

# The SCRIPTURE STANDARD

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

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## THE GRANDEST THEME

The government is currently spending millions of pounds on the sending out of forms to the general public asking them to suggest ways of improving the National Health Service. Critics, quite rightly, are wondering why a government, after 18 years in opposition, and 3 years in actual power, have, at this stage, to ask for suggestions on a matter so obvious. Surely, by now, they should know what's required to improve the Health Service. And so, once again, most taxpayers are appalled at what seems such a dire waste of money. As usual, in such circumstances, the government call in the "*spin doctors*". By a coincidence, yesterday's "Daily Mail" described in detail the enormous sums the government is spending on a vast army of such "doctors", led by men like Alistair Campbell, the the Prime Minister's "spin" expert. When government departments make an unpopular decision, or Ministers make a public gaffe, the "doctors" are called in and put a favourable gloss or slant on whatever has taken place, and give to the media (through TV and the press) a vindication of those involved. Until recently, most of us had never heard of "spin doctors," I suppose, but realise now that all political parties have such men, and that putting a certain "spin" on events has been going on since time began. The particular "spin" in this case, to defend the expense of asking the nation's advice on the Health Service, is that the government "likes to consult the people," which sounds extremely laudable, but sadly does not seem to apply to "Section 28" and many other selected subjects.

### SELF JUSTIFICATION

And so "self justification" seems to be a natural reaction to any charge or criticism, and we all eventually get involved in it. The first thing a man does, I suppose, as soon as his words or actions should take him before a court, or tribunal, is to get himself a good solicitor, and plan a strategy whereby he shall be able to justify himself, and convince a jury that his actions were, in fact, quite exemplary, although obviously totally misunderstood. In Acts 24, the Jews brought along to the Sanhedrin a great orator, Tertullus, to accuse Paul, but also to justify their desire to secure the execution of such a godly man as Paul. Pilate "washed his hands" in an attempt to exonerate himself from all responsibility from what was likely to follow. Cain tried to justify his disinterest by asking "Am I my brother's keeper?" When Jesus was describing the "great invitation" He records the reaction of all those "who began to make excuse" in justification of their indifference.

It is true therefore that man is quick to try to *justify himself*, not only to his fellowman, but to God. Job was accused of this numerous times, by Bildad. The certain young lawyer '*willing to justify himself*' asked Jesus "Who is my neighbour?"

Adam blamed his transgression on 'the woman thou gavest to be with me' and Eve, when challenged, explained 'the serpent beguiled me, and I did eat.' When Moses challenged Aaron on the presence of the golden calf, Aaron said, "Thou knowest the people, that they are set on mischief." Similarly Saul, when questioned by Samuel about the bleating sheep, blamed the people - "But the people took of the spoil, sheep and oxen . . ." Clearly some of the best people were quick to try and justify themselves, and, when accused, we ourselves are no strangers to the device of *self-justification*. There are, however, "none righteous, no, not one," and whether our actions on a certain occasion may or may not be excusable, the broad truth is that all have sinned and come sadly short of God's glory (and sin separates man from his Maker). But. BUT. "BUT God commendeth His love towards us in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, *being now justified by His blood, we shall be saved from Wrath through Him. For if when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son, much more being reconciled, we shall be saved by His life.*"

Thus God graciously intervened and rescued us from our hopeless plight. While man struggled in the morass of sin Christ died for him, and 'justified' mankind 'By His blood.' Small wonder then that God commendeth His own standard of love to us and assures us of His promise which contains that double indemnity, i.e. That if God would save His enemies by the *death* of His Son, how much more will He save His Church by the *life* of His Son. From Paul's various other statements in Romans on the subject, we can summarise and say that "It is God that justifieth" (Rom. 8:33) and that we are justified "Freely by His Grace" (Rom. 3:24) and that we are "justified by His blood" (Rom. 5:9) and that we are justified by our *faith* (Rom. 5:1).

#### TRUE JUSTIFICATION

God's plan for saving the souls of lost men is the central theme of the entire Bible. The scheme for human redemption begins to unfold in the early part of Genesis; and like a great river ever widening in its course, continues through to Revelation. All other issues are purely incidental to God's main thrust - to rescue perishing souls. Jesus came to seek and to save that which was lost and is the central personality of the Bible - His gospel is the focal point of its doctrine. The O.T. pointed forward to His coming and the New Testament presents Him as the world's Redeemer and reveals in detail His scheme of redemption.

In Paul's epistle to the Romans we are confronted with Paul's teaching on 'justification'; that pearl amongst all the many graces of God to man, and the one which Luther considered the most important doctrine in the Bible. 'Justification' is not now a matter much written upon, but if one should pursue any background reading in the subject one will find that it was something around which controversy raged at the Reformation. Alexander Campbell agreed with Luther's sentiments and said of the great Reformer "Emerging from the smoke of the great city of mystical Babylon, he saw as clearly and as far into these matters as any person could in such a hazy atmosphere." Luther's view, based on New Testament scripture, that we are justified by faith, conflicted with the teaching of the Roman Catholic church and even now Roman Catholic theologians believe that justification involves an infusion, and not an imputation, of righteousness - a moral and not a legal change, a change of character and not of condition.

#### THE MEANING

The meaning of 'Justification' is best ascertained from the original use made of the word in the scriptures. Here it would seem to be a direct opposite to 'condemnation' and used in the context of a judge pronouncing that the person arraigned before him is innocent (Deut. 25:1; Is. 5:22). The function of the judge is to confirm the innocence of

the guiltless, and condemn the guilty, and, as such, he has no need to dispense mercy. The innocent have therefore no need of pardon - only the guilty. Thus the element of *Pardon* looms large in any definition of 'Justification.' Paul, in the early chapters of *Romans*, highlights *the guilt* of both Jews and Gentiles. The Jews had the Mosaic Law but the law merely defined sins, and could not pardon them. The law *condemned* and therefore could not at the same time *justify* those under it. **The Gentiles**, although not having the law, were sinners never-the-less, because they did not always do *by nature* the things contained in law or in keeping with their conscience (Rom. 2 & 3), and therefore Paul could truly say **"All (Jew and Gentile) have sinned and come short of the glory of God."** Because **"by the deeds of the law no flesh could be justified"** God had to step in and justify us *by His grace*. Our justification means therefore that God not only declares us innocent of having contravened His law but actually regards us as if we had always actually kept it. 'Justification' is thus the happy state of being admitted into the favour of God, as *pardoned sinners*, God choosing to ignore the fact that we were ever dead in trespasses and sins. In Paul's discourse to those Jews in Antioch (Acts 13:39) he declared: **"Be it known unto you therefore, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins: and by Him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses."**

#### THE MANNER

Even the most casual reader will at once realise if man is justified by his faith in Christ, then the justification which God extends has not universal application. Indeed Paul stressed to the Corinthians that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God and adds: **"And such were some of you; but ye are washed; but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God."** (1 Cor. 6:11). Again in Rom. 8:23, Paul advises us that only those who have responded to God's call will be justified, and those whom God justifies them He also glorifies. To be justified is, therefore, entirely contingent upon our faith in Christ.

Bearing in mind that there were Judaizers in the Church at Rome, doubtless voicing the merits of circumcision and the works of the law, we can perhaps understand why the apostle spends much time in emphasising that justification was conditional upon faith and why he introduces (Chap. 2 & 3) the case of **Abraham and David**. In **Abraham's** case, Paul points out that he was justified by simple but strong faith. Abraham lived *before* the Mosaic Law was given, and therefore enjoyed God's justification without the law. Paul infers that Jews and Gentiles in his (Paul's) day could equally enjoy God's justification in the same way and on the same terms. Nor was this all, for Abraham was justified by God by faith about twenty years before he was circumcised - thus circumcision had nothing to do with it, and therefore men could easily (in Paul's day) be justified by faith as Abraham was, and circumcision and Moses' Law would have no bearing on the matter. Neither, in Abraham's case, had his justification been based *on his works* for he was justified before being tested by works, and many years before being called upon to sacrifice his son. Justification, given *because* of meritorious works, would form payment of any debt - but justification is by free grace and is **not** therefore payment of any debt. Abraham has not earned his justification by works. Paul not only quotes the case of Abraham but also refers to **David**, who, unlike Abraham, lived under the law and who spoke while it was still in force.

"Even David," says Paul, **"describeth the blessedness of a man, unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works. Saying, Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin."** Paul quotes here Psalm 32:1, 2 where David not only expresses

the idea of justification without works but also, at the same time, gives us a wonderful definition of 'Justification'. And so Paul shows that his doctrine of justification by faith is not as revolutionary as some of the Jews were claiming, but was as old as Abraham and David.

Readers may be thinking of what James, in his epistle, had to say about the case of Abraham and how, in James' view Abraham was **"justified by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar."** (James 2). I believe that any apparent contradiction in the two statements will disappear if we study the matter closely. It seems to me that James is not denying that Abraham was justified by faith but is merely stressing that *true faith* must manifest itself in *good works* (or it is not true faith at all). Indeed (in verse 22) James directs our attention to Abraham's faith and how that faith had its fair and full expression in works - **"Seest thou how *faith* wrought with his works, and by works was *faith* made perfect."** Works, therefore, according to James, are the tangible evidence that faith is present in any individual, and are, in fact, the *only* evidence. Thus 'no works' means 'no faith.'

#### THE MORAL

And so, at the risk of labouring the point, 'Justification' is, as Luther maintained, the doctrine by which the Church would stand or fall. It certainly is the source of the great freedom we enjoy in Christ, and destroys the need for any human intermediary or priestly confessional. Praise be to God for such an unspeakable blessing. 'Justification' is by the grace of God; is for Jew and Gentile alike; and is based on the premise not only that God pardons our sins but regards us as if we have never fallen. It depends not upon any meritorious works on our part and transcends any question of colour, or race, or law, or circumcision (except and in so far that our good works are but evidence and expressions of our faith in Christ). This blessing was brought about by the shedding of Christ's precious blood and is offered to those who have been called by the gospel, washed and sanctified. The moral? God has been swift to forgive us our iniquities and nobody "twisted His arm." Nobody should have to twist our arms to force us to give our fellowmen their trespasses against us. As Paul says, **"And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake, hath forgiven you."** (Eph. 4:32).

Reference was made earlier to the common practice of hiring a good lawyer to plead our cause when brought before the bar of justice. Could we imagine any better advocate to speak for us than the Great Advocate? John says, **"And if any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, even Jesus Christ the righteous."** And Paul says, **"Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that JUSTIFIES. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died (yea rather, that is risen again) who is even at the right hand of God, making intercession for us."** Our cause is obviously in good hands. Self-justification will, however, remain our constant pre-occupation, and we shall forget that, at the end of the day, (as Paul says), **"it is God that justifies."** After all, Jesus was raised, was He not, **"for our justification."** What grander theme could there be?

EDITOR.

## PSALM 73 - A FAITH STRUGGLE

That the righteous should prosper and the wicked suffer is an axiom that makes good sense to nearly any religious person (whether he desires such to happen or not). Underlying this outlook is the unspoken assumption that God ought to reward the righteous here and now and punish the wicked here and now. In spite of this general mind-set, most religious people are content so long as the prosperity of the wicked does

not greatly exceed their own prosperity. However, when the wicked prosper and the righteous suffer, theological problems sometimes come to mind which may lead to painful struggles of faith. Though nothing can be done to guarantee that modern Christians will never be forced to deal with this problem, it is comforting to know that godly men in previous times have been victorious in their struggles with the same issue, and have even matured in faith as a result of their experience. A case in point is the author of **Psalm 73**, a *real man* who experienced a real faith before he came to see things in proper perspective.

Psalm 73 contains much information concerning the faith struggle which its author endured. Though the details of his experience are not written out in chronological order, a careful reading of the Psalm will yield a fairly clear picture of the events that lead up to its writing. The man who was eventually to write Psalm 73 was a righteous man (v.13). He had kept his life unstained by sin and had ceremonially washed his hands as a declaration of his innocence (cf Deut. 21:6-7; Matt. 27:24). At some later time, in spite of his righteousness, calamity struck (v. 14). Though the exact nature of his misfortune cannot be determined, the text indicates that this was a continuous process for quite some time ("all the day," "every morning," v. 14). In view of this, it is likely that his calamity was some type of disease or sickness, though this is not certain.

#### ENVY

As the Psalmist suffered, he became increasingly aware of the prosperity of the wicked (vv. 3ff.). Apparently their prosperity had not bothered him too much before, but now that he was suffering, their good fortune was a burden to him. When he later wrote what is now Psalm 73, he made a very pointed contrast between the prosperity of the wicked and suffering of the righteous. The wicked are not "smitten" as the rest of mankind (v. 5), but the Psalmist is "smitten" (same Heb. word) all day long (v. 14). Likewise, the wicked do not have the "trouble" that other men have (v. 5), but the Psalmist had faced the "troublesome" (same Heb. word) task of understanding his sufferings (v. 16). This contrast points out what at one time appeared to be a major drawback of living a righteous life.

Painfully aware of his own suffering, and growing in his realisation of the extent of the prosperity of the wicked, the Psalmist was brought to the point of *envy* (v. 3); he was actually jealous of the wicked. In his thoughts he concluded that, due to the prosperity of the wicked and due to his own calamity, his efforts to live righteously were totally vain (v. 13). The writer never verbalised this conclusion; in fact, he later confessed that if he had spoken in such a manner he would have been acting unfaithfully toward the rest of God's people (v. 15). Yet the thoughts and feeling of envy toward the wicked and the futility of righteous living were undoubtedly in his mind. It is at this point that the Psalmist came close to losing his faith (v. 2).

#### TRANSIENCY OF PROSPERITY

For a while the Psalmist tried to resolve his dilemma by human reasoning. However, when he did so, this was troublesome to him (v. 16). Finally he went to the "sanctuary of God" (v. 17, apparently referring to the Temple in Jerusalem) and was led to a new realisation. The most important thing that he realised concerned the "end" or "final lot" of the wicked. They are destined to destruction and terror (vv. 18-19). The prosperity that they presently enjoy is as usual as unreal as a dream (v. 20) and as short-lived as a man's journey down a slippery path (v. 18). How foolish to be envious of such as these! When the Psalmist at last realised the final lot of the wicked, he renewed his trust and delight in God, and later wrote this monumental Psalm (vv. 25-28).

A summary of the progression of the Psalmist's feeling and thoughts during his experience may be presented by the three-fold occurrence of the word "surely" in the Psalm. At one time, due to the prosperity of the wicked and due to his own suffering, he

thought "surely" all his efforts to keep his heart pure were in vain (v. 13). Later, however, he realised that "surely" God sets the wicked in slippery places (v. 18). This led him to his final conclusion that "surely" God is good to those who are pure in heart (v. 1).

### LESSONS FOR CHRISTIANS

The modern Christian can learn many lessons from Psalm 73. The most obvious lesson is that godly people should not be envious of the prosperity of the wicked (cf. Ps. 37:1-2; Prov. 24:19-20). Christians especially need to be reminded of this when they are suffering, since it is in times of trial that one is most likely to feel that God is not treating him fairly. The reason that Christians need not be envious of the prosperity of the wicked is that the "final lot" of the wicked is destruction (Ps. 73:17-20), while the final lot of the righteous is eternal life (v. 24). This also shows that Christians should not set their hope on things in this life, but should look forward to the city which is to come (Heb. 13:14).

A second major lesson is that God is indeed good to those who are pure in heart (Ps. 73:1). Faithful Christians should believe and confess this whether they suffer or prosper. Instead of humanistically determining the nature of God on the basis of one's assessment of the appropriateness of the events that happen to him, one should hold steadfastly to the confession of God's goodness no matter what happens. Instead of defining God by events that occur, one should come to understand more fully the meaning of "good" by these events (Matt. 7:11; Rom. 8:28). Once Christians recognise that God's nature is goodness, they should in turn renew their delight and trust in him (Ps. 73:25-26).

### FOR OUR LEARNING

Another very important lesson for the Christian in this Psalm is that God is with him even during times of doubt and questioning. The Psalmist recognised that such was true in his case, and he points this out in the Psalm by another word-repetition. He confesses, "I was a stupid beast *before Thee*" (v. 22), but he also realises, "I was continually *with Thee*" (same Heb. word, v. 23). However, he acknowledges that he was with God not because of anything *he* had done, but because *God* "had seized *my* right hand" (v. 23). In other words, though the Psalmist was straying away from God, God was still with him. Likewise, when Christians have doubts and struggles in their faiths, God does not abandon them, but remains faithful (2 Tim. 2:11-13).

Christians may also learn from Psalm 73 that they should tell others what God has done for them (Mark 4:19). No sermon is more powerful than that which grows out of one's own personal experience. The Psalm shows that faith struggles can lead to a more mature faith (James 1:2-4). When Christians encounter faith struggles they should rejoice and look forward to the growth and maturity that they will bring.

Psalm 73 is a portion of the word of God that grew out of the personal experience of a real human being. Its message is timeless and its hope far-reaching. With the reading of this Psalm, the words of Paul are again vindicated, that "**Whatever was written in earlier times was written for our instruction, that through perseverance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope**" (Rom. 15:14).

M. BRYANT.

## A PLACE LIKE NO OTHER

Would that the world has an epidemic of homesickness, for such is evidence of good memories of home. And too, maybe parents would dream themselves into better moms and dads.

Why is it that one can be ten thousand miles away from home, and yet, in moments of thought, dream himself right back there to the green pastures, or the peaceful forests,

or high mountains, or whatever? (Thank God for memories!).

J. Howard Payne was right when he wrote, "Mid pleasures and palaces though we may roam, be it ever so humble there's no place like home." And there isn't. Many journey to the far corners of the earth in search of what they desire, but find it only when they return home.

There's something precious about that humble dwelling of childhood days, something that really cannot be put into words. That yearning, gnawing feeling to return there just for a visit is a unique aesthetic sensation of the human heart. And it's there no matter how old you are. Those precious childhood memories are like jewels which illuminate our past.

All parents should build good future memories of home in the minds of their children. Any who don't are destroying the future happy recollections of a distant sojourner.

Good homes are to society what good bones are to anatomy; they just hold everything together. But bad homes are like bad bones too. They just allow everything to fall apart. True character is made in the home. As someone said, "Home is the chief school of human virtues." "We shape our dwelling," said Winston Churchill, "and afterward our dwellings shape us." Would that we had millions of homes shaped after God's eternal precepts.

When God filled vacant space with the universe, he created a lot of physical things. But when it came to the home, he created something spiritual, emotional; something made out of love and understanding and just pure joy. There wasn't anything physical about it, no brick and mortar and all that. Yes, the home is that "paternal hearth," said Irving, "That rallying place of the affections."

A house is built by hands, a home by hearts. I'm sure it was Hugo who said, "A house is built of logs and stone, of tiles and post and piers; a home is built of loving deeds that stand a thousand years."

### A HOUSE OR HOME?

But sadly, here is where too many people are confused. Some fail to see a difference between a good house and a good home. There is a difference, you know. One's made out of brick and mortar, the other of strictness and order. One contains lamps and chairs, the other love and charity.

A good home never really needed a good house. "A cottage," said Hamilton, "will not hold the bulky furniture and sumptuous accommodations of a mansion; but if God be there, a cottage will hold as much happiness as might stock a palace." And that's the key: "if God be there." Would that we had today as many good homes - "with God there" - as we have good houses. "The sumptuously furnished house may be only an exquisitely sculptured tomb," said John Henry Jowett, "the scantily furnished house may be the very hearthstone of the eternal God." How many houses are there today which are only whited sepulchres full of dead men's bones?

"Homes are the building blocks of civilization," exhorted Toynbee. But what if the building blocks are made of a cheap substitute for the real and pure clay? A house that has food and fire for the fireplace never contains a home until it is running over with food and fire for the soul. Elijah, remember, built an altar; but it took God to produce the fire. Men can build houses. That's easy. But it takes God to build a true home. And really, isn't that what we want? Good Christian homes are sprinkles of heaven on earth.

It's a shame that the modern home has become only a place to get ready to go to some other place. Few men are *homeless*, but many are *home less* than they should. There was the woman who asked the court for a divorce on the grounds that her husband was "careless about his appearance." She explained, "He only appears around the house about once a week."

The rich seem to spend a lot of money *on* their homes, the poor spend a lot of time *in* their homes. Wouldn't we have more happier homes if more people felt at home at home?

Of course, not every home is perfect. But that does not mean that it, the home, cannot be precious. Disobedience and disagreement sometimes cause waves and worry in the home, but devotion and duty make for good wishes and good wills. Someone once said, "The best way to keep a child at home is to keep charity there."

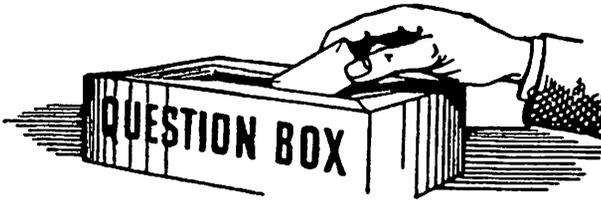
#### AS FOR MY HOUSE

Good homes will produce good products. There's no factory in the world that can surpass the product of a good home. Good homes roll off tons of certified happiness every year. If a sour product comes from the factory, usually there's a malfunction in the machinery. So every home factory should be thoroughly cleaned, oiled and repaired with the ointment and oil which flows from the eternal fountain of divinity.

That's the only way we can assure a good product. Didn't someone say, "Make a product the way it should be, and when it is sold to the customer, it will be what it was intended to be"? Someone else said it a little differently, "train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old, he will not depart from it." That has to be right.

"But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord." Wouldn't it be great if every head of every household in the world would say that? Of course, that's not realistic, everyone saying it and doing it, that is. It will never happen in a sin-ridden world. But those who make it happen in their own homes have reaped untold joys. And it can happen in your home, too. Ever wonder why there were so many "Household baptisms" in the first century when the Church first began? Maybe it was because there were a lot of fathers who said, "As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord." And that everyone must do today if he ever really wants to restore true homelife to his home.

R. E. DICKSON.




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Conducted by  
Frank Worgan

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#### *A question concerning the tombs of the 'Fathers' of Israel*

During a recent conversation, a brother drew my attention to an apparent contradiction concerning land-purchase of Abraham and Jacob, and the burial-places of Abraham, Jacob and the 'Fathers'.

The passages involved are: Genesis 23:19; Genesis 33:19; Acts 7:16; Joshua 24:32ff.

Gen. 23 is the *only* record of a land-purchase made by Abraham and it relates to the purchase, from Ephron the Hittite, of the field *near Hebron* containing the cave in which the body of Sarah was buried. This tomb, which today is *in Hebron*, the town having expanded, became the burial place of Abraham himself, followed by Jacob and Leah, and Isaac and Rebekah (Gen. 49:31 and 50:13).

Gen. 33 *tells* us that *Jacob* bought a piece of land at *Shechem*, from the sons of Hamor, and this purchase is confirmed by Joshua 24:32, where mention is made of the burial of Joseph at Shechem.

Acts 7, however, is the passage which creates confusion in the minds of some, because Stephen says that Joseph *'and our fathers'* were buried at *Shechem 'in the tomb*

which Abraham bought from the sons of Hamor,' and the question is: do we have a contradiction here? Has Stephen made a mistake? The answer is No! There is no contradiction and no mistake!

The difficulty disappears when we understand that, when Stephen spoke of *our fathers,*' he was not referring to the Patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, who most certainly were buried at Hebron, but to the fathers of the Twelve Tribes (Acts 7:8).

Notice also, that in v. 12 of that chapter Stephen says that Jacob himself, and *'our fathers,'* died.

Jacob died first and was taken back to Canaan to be buried at *Hebron,* as he had requested (Gen. 50:13).

Later, Joseph died, the only one of the twelve sons of Jacob whose burial is actually recorded, and, many years later, at the time of the Exodus his bones were taken back to Canaan and buried at *Shechem* in the piece of land which Jacob had given to him (Gen. 48:22).

This is what Joseph had requested his brothers to do, and it is perfectly conceivable that the rest of 'the fathers,' all of whom died in Egypt, made the same request following Joseph's example, because they, also, would have no desire to remain in Egypt but would ask to be buried in the Promised Land.

This means that Stephen is simply stating that *the fathers of the twelve tribes* were buried at *Shechem,* and therefore there is no contradiction.

The only person who says otherwise is Josephus, the Jewish soldier who wrote the 'History of the Jews.' He says that the *'sons of Jacob were buried at Hebron* (Book 2, ch. 8:2).

But Josephus was inaccurate. There are only six people buried in the Cave of Machpelah and they are those already mentioned. Today, the 'Mosque of Abraham,' which was originally a Christian church-building, covers the entrance to the cave. The tombs, to which no one is allowed access, lie beneath the building, and are represented inside the Mosque itself by six symbolic tombs. As for the Tombs of the Twelve Patriarchs; Jerome testifies in his Epistle 86, that even in his days they were shown at *Shechem.*

If we wonder how Josephus could make such a 'mistake,' perhaps the reason is not difficult to find. In his days, Shechem had become part of Samaria. Originally that was not the case. Shechem had been an ancient Hebrew sanctuary, with very strong associations with Abraham.

1. It had been his first stopping place when he came to the land of Canaan, and had built an altar there, and it was here that God first appeared to him (Gen. 12:6).

2. Shechem is where Jacob had settled after his return from Haran in Mesopotamia, and there he had bought a piece of land (Gen. 33).

3. Joseph's brothers had actually herded their flocks at Shechem before going down into Egypt (Gen. 37:12-14).

4. Shechem had been allocated to Ephraim at the Conquest of Canaan, and had been made a City of Refuge (Josh. 20:7).

5. It had been the first capital of all Israel (1st Kings 12:11).

6. In the New Testament it appears as Sychar, where Jacob's Well was located (John 4). It is easy, therefore, to see that the place would be sacred to the Israelites.

However, when the Northern Kingdom of Israel fell to the Assyrians in 711 B.C., the area was re-populated by foreigners moved in by the conquerors, and Shechem became the centre of worship for the 'Samaritans', who, having been denied the privilege of helping to rebuild the Temple in Jerusalem, built their own Temple on near-by Mount Gerizim.

Given the feeling that the Jews later had for all things 'Samaritan,' it is not

surprising that, when writing his 'History', Josephus should close his eyes to the fact that the fathers of the tribes of Israel were buried in Samaritan territory - namely at Shechem.

But, the fact remains, that Shechem was always a more prominent place than Hebron.

Incidentally, there is no doubt that when Stephen mentioned the fact that the Fathers were buried in 'Samaritan' Shechem, this would anger his listeners even more!

### A SECOND PROBLEM ARISES FROM THE PASSAGES TO WHICH I HAVE REFERRED

As we have seen, Abraham's association with Shechem was earlier than his connection with Hebron, and it is possible to build up a picture of ownership of that piece of land at Shechem, before *Jacob bought it*.

Genesis 48:22 records that Jacob gave to Joseph 'one shechem' - 'one mountain slope', or 'one portion' - which, he said, he '*took from the hand*' of the Amorites '*with my bow and with my sword*'. The expression, '*took from the hand*', means '*re-claimed*', and therefore he was not thinking of the purchase recorded in ch.33.

Remember that Abraham built an altar at Shechem, and that in itself implies *ownership*, because he would never have erected an altar on land which belonged to someone else.

What Jacob had done was to re-assert by force of arms, his claim to land, which had once belonged to Abraham. That land at Shechem had very special significance to him, because of its religious family associations, but in the intervening time, the Amorites who had entered Canaan had occupied it.

Then, after '*taking it from the hand of the Amorites*' Jacob had diplomatically, and as an act of reconciliation, *enlarged* his holding by purchasing more land, and this is the purchase recorded in Gen. 33.

It was because of this sacred significance of this land that he singled it out as a special gift to Joseph, and why, later, Joseph requested that, when God delivered His people from Egypt, his bones should be taken and buried at Shechem.

One final point: Gen. 22 tells how Abraham made the journey to Mount Moriah in order to offer up Isaac. The mountain overlooks the Plain of Moreh, where the Oak of Moreh stood, (Gen. 12:2) where Abraham erected his first altar *and where Shechem was located*.

Thus, Abraham knew well the place to which God instructed him to take Isaac.

The mountain which overlooked Shechem and the Plain of Moreh is Mount Gerizim, on which the Samaritans built their temple.

We can surely appreciate that, for Abraham to travel so far to fulfil the command of God argues that he had, originally, consecrated an altar there, and had a possession there.

(Questions to: Frank Worgan, 5 Gryfebank Way, Houston,  
Renfrewshire, Scotland PA6 7NZ  
Email: frank@fworgan.freeserve.co.uk)

## PICTURES VERSUS WORDS

The idea was recently put forward on television that our English cathedrals should be returned to their original condition when they were built in the Middle Ages, before the reformers had broken up stained glass windows and statuary and whitewashed over the wall paintings with the idea of rooting out idolatry. This would involve having the interiors of the buildings, and sometimes part of the exteriors, repainted in bright colours and regilded, and providing plenty of music, ceremonies incense, robes and

processions. Some buildings still have a mediaeval wall painting of the last judgment, which was a popular theme, and shows devils pitchforking lost souls into the mouth of a huge beast. In these days when people take little notice of the word of God *in written or spoken form*, it is thought that *illustrations* of Bible stories and so-called saints would attract them like a kind of "religious theme park", as it presumably did in mediaeval times, when the scriptures were a closed book to almost all people, and the Church profited financially from pilgrimages.

Some might argue that cathedrals are very much like the tabernacle or temple in the Old Testament where everything was of the finest craftsmanship but, although the various items in these Jewish places of worship were full of symbolic meaning concerning the way of salvation, nowhere were there any depictions of human beings, and there was nothing which could lead to idolatry. Moreover we are not commanded to erect any such buildings under the Christian dispensation.

### PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

When considering illustrations of Bible stories, one remarkable fact is how little we know about the appearance of scriptural characters. We are told that the Israelites admired king Saul for his height (1 Sam. 9:2), and we know David was a handsome lad (1 Sam. 16:12). Some women were described as beautiful when it was important to the story. In New Testament times appearance is of even less importance. It seems that our Lord passed unnoticed in a crowd, and only riveted their attention when He began to speak. We know roughly the type of clothes they wore as these remained the same for many centuries. We know that men had relatively short hair at that time, because Paul condemns long hair (1 Cor. 11:14) and he could hardly have done this if it had contradicted the example set by Jesus and His disciples.

Another good television programme about religious art explained that Christians did not produce any pictures until about 200 years after the beginning of the Church, and when they did begin to use illustrations they did not claim that they were real likenesses, but gave them contemporary clothes and appearance. It was not until after 1200 A.D. that legends of miraculous portraits gradually led to the traditional image of Jesus with long hair being adopted and spread by the Catholic Church. Apparently many people feel a need to believe in these portraits and cannot accept any alterations.

### SEEING OR HEARING

Even the best of the old works of religious art usually show mediaeval costumes and backgrounds from various European countries, seem rather far removed from our everyday life, but any attempt to follow their example and show scriptural characters in modern dress, with tee shirts, jeans and trainers, would take away all their dignity. Pictures representing Bible characters in authentic dress in a Middle Eastern setting may be helpful, especially to children, but we have to ask whether the artist has rendered the details correctly. The television programme showed an early image of the baptism of Jesus, where He was shown standing in water up to his waist, and a later one where He was standing beside the water while John the Baptist poured a few drops over His head from a little dish. Art can certainly mislead.

The most important consideration, however, is that while scripture is inspired (2 Tim. 3:16) no Christian art was ever inspired in the proper meaning of the word. The scriptures are full of references to the word of God. "**Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing the word of God**" (Rom. 10:17). Our Lord intends us to receive the gospel by *hearing* it, rather than looking at pictures. May we make a plea here for more **reading of the Bible** in our meetings, rather than just a few verses on which to base a sermon? The scriptures will speak for themselves when a passage is chosen thoughtfully and read clearly. Then we can picture the Bible stories in our own minds better for not being restricted by some artist's imagination. Besides, the most valuable illustration we

can give is for *ordinary people* to be seen *living the Christian life* in the world.

R. M. PAYNE, Reading.

## CHRISTIAN LIVING

The characteristics of Christian living can be summed up in the following statements of Jesus. He said, "**Come unto me**"; "**Follow me**"; "**Abide in me**" and "**Go ye**". Simple words indeed. Today we tend to worry over the things we must not do, to the neglect of the things we should be doing.

The requests that the Lord makes of us are so simple, so straight forward, so unmistakable in meaning that even a child can understand. It would appear the difficulty does not lie in trying to decipher *the meaning* of Christ's commands, but in believing *with a sincere heart*: that seems to be the trouble. I am sure we pray often: but do we pray believing, not just hoping; expecting, awaiting the force of the Holy Spirit. It seems not brethren. We fail in this, taking things for granted. God relates to those who are mighty in prayer; they will be used and blessed of Him.

### "COME UNTO ME"

To hear and to respond to the call of Jesus, creates a new Christian, and praise the Lord, that's good. The more we go to Jesus, the closer our fellowship with Him will be. Our experience in the Lord will reach new heights. We must realise that Jesus says "Come unto me" not once but often.

### "FOLLOW ME"

When we come to Jesus we find a friend with power, influence and wisdom: such as no earthly friend can ever hope to have. Earthly friends can, at times, let us down: but Jesus, never. In Him all things are possible. We need to believe this. Many of us tend to falter. We need to follow on in the footsteps of Jesus, in close company. Failure results in sorrow.

### "ABIDE IN ME"

To be in union with Christ is of the most importance. We must be in fellowship with Him, we must be working with Him. Jesus says, "**I am the vine ye are the branches.**" Christian take note; no branch, no fruit. It is through the Church the good news is to be preached, in all its facets. Through the Christian the good news is to be made known. For this we need to abide in Christ, for strength, for guidance, for help and for success. We must ever be aware of the possibility of failing in this by, standing on past laurels. To "abide in the Lord" means success in all things; that is the promise of God.

### "GO YE"

To answer Christ's call of "GO", one needs courage, honesty and a stout heart. If truly abiding in Christ, these things can be ours. The Spirit will help you, guide us, direct us and care for us. A possible failing of the Christians may be that strict adherence to the first three commands create a neglect of the fourth "Go ye", to the hurt of the soul. "Go ye", Christ says, but we stand static! "Go and preach the gospel," but we respond, "I can't do that, its not very convenient." Attend meetings; go to the soul that needs comfort; go to the brother that needs help; go to the person that is house-bound. In this dear reader, you are helping to preach the gospel. It may be hard to understand this, but a static Christian is of no consequence. A Christian on fire for the Lord, can soon set alight a flame somewhere else, to the glory of God. We have to share the faith. If you really can't go then send a card, a note, an invitation, a tract, advice, help. We can all go, brethren, in some way or another. If not, help others to go. Be about the Lord's business in your own small way.

May the Lord bless us all, in the work He has set before us.

A. P. SHARPE, Newtongrange.

## SCRIPTURE READINGS

Aug. 6	Genesis 3:1-19	Romans 5
Aug. 13	Proverbs 5	Romans 6
Aug. 20	Deuteronomy 5:1-22	Romans 7
Aug. 27	Proverbs 16:1-25	Romans 8:1-17

### PEACE, JOY, HOPE AND LOVE

Peace in the Greek is *eirene*; joy is *chara*; hope is *elpis* and love is *agape*. The word peace is used eighty-eight times in the New Testament scriptures as is found in every book. It means far more than just freedom from trouble and cessation of hostility. It describes the serenity, the tranquillity, the perfect contentment of the life which is completely happy and secure. Only Jesus can give this perfect peace (John 14:27). It is a peace that passes all understanding (Philippians 4:7). Christianity is a religion of joy. The word occurs sixty times in the New Testament. The verb is found seventy-two times. This joy is not from earthly things, but it is a joy whose foundation is God. One commentator has described it as "the distinguishing atmosphere of the Christian life". Hope is desire combined with expectation. Hope looks forward. The Christian hope is for future good. A.M. Hunter once wrote: "Hope is the confidence that the God who has redeemed men in the cross will, at the end, reward his faithful people with the glory 'laid up for them in heaven' ". Alexander Campbell wrote: "The whole hope of the Christian may, indeed, be summed up in one sentence: 'If children, then heirs - heirs of God, joint heirs with Christ . . . (Romans 8:17)' ". Love is at the heart of the Christian message. We read: **"But God commends His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us"** (5:8). O the deep, deep love of Jesus - vast, unmeasured, boundless, free . . . love of every love the best.

### DEATH THROUGH ADAM, LIFE THROUGH CHRIST

I believe in Adam and Eve. The first Adam is as real to me as the second Adam. I accept the account of the fall of man in the book of Genesis. I read it as a historical event. Some have written it off as a myth, but they cannot count on Paul as an ally. We read: **"Wherefore, as by one man sin entered the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned . . . Nevertheless, death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over them who had not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression, who is the figure of Him that was to come"** (5:12,14). I like what Alexander Campbell once wrote: "Condemned to natural death, and greatly fallen and depraved in our whole moral constitution, though we certainly are, in consequence of the sin of Adam, still, because of the interposition of the second Adam, none are punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord but those who actually and voluntarily sin against disposition of mercy under which they are placed: for this is the 'condemnation of the world, that light has come into the world, and men choose darkness rather than the light, because their deeds are evil' ". In other words, Jesus came to save sinners. But salvation is conditional upon our obedience to His gospel. Please note: sin condemns, pollutes, alienates and destroys its subjects. Grace, through Christ, justifies, sanctifies, adopts and saves its subjects.

### FREEDOM FROM SIN

Let us remember that sin is a power which seizes the throne-room of people's hearts and reduces them to abject slavery. It is the weapon of the master-strategist, who is Satan himself. It is he who knows all the weak spots in our character and who can exploit every fear, every emotion and every desire. This is where Jesus comes in. The old way was one of enslavement to sin; the new way is one of enslavement to Christ, in whom there is true and lasting freedom. In the waters of baptism all

die. From the waters of baptism all rise to walk a new life in Him (6:4). **"Likewise reckon you also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord"** (6:11). No longer does sin reign over us like a king (6:12); no longer does sin have dominion over us like a master (6:14). Jesus is now our Master, Lord and King. Service to Him means we are **"servants to righteousness unto holiness"** (6:19). I also quote verse 22: **"But now being made free from sin and become servants to God, you have your fruit unto holiness and the end everlasting life"**.

I once studied the subject of slavery in detail. Roman slavery in particular took up months of work. I have never regretted the time spent on it because it helped me to understand better the thinking of Paul. It is clear from his writings that he knew all about slaves and slavery and he used his knowledge to great effect. This is certainly the case in his epistle to the Romans.

#### FREEDOM FROM LAW

Our late brother William Wardrop in Motherwell always used to say: "The Law diagnosed the disease, but Jesus provided the remedy". The early verses of chapter 7 point out that Christians have died to the Law. It no longer has dominion over them. **"Wherefore, my brethren, you also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ; that you should be married to another, even to Him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God"** (7:4). One commentator has written: "Despite the good intentions of law, it only incited to sin. Its very prohibitions encourage experimentation. Its denunciation created determination to taste the forbidden fruit. It was not the law that was weak, but the flesh. It perverted what it came to protect. Obviously a whole new plane of life had to be created with a level of life to which law could never aspire. It would not do to die to one law and than marry another

one. Law has nothing to offer one who is raised from the dead".

Paul wrote: **"For sin shall not have dominion over you: for you are not under law, but under grace"** (6:14). The Christian system is different from the Jewish system. The Jews were under a government of precept; we are under a government of principles. Everything was laid down to the Jews in broad and plain commandments, their book, which contains their worship, was a ritual and a manual of religious and moral duties. Nothing was left to discretion, nothing to principle. There is nothing like this in the New Institution. In Christ we have attained adulthood and He leaves a lot of things to our discretion. But, of course, **"let all things be done decently and in order"** (1 Corinthians 14:40).

#### FREEDOM FROM DEATH

Romans chapter 8 is one of the great chapters of the Bible. I describe it as the chapter of the Holy Spirit, who is mentioned nineteen times in the first twenty-seven verses. Sin spells death, but the Spirit spells life. Again, a knowledge of Roman slavery will help us in our understanding of a number of Paul's statements in this portion of his letter. Awareness of the adoption process in the Roman world will also go a long way in assisting us with the interpretation of the passage. (I should like one day to re-enact the adoption ceremony when, for example, a stranger by blood was adopted into a family to receive all the rights of a son). Once I was a slave of Satan, but now I am a son of my heavenly Father. He adopted me into His family. I have been given a new name. I am permitted to eat at His table. I have become an heir of His estate. My past life has been blotted out. It is all too wonderful for words!

I like the fact that in due time God did not send another system of Law, but He sent His Son. **"For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh,**

and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit" (8:3-4). To walk after the flesh is the fate of the once-born men; to walk after the Spirit is the feat of twice-born men.

IAN S. DAVIDSON,  
Motherwell.

## TEST YOUR BIBLICAL KNOWLEDGE

1. How long did it take Nehemiah and his men to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem?
2. Who was the father of Acsah?
3. Which king did Hazael murder?
4. How long did Ezekiel lie on his right side for the sins of Judah?
5. Who was the father of King Jehoshaphat?
6. With whom did King Jehoshaphat ally himself by marriage?
7. Which two men wrapped Jesus's body for burial?
8. Whose household informed Paul the quarrels at Corinth?
9. For how long was Anna the prophetess married?
10. Name the wicked woman mentioned in the letter to Thyatira.

## COMING EVENTS

### CHURCH AT PETERHEAD Special Weekend

Dates/Times: Saturday, 16th September,  
7.00 p.m.

Sunday, 17th September, 10.00 a.m.,  
11.00 a.m., 6.00 p.m.

Speaker: *Andy Scott (Kirkcaldy) D.V.*

### Gospel Mission

Dates/Times: Wednesday, 15th to  
Sunday 19th November

Wednesday to Saturday, 7.00 p.m.  
Sunday, 10.00 a.m., 11.00 a.m.,  
6.00 p.m.

Speaker: *Frank Worgan D.V.*

### Social Weekend

Dates: 7th-8th October (inclusive)  
Times: Saturday 7th - 3pm

Sunday 8th - 10.00am, 11.00am  
and 6.00pm

Speakers: *John Morgan (Hindley)*  
*Mitch Vick (Stirling)*

*A warm welcome awaits all.*

### ANNIVERSARY MEETING

**Kentish Town, London**

To be held October 7th at 3.00 p.m.

Tea at 4.45 p.m. and

Evening Meeting at 6.30 p.m.

Speaker: *John Kneller, Tranent.*

### NIGERIA APPEAL

Some of you will remember supporting a brother L.O. Ubuja in Nigeria last year through an appeal in the *Scripture Standard*. We were able to send £300 to him and he wishes to convey his sincere gratitude to all concerned and has asked if we can support him again this year.

He has been studying with some faithful brethren and has made arrangements to travel with them to their villages and conduct a few days evangelism with the aim of establishing churches in their respective communities where they can continue to worship.

He hopes to conduct more of the same programme in the future as many of his converts and those who study the Bible with him (yet to be Christians) come from areas where there is no nearby church. He says "I humbly appeal to you to centre your kind discussions on the need of my regular support. Seek around from dedicated and willing children of God."

If you would like to help this brother in his endeavour to spread the gospel and establish new churches could you please send any donations to me Mrs. Margery Purcell, 3 Dale Avenue, Bramhall, Stockport, Cheshire, SK7 2JP and could you make any cheques payable to Church of Christ, Stretford.

### GHANA APPEAL

The following is an update on brother David Fobi who is being treated at the hospital in Kumasi. The tests

showed that he does not have cancer. He has three operations ahead of him, the first of which he was meant to undergo this week. Unfortunately, he has malaria and a bladder infection which means the operation will have to be postponed until 23rd June. Please remember him in your prayers. I was sent a list of drugs needed for him, which are not available in Ghana, and was requested to obtain if possible. This involved getting a private prescription, applying for clearance permission from The Ghana High Commission, the Medical Control Agency and the Home Office. A Doctor's letter had to be attached and also enclosed, after the Pharmacy obtained these drugs. They were sent by DHL and I was able to track where the parcel was, by using the Internet each day and keep the hospital informed by E-mail. The parcel arrived safely (Although not on the day that it was scheduled to arrive). We pray that brother Fobi makes a full recovery.

Sister Wanda Spiers also has malaria at present. We pray that she will also make good and speedy recovery.

Graeme Pearson, 13 Fairways, Dunfermline, Fife. KY12 0DU.

## OBITUARY

**Cleveleys, Lanes.:** It is with sadness that we have to report the passing of Bro. Colin Morgan Leyland on June

12th, aged 66 years. He died in hospital from severe heart problems. Our hearts go out to his wife and family as they have to come to terms with their loss and we pray the Lord will sustain them in their sorrow. Colin and Pat have been members of the church in Cleveleys for just over 30 years and he will be sorely missed. He has been one of the mainstays of the congregation, teaching and preaching from a wide knowledge of the scriptures. Older brethren in Turnbridge Wells and Peterhead will have many memories of him labouring with them in his earlier years. The funeral services were taken by the writer and Bro. John Morgan of Hindley. "Blessed be those who die in the Lord."

Pat and family wish to sincerely thank all those who sent so many beautiful cards and letters of sympathy and regret that they cannot answer them all.

ERIC WINTER.

## CHANGE OF ADDRESS

Bill Cook (*formerly of Glenrothes*) now resides at:

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Pitcorthie, Dunfermline,

Fife. KY11 8DG.

Telephone: 01383 723681

**Answers to Quiz next month.**

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