

The SCRIPTURE STANDARD

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

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A HAPPY NEW YEAR TO ALL OUR READERS

THE MERCIES OF GOD RECALLED AND TRUST EXPRESSED

"But this I call to mind, and therefore I have hope; the steadfast love of the Lord never ceases, His mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning; great is Thy faithfulness. 'The LORD is my portion' says my soul, 'therefore I will hope in Him'." (Lamentations 3:21-24).

GOD BLESS THY COMING YEAR:

THY COMING IN, THY GOING OUT,
THY REST, THY TRAVELLING ABOUT,
THE ROUGH, THE SMOOTH,
THE BRIGHT, THE DEAR:
GOD BLESS THY YEAR.

NOTHING IS FOREVER

Nothing remains the same. Another year has gone and again we have witnessed great change. Surely, by far, the most momentous and exciting event of the past year has been the complete demise of Communism. What could have been more dramatic or amazing? Not so very long ago we were all in the dark, depressing shadow of the 'Cold War' with the Soviet Bloc, and greatly perturbed at the ominous but rapid spread of Communism throughout the Third World and the 'Banana Republics'. It thrives in Africa, Asia, South America, especially Cuba, etc., right up, indeed, to the very doorsteps of the White House itself in Washington. Astonishingly, these 'reds under the beds' days have suddenly gone, and Communism, as a political system, has been roundly condemned as an utter failure, not by its enemies, but by the Russian leadership, in Moscow, its very birthplace. Anybody ten or twenty years ago, who would have predicted that the U.S.S.R. by 1991 would have completely dismantled itself, would have been regarded as a lunatic. But, there it is, the regime has gone. Why should I mention this? Because it proves that nothing is forever, and that the apparently impossible can often come to pass, Mountains can be removed. God is in His heavens.

The many countries recently espousing Communism have now been left out on a limb, with a great mass of political egg on their faces, and highly embarrassed. This

week, in Britain, sees the printing, after many years, of the very last issue of "Marxism Today" and British Communists are, understandably, keeping a low profile and trying to disappear into the woodwork. And so, another political system (which, like the poll tax, looks feasible on paper but fails miserably in practice) has been tried and tested and found wanting, as has its leaders. For the fine Russian people life under the Czars was no picnic, but 'liberation' under Lenin, Stalin and company, has proved to be just another form misery, penury and tyranny. It used to be suggested that Communism was based upon Christianity, in that all were to be regarded as equal, and entitled to share 'communally' in life's benefits. It is true that, in Christ's eyes, all men are equal but this is clearly not the philosophy which has lately prevailed in the U.S.S.R., where some are very much 'more equal' than others, and where bribery and corruption in most transactions are the norm. Unhappiness, imprisonment, torture, and violent death has, for the past 75 years, been the portion of Russians and East Europeans, under Communism; (Stalin, himself, is reckoned to have murdered over twenty-five million Russians) and so if the fruit of the system is anything to go by, it can hardly lay any claim to have been based upon Christianity, or the teachings of Christ.

AN OPEN DOOR

It's an ill wind that blows nobody any good, and the political changes in Russia and Eastern Europe, have now opened up great opportunities for preaching the gospel in those countries and offering to the people a new and better way of life; and a new and better leader — The Prince of Peace. There is obviously a great opening now for taking the gospel into those fresh fields: but only if we are in a position to take up the challenge.

Many of the denominational bodies are already making arrangements to enter these countries and to compete with the R.C. Church and the Russian Orthodox Church. This makes us ask ourselves: how capable are we of participating in this wonderful chance of taking the Truth to the teeming millions over there?

Meanwhile on the domestic scene, the Church of England have just this week been voting on the question of whether women should enter their priesthood. While the Church of Scotland welcomes women into its 'ministry' and 'eldership' the C. of E. are still wrestling with the issue and seem likely to divide asunder in the matter. Although the Bishops, Clergy and Laymen of the London diocese of the C. of E. have, a few days ago voted against the ordination of women, the battle seems far from over. Interestingly enough the Presbyterian Church of Australia have, after 17 years of women being ordained into their ministry, just decided to end the practice. Readers may be wondering why this topic is worthy of the mention. I mention it because it seems only a matter of time before the 'Churches of Christ' will be debating the issue: indeed some may be doing so already: not perhaps on this island, but the question will come here eventually. In some of the mainstream Churches of Christ magazines, one becomes increasingly aware that more and more articles are appearing on subjects with this issue thinly disguised but at the core. "Women's role in the Church" is now a subject with deeper ramifications than it used to have; and subjects like "Women's value in the Ministry" are more common. Just this month in one such magazine one writer said that, by virtue of men and women being equal in the Church, it seemed unreasonable that women should not take part in the 'ministering' and that indeed some congregations already employ female full-time Education Ministers." I suppose that it would only take one or two 'big' preachers to come down in favour of women in the pulpits and the floodgates would open. Incidentally in this month's "Life and Work" (magazine of the C. of Scot.) one writer describes a new problem arising from women in the 'eldership'. Apparently male elders are now being outnum-

bered by the appointment of more women 'elders' and, feeling intimidated and generally unhappy about the situation, are giving up and leaving: soon all the 'elders' may be female.

THE CHURCH DOES NOT EVOLVE – IT WAS CREATED

If we were sufficiently versed in ecclesiastical history, I suppose we could all look back down over the centuries and see how the religious world has evolved into what it is today. We would be able to see how Paul's warning to the elders at Ephesus (that **"Grievous wolves would enter the Church, not sparing the flock"** Acts 20:29) materialised, and the Early Church sank into apostasy. We would see the emergence of the R.C. Church with its papacy, priesthood, rites, music, superstitions and how N.T. baptism was substituted by the sprinkling of babies and invalids. We would, inter-alia, note the founding of the C. of E. by Henry 8th and later the Reformation and rise of Protestant denominations. And so, by living in these latter times, we have the distinct advantage of being able to look back and see **how**, and **when**, and **by whom** the Church built by Jesus was changed: indeed battered out of all recognition, by well-intended attempts to improve it. We can do exactly the same thing with regard to the history of Churches of Christ and, looking back, see **when**, **how** and **by whom** changes have been introduced. Fortunately we have the divine blue-print for Christ's church in the N.T. and can always refer to the original when trying to identify changes and departures. Change in any congregation's belief and practice is only permissible if the end result will be a church **much nearer to the N.T. pattern**: this is the only justification for change. Unfortunately some of the changes which have taken place within the N.T. churches have, as with the denominations, been as a result of congregational fads and fancies: and not to get the church closer to the original.

It seems amazing that the members of the C. of E. voting last week (on the woman in the priesthood issue) did not seem to wonder, or to ask themselves, why their church should **now** (1991) be asked to decide an issue unmentioned since the 16th Century. Obviously the aim is not to bring the C. of E. closer to the N.T. but to satisfy a fairly recent trend or fashion. Many of those who want women ordained are determined to have it done, whether it divides the Church or not. Most would consider this behaviour deplorable but members of Churches of Christ in this country have seen this attitude before, and if anybody should ever attempt to write a history of the "Old Path" churches it will be interesting to see how they will deal with the introduction of 'individual containers' into this island, in 1960, and the division caused. **When** these vessels were introduced, and **by whom**, is well established, but any late historian will find it very difficult, even now, to really establish **why**. Certainly congregational size could not have been the reason: the 'hygiene' suggestion has always been vigorously denied, and nobody at the time ever tried to claim that it was to get back more closely to the N.T. Scriptures. There seems to be a tendency amongst us that when denominational bodies introduce additions into the worship, we call them 'innovations': but when Churches of Christ do it, we call them 'expedients'. The main concern of the 'Pioneers' was "is it scriptural": whereas today, with all the pressures and competition for numbers, the question is "Will it bring them in".

Another disturbing trend is that, given a choice between something that is scriptural and something that is not scriptural but will "get results", many members might vote for the latter.

THE CHURCH, LIKE THE BIBLE, IS CHANGELESS

Once *N. T. congregations* are established in a locality there should be no *need* for change. Indeed the inspired writers on the N.T. were continually exhorting that the church should *remain* stable and steadfast, and *should resist* all attempts to change it, or divert it from the God-ordained course. Not only should the members remain steadfast *as individuals*, but should remain **united as a church**. Did not Jesus himself,

pray that His Church might “be one” (as close as he was to the Father, and vice-versa) and that there be no divisions among them. Those who respect that prayer will actively promote unity, and will refuse to take any form of action which might set at nought a brother, and cause division with the body of Christ. Even in N.T. times, church members were susceptible to ‘personality cults’ and would rally round the strong, or popular personality. Today I suppose some preachers still have their ‘fan’ clubs. Paul condemned any such trend and in 1 Cor. 1 asks **“Is Christ divided? was Paul crucified for you? or were you baptised in the name of Paul?”** The great apostasy, from which Luther managed to extricate himself hundreds of years later, had its beginnings in these very early days of the Church. As Paul warned the elders at Ephesus, **“Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them.”** (Acts 20:29). Christians must **“all speak the same thing”** and be **“perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgement.”** The Kingdom of God is brought into being by “the incorruptible seed” of the Kingdom (the word of God). The word of God cannot be changed and neither can the Church. The Church is as permanent a fixture, as the word of God, and one may as well talk of making ‘changes’ in the one as the other. If the Church changes it is certainly not God’s doing. God placed the blueprint in our hands, two thousand years ago, and has remained silent, since. Yet, if Jesus were to return to the world today, He would be hard pressed to find His church.

MEMBERS MUST CHANGE

With sometimes very little to show for our preaching efforts: with increased pressures to enlarge our numbers and faced with the apparent success of some of the denominational bodies, we are always open to the temptation to set aside our ‘Old Paths’ and ‘Back to the Bible’ attitude and to exchange it for a much more accommodating stance more in conformity with the expectations of the present religious scene. Some succumb to the temptation. Surely the early apostles were exposed to exactly similar temptations and could easily have made life much easier for themselves by making a few concessions here and there to the various factions of their day. However, as we can see from the divine record, the apostles were not in the business of seeking to pander to the religious whims and fancies of their day, or even to court a little popularity as fine, sensible Christian gentlemen, **but were completely uncompromising.** How could they compromise or make allowances? Were they not engaged in giving to the world God’s eternal word: the incorruptible seed of the gospel? **They had no authority to change it then; much less have men that authority today.** Nothing is forever? Yes, some things are, God Himself is changeless. He said **“I am the Lord, I change not”** (Mal. 3:6), and so we have the grand assurance that we shall not wake up some morning and find that God has gone over into the other camp, or due to some capricious quirk has changed the rules. Similarly, Jesus **“is the same yesterday, and today, and for ever”** (Heb. 13:8). Likewise God’s word is indestructible, outlasting even the world itself, for Jesus said, **“Heaven and earth shall pass away, but My words shall not pass away,”** and the apostle Peter said, **“The word of the Lord endureth for ever. And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you.”** (1 Peter 1:25).

And so, while the Church (with its Title Deeds enshrined in the eternal word of God) is not something that man can change, even slightly, its **individual membership** is exhorted and expected to change. As individual members of the Lord’s body we are urged to mend our words and ways; to enhance our lifestyle and be better people. We should change – and try to love more. We should change and try to preach more; to pray more; to give more; to do more; in short, to become more like unto Jesus, the Author and the Finisher of our faith. Modifications can not be made to God’s institutions; but there is no limit to the alterations, for the better, we can make in ourselves. Nothing, for long, remains the same in a restless and uncertain world, and changes are inevitable, good or bad. May it be that in 1992, whatever the change in

our fortunes, in health or wealth, we shall, with God's help, surmount the bad and use wisely the good, growing in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour. (And may we in 1992 apply our minds, energies and prayers to find ways and means of taking the glad tidings of the gospel to the multitudes behind the old 'Iron Curtain').

EDITOR.

GLEANINGS

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

CALLED OUT

"Ye are an elect race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession, that ye may show forth the excellencies of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvellous light." (1 Peter 2:9 R.V.)

A BUILDING OF LIVING STONES

"The Church is a building, the Savior says so; it is a building that has all the faculties of a human being. This is corroborated by Peter, to whom the Saviour made first use of the term, when he writes: **'Ye also, as living stones, are built up a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.'** (1 Peter 2:5).

A building is made for habitation, and this is exactly in accord with Paul's teaching on the same subject when, in writing to the church at Ephesus, he says: **'So, then, ye are no more strangers and sojourners, but ye are fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God, being built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the chief corner stone: in whom each several building, fitly framed together, groweth into a holy temple in the Lord; in whom ye also are builded together for a habitation of God in the Spirit.'**

A TEMPLE OF THE LIVING GOD

"The Church, then is a spiritual building made of living stones, and the living stones are the people – men and women, youths and maidens – who have heard the call of the Lord to **'Come ye out from among them and be ye separated and touch no unclean thing and I will receive you'** Listen to the Apostolic injunction in 2 Cor. 6:14-16: **'Be not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with iniquity? or what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what portion hath a believer with an unbeliever? And what agreement hath a temple of God with idols? for we are a temple of the living God: even as God said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them, and I will be their God and they shall be my people.'**"

F. C. Day.

THE TRANSFIGURED CHURCH

"Now, how stands it with the Church? Does she seem fitted to strike, and arrest, and silence, and allure the careless or suspicious multitudes? What is there unique and amazing about her? Her Lord has promised her a Marvellous distinctiveness. She is to be "a glorious Church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing"! "A glorious Church": shining amid all the surrounding twilights with a radiance of a splendid noon! "Not having spot": no defect, no blemish, no impaired function, no diseased limb! "Or wrinkle": there shall be no sign of age about her, or any waste; she shall never become an anachronism; she shall always be as young as the present age, ever distinguished by her youthful brow, and by her fresh and almost boisterous optimism."

"OR WRINKLE, OR ANY SUCH THING!"

Mark the final, holy swagger of it, as though by a contemptuous wave of the hand the Apostle indicates the entire rout of the unclean pests that invade and attack an

apostate Church. "Or any such thing"! Are these great words of promise in any high degree descriptive of our own Church? Is this our distinctiveness? "**Not having spot**": have we no withered hands, no halt, no blind, no lame, no lepers? "**Or wrinkle**": are we really distinguished by the invincible and contagious energies of perpetual youth? does not the holding up of this great ideal throw our basal defects into dark and ugly relief?

"IS EXCEEDINGLY LIKE THE WORLD."

The pity of it all is just this, that the Church, with all its loud and exuberant professions, is exceedingly like "**the world**". There is no clean, clear line of separation. In place of the promised glories we have a tolerable and unexciting dimness; in place of superlative whiteness we have and uninteresting grey; and in place of the spirit of an aggressive youthfulness we have a loitering and time-serving expediency. There would be no difficulty, if only we had seized upon the fulness of our resources, and had become clothed with the riches of our promised inheritance, in men being able to distinguish, in any general company, the representatives of the Church of the living God".

J. H. Jowett.

THE GOOD WAY

"Thus saith the Lord, Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, wherein is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls". Jer. 6:16.

"First of all, you have in this text excellent general advice. Jeremiah says to you, "**Stand, and see, and ask.**" I take these words to be a call to thought and consideration. They are as though the prophet said, "Stop and think. Stand still, pause, and reflect. Look within, behind, and before. Do nothing rashly. What are you doing? Where are you going? What will be the end and consequence of your present line of action? Stop and think."

Now to set men thinking is one great object which every teacher of religion should always keep before him. Serious thought, in short, is one of the first steps towards heaven. "**I thought on my ways,**" says the Psalmist, "**and turned my feet unto Thy testimonies**" (Ps. 119:59).

"CAME TO HIMSELF"

The prodigal son in the parable "**came to himself**" before he came to his father. He began to consider quietly the folly and uselessness of his conduct, and then, and not till then, he returned home, saying, "Father, I have sinned" (Luke 15:18). **Want of thought** is, in truth, the simple cause why many make shipwreck for ever.

There are but few, I suspect, who deliberately and calmly choose evil, refuse good, turn their back on God, and resolve to serve sin as sin. The most part are what they are because they began their present course without thought. They would not take the trouble to look forward and consider the consequence of their conduct."

THE CHURCH

"Today as we look at her, we are conscious of much weakness, and certainly often-times of a lack of beauty. We need to be reminded that our eyes are often fixed upon the scaffolding that surrounds the building, rather than the building itself. Nevertheless we all see something of the glory of the Church in its individual members. How many we have known, true Christly souls, who so share His life that His beauty, His compassion, and His tenderness are all manifested through them. The time will come when He will present His Church to God, a glorious thing, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing. It was in view of this, undoubtedly, Paul urged those to whom he wrote in his Corinthian letter, "**to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of Peace,**" where the word "**keep**" means to observe, or keep in view; referring to the fact that the hour will come when "**we all attain unto unity of the faith, and of the stature of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a full grown man, unto the measure of the fulness of Christ.**"

LEONARD MORGAN.

LIFE OF CHRIST (4)

In this article on the Life of Christ we shall look at **the temptation of Jesus** which took place immediately after He was baptized by John the Baptist.

THE DEVIL

Before we begin, since the subject includes the devil, let us clear up a few misunderstandings concerning him.

The devil we are discussing, who tempted Jesus after His baptism, is the **dee-ab-ol-os**. **Dee-ab-ol-os should only be applied to Satan as a proper name. I am pointing this out for a reason. The word da-hee-mon-ee-on** which should be translated, **demons** is (quite often) translated as devil in the Authorized Version and this has led to much confusion on this subject.

79 times the word demon has been incorrectly translated as devil, in the Authorized Version. In fact you may find my next statement hard to believe, but you won't even find the word demon in the Authorized Version.

There is only one **devil** but there are many **demons**. The word devil should only be applied to Satan.

After God publicly acknowledged Jesus as His Son, Satan began his work by tempting Jesus.

Jesus was subjected to temptation **according to the will of God for He was led by the Spirit**.

Jesus was led up from the River Jordan to the nearby mountainous range. Tradition locates the place as a rugged, desolate region between Jerusalem and Jericho, about four miles from the river Jordan and 20 miles from Jerusalem.

Jesus was not driven against His own will but voluntarily yielded to the powerful influence of the Spirit, as the Spirit led Him to do the Will of God. In order to be the Saviour of tempted mankind, it was necessary that **He Himself** should be tempted, **"in all points as we are, yet without sin."** (Heb. 4 v 15).

The devil, Satan, the god of this world, is always singular never plural. The term devil is never used in the Bible to signify an evil spirit and it is never used to personify the evil in man or in the world.

The devil is represented in the New Testament as an adversary of human souls endeavouring, by various snares, to take us captive, suggesting evil thoughts to our minds or erasing good impressions which we once had, or putting hindrances in the way of good works, or inspiring persecutors of the faithful and, one thing is sure, he and his followers will be finally cast into torment.

From the letter of Jude we learn that the devil is a created being of higher order than man who has fallen from his first estate.

We are not informed why Jesus fasted for 40 days and 40 nights. He did not fast in the ecclesiastical sense of that word, but in the strictest meaning of abstaining from all food whatsoever. Luke records that He did eat nothing in those days. (Luke 4 v. 2).

Moses and Elijah fasted the same length of time. Moses represented the law, and Elijah represented the prophets.

Before we can appreciate the temptation Jesus endured, we must set a standard by which we can judge temptation.

All temptation results from the excitement of some lust or desire. That is clearly taught in James 1:14. The more intense the desire, the greater the temptation. Human experience also teaches that **the more cunningly we can disguise a sinful act, the more easily we are induced to commit it**. Therefore, if there is a desire and the circumstances are such that we could disguise the act without anyone knowing what we intend to do, then we have the recipe for the strongest temptation.

THE FIRST OF THE THREE TEMPTATIONS OF JESUS

“The tempter came and challenged Him, If you are God’s Son, command those rocks to become bread.”

Here we find Jesus at the end of a 40 day fast. The tempter came at a very weak moment for Jesus; obviously His body would be desiring food. Note also the carefully chosen words of the tempter – **“If thou be the Son of God”**. He well knew who Jesus was but is trying to excite a desire for Jesus to prove who He was; to dispel the doubt implied in those words.

Satan was challenging Jesus to prove His claim by doing a miracle. Since Jesus was the Son of God it would, of course, have been easy for Him to command the stones to become bread.

This first temptation appears to be **twofold** in its nature. Jesus is tempted to satisfy His hunger, and also to prove Himself to be the Son of God. Jesus replied, **“It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from God’s mouth.”**

Jesus is ready with the Word of God to answer this temptation and quotes from Deut. 8:3.

It is significant that the first words of Jesus recorded after His baptism are a declaration of the authority of the Scriptures.

Jesus made the Word of God His rule of authority. Our Lord met every temptation by a quotation of Scripture. The Israelites had lived by the Word of God when they ate manna in the wilderness, which was produced by His Word.

There are other things which sustain life other than bread; bread sustains the physical body, but it cannot sustain the spiritual part of man’s nature.

The quotation Jesus used was originally applied to the Israelites when they had bitterly complained of hunger in the wilderness, even they were taught that there is something more to true living than sustaining the physical part of man.

In sending the manna to the hungry Israelites God taught them that the true bread was the bread from Heaven.

THE SECOND TEMPTATION

The devil then took Jesus into Jerusalem to the Temple, to a high point. The south-east corner of the Temple overlooks the Valley of Kedron and, according to Josephus, the wall at that point was 600ft high. This could be an exaggeration but today the foundations of this part of the wall are 90 feet below the present ground level.

“The devil then took Him into the holy city, and placed Him on the summit of the Temple, and said, If you are God’s Son, throw yourself down, for it is written, He will command His angels concerning you, and they will catch you in their hands so that you will not strike your foot against a stone.” (Matt. 4:5).

Jesus had responded to the first temptation by expressing great faith in God and His Word. Satan now goes to the other extreme by attempting to get Jesus to actually throw Himself off the Temple wall and depend on God to save Him. Satan even quotes Scripture (from Psalm 91 v 11 in the Septuagint form) but he perverts the meaning of it.

Psalm 91 v 11 was written to encourage faith. The devil plainly infers that this is a promise made to all pious men, and must apply all the more forcibly to Jesus if He is the Son of God.

The application he made was false. There is a general watch and care of God over His people, but He has not promised to protect His people from danger while they violate His Will. God has not promised to give any **extraordinary** protection to those who trust Him. Man must comply with the Will of God and trust in the ordinary means that God has provided for his well-being.

It is easy to imagine Jesus on that wall-head, gazing down into the valley below

from such a dizzy height; the idea of a fall and its consequences would instinctively possess Him.

Satan, at precisely the right time, says, "Jump, God protects His own, it will show how completely you trust in Him, everything is in your favour unless, of course, you fear personal injury."

But Jesus answered, "Again it is written, 'You shall not make trial of the Lord your God.'"

This quotation of Jesus was from Deut. 6:13 and does not contradict the quotation of Satan, for all Scriptures harmonise. It is not pleasing to God to quote one Scripture while trying to pervert the meaning of another.

This quotation Jesus used, clarified the one given by the devil. What Jesus was saying was this:-

"Yes, it is true, Satan, those words you quote are written, and they are applicable to me and to good men and they will be fulfilled at the proper time. But to throw oneself into unnecessary danger in order to "tempt" or test God would be a sin, and especially when it was done at the command of the devil."

THE FINAL TEMPTATION: ON THE MOUNTAIN

"Further, the devil took Him to the top of a very high mountain and showed Him all the world's kingdoms and their glory and said, I will give you all these things if you will fall down and worship me."

A panorama of the kingdoms of this world were shown to Christ and Satan promised to give Christ all the glory of these kingdoms.

This is the most diabolical of all suggestions which were made by Satan. The Creator of the heavens and the earth does not need to bow down to Satan. If Jesus had done this he would have acknowledged a falsehood, for the devil was not supreme, neither was he sovereign; he only had such powers as had been granted to him by God.

For success here, Satan is depending solely on the intensity of the desire which he expected to excite.

Here Satan is offering Jesus the easy road. Fall down and worship Satan and these Kingdoms are yours. On the other hand, if you carry out the will of God, you must be crucified upon the cross.

Jesus at once repelled Satan with righteous indignation as the ARCH-ENEMY of the Father. The devil had thrown off his mask and appeared to Christ in his real character, so Jesus treats him accordingly.

"Get thee hence" in the original text means "Get out of my sight" Satan. This is the first recorded exclamation of Jesus.

Jesus goes on to say, "For it is written, You shall worship the Lord your God, and you shall serve ONLY Him!"

Leo Boles informs us that Jesus put emphasis on the word ONLY when he said, "and you shall serve ONLY Him,"

There is ONLY one God to be worshipped.

The devil is called SATAN here, because in this temptation he displayed his real character as the ENEMY of God, for he tried to take the worship and service of God's Son, and use them for his own diabolical ends.

In revealing himself as the enemy of God, he also reveals himself as the adversary of Jesus.

Satan, having failed in his mission, left the Lord for a season and "the angels came and ministered to Him."

Jesus had triumphed. Later He taught through James, "resist the devil, and he will flee from you." (James 4:7).

WINDOWS

Let us see what lessons we can learn from just three Bible Windows

A WINDOW FOR LIGHT (Genesis 6 verse 16)

In the days of Noah when God saw that the wickedness of man was great upon the earth: that the imagination of man's heart was evil continually; He decided to thoroughly cleanse the earth with a mighty flood. Only Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord, He was commanded to build an ark by which he and his family should be saved. It was not left with Noah to plan this, God gave him all the instructions necessary. (Read Genesis 6: 13-22).

God provided for a light from above, a window.

Today we rejoice that God has provided Jesus, our ark to preserve us from the flood of spiritual death. He is the LIGHT OF THE WORLD. Through the window of His WORLD has come the LIGHT from above that we may learn the way of salvation, and by walking therein may have eternal life.

A WINDOW FOR SALVATION (Joshua 2 verse 18)

When Joshua became the leader, in the stead of Moses, it became his task to lead the people into the promised land. Reaching Jericho, he sent two spies to view the land, and they lodged in the house of Rahab, a harlot. The King of Jericho learned of this and sent word to Rahab to deliver these men as prisoners. She told them they had left but did not know where they had gone. If they went quickly they might catch them. This was untrue, for she had hidden them under flax in the roof.

After the pursuers had gone, she came to the spies and pleaded with them on behalf of herself and her household that her kindness might be rewarded with the salvation of their lives. She requested a token that this would be so. The spies gave to her a scarlet cord by which they were to be let down, and told her to bind it in the window, and to bring all her kindred into the house, and to remain there. If they did not do so they would die. This she did, and they alone survived when the city was destroyed. This symbol of the scarlet cord is a reminder to us of Jesus' precious blood, which, when applied to us will save us from the consequences of sin.

A WINDOW FOR BLESSING (Malachi 3:10)

After we have read through the history recorded for us of God's dealing with His people, we come to the final book of the Old Covenant, where Jehovah upbraids them for unbelief and unfaithfulness, and yet still continues to promise them blessings if they will repent and keep His commandments. He repeats His promise of the coming of a Redeemer who will turn their hearts from sin unto righteousness. He will open the windows of heaven and pour out a blessing, so great that it would overwhelm them.

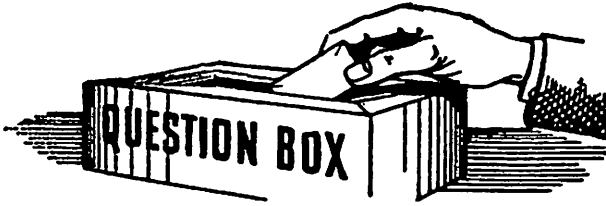
Today we can share in the richness of this blessing, God's greatest gift of His only begotten Son, "that whosoever believeth in Him, should not perish but have Everlasting Life." (John 3:16).

Through trust and obedience to Jesus we can walk in LIGHT that cannot fade, and have Joy unspeakable and full of Glory that cannot pass away.

Tom Kemp,
Hindley,
Wigan.

Without me Ye Can Do Nothing (John 15:5)

Abide in Me. The measure of our practical obedience to this word of our Lord will be the measure of our strength: His strength clothing us. We have fully adequate resources for Christian living, for holiness, for effective power in this day and generation. Shame on us if we are not making that evident.



Conducted by
Alf Marsden

"After reading your answer in the November issue of the S.S., I have another question for you. If Jesus was the long-expected Messiah, why is there so little mention of this fact in the New Testament?"

At the outset, in answer to this question, I might also add that in the so-called Messianic Prophecies in the Old Testament, there is no direct use of the word Messiah. The problem for the people in the days of the ministry of Jesus was the cardinal one of **identification** of the Messiah, and it was in the resolution of this problem that the Jewish leaders and the people got it so hopelessly wrong. Two of the most revealing scriptures are to be found in John 5:39 where Jesus says to the Jews, **"Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me"**; and in Luke 24:25, 26 when Jesus, after His resurrection, spoke with the two on the road to Emmaus and said, **"O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken: Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory?"** So Jesus Himself asserted quite forcefully that His identification from the O.T. scriptures was not only possible, but ought actually to have been recognised by anyone who had searched properly. We need to examine this important point in a little more detail.

THE PROBLEM FOR THE JEWS

Students of the behavioural sciences will know that human behaviour is governed to a marked degree by **'expectation'** and **'realisation'**. Expectation itself can be either modified or exacerbated by the conditions and circumstances in which one finds oneself; while realisation, if it does not meet expectations, will many times give rise to attitudes which may be unhelpful and unwholesome.

The history of God's chosen people illustrates the above points quite vividly. The nation had been divided into the Northern and Southern kingdoms. The people had suffered much under their own leaders, and at the hands of the oppressive nations around them. It never seemed to enter their minds that the trials and tribulations were as a result of their own perfidy and lack of allegiance to God. The culmination of all their problems came during the inter-testamental period when Selucid troops under Antiochus Epiphanes (who claimed to be an incarnation of Zeus) suspended the Temple sacrifices, ordered the destruction of the Scriptures, discontinued circumcision, Sabbath observance, and the food laws. Many Jews welcomed death rather than this sort of defilement, and it is probable that the conditions described in Heb. 11 pertain to this period. This led directly to the Wars of the Maccabees, and perhaps the greatest moment for the Jews came under the leadership of Judas Maccabaeus who purified the Temple area and restored the Temple sacrifices and worship. It was in 63 B.C. that the Roman general Pompey entered Jerusalem, and Judas became a Roman protectorate. However, there was always behind the minds of the Jews that the Messiah, the Lord's Anointed, the Leader Prince, would emerge in due time. But what was their expectation of His leadership, and would the realisation be too bitter to swallow.

THE EXPECTATION

In view of what I have said up to this point, we can well understand how high the expectations of the Jews were that some mighty Messiah would come along and

relieve them of the thralldom of Rome. John seems to bear this out when he recounts the miracle of the feeding of the five thousand; he records the people who saw the miracle as saying, **"This is of a truth that prophet that should come into the world"** (John 6:14). The record then goes on, **"When Jesus therefore perceived that they would come and take him by force, to make him a king, he departed again into a mountain himself alone"** (v.15). This is probably why Jesus never referred to Himself as the Messiah. We can see, therefore, what the expectations of the people were; the great miracle-worker would surely be able to use His power to restore the destiny of the nation.

Another view of expectation is to be found in the discourse of Jesus with the two on the road to Emmaus. Cleopas and his companion asserted to the culpability of the chief priests and rulers, **"And how the chief priests and rulers delivered him to be condemned to death, and have crucified him"** (Luke 24:20). To show their expectation, they then went on, **"But we trusted that it had been he which should have redeemed Israel"** (v. 21). They had the Messianic hope alright, but it would seem to me that the redemption which they spoke of was not the redemption associated with the Gospel, i.e., it was not spiritual; they were looking for the redemption of Israel as a nation. That it was non-spiritual seems to be borne out by the discourse Jesus had with Nicodemus. It is patently obvious that Nicodemus did not understand the nature of the new creation in Christ Jesus, **"How can a man be borne when he is old? can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born?"** (John 3:4).

There is also a rather startling aspect of John the Baptist given to us in the Gospel of John. The Baptist, in prison, heard the things that Jesus was teaching and doing, and sent two of his disciples with a message to Jesus, saying, **"Art thou He that should come (the Messiah, presumably), or do we look for another"** (Matt. 11:1-6). Jesus sent them back saying **"Go and shew John those things which ye do hear and see"**. He even added what seemed to be a gentle rebuke to John, **"And blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in me"**. This illustrates how deep the Messianic expectations were, but the 'yes' answer to the Baptist's question also shows Jesus confessing openly His claims to Messiahship.

THE REALISATION

How many times have you heard people after returning from some event say, "Well, that wasn't a bit like I expected it to be; the realisation had not come up to the expectation. Imagine a man travelling home from work in the evening and expecting a meal of roast beef, roasted potatoes, and all the trimmings, and he finds on the table when he gets home, a pot of jam and some bread; he is likely to feel a little peeved. Consider, then, in the days of Jesus, how the Jews must have felt when the realisation dawned on them that the One whom John the Baptist had marked out for them as from God, was preaching a message of **'love your enemies, do good to them that spitefully use you; if your enemy strike you on one cheek, turn the other also'**. What sort of talk was that, when the nation was a Protectorate of Rome? Can love and peace change the world, or is it those who have **might** on their side who ultimately prevail? The rulers and the people thought they knew the answer to that one, and so they turned on Jesus as an imposter. This man was no Messiah. He was no Anointed Leader from God. Away with Him, and let us see if we can identify the true Messiah.

Ah, but they forgot that Jesus was the Christ of God. Many people refer to Jesus Christ today and they think that 'Christ' is the surname of Jesus. The 'Christ' is the Messiah, the Lord's Anointed, and it took a loose Samaritan woman to spell this out when she talked with Jesus. John records that the woman said to Jesus, **"I know that Messias cometh, which is called Christ: when he is come, he will tell us all things"**. Jesus declared Himself again, **"I that speak unto thee am He"** (John 4:25,26). We also read in John 1:40,41 that Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, found Simon and said to

him, **“We have found the Messiah, which is, being interpreted, the Christ”**.

In view of the above, what I have to say to our questioner is that even though the precise word ‘Messiah’ (or Messias) is not often used, there are many prophecies in the O.T. which relate to God’s Anointed coming into the world, and the N.T. identifies Him as Jesus, the Christ of God, and I hardly need add that the N.T. is replete with information and teaching concerning Him. Yes, Messiah has been manifested, and His manifestation procured salvation for all who will accept and obey Him. Those who look for a future manifestation of the Messiah will, I fear, look in vain. God’s Anointed One has been to this earth. **He will** come again, but the next time He comes it will be in His Glory. Even so, Lord; come quickly.

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

CHRIST YES – PAUL NO!

The well known writer C.S. Lewis has made a statement to the effect that there is always the danger of spending so much time studying or quoting Paul that we may lose sight of the Christ of the Gospels.

I strongly disagree with this concept! How can there ever be any danger of losing sight of Christ and the Gospels when we study the rest of the New Testament? The message of Peter, Paul, James, John and the other writers of the New Testament is the fullness of the Holy Spirit’s revelation of Christ and his works. It is the **“all truth”** into which Jesus promised that his apostles would be guided by the Holy Spirit (John 16:13). The Epistles and the Book of Revelation transcend the Gospel account in much the same way that the Gospels transcend the old Testament picture of Christ.

Luke makes it very clear that when he writes in Acts that it is the continuation of the work begun by Jesus. His account of establishing of the Church, the conversion of sinners and the expansion of the Kingdom of Christ is in perfect accord with the eternal plan of God. Luke’s Gospel and the book of Acts form one complete unit in two volumes.

Paul likewise emphasized the same truth when he pointed out that he was led into knowledge of the Lord by the revelation of the Lord himself and not by the other apostles (Gal. 1:15-20). He declared again and again that his life and work is a continuation of the life and work of Jesus (Gal. 2:20; Phil. 1:21). In fact, Paul wrote that those who would change or pervert the gospel message stand condemned (Gal. 1:7-9).

John also gives us further words and teaching from Christ which are not found elsewhere in the Bible. One cannot read Revelation and miss sight of Christ!

There is a greater danger in all extremes – either in magnifying or minimizing any portion of the New Testament to the exclusion of the rest. We need to see what the Lord said in Revelation 22:18,19 about taking away from his message!

We need to ask some pertinent questions about motives when we encounter “off the wall” statements like this one by Mr. Lewis. Why did he make a statement like this? Is it a try to establish the modernistic teaching that Paul’s theology is different from Christ’s? Is it to try to get away from the apostolic teaching? Is it to call into question the authenticity of Paul, Peter, James and other New Testament writers? Is it a try to establish some sort of distinction between the religion of Jesus and the religion about Jesus? Is it to cast doubts about Paul’s inspiration and life? Is it to say that the words of Christ can only be found by searching them out from amid spurious interpolations? Why?

Such statements as Mr. Lewis’ are unbiblical, unscholarly and certainly a little unnerving to those of us who have really put our trust and confidence in the inspiration and authority of the New Testament.

E. Lewis

SCRIPTURE READINGS

| | | |
|---------|-------------------|--------------------|
| Feb. 2 | Jeremiah 15:10-21 | Revelation 10 |
| Feb. 9 | Zechariah 4 | Revelation 11:1-18 |
| Feb. 16 | Micah 4 | Rev. 11:19 – 12:17 |
| Feb. 23 | Daniel 7:1-12 | Revelation 13 |

THE LITTLE OPEN BOOK

The Bible was a closed book for centuries. Throughout the period known as the Dark Ages the word of God had been kept from the people. The Reformation changed all that and we have men such as John Wycliffe, Martin Luther, William Tyndale, etc. to thank for translating the Scriptures into the vernacular of the people. And we must not forget that this outstanding work was achieved under great persecution. These men were regarded as heretics by many in their day, but now, of course, they are heroes. Brother Graeme Pearson in his notes on Revelation has commented: "The book had been closed. The Bible had been kept from the people. Many people during the Dark Ages were burned at the stake for no other reason than that they had a Bible in their house. The book was sealed up in dead languages and it was impossible for it to be read in the native tongue of any European people. Here the angel comes with an open book signifying that God's Word was to be given back to the people. The Reformation had begun much earlier with Wycliffe and Huss, but it was fully inaugurated in the sixteenth century."

I thank God often that today I can study His Revelation in the English language. I also thank Him for all the efforts that are being made to translate the Bible into all the languages of the world (a mammoth task!). Recently, I posted five Bibles in the Telugu language to a brother in India and it made me think just how far things have come since the work of the early reformers.

The Two Witnesses

The apostle John was given the task of measuring the Temple (11:1). It could

not have been Herod's temple in Jerusalem because it had been destroyed by the Romans nearly thirty years before. Therefore, the temple he had to measure with God's measuring rod was the spiritual temple (1 Corinthians 3:16,17). The outer court was not measured. B.W. Johnson has written: "The connection shows that the court of the Gentiles, which surrounded the temple on all sides, is meant. This was typical of the world, and the fact that it is not measured, shows that the world, and those who follow the world, whether sinners or professing Christians, do not come up with the divine standard. This outer court is said to be given to the Gentiles and it is added that they shall tread the Holy City underfoot for forty-two months. The Holy City is a type of Church and this language implies its oppression for a period of twelve hundred and sixty days, or years."

The two witnesses (11:3) represent the two testaments of God. They manifested great power and this is confirmed by the Hebrew writer's statement that **"the word of God is quick (alive) and powerful (energetic) and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and is a discerner (critic) of the thoughts and intents of the heart"** (4:12). (See also 1 Kings 17:1; Exodus (7:20).) The mentioning of the two olive trees and the two lampstands reminds us of statements made in Zechariah chapter 4.

We read: **"And when they (the two witnesses) shall have finished their testimony, the beast that ascends out of the bottomless pit shall make war against them and shall overcome them and kill them"** (11:7). This was to last a period of three and a half days, or three and half years (11:9,11). This period refers to the French Revolution when the French Rationalists attempted to destroy the Bible. Voltaire was at the forefront of the effort. Later the British and Foreign Bible Society bought his house and used it as a supply centre in the distribution of Bibles throughout the

world. Of course, God's word could not be killed off, for it is eternal (Isaiah 40:8; Matthew 24:35; 1 Peter 1:25).

The Woman And The Dragon

The woman (12:1), I believe, represents the people of God. The sun, I suggest, is a symbol of the gospel, the moon a symbol of the Jewish system and the twelve stars a representation of the twelve apostles of Jesus. The apostles of Christ, of course, have a unique position in the Christian system (Matthew 19:28; Luke 22:30; Revelation 21:14).

The great red dragon (12:3) depicts Satan (12:9). He is also called the "old serpent" (12:9), "the devil" (12:9), and "the accuser" (12:10).

The "man child" (12:5) brought forth is not Jesus, but is a symbol of the increase of God's people, which Satan cannot stand and will do all in his power to prevent. The "man child" is "to rule all nations with a rod of iron" (12:5). In Revelation 2:26,27 we read: "And he who overcomes and keeps my work unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations: and he shall rule them with rod of iron..."

Revelation 12:6 reads: "And the woman fled into the wilderness, where she has a place prepared of God, that they should feed her a thousand two hundred and sixty days." Ezekiel once wrote through the spirit: "I have appointed you each day for a year" (4:6).

So one thousand two hundred and sixty days is one thousand two hundred and sixty years, or times, time and half a time (12:14), or forty-two months (11:2). This is the period known as the Dark Ages when the word of God was kept from the people. Please note, however, that the church over these long years did not go out of existence, but was nourished by God (12:14).

The war between Satan and the people of God was similar to that which had taken place in heaven (12:7). I like verse 11: "And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb (Jesus' part) and by the word of their testimony (the saint's part); and they loved not their lives unto

the death".

The Two Beasts

We read: "And I stood upon the sand of the seas and saw a beast rise up out of the sea, having seven heads and ten horns, and upon his horns ten crowns and upon his heads the name of blasphemy" (13:1). Chapter 17 gives us the meaning: "And here is the mind which has wisdom. The seven heads are seven mountains on which the woman sits... And the ten horns which you saw are ten kings, who have received no kingdom as yet; but receive power as kings one hour with the beast" (9,12). The first beast represents the Roman Empire, and the second Holy Roman Empire. All the characteristics of the former were seen in the latter (13:12). In fact, the Pope adopted titles of the Emperor himself – for example, Pontifex Maximus, which means "Chief Bridge-Builder".

It is difficult for us today to appreciate the power both the Roman Empire and the Holy Roman Empire had over people. One commentator has written: "The Pope claimed the right to make and unmake kings; all crowns were placed upon royal heads by his own hands or by those of his bishops; rulers were dethroned, subjects incited to rebellion, provinces taken from one ruler and bestowed upon another, and all the rulers of the Catholic world made to swear obedience to the Pope as their liege lord... At least three councils are named, those of Tours, of Constance and the Lateran, which have expressly forbidden business intercourse with heretics."

The number six hundred and sixty six has caused much discussion (13:18). In the Greek it spells out "Lateinos" – the reputed founder of the Latin Race. Rome is the ancient capital of the Latins. The Romans were a Latin race and spoke the Latin language. The Catholic Church is continually officially called the Latin Church.

Ian S. Davidson,
Motherwell.

GHANA REPORT

There is more good news from Ghana this month from Bill Cook. On November 17th, 1991 a new congregation was established about ten miles south of Kumasi in a village called Pekye (pronounced Pechee). There are two villages side by side named Pekye No. 1 and Pekye No. 2. There are six members and on their second Lord's day they had seven visitors and three children attend their meeting. Bill, from the Ghana funds, has given them money for a plot of ground, a table and two tablecovers. One of the members is a carpenter and intends to build a wooden frame with a roof to start with. The walls doors and windows will come later when funds are available. They have experienced some local opposition already which resulted in a meeting not being held because no-one will rent out rooms with light for an evening service in Kumasi to the Church of Christ. Bill intends to overcome this problem before he leaves by buying a small generator. In Nobewan the congregation grew when a man aged 60 years was baptised. I received a report from three brothers in Odumasi which ran into three pages of foolscap. I noted that four members in Odumasi, three in Nobewan and some non-members have received Medical Aid in the past month. The Bible Correspondence courses have been well received, In the past month £431.14p was paid from the fund for Bible Correspondence Courses, £100 was sent to Ghana and as I write this report there is £480.16p in the Bank Account which Sister Ann Cook

will take (along with any additional gifts received) to Ghana when she goes out to be married to Brother Martin Price. Brother Bill Cook should be back on 21st January, 1992. Before he returns he will arrange the Bank Account that we presently use in Kumasi to be accessed via the signature of three faithful Brothers, for the continuing of the work.

To date £26,571.01p has been collected for Ghana. As we begin a New Year may I sincerely thank everyone who has contributed to this appeal, for your love and concern for our Brethren in Ghana. Please continue to support the work which has begun. The three areas of need are - Gospel Work, Medical Aid and Building Fund. Please send crossed cheques to Graeme Pearson (Ghana Appeal), 13 Fairways, Dunfermline, Fife. KY12 0DU. Tel: (0383) 728624.

P.S. Latest news via Express Aeogramme from Bill Cook. Pekye membership at 10. Plot of ground purchased. Timber frame partly built but they have run out of money to complete the basic structure. Bill Cooks funds have run out. In the article above, £300 of the £480 has been allocated to other needs, (Gospel, Medical & Eyecare). Building funds are required.

Last minute news by telephone from Ghana, 9th December, 1991. Bill has informed me that another congregation has been established in DENU (four miles west of Aflao) with a membership of five. They are described by Bill as very enthusiastic

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