

# *The* **SCRIPTURE STANDARD**

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

VOL. 46. No. 7

JULY, 1978

## **CHRIST'S SINLESSNESS**

THE police and criminologists assure us that the very high crime rate, which escalates annually, is but the tip of the iceberg and, in fact, if all crime committed was detected the court and prison facilities would be hopelessly inadequate. Thy cynic might say, therefore, that being punished for a misdemeanour is not so much paying for our crime, but bearing the punishment for being caught. They certainly have this philosophy in the Armed Services. It follows from this that crime statistics are in no way any guide to guessing the full extent of the criminal offences committed in this island. Thousands of men and women could go into court and quite honestly say that they have no previous convictions. That is not to say, however, that all those thousands of men and women were honest and upright – it would just mean that they had never been caught and convicted. This week the local paper has been carrying the story of a high-ranking local government official who has been jailed for eighteen months for embezzlement and stealing from the petty-cash account. At his trial it was stated that he had 'No previous convictions' but yet the evidence led showed that he had been defrauding the Local Authority regularly over the past ten or fifteen years. 'Crime' is but a specialised form of sin— i.e. against the laws of men, whereas 'Sin' is a transgression of the laws of Almighty God. When we consider that the vast bulk of crime remains unseen and undetected, how much more the vast bulk of sin in the world goes unseen and undected. And when one considers the magnitude and enormity of the sin in the world which is seen, easily and every day, then the sin in the world, each and every day, must be of mind-boggling proportions. We may all claim to have no previous convictions in the matter of crime, but we certainly stand amongst the guilty when sin is under consideration. All have sinned and come short of the glory of God. If a man say he hath no sin, then, says the New Testament, he is a pathetic teller of untruths. Years ago I heard a wonderful address on how God can remove the world's great mountain of sin and certainly as sins pile up, each day in the life of the world, there must now indeed be a very great mountain.

This black but true picture of the inhabitants of the world merely serves to highlight the shining brightness of our Lord's sinfree lifetime, His spotless character, free from flaw or stain. There is a wonderful conversation recorded in John 8 (31-end) between Jesus and the Jews, in which the Jews boasted to Jesus that they were Abraham's seed and were not, therefore, in bondage to any man. They reckoned that they were free and independent men, rulers of their own destiny – what need had they of "The truth that can make men free". Jesus pointed out, as we notice, that the power of Satan in the world transcended any merit which man might think there was in ancestry and that though they might well be the progeny of Abraham they were, first and foremost, the children of Satan the devil. "Jesus said unto them, If God were your Father, ye would love me; for I proceeded forth and came from God; neither came I of

myself, but He sent me. Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it. And because I tell you the truth, ye believe me not. Which of you convinceth me of sin? And if I say the truth, why do ye not believe me. He that is of God heareth God's words: ye therefore hear them not, because ye are not of God". Those words of Christ constituted a wide-open challenge to all those who were listening to Jesus, to sworn enemies who sought His life, and indeed to friend and enemy alike. "Which of you convicteth me of sin". Not many of us could throw down a gauntlet of that nature and magnitude. It was a challenge then to all at Jerusalem and it is as much a challenge to all of us today. The terms of the challenge were certainly simple and uncomplicated as far as terminology was concerned and didn't require much in the way of definition, but it would be difficult to measure the full breadth and scale of it. Jesus certainly didn't restrict the scope of the invited scrutiny. It was a challenge no other man could dare to issue.

Think of all the good men thrown up by history. Each nation has had its worthy sons — philosophers, poets, statesmen, explorers, philanthropists, men of medicine, men of letters, men of compassion. None could, with all their virtues and good deeds, have issued the challenge Jesus issued. Think of all of the wonderful and Godly characters of the Old Testament - with all of their virtues and Godly deeds none could have issued the challenge Jesus issued. "Which of you accuseth me of sin?"

It was not that the enemies of Jesus were unaware of the challenge of Jesus, or that they chose to ignore it. They dearly would have loved to have been able to meet it but the simple truth is that they could find no fault in Him. One of the most wonderful features of the life of our Lord and Saviour, amongst the many others, was the fact that He was absolutely unique in that, during His entire lifetime, He sinned never, in act, thought or deed. Jesus lived a life which reached the very highest possible expression of Godlikeness of which any human being is capable. He was the flawless and peerless expression of the nature of God. Indeed, as Jesus said, "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father". Some might shrug and say, "Oh but He was different being God's Son, was He not?" implying that Jesus had a head-start on everybody else, and in fact His sinlessness was not all His own work. I believe that the writer to the Hebrews kills stone-dead this implication (in Heb. 4:14) when he says, that Jesus "was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin". Jesus was in every way tempted just as we are yet He never succumbed to any sin. Such a marvel more than tanks with all the other attributes of Jesus. We could, for instance refer to His miracles, wonders and signs: or His unsurpassed teachings and parables; or His wisdom and compassion: His obedience to His Heavenly Father which took Him to the cross; His death and resurrection: but just as wonderful must surely be His sinless life — not for a day, or even for a week but for His entire lifetime. Jesus was truly pure. He was as holy as God Himself. His deity did not lessen His humanity and he was subject to physical weakness; was often tired and hungry; could weep; was subject to all the moral pressures and temptations and prayed to God for strength that He might overcome these temptations. The apostle Peter says, "Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow in His steps: who did no sin. neither was guile found in His mouth. Who, when He was reviled, reviled not again; when He suffered He threatened not: but committed Himself to Him that judgeth righteously" (1 Peter 2:22). This challenge from the Lord was never met by His enemies but it was not for the want of them trying. We read "Now the chief priests and elders and all the council sought false witness against Jesus, to put Him to death. But found none; yea though many false witnesses came, yet found they none" (Matthew 26:59). We can just imagine these men in their conferences, conclaves, councils of war, committees, scheming and planning, bribing and coercing men to give false testimony. "And the chief priests and all the council sought for witness against Jesus to put Him to death; and found none. For many bare false witness against Him but their witness agreed not together" (Mark 14:55). This surely speaks for itself. False witness would have been unnecessary if He could have been accused of sin. Pilate himself said, "I find no fault in this man". Judas repented of his act of betrayal and tried to give back the thirty pieces of silver saying, "I have sinned in that I have betrayed

innocent blood". Paul said that Jesus "knew no sin" (2 Cor. 5:21). The apostle Peter said that Jesus "did no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth" 1 Peter (2:22). John said, "...in Him is no sin.." (1 John 3:5).

This wonderful life of Jesus is the standard set, the ideal to which men must attain, an example for us to follow. "Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example that we should follow in His steps" (1 Peter 2:20). It is sad today, in a world of cults and hero-worship, to see so many young people worshipping at the feet of some of the freaks of humanity known as 'Pop stars', dressing like them, and even literally dying their hair for them. It surely is a sad reflection on the society of young people today that the bulk of them watch 'Top of the Pops' each week with great admiration and undivided attention. To us older people this programme more than resembles the exercise ward for the seriously disturbed in some mental asylum. Those, young and old, who would want to emulate 'their hero' could do no better than follow and worship the peerless, flawless, sinless Son of God.

EDITOR.

## DEALING WITH DIFFERENCES

THERE have always been differences between the saints in the United States and those in the United Kingdom. Some of these have grown into what may seem to be insuperable problems. No doubt they have been augmented by the distance between us. They have also been augmented by some who have come from us to you. Perhaps I should not write about them seeing that I am a controversial figure at home and abroad. On the other hand, my deep and abiding love for all of God's children, even those who oppose me most seriously, forces me, to try and express my feelings.

We have a common bond in the gospel. All of us who are in Christ Jesus have come together at the cross. We have all "by one Spirit been baptized into one body". That is true whether we be British or American, black or white, red or yellow. We all imbibe of that one Spirit. The things we hold in common are abundantly greater than those about which difference have arisen. What is called "the restoration movement" in the United States was launched by men from Great Britain. The Clan Campbell had its roots in Scotland. Thomas and Alexander were born in Northern Ireland.

Imbued with a desire for unity of all who believe in Jesus through the testimony of the apostles, they inaugurated "a project to unite the christians in all of the sects". It is not surprising that noble men in the British Isles shared their same eagerness. In spite of the hardships of travel in the early part of the nineteenth century men crossed the Atlantic in both directions to share their insights and ideals. Certainly those of us upon this side of the ocean owe a great deal to you upon that side.

It would be a great tragedy indeed if something were to occur which would crystallize us into separate parties when the world so sadly needs an example of that unity in the Spirit which transcends all other considerations. It is very easy to lose a generation or more by heated discussion resulting in a withdrawal from all relationship, thus polarizing into two parties which have little if anything to do with each other.

As I read our history as a people it seems there have always been areas of grave concern. One of the first seems to have been the Lord's Supper. There was no difference as to its inception by Jesus or the need of perpetuating it among the saints until His return. The brethren in Great Britain took a firm stand against even passing the bread and fruit of the vine to the unimmersed. In the discussion someone in our land came up with the unfortunate slogan, "We neither invite nor debar". Through the intervening decades there has been a tendency upon the part of some to regard the others as deliberately compromising truth because of their separate views.

Yet it has never been as one-sided as it seems. Many brethren in the United States agreed with the British brethren. Editors have expressed their views and letters to editors defended it. Although some would have implemented it differently than the brethren in Great Britain they

were free to acknowledge that the principle was right. Aliens had no right to be granted prerogatives which were a part of citizenship in the kingdom.

It is interesting that so many problems revolved around the Supper, seeing that it was a demonstration that we are "all one bread and one body". But the introduction of individual cups brought a division in the United States. To this day, to our shame, we still have an open cleavage over the matter. Those who use but one container do not regard those who use individual cups as in their fellowship. They think of them as sectarians. Actually, the problem was not over the use of more than one container. Some of those who strongly objected to individual containers had used two or more for a long time with no real objection. The introduction of individual containers aroused a furor which has not subsided.

In Great Britain the practice remained uniform. There was no disturbance because brethren continued with one container. It was only when Americans came to Britain, bringing with them multiple cups, that the problem was created. It is sad to realize that a burden has been laid upon the Cause by importation of a matter which had not previously troubled the saints. Yet, I wonder if there would not have occurred a real tension even if individual cups had not been introduced in Great Britain by Americans.

It seems to me that attitudes have had much to do with aggravating the conditions. I think it was wrong to regard Great Britain as a mission field to become fertile ground for American money and methods. Yet it is true men have come, sometimes through solicitation and with the help of brethren in Great Britain. Congregations have been planted which bear the American stamp. Some of the brethren with whom I laboured while there have accepted support from American areas. This is no sin, but the effects of it could prove that it was a mistake in judgment.

Now it seems to me we need not worsen conditions. It is one thing to hold a divergent opinion about the means and methods of implementing a command and another thing to be regarded as disloyal to the faith for doing so. Those who truly identify with Jesus will unselfishly seek to receive and work where possible with all others who are in Him. Thus, there will be no widening of our gulfs if they are not bridged. It is to be hoped that the wonderful brethren there will not become fragmented as we are in this land. My prayer is that various factions in America will not send their representatives among you to divide you upon the basis of our American schisms.

(Written for the 'S.S.' by W. Carl Ketcherside, 139 Signal Hill Drive, Saint Louis, Missouri, USA)

## SAVED BEFORE THE JUDGMENT

I have on and off, puzzled over certain passages of scripture, concerning the Christian and the judgment of God. May I at once point out, that this is not the only subject I puzzle over in the scriptures, there are many more, and knowing the author of the Bible, well can I agree with 1 Cor. 1:25, "The foolishness of God is wiser than men". I stand with the simple minded, knowing that no man living understands everything in the Bible, yet I believe that in the here-after it will be known.

I write this article hoping that there will be a response from the brethren, and again hoping it will be discussed in the love of the Master. It is as well to remind ourselves that there are those outside of Christ who may read the 'Scripture Standard' and if they find sarcasm and the like, we may do more harm than good, and harm to the gospel is sin.

When Paul wrote to Timothy, (2 Tim. 3:16) he said, "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness:." With this in mind let us together approach the subject, I ask the question, "Is there a pre-judgment for Christians" or, as the title, "Are Christians saved before The Judgment". At this moment of reading I imagine that the reader has scripture flashing through his mind exactly opposite to what I am suggesting. We read in the gospel of John 5:24 "Verily, verily, I

say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life". At the time Jesus spoke these words, before His death and resurrection, it was in fact to the people of that day, yet even though spoken then, when we read on to verse 29 it seems to apply not only then, but up unto this day. In verse 24 a person was to believe in Christ, through the teaching of His word, the Master requiring a complete surrender of ones life unto Himself, and in return giving salvation which places a person above the condemnation of judgment. It would be wrong of course for anyone to take only one verse; or indeed several verses, of scripture and believe they have found the ultimate answer to a scriptural question.

Consider also Mark 16:16, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; But he that believeth not shall be damned". We find again, by belief and baptism a person is saved from their sinful nature; Jesus Christ, God's Son having taken a person's past, present, and future sins to the cross at Calvary, and there these sins remain once and for all, until time ends.

In taking away our sin. The Lord Jesus has given unto us His righteousness, something we could never achieve on our own, it's given not earned. We are, of course, reminded by John 1 verse 8, "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us". But yet again, "if we confess our sins, God is ready to forgive us our sin". We do not have to be Baptised again and again. Our heavenly Father knows our sinful nature, and that try as we may, even after baptism, when the slate has been wiped clean, we fall. The Apostle Paul felt the same in Romans 7 verses 19-20. "For the good that I would I do not; but the evil which I would not, that I do", "Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me". Paul here condemns himself. God is not saying Paul is rejected. Are we to believe that once a person has repented, confessed Jesus Christ as The Son of God, immersed into water, and now as a young Christian, of whatever age, is to go through the rest of their natural life, remaining faithful, yet wondering if they are going to be accepted or rejected at the judgment? Do we believe that God Almighty leaves, Christians, doing His will, 'dangling in suspense' until the last moment, until judgment; I believe not.

Let us for a moment put ourselves in the place of Paul, (the scene is Acts 16-30). Here a man asks a sincere and serious question, "What must I do to be saved". Paul's answer was, "believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved". There is no hint of doubt in Paul's answer; so then why should there be in ours? Paul did not say you might be saved; it was a convincing answer, "You will be saved". In other words saved before the Judgment day; it is a day for Christians to see and not fear. Their Saviour Jesus Christ has taken that fear away. Paul to Romans 14 verses 10-12 "We shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ. So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God". I have just mentioned Paul, let us stay with him as he writes to Timothy 4:7,8. "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course I have kept the faith; Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord the righteous judge, shall give me at that day; and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing".

What christian is not looking and longing for the return of their Saviour; when He will fulfil His promise of John 14 verses 1-6. Although these words were spoken to those disciples of that day, surely the same words apply to disciples that were to follow? As the Lord Jesus then was The Way, the Truth and the Life, He still is even until this day; nothing to alter these six verses has changed. Consider also the Apostle Paul, writing to Thessalonians 4:14-17 "Even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him". The dead in Christ shall rise first; Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air; and so shall we ever be with the Lord; 'them' being christians saved before judgment. It is the we which are alive, the christians at Christ's coming who will meet Him in the air and be forever with Him. And as the Judgment follows the glorious scene, where is the doubt, the anxiety, the frustration, the worry of the judgment for Christians, when our elder brother the Lord Jesus, points to His own and says, "They are Mine I Redeemed them"?

We should rejoice in the knowledge that Christians are saved before the judgment day, there is nothing to fear as long as we hear and keep His word to the best of our ability, and do and practice nothing we know to be wrong. There is a saying in the print trade, of work that is a little off standard, as one wonders whether to pass it or reject it, comes the saying; "If in doubt throw it out". How much the more careful should we be when, or if, we allow obscure things to enter our lives and church practice. Salvation is for the faithful Christian. If anyone is in doubt as to the prejudgment of Christians I would ask the question, Jude 14-15 "Behold the Lord cometh with ten thousands of his saints". Who are these saints already with and in the Master's keeping, some suggest they are angels, but the Bible says they are saints.

IVOR CAREY, 24 Glyn Vale, Bedminster, Bristol.

## ASK

"God speaks to us in bird and song;  
In winds that drift the clouds along;  
Above the din of toil and wrong, -  
A melody of love".

"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". Ephesians 3:20.

ASK ..... WHAT DO I ASK? "The Lord direct your hearts into the love of God"

2 Thessalonians 3:5

How much more are you worth to our heavenly Father, to our Lord Jesus? "How much then is a man of more value than a sheep! Matthew 12:12 (RV). "Ye are of more value than many sparrows" Matthew 10:31 (RV). You may say - of course we are - what a comparison! fancy..... Ah, but my brother, my sister, my friend, you cannot neglect the valuable lesson given to us by the world's greatest teacher. Remember the words of Nicodemus: "Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God". John 3:2 (RV). "Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? and not one of them shall fall on the ground without your Father: but the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear not therefore; ye are of more value than many sparrows" Matthew 10:29-31 (RV). What a comparison! fancy ..... W. M. Thomson wrote: "No traveller in Syria will long need an introduction to the sparrow on the house-top. There are countless numbers of them about you. They are tame, troublesome, and impertinent generation, and nestle just where you don't want them. They stop up your stove and water pipes with their rubbish, build in the windows and under the beams of the roof, and would stuff your hat full of stubble in half a day if they found it hanging in a place to suit them. They are extremely pertinacious in asserting their right of possession, and have not the least reverence for any place or thing". Poor old sparrows ..... two for a farthing ..... and it would seem they had cut prices in the Lord's day ..... five for two farthings! Luke 12:6. Seemingly worthless but stay a moment ..... listen, and take note of the words of the one of whom it was said: "Never man spake like this man". John 7:46. "Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? and not one of them shall fall on the ground without your Father". WITHOUT YOUR FATHER". Troublesome, impertinent, seemingly worthless, yet, not one, falls to the ground... "WITHOUT YOUR FATHER".

Campbell Morgan wrote:- "Christ was not speaking of seraphim, nor of saints, but of sparrows. Of one of them he said that if perchance with broken wing, or fainting heart, it fall on the ground, it is not alone, for God is with it. Observe carefully that the declaration is not "without your Father's knowledge", but "without your Father". God not only knows, He is with the falling bird. Like a flash of light, these words enable us to see God's world and God, as Jesus saw them. Nothing is outside His knowledge; nothing is beyond the tender strength of His nearness. He is the Comrade of the bird, which man values at half a farthing".

ASK ..... WHAT DO I ASK? "The Lord direct your hearts into the love of God".

## THE SCRIPTURE STANDARD

"God sees the little sparrow fall,

It meets His tender view;

If God so loves the little birds,

I know He loves me, too.

He loves me, too, He loves me, too.

I know He loves me, too;

Because He loves the little things,

I know He loves me, too."

Written with the children in mind, yet, although simple, the lesson most profound. I wonder how many times we are guilty of not "seeing the wood for the trees". You may smile when I say I see in these three verses in Matthew 10:29-31, a love story, a Father's concern for one of the seemingly worthless and despised birds, the sparrow does not fall to the ground "without your Father", and they also show me of my Father's love and concern for His own children. "Fear ye not therefore, ye are of more value than many sparrows". Can we grasp this glorious thought, I matter to God! you matter to God! Whatever our occupation, Labourer, Bricklayer, Farmer, Doctor, Grocer, Joiner, Fisherman, Nurse, Housewife, Cook, Preacher, Miner..... Take hold of these two statements by the Lord Jesus, and allow them to bring rich blessing to your soul. "Without your Father". "Ye are of more value than many sparrows".

O troubled and anxious soul, take this message from the Word of God. He is with you, in your trial, your sickness, your problem. If you are His child claim His promises, they are many, and they can and will sustain you in your time of stress and difficulty. The lessons that I have received from watching the tame, troublesome, impertinent, seemingly worthless little sparrows, are very many. On the way home from Scotland, I picked up a sparrow hit by a car or some other vehicle, it was as light as a feather, as the saying goes:- "Not one of them shall fall on the ground WITHOUT YOUR FATHER".

The sparrow with one leg - what happened I do not know - but what I do know - "Not one of them is forgotten in the sight of God" Luke 12:6 (RV) I had the pleasure of watching it have a good feed.

The lesson of the two sparrows :- Mother and child no doubt, one which opened its mouth, and the other which put something in. Now who told the young one to open its mouth? and who told the old one to put something in. "Behold the birds of the heaven, that they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; and your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are not ye of much more value then they?" Matthew 6:26 (RV).

Early one morning I saw a bird searching for food on my lawn, I could not see the food, but it was there alright, and I have no doubt that it thoroughly enjoyed its breakfast. "Your heavenly Father feedeth them". Now those last words do not mean that the Father put the food into the mouths of the birds, they must seek ..... search ..... to find.

W. Riley makes one of his characters say:- "I have faith in God and myself. When I pray for my daily bread I don't sit back and open my mouth and expect the ravens to bring it". God provides the nuts, the Tom-Tits do the cracking.

Shall we this month take these very valuable lessons to heart:- "YOUR FATHER KNOWETH". "NOT ONE OF THEM IS FORGOTTEN IN THE SIGHT OF GOD". "YOUR HEAVENLY FATHER FEEDETH THEM".

"O LORD! how happy should we be,

Were we to leave our cares to Thee,

Were we from self to rest,

And feel, at heart, that One above,

In perfect wisdom, perfect love,

Is working for the best.

How far from this our daily life,

Ever disturbed by anxious strife,



By sudden wild alarms.  
 O could we but relinquish all  
 Our earthly props and simply fall  
 On Thine almighty arms.

For when we kneel and cast our care  
 Upon our God in humble prayer,  
 With strengthened souls we rise,  
 Sure that our Father, who is nigh,  
 To hear the ravens when they cry,  
 Will hear His children's cries.

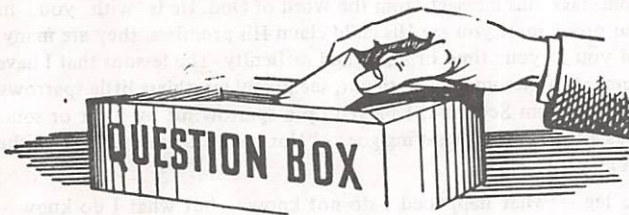
O! would these restless hearts of ours  
 The lesson take from birds and flowers,  
 And learn from self to cease:  
 Leave all things to our Father's will,  
 And in His mercy trusting still,  
 Find in each trial, peace".

J. Anstice.

ASK ..... WHAT DO I ASK? "The Lord direct your hearts into the love of God".

And may the Lord's richest blessing be your portion,

LEONARD MORGAN




---

Conducted by  
 Alf Marsden

---

"Was Christ the Son of God before he came to earth?"

THIS question has been asked, I understand, because the questioner believed that Jesus was the Son of God before he came to earth, but has had doubts raised in her mind because of recent teaching which she has heard. It is certainly a very important question, because it brings into focus the deity, pre-existence, co-existence, and co-eternity that Jesus claimed with the Father, We can never understand all the teaching pertaining to God, Christ, and the Holy Spirit, but we can understand what is taught in the Bible, and it is to the Bible that we must turn in order to try to answer this question.

#### The Godhead

We cannot begin to understand the answer until we have defined the Godhead. Three related Greek words are translated "Godhead" in the A.V.

a THEIOS - this means divine, and is used of the power of God, "According as his divine power hath given unto us all things..." (2 Peter 1:3). In Acts 17:29 it is used as a noun with the definite article, to denote "the Godhead", or the Deity, i.e. the one true God.

b THEIOTIS - this means divinity as in Rom. 1:20, and it indicates particularly the attributes of God, His divine nature.

c THEOTES - this indicates the divine essence of the Godhead, the Personality of God. In Coll. 2:9 we read, "For in him (Jesus) dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily". Here Paul is declaring that in the Son there dwells all the fulness of the absolute Godhead, and the apostle uses this word to express the essential and personal Godhead of the Son; in other words, Jesus was, and is, absolute and perfect God.

Although the doctrine of the Godhead is not concisely defined in scripture, we may express it in the following way.



These are obvious claims to pre-existence, and they are borne out by the words of Paul, "For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich" (2 Cor. 8:9). Let those who deny Christ's pre-existence explain just when Christ was rich, because he was rich before he became poor. Obviously, this is a direct reference to the riches in glory which he had with the Father prior to his advent; no other explanation will suffice.

### The Claims of Christ

Having defined in brief terms the biblical teaching of the Godhead, we can now turn our attention to what Christ claimed for himself.

- i) Jesus claimed that he came down from heaven – "And no man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven.....(John 3:13).
- ii) Jesus claimed that he was in heaven before he came to earth. "What and if ye shall see the Son of man ascending where he was before" (John 6:62).
- iii) Jesus claimed to have been with the Father before the world was, "And now, O Father glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was" (John 17:5).

1 The basic and fundamental truth expressed in the Bible is that there is only one God. (See Isaiah 42:8; 43:10).

2 But while the scriptures teach that there are not three Gods, they do teach that there is a plurality in the Godhead, e.g. "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit" (Matt. 28:19).

3 Therefore, there are three Persons; Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

4 These three Persons are equal in essence John 15:26; Gal 4:6, but with the Godhead there is a primacy of relation and order.

(A) The Father is recognised as God (John 6:27); and superior to the Son. (John 14:28).

(B) The Son recognises and acknowledges the authority of the Father (John 5:19-27).

(C) Both the Father and the Son send the Holy Spirit (John 14:16).

Therefore, we can say that the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are Three Persons, distinct from each other, but they are equal in Essence.

Furthermore, in order to confirm his pre-existence and his relationship within the Godhead, he said on one occasion, "..... Ye are from beneath; I am from above..... for if ye believe not that I am (he) ye shall die in your sins". (John 8:23-24). Note the use of 'I am (ego eimi)'. This is used four times in the N.T., and constantly used in the Septuagint O.T. when the name of God is referred to. In the same chapter Jesus said, "Before Abraham was (genesthai = was born), I AM" (v58). Verse 59 proves that the Jews understood the significance of this claim because the scripture says, "Then took they up stones to cast at him". Stoning, as we know, was the punishment for blasphemy, and the Jews evidently thought that Christ was blaspheming in claiming his relationship with God.

It is quite evident, then, that Christ plainly claims his Deity, emphasising his perfect harmony with God. If we read John 5:17-47 we shall see the many aspects of the Father which he claims for himself; life, immortality, power over death, judgment. He readily acknowledges the statement of the Jews when they said that if a man witnesses of himself then the witness is not true. In answer he said that John the Baptist had testified to him; the works had testified to him; the Father testified to him; and the scriptures testified to him. Jesus evidently refers to the O.T. scriptures, and it is very plain, although it would be the basis of a more detailed study, that many O.T. prophecies were fulfilled in Christ. The basic problem with the Jews was that they could have recognised Jesus from the O.T. Scriptures, and they should have, but they didn't, and this was their condemnation according to Jesus, "And this is the condemnation, that light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light" (John 3:19).

## Pre-existence and Co-existence underlined

There are some who teach that Christ was an unidentifiable something known as 'The Word' before he was born in the flesh, and it was only when he was born that he became the Son of God. Are we seriously being asked to believe that the Christ was only an idea in the mind of God before that idea was identified in the flesh? Was Christ just a supreme liar in stating and claiming the things which he did? And what about the teaching of John in his gospel record, he testifies, as we shall see, to the co-existence and pre-existence of Christ, and if there was no divine intervention in the birth of Christ then we must conclude that the Christ was born illegitimately of an unmarried girl and an unknown father. We know, of course, that this is not true, as we are perfectly well aware that 'The Word' was not an abstract idea before its advent in the flesh; this is not the phraseology of the scripture. But let John speak.

John states, "The Word became flesh and dwelt among us". I do not think anyone would disagree that 'The Word' which came in the flesh was identified as Jesus, the Christ, Therefore, if the Word existed prior to its becoming flesh, then Christ existed before as well. John says, "In the beginning WAS = 'een' = EXISTED the Word". You will note that John is not saying 'in the beginning the Word came into being', or that the Word was created in the beginning. The One about whom John writes existed before Creation. (See also coll. 1:17). Therefore, pre-existence is asserted. John also says, "The Word was with God", i.e., a living unity with God in the most complete sense; and realising this, it is only a logical step to John's next assertion, "And the Word was God". Therefore, not only is co-existence claimed, but also complete and fundamental deity.

'The Word' becoming flesh marked a new form of existence and not the commencement of existence. Jesus 'tabernacled' with us. His was to be a temporary stay before he returned 'to the glory that he had with the Father before the world was'.

## Conclusion

This is a fascinating study, and could go on to state many more proofs that Jesus, the Christ, was the Son of God before he came to earth. We could speak about the testimony in the Epistles to this fact, but I am sure that I have said enough to verify to our sister that when she thought of the Saviour as Son of God in heaven prior to coming to earth, that I for one think she was absolutely right.

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

## SCRIPTURE READINGS

### AUGUST 1978

6—Deut. 18:9-22	John 5:19-47
13—2 Kings 4:38-44	John 6:1-21
20—Exodus 16:9-25	John 6:22-40
27—Jeremiah 31:27-40	John 6:41-71

### STUPENDOUS CLAIMS

JESUS has already aroused the anger of the Jewish leaders. He has upset their ideas as to the use and meaning of the Sabbath Day. He has in fact claimed to be LORD of the Sabbath (Matt. 12:8; Mark 2:27,28). They realised He thus made Himself equal with God (John 5:18). We perhaps lose the shock His hearers felt by familiarity with the truths Jesus taught, and our ready acceptance of them. The

expectation of the Jews of the Messiah was based upon materialistic teachings about it. A new age was to dawn, and He was to bring it with Him, but what they saw in Jesus was an ordinary man. He had extraordinary powers true, and He was a wonderful teacher — "the common people heard Him gladly". However He made no appeals for popular following but taught love, humility and kindness. He chose comparatively lowly and ignorant men for His followers and was disapproved by "those who knew". BUT what claims He made! He called God — the Almighty Creator — His OWN Father, and said that He was doing the works with and for that Father, not just for Himself. He claimed the same honour from men as God. He claimed to have eternal life — that of the Father of Whom He spoke so plainly. To them even the wonders and signs He wrought before their eyes could not justify SUCH a CLAIM. He must show them "a sign from heaven" before they could believe this! Also He contin-

ously claimed infallibility for His words. Have we noticed sufficiently His "verily, verily." Barclay rightly I am sure translates as "This is the truth I tell you", Phillips uses the phrase "I assure you", the New English Bible "in truth, in very truth I tell you". In John's gospel the double 'verily' appears about 20 times and in the other gospels the single 'verily' many times also. This absolutely dogmatic claim proved Him greater than their greatest teachers "He taught as one having authority, NOT as the scribes' (Matt. 7:29). We acknowledge with joy that the stupendous claims are more than justified while it almost passes comprehension that God could become man in the person of Jesus. Oliver Wendell Holmes writes in a well-known hymn, 'Centre and soul of every sphere, yet to each loving heart how near'. The compassionate prophet of Nazareth is the ALMIGHTY AND ETERNAL GOD. Is it little wonder that the 'wise' rejected HIM but the humble received Him with love?

#### Stupendous Signs

Apart from the resurrection itself, we suppose the greatest sign Jesus gave for the greatest number of people was that of which we are reading this month in the sixth chapter of John. It is recorded in all four gospels, and the three other accounts should be read at the same time (Matt 14:13; Mark 6:32; Luke 9:10). It is a rewarding study throwing lights and shadows. Jesus had fame already as a healer and a teacher, and it was this that brought the crowds together around the lakeside, probably increased by pilgrims travelling towards Jerusalem for the Passover. We should try to picture on the hillside overlooking the sea the hundred and more groups of men and women and children sitting in groups of 50 each awaiting the service of the twelve disciples, surely others must have joined them in the work. How ever could such a distribution be made, and such a tremendous amount of bread and fish be multiplied? Not being in the catering business we fail to estimate how many large loaves would be required to feed one group of 50 (and there were groups of 100 - Mark 6:40) with fishes also! Doubtless every person present saw and heard the Saviour's blessing and thanksgiving - note the identity of 'blessed and brake' and 'gave thanks'. They must also have seen or else understood the pitiful quantity of food from which their ample supply came. Philip's estimate for each one to

have a little was 200 pennyworth (possibly 15 pds.), but the multitude had more than enough - "as much as they would" John 6: 11). Incidentally the word for basket indicates a large bag such as every Jew carried when journeying among Gentiles, so that it may be each of the twelve disciples filled his with fragments and thus took them away with them without difficulty. The seven baskets when the 4,000 were fed were apparently rope baskets, a different word being used. The difference is not seen in English but is present in Matthew 16:9 and Mark 8:19 & 20 - a mark of accuracy! John alone mentions the danger in which Jesus found Himself through the astonishment and enthusiasm excited in the minds of some vigorous men. They wanted to make Him a king - a political king we suppose. How Jesus quelled their enthusiasm we do not know, but He did "constrain" (almost "force") His disciples to take their boat off to the "other side", away from the crowd. He Himself went to pray in the loneliness of the mountain side. It was not surprising that the staggering nature of this "sign" did effect some of the people deeply. We read of Jesus that "He did not commit Himself unto them ... for He knew what was in man" (John 2:24). Their enthusiasm was illfounded and fickle. The next day Jesus had to tell them they had not accepted the sign but only the food. A little while after He also had to remind His disciples of what had happened when they thought they were short of bread (Matt. 16:8). Indeed they had witnessed something so wonderful. Did it "register"? Does the astounding grace of God "register" with us as individuals?

The disciples were to witness immediately something just as impossible by all human reasoning. Jesus walked to them on the sea, the wind being contrary, and themselves labouring against wind and weather. How greatly they needed this sign Jesus knew well. Peter indeed showed a measure of faith, yet had to call upon Jesus to save him (Matt. 14: 28-31), and Mark tells us even His disciples "considered not the miracle of the loaves for their heart was hardened" (6:52). So easily can we forget. This sign to the disciples was completed by the calm which ensued, and they worshipped Him. None of these signs were in vain by any means for the Holy Spirit has passed them to us for our comfort and encouragement.

### Unusual Teaching

In reasonable extension of His bountiful supply of bread to the people Jesus speaks of Himself as the bread of life. Some at least of those who partook of His bounty were reminded of God's supply of manna in the desert. They knew that the disciples had taken ship across the lake, and could not understand how Jesus came to be with them. He did not satisfy their curiosity but led their thoughts to spiritual needs. Their fundamental need was spiritual life. That could not be got by physical effort. It could and can be got only by faith in God. So this is what they must do — accept the truth that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God. Some doubtless had "come to Jesus", accepting Him as their teacher, but it was an uncertain allegiance, depending on the fickle human will, and beset with doubts on account of their preconceived notions about the messiah. The fact of His plain Humanity apparently made them doubt His deity. They stumbled over His simple way of life. Their hearts were hardened against 'the signs' (6:26).

We are naturally squeamish about flesh being eaten and blood being drunk, more so perhaps than His listeners. They were used to the sacrifice of living animals with the sprinkling of blood. A sacrifice was an offering to God in which the suppliant and the priest shared in most cases. Blood was forbidden as a drink because it signified life given only by God and thus belonging to Him. They could

realise that taking Jesus's blood would signify sharing His life, which it clearly means, and eating His flesh means sharing His humanity. We have here pictured our appropriation of His life and character in a spiritual sense through acceptance in mind and heart. The Lord's Table bears a close resemblance to this.

R.B. SCOTT

## NEWS FROM THE CHURCHES

**Peterhead, Scotland:** We rejoice that Michael Reid was added to the Lord's church on Sunday the 28th of May. Michael, who is seventeen has come up through Sunday School and is always an active worker when things need doing. Wm. Strachan, Sec.

### Briefs

A ship in the harbour is safe, but that is not what ships are made for.

Character is not made in a crisis—it is only exhibited.

Jumping to conclusions is not half as good exercise as digging for facts.

It is better to take things as they come than to try to catch them as they go.

**THE SCRIPTURE STANDARD** is published monthly.

### PRICES PER YEAR - POST PAID BY SURFACE MAIL

UNITED KINGDOM and COMMONWEALTH	....	....	....	£2.00
CANADA & U.S.A. (Dollar Bills)	....	....	....	\$4.00

(Please add 50 cents to cover Bank charges)

AIR MAIL please add 50p or \$1.00 to above surface mail rates

### DISTRIBUTION AGENT & TREASURER:

JOHN K. KNELLER, 4 Glassel Park Road, Longniddry, East Lothian, EH32 0NY  
Tel. No. Longniddry (0875) 53212 to whom change of address should be sent.

**EDITOR:** JAMES R. GARDINER, 88 Davidson Terrace, Haddington, East Lothian, Scotland.

"The Scripture Standard" is printed for the publishers by Walter Barker (Printers) Ltd., Langley Mill, Nottm. Tel. 07737 (Langley Mill) 2266