowing where I am going: "By faith Abraham when he was called, obeyed to go out unto a place which he was to receive for an inheritance; and he went out, not knowing whither he went" (Heb. 11:8). I believe.

I can realize "the impossible" through his power: "By faith even Sarah herself received power to conceive seed when she was past age, since she counted him faithful who had promised" (Heb. 11:11). I believe.

I can continue to act upon God's promises even though death may precede their fulfilment: "By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau, even concerning things to come. By faith Jacob, when he was dying, blessed each of the sons of Joseph. By faith Joseph, when his end was nigh, made mention of the departure of the children of Israel; and gave commandment concerning his bones" (Heb. 11:20-22). I believe.

I can courageously face personal danger and overcome fear in walking with God: "By faith Moses, when he was born, was hid three months by his parents, because they saw he was a goodly child; and they were not afraid of the king's commandment" (Heb. 11:23). I believe.

I can remain true to my Lord even though this brings rejection by my peers: "By faith Moses, when he was grown up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; choosing rather to share ill treatment with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season: accounting the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt" (Heb. 11:24-26). I believe.

WHEN JESUS CHRIST IS REAL TO ME . . .

I can run with patience the Christian race of life: "Therefore let us also, seeing we are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus the author and perfecter of our faith" (Heb. 12:1,2). I believe.

I can be calm while the storm rages: "Behold, there arose a great tempest in the sea, insomuch that the boat was covered with waves: but He was asleep. And they came to Him, and awoke Him, saying, Save, Lord; we perish. And He saith unto them, Why are ye fearful, O ye of little faith? Then He arose, and rebuked the winds and the sea; and there was a great calm" (Matt. 8:24-26). I believe.

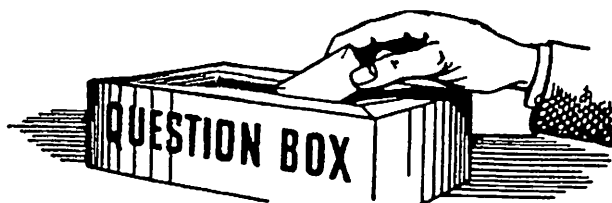
I can live day by day free from life's anxieties: "But if God doth so clothe the grass of the field, which today is, and tomorrow is cast into the oven, shall He not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith? . . . But seek ye first His kingdom, and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you" (Matt. 6:30:33). I believe.

I can maintain a spirit of power and love and self-control; "God gave us not a

spirit of fearfulness; but of power and love and discipline. Be not ashamed therefore of the testimony of our Lord" (2 Tim. 1:7,8). I believe.

I can be used of my Lord mightily to share the good news with others: "... to make all men see what is the dispensation of the mystery which for ages hath been hid in God who created all things; to the intent that now unto the principalities and the powers in the heavenly places might be made known through the Church the manifold wisdom of God, according to the eternal purpose which He purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord . . . Now unto Him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, unto Him be the glory in the Church and in Christ Jesus unto all generations for ever and ever. Amen" (Eph. 3:9-11,20,21). I believe. Help thou mine unbelief.

C. ROGERS



Conducted by
Frank Worgan

"Jesus said that God is a God of the living: i.e., 'the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob' yet Peter says (in Acts 2) that David is 'both dead and buried' and 'is NOT YET ascended into the heavens'. Where is David? Is he in a different state from that of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob?"

The statement with which this question opens draws our attention to the Lord's encounter with the Sadducees which is recorded in **Matt. 22:32**. You will remember that the Sadducees denied the existence of a future life, and, therefore, the possibility of resurrection from the dead. By quoting God's words to Moses found in **Exodus 3:6**, Jesus asserted that, though *physically* dead, the three patriarchs continued to exist in another realm; in other words, they were still *alive*.

When God spoke to Moses, the patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob had all been dead for centuries, therefore our Lord was drawing the attention of the Sadducees to the undoubted fact that if, as they claimed, the patriarchs had ceased to exist at death, God would have used the *past* tense of the verb '*to be*', and would have said, '*I was the God . . .*'. But instead, He used the *present* tense - '*I am the God . . .*'.

(And, by the way, notice that this is an interesting example of 'verbal inspiration'. Here we have an argument based on the *tense* of a word!).

Peter's statement concerning David, found in the other passage to which the questioner refers, **Acts 2**, must be considered in relation to the prophecy made by Nathan and found in **2nd Sam. 7; 11-13**. In that chapter, we read that King David had been assured by God that his royal House would be established and that the Kingdom of his '*seed*', who should reign after him, would be established for ever.

It is important to notice that the word used in v.12 is not the commonly used word, '*ben*' which means '*son*', but the word '*zera*', which means '*offspring*' or '*progeny*', and that the fulfilment of this promise was not realized when David's immediate successor, his son Solomon, became king.

Inspired by the Holy Spirit, on the Day of Pentecost Peter declared that the prophecy referred to the Messiah, the 'Christ', who was to come; that is, to the one whom every Jew would know as David's '*greater Son*'. In fact, the Jewish teachers of New Testament times themselves understood this to be a Messianic promise and would

therefore raise no objection to Peter's interpretation.

Nathan the prophet said that God's promise would be fulfilled when David '*slept*' with his fathers, that is, after he was dead and buried, when God '*raised*' one of his descendants to sit on his throne. Indeed, Peter, claimed that David clearly understood this, because, being a prophet himself, he '*spoke of the resurrection of the Christ*', in Psalm 16; 8-11, where he even called the Christ '*my Lord*';

"The LORD ('YHVH') said to my Lord ('Adonai' . . .)"

Peter then proceeded to point out that the conditions were right for the fulfilment of Nathan's prophecy, reminding the Jews that David still lay in his grave, and stating that '*his tomb is with us to this day*'. On the other hand Jesus, the descendant of David, had been '*raised*' from the grave (Rom. 1;3-4), and had ascended to heaven, and is now at God's right hand, having been declared '*Lord and Christ*' (Acts 2;35).

Thus, the contrast which Peter emphasizes in his sermon is a contrast between a David who has *not yet* been *physically* raised from the dead, and who has *not yet* nor *physically* ascended to heaven, and a Christ who *has*.

The 34th verse, to which the question refers, would be accurately translated - and much easier to understand - if it were to be rendered "*David did not ascend into the heavens*". Again, there would be no argument from Peter's audience! They knew that when David died his body went to the grave, where it still rested. Any devout Jew, listening to Peter that day, could have shown where he believed the tomb was situated. In 1st Kings 2:10 we read that he was buried '*in the city of David*', the old part of Jerusalem, which today lies outside of the city walls.

We understand, therefore, that the verse is not making a statement concerning the destiny of David's *soul*, but is pointing to the difference between what happened to the *bodies* of David and Jesus, and has nothing to do with David's eternal destiny.

The question asks, "*Where is David?*" In Acts 13:22, Paul tells us that God said, "*I have found in David a man after my heart, who will do all my will*", and in the 36th verse of the same chapter, the apostle declares:

"David, after he had served the counsel of God in his own generation, fell asleep and was laid with his fathers . . ."

On the basis of this testimony from an inspired apostle, I think we may take it that, wherever the soul of David is at the present time, it is safe in the keeping of the God whom he served, and like all the righteous dead, he is awaiting the resurrection of the body which the Lord's own resurrection made possible when He became:

'the first-fruits of those who sleep'. 1st Corinthians 15:20.

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

SCRIPTURE READINGS

Dec. 5	Psalm 2	Revelation 2:18-29
Dec. 12	Isaiah 22:15-25	Revelation 3:1-13
Dec. 19	Ezekiel 33:7-20	Revelation 3:14-22
Dec. 26	Ezekiel 1	Revelation 4

THYATIRA

Thyatira was located about thirty-

five miles inland south-east of Pergamum. "It was a Macedonian colony and in the Roman period was, as Pliny the Elder called it, *inhonora civitas* ('a city of no first-rate dignity'). Its site is today occupied by a Turkish town, Akhisar, with a population of about fifty thousand" (Edwin Yamauchi).

Thyatira was noted for its trade-guilds. "There are references to unions of clothiers, bakers, tanners, potters,

linen-workers, wool-merchants, slave-traders, copper-smiths and dyers" (C.J. Hemer). Among the most important guilds were those that worked with textiles. We recall that when Paul preached at Philippi, he helped convert a woman from Thyatira named Lydia, who was a seller of purple cloth (Acts 16:14). "Thyatira, in fact, seems to have been particularly important for its dyeing process, for its guild of dyers was evidently unusually prosperous" (David Magie).

The church was praised for **"love, and service, and faith, and your patience, and your works, and your last to be more than the first"** (2:19). However, God was not pleased with them because they had allowed a false prophetess, called Jezebel, **"to teach and to seduce my servants to commit fornication, and to eat things sacrificed unto idols"** (2:20). A study of the first Jezebel, the wicked daughter of Ethbaal king of Sidon, wife of Ahab and slayer of the prophets of God, will give a clearer picture as to the destructive influence this woman had upon the Thyatiran church. The good Lord gave her the opportunity to repent, but she refused (2:21). She and her followers would, therefore, face the wrath of God (2:22-23). The faithful remnant would be blessed and empowered to be overcomers of the world and Satan (2:24-28).

SARDIS

Sardis was one of the oldest cities in Asia Minor. It had been the capital of Lydia at one time. Here modern money was born and its wealth was legendary. Croesus (560-546 B.C.), the most famous Lydian king, was noted for his fabulous gold, panned from the sands of the Pactolus river. Sardis was a great trading centre and had noted woollen industry. In Roman times, it was an assize town. "When John wrote his letter

to Sardis, it was wealthy but degenerate. Even the once great citadel was now only an ancient monument on the hill top. There was no life or spirit there. The once great Sardians were soft, and twice they had lost their city because they were too lazy to watch" (William Barclay). The letter should be carefully read in the light of the historical background.

Sardis was the dead church, although they had a reputation of being alive (3:1). How God sees a congregation is the all-important thing. The cry to them was: Watch! (3:2,3). The history of their city should have been a lesson to them. They ignored it at their peril. Again, there was a faithful remnant in God's service at Sardis (3:4). The **"book of life"** is mentioned. It is also referred to in Exodus 32:33; Psalm 69:28; Daniel 12:1; Luke 10:20; Philippians 4:3; Hebrews 12:23; Revelation 20:12; 21:27; and 22:19. We read **"He who overcomes, the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot out his name from the book of life, but I will confess his name before my Father, and before His angels"** (3:5). Remember, a brother or sister can remain faithful to God even in a dead church. Note the appeal to the individual: **"He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says unto the churches"** (3:6).

PHILADELPHIA

Philadelphia was built by Attalus Philadelphus or named after him by his brother Eumenes in the second century B.C. It had been built for a purpose - to spread Greek culture and language to Lydia and Phrygia. This is why it was known as "the city of the open door". It had been given an open door to take Greek ideas to the lands beyond. Philadelphia was sited near a volcanic area, which meant it had suffered from various earthquakes in its time. The

name of the city had changed three times in its history. It had been redesignated Neocaesarea and later Flavia; but these new names did not last.

Philadelphia was the faithful church. Given the history of the city, they would clearly understand the words: ". . . behold, I have set before you an open door and no man can shut it . . ." (3:8). They would also fully appreciate these words in the light of all the destructive earthquakes: "**Him who overcomes will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out: and I will write upon him the name of my God and the name of the city of my God, which is the new Jerusalem, which comes down out of heaven from my God: and I will write upon him my new name**" (3:12). Here is a city that no earthquake will ever destroy and where all saints will be secure for ever.

LAODICEA

Laodicea was located in the fertile valley of the Lycus river. Roads from the city led to Ephesus, Hierapolis and Syria. There were eight other Laodiceas on the ancient world. This one had been rebuilt by Antiochus II between 261 and 253 B.C. and renamed after his wife Laodice. Laodicea was a great banking and financial centre; a great centre of clothing manufacture; and a well-known medical centre, specialising in the treatment of eye disease. Laodicea had problems with the supply of water and so utilised aqueducts. The waters for the aqueducts were drawn from hot springs and would, therefore, be tepid when they reached the city.

The church at Laodicea has always been known as the "lukewarm" church. We read: "**So then because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue you out of my mouth**" (3:16). The congregation saw itself as "**rich and increased with goods and having need of nothing**" (3:17). But God saw

them as being "**wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked**" (3:17). He saw them in the true light. A famous verse is verse 20. "**Behold, I stand at the door and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come to him, and will sup with him, and he with me**". I have heard the verse used frequently at gospel meetings. But it should not be overlooked that the words were originally addressed to a church. Again, please note the emphasis upon the individual.

CHAPTER FOUR

In chapter four we are given a wonderful picture of God's throne in heaven. The word "throne" is a key word in the book of Revelation. It occurs frequently. The book teaches us that the throne of God is greater than all earthly thrones. And He who sits on the throne lives for ever and is worthy of all glory and honour and power (4:11). A rainbow, resembling an emerald, encircles the throne (4:3). "The throne no doubt represents God's authority and judgment, but the encircling rainbow symbolizes the mercy which tempers and restrains His wrath" (Robert Wallace Orr). Surrounding God's throne are twenty-four other thrones on which are seated twenty-four elders or ancients. They are dressed in white and have crowns of gold on their heads (4:4). These, I believe, are an exalted angelic order.

Four living creatures are also mentioned (4:6). Their description is similar to that found in Ezekiel chapter 1 and Isaiah chapter 6. Again, the reference is to a special order of angels. In verse 7, the lion is a symbol of strength; the calf or ox, a symbol of humility, the man, a symbol of rationality; and the eagle, a symbol of exaltation. In verse 11, we are given the purpose of creation: ". . . **for you have created all things, and for your pleasure they are and were created**". Dear reader, our task in this world is to live to please God. Not to

live to please God is to miss the whole point of our existence.

IAN S. DAVIDSON,
Motherwell.

TEST YOUR BIBLICAL KNOWLEDGE

1. Who begins his book with an invasion of locusts?
2. Where was Rehoboam crowned king?
3. How old was Moses' father when he died?
4. In which book do we read of King Lemuel?
5. Which king died when Isaiah received a heavenly vision and was given his commission?
6. What happened to Samson when he was captured?
7. Who, along with Matthias, was a candidate for the position of the twelfth apostle?
8. In which book do we find the names of Apphia and Archippus?
9. Which Caesar was reigning when John the Baptist began his ministry?
10. With whom did Paul and his companions stay while in Philippi?

NEWS FROM THE CHURCHES

Buxton: Rejoice with the angels for the baptism, on Sunday the 19th of September 1999, of Elizabeth Ashurst, elder daughter of Brother Stephen and Sister Abigail Ashurt.

It is thrilling to see a young person commit their life to the Lord Jesus Christ. She will be worshipping with the church which meets in her parent's home in Fairfield Road, Buxton.

We are very grateful to the church in Argyle Street, Hindley for their hospitality in hosting the baptism.

ALLAN ASHURST,
Stretford, Manchester.

OBITUARY

Kentish Town, London: The church here mourns the passing of Sister Pearl Pickard, on August, 9th, 1999, who was hospitalised following a stroke. Our sister had been a member of the Church for a great number of years, but could not attend recently due to her physical incapacity. Our thoughts and prayers are with her family at this time.

DOROTHY PROUD (Sec.)

Tranent: It is with sadness that the church in Tranent reports the death of Brother David Colgan who passed away peacefully on the 26/9/1999, at the age of 79 years. Bro. David was baptized in 1942 and served his Lord since that time and attended the worship until poor health prevented him these last few years. As a regular hospital visitor before ill health overtook him David was well known throughout the area.

The funeral service was well attended by family and friends and was ably conducted by Bro. John Kneller.

JOHN COLGAN, (Sec.)

A SUGGESTION

In the September Editorial re the state of the nation, and the usefulness of protests, I invited comments from readers. Sister Payne responded, thus:-
Dear Editor,

Thank you for your September editorial which I am sure expressed what a lot of us are thinking. What to do about this state of affairs, though? Having worked in local government, I know it is commonplace for all such organisations to receive letters of complaint, write soothing replies, and then do nothing about them. I doubt whether a relatively small number of people like ourselves can act as an effective pressure group nowadays, although there is no harm in trying.

However, we have another source of help. Should we not rather set aside a definite time for prayer about the godless state of this nation? We should be praying fervently, not just for an improvement in public morals, but for the conversion of every individual, and that the gospel should be preached with conviction to everyone the length and breadth of the country. It would be perfectly possible for the media to be cleaned up overnight if some of those in control were influenced by the power of the gospel. Don't let us be lacking in faith.

ROSE M. PAYNE.

MEETING PLACE ARRANGEMENTS

DV beginning October the 31st, the Church in Stretford, Manchester will begin meeting in the Memcap premises:

The Green Hut, 538 Kings Road, Stretford, Manchester, M32 8JT.

It is about 300 yards from the Edge Lane/Kings, Road traffic lights, on the left.

Please note that the Breaking of Bread will be at 11am.

For details of Sunday evening and week night meetings please phone Allan Ashurst on 0161 865 4242 or John Purcell on 0161 439 1758 or Raymond Nathan on 0161 283 6793.

GHANA VISIT

Loraine and I have just returned from a visit (not funded from the appeal) to the churches in the far northern region in Ghana as well as the remote area of Dambai. The Church continues to grow in Ghana with another two added last month. Record heavy rain for two months resulted in damage to Bagri dam in Burkino Faso. They had to release water which flooded northern Ghana. The death rate was 13 on the day of our arrival. 228 homes destroyed, 737 peo-

ple displaced and the entire crop of rice and millet destroyed. The church at Kandiga has only three sides and a tree wedged into the roof to prevent further damage. We took the appeal funds and equally distributed it to eleven remote churches.

After much discussion we have concluded that there are now four churches which no longer need aid and can be left to do their own outreach work with another three churches which will shortly fall into this category. This will free up the money going to Ghana to help some of the very young congregations. One congregation with no land or building, begun in 1997, has grown to 30 in number. A sister needed an operation costing 800,000 cedis (£177.78). The operation was a success but they cannot raise the money to pay the hospital, a local church gave them 100,000 cedis. This is only one of a number of cases we were confronted with and were unable to pay the bill.

Last year I wrote in the Scripture Standard about a Muslim converted to Christ in a remote village of Dambai, Volta Region. I said you would not forget his name; it is Paul and he never ceases witnessing for Christ. In the same district, a blind man who was also converted is currently being led through the villages and he is winning souls for Christ. We had the privilege to meet these converts to Christ. The trip was worthwhile and whilst we have problems and concerns in some areas, the help sent via the Scripture Standard is greatly appreciated. I made it clear that this will be my last visit to Ghana as I feel I have neglected my congregation in Dunfermline for the sake of this work in Ghana. I will continue to run this appeal as there are still many needs among the very young churches. It is very encouraging to see churches standing independent of our help. I know this Appeal has gone on for much longer

than I ever expected. I therefore appeal to you to be patient with me just a little bit longer, we can see the light at the end of the tunnel, please keep giving.

Please make cheques payable to "Graeme Pearson (Ghana Appeal)" and send to Graeme Pearson, 13 Fairways, Dunfermline, Fife, KY12 0DU. Tel: (01383) 728624.

WHAT IS PREJUDICE?

It is the lock on the door of the closed mind. It is the ignorance we usually mistake for reason. It is the first enemy of information and progress. It is intellectual astigmatism. It is a perfect combination of conceit and ignorance. Prejudice never saved a soul nor settled any question in the light of truth and justice. It is the defence of the devil, shell of a petrified mind, and ceiling on understanding.

Prejudice is the adjunct of a weak cause. It is that which prevents a person from investigating the teachings of the Word of God to see if what he has practised in religion is in God's Book. Prejudice is that which causes one to attack the person preaching when Scriptural arguments cannot be given in answer. In fact, when one manifests a prejudiced attitude he is admitting defeat

in logical reasoning but still refuses to pay heed to anything different from what he already holds.

It is that which will keep many persons from obedience to the gospel of Christ. We plead with you to lay aside all prejudice and study with us the Book of God. Then let us do Bible things in Bible ways; call Bible things by Bible names; and be content with a "thus saith the Lord". If we were all to use the Bible as our standard of religion, division would cease and unity prevail which is that which our Lord so fervently prayed for (John 17:20-21). Lay aside your prejudice; study with an open mind.

Author unknown.

1. Joel (1:4).
2. Shechem (2 Chronicles 10:1).
3. One hundred and thirty seven (Exodus 6:20).
4. Proverbs (31:1).
5. Uzziah (Isaiah 6:1).
6. The Philistines gouged out his eyes (Judges 16:21)
7. Barsabbas (Acts 1:23)
8. Philemon (v. 1-2).
9. Tibertus (Luke 3:1).
10. Lydia (Acts 16:14-15).

ANSWERS

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