

The SCRIPTURE STANDARD

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

VOL. 45. No. 3

MARCH, 1977

ARE TIMES REALLY CHANGING?

BRITAIN is going through a period of nostalgia just now, this being the Queen's Jubilee Year, and we are being asked by the media to recall what things were like, in 1952, when the Queen came to power, and to reflect upon how things have changed since then. The Queen, has of course, good reason to be proud of her record as sovereign of Great Britain over the last quarter of a century and has been a good queen. When one considers some of the kings and queens of bye-gone days, and some of the presidents of other countries in these present days, we here in Britain have had a peerless monarch at whom no one can point a finger or cast aspersions. To me, our queen is not quite in the same class as Victoria, but then, some will say that that is a very good thing.

To see films of the Queen's coronation, of twenty-five years ago, and to see how things have changed since then is quite alarming. How values have shifted and people have changed. Youngsters watching these films will be amused perhaps, at the long skirts the ladies wore, or the 'short back and sides' of the men, little realising that in another twenty-five years youngsters will be laughing at present styles. Britain, in 1952, having just emerged from the war in Europe was trying to recover (and is still trying to recover) and had had the benefit, moral and spiritual, of the experience in war-time conditions. The people were lean but tough, and regarded one another with a neighbourly eye brought about by the trials and tribulations of war and the resulting feeling of comradeship. How different from today.

In the passing of time one has, I suppose, to discern between things that matter and things that don't. Kings and Queens may come and go, Primeministers and Presidents may rise and fall wars may wax and wane, fashions and styles may live today and tomorrow die, but amidst it all man must be wise enough to place his confidence in the right place and differentiate between the certainties and uncertainties of life. In a world of shifting values man must be able to recognise the pearl of good price when he sees it. For instance consider what men generally regard as the accepted essentials in life. Take for instance, personal physical beauty. We are, of course born as we are and have to make the most of it. Yet men are influenced by appearances. Many a beautiful woman has been able to testify that 'her face was her fortune'. Some of the women appearing in the films at the time of the Queen's coronation, beauty queens in their own right at that time, are now interviewed, if at all, in Homes For The Aged. Beauty, though it helps us through this world, does nothing for us in the next, and in any case physical beauty cuts no ice with God. God is concerned only with the character of the person and the outside appearance is of no consequence. Beauty, with the body, passes away, but the soul lives on. Men are undoubtedly influenced by appearances and in many cases replies to job advertisements must now be accompanied by 'a recent snapshot'; but God is quite unimpressed.

Another worldly value regarded by man as indispensable to health and happiness is wealth. Here again God's ways are not man's ways and His thoughts not man's. The apostle James talks of congregations where the brethren had respect to persons (something not quite unknown even in these days) and when there came into the assembly a man with a gold ring and goodly apparel he was asked to "Sit thou here in a good place" and when there came in a poor man with vile raiment he was told to either 'Stand there' or sit under a footstool. Is it possible that this spirit still persists? The apostle goes on to accuse the brethren of despising the poor and points out that God hath chosen the poor of this world, who are rich in faith, to be heirs of the kingdom. The world at large is also inclined to pander to the rich and to disapprove the poor. Are there any assemblies today where some visiting brethren get V.I.P. treatment and others get little attention, or even none at all? Like physical beauty, material prosperity is a value to which men attach a very high priority yet, as far as God is concerned prosperity, like knowledge, merely brings with it added responsibility. After all, we bring nothing into the world and it is certain that we can take nothing out. Any riches we possess must therefore be left behind when we die. The only form of riches transferable to the next world are in the form of good works. Jesus, in Matt. 12:29, exhorts His followers not to seek after the things generally sought after by the nations of the world, and, as far as worldly wealth was concerned, to sell what they had and give alms, thus "providing for themselves bags which wax not old, a treasure in the heavens that faileth not, where no thief approacheth, nor moth corrupteth. Bags, or purses, that wax not old and which can't be stolen by thieves and which can't be destroyed by moths or decay. Men say they are rich and happy, but it is possible to be poor and happier. It is said that millionaires are rarely seen to smile and some, like Henry T. Ford, were in their later years most unhappy men. Andrew Carnegie said that the men who grew more miserable as they grew older were men who had made money-making their God. Certainly the latest, in a long line, of millionaires to die, Mr. Howard Hughes, did not seem to have been even slightly happy in his last years. Wealth, like power, is an illusion and the current hope of the common working-man that 'He might win the pools' and that thereby all his troubles will be over is an illusion as well. Many pools winners will readily testify that their troubles only really began when they won the money and they now wish that they had never won it. The apostle Paul's charge to Timothy regarding the rich men in the church was, "Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not high-minded, nor trust in uncertain riches but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy. That they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate. Laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the day to come that they may lay hold on eternal life" 1 Tim. 6:17.

Yes, notwithstanding all kinds of change over the centuries man still places great store by the same old basic values and is still impressed by appearances and by riches. Despite changing time he still employs the bulk of his time not so much in the search for happiness as in the continual and insatiable pursuit of pleasure, or even power. At the end of the day, and at the end of a man's life, none of these things amount to very much when he stands before his Maker. The wise Solomon at the end of a very eventful life in which he pursued (and overtook) every possible experience and joy that life could possibly offer summed the matter up by saying that it was all 'Vanity' and illusory. To people in a world of rapid and far-reaching change in danger of being swept along or turned aside by it, he gave some good advice in the closing verses of the Ecclesiastes, when he said, "Let us, then hear, the conclusion of the whole matter; Fear God, and keep His commandments for this is the whole duty of man. For God will bring every work into judgement; with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil".

EDITOR.

CANADIAN SUBSCRIPTIONS

Arrangements are in hand to send Canadian subscriptions of S.S. by Airmail to Earl B. Severson, #205, 11867-222 St., Maple Ridge, B.C., CANADA, V2X 5V4, for re-posting to Canadian subscribers. We hope that this will result in copies arriving several weeks earlier than when sent by surface mail direct from Scotland. In future send all changes of address to Bro. Severson.

SAVED BY OBEDIENCE

YEARS ago, I was told a true story (I think) about obedience, which made a great impression on me as a child. (Perhaps some of the older generation can also remember the tale).

A very young child wandered on to a railway track and a train was coming in the distance. His mother arrived on the scene, panic-stricken, and could realize the oncoming tragedy. There was no time to snatch the child to safety — all she could do was to shout out urgently “lie down flat on the track”. The child had been brought up to be obedient and immediately did what the parent demanded. The train roared along over the child, but mercifully he escaped absolutely unharmed.

We, too, can be saved eternally by obedience to God.

Obedience is not popular these days and unfortunately is not taught to children - in fact, children are disobedient to parents, hence lawlessness abounds. From the time of the disobedience of Adam & Eve, the Bible constantly stresses obedience. The prophet Samuel told Saul, “To obey is better than sacrifice.”

We read that Jesus “learned obedience by the things which He suffered, and being made perfect, He became the author of eternal salvation unto all that obey Him”. Surely, this lack of obedience to God is one of the major causes of religious division in these days. Even religious folk are sometimes unwilling to submit to God’s authority, viz., in the matter of baptism, etc. Christ also said “Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven”: so we must be doers of the Word. AS Peter say: Let us “purify our souls in obeying the Truth” and always exhort others to do the same.

Sister E.C. Payne, Reading.

LIFE

(Luke 12 : 13 - 24)

What people think LIFE is

People think life is not worth living unless one has more money and possessions than are needed. Hard work to better oneself is made a god, and admired in others as though it is a virtue in itself. Well-to-do people are respected. Accademic people are respected. Knowledge is made a god, and the pussuit of it for its own sake regarded as a virtue. Conservation and the Arts have replaced God. The hierarchy in business, medicine, politics, religion, entertainment, sport are made gods, Man’s achievements are made gods.

Whatever man sets his mind to, whether it is, to gain some achievement or to do good works it is done to impress. We are always trying to impress other people. How hollow! Are these things what is life all about? “Vanity of vanities, all is vanity”.

Jesus said:

“Sell that ye have, and give alms; make for yourselves purses which wax not old, a treasure in the heavens that faileth not, where no thief draweth near, neither moth destroyeth. For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also” v.v. 33 and 34.

Does this mean that if we put up with a bit of hardship now, we will get the same kind of things in heaven, only bigger, better and lasting? “Jehovah’s Witnesses”, Muslems and Mormons, believe that for the ‘faithful’ the next life will be a bigger and better version of this. Some seriously believe that the men will recline on couches with beautiful maidens in attendance. What the women will get I don’t know.

This is the highest that many minds reach in their conception of the next life, and they say that if it is not like that they do not want to go.

How can one explain to a blind man the beauty of a bird in flight; flowers: the sea? Can the delights of sight be adequately explained in terms of touch, tastes or hearing? How will you explain to him colour, how it can be used and misused? You can say its like beautiful music, discord and harmony. How sad if when a surgeon says I can give you sight, the blindman refuses

saying: "I'm afraid – its unfamiliar". Would not the surgeon appeal to him and say, "You know how you like to hear things, smell and taste, how you like the touch of a child's cheek against your face, well sight is also wonderful, completely different but more wonderful". So God explains to us something completely outside our realm of experience in terms of things we have experienced. Heaven in terms of the most prized things of this life, only more so – transparent gold. Rev. 21:21.

Perhaps you can now see that "there is that maketh himself rich yet hath nothing, there is that maketh himself poor yet hath great riches" (Proverbs 13:7).

"Did not God choose them that are poor as to the world – rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom which he promised to them that love him" (James 2:5).

There was nothing wrong in the man in Luke 12:13 wanting his correct share of the inheritance – but one who is really living is not unduly perturbed at being cheated. Verse 23 "Is not life more than food and body than raiment". A man who is pre-occupied with wealth cannot serve God. Religious people who like to have plenty will try to justify themselves but God knows their hearts, What men think is great, God hates. When the pharisees, who liked to have plenty, heard this teaching they derided Jesus (Luke 16:13-15). Can you see that pursuing wealth or prestige or over indulgence is not living.

Real Life

"This is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent" John 17:3. You and I have a problem – how to really live. Jesus is God's Christ – anointed one – the one God has selected and sent as the answer to that problem. Get to know him and really live. "He that hath the Son hath life" 1 John 5:12. Get to know him so well that he lives right inside your being (Eph. 3:17-19).

This will mean a complete change of mind and attitudes Phil 2:5. Now the only authentic source of information on Jesus is the Bible, and most of this information is in the New Testament. In it you will see that Jesus practised what he preached.

Jesus was a nobody

He voluntarily made himself of no reputation (Phil 2:7 A.V.). What Jesus said of John the Baptist could equally been said of himself. "What went ye out for to see, a man clothed in soft raiment? Behold, they that wear soft raiment are in king's houses". His step-father was a humble tradesman – a carpenter – a far cry from being a king. During his ministry he had no home of his own. A scribe wanted to be one of his followers, Jesus pointed out to him "the foxes have holes, the birds of the air have nests, but the son of man hath nowhere to lay his head" Matt 8:2).

He was put to death with two criminals as though he himself was a criminal. If it hadn't been for the concern of Joseph of Arimathaea, there would have been no where to bury him – a borrowed tomb.

What a way to teach – such a lesson as this – to such as us – the avaricious. James 5:1-6. Have we perhaps condemned, killed the righteous one – and he doth not resist us.

Jesus' life is a full life

"I am the living bread which came down from heaven: If any man eat of this bread he shall live for ever: and the bread that I will give is my flesh which I will give for the life of the world" John 6:51. Jesus' compelling reason for living was in order to die so that we can experience LIFE. "Sacrifices and offerings – thou wouldst not, neither had'st pleasure therein – then hath he said, lo, I am come to do thy will, O God" (Heb. 10:7-9).

We get satisfaction from eating – He got satisfaction from doing the Father's will, in bringing salvation to the lost, John 4:31-32 "I have meat you know not of, My meat is to do the will of him that sent me and to accomplish his work". Don't forget that he was hungry when he said this, but he had a deeper hunger. This was not abject slavery to a selfish despot who says, "please me, or else". We don't sing "How great thou art" to a selfish despot, but to one though Almighty was utterly self giving to the selfish – inspiring in us selfishness and its incomparable joy. What joy? a selfish joy? a bit of suffering then a lot of pleasure? NO. For your sakes he became poor that ye through his poverty might become rich" (2 Cor. 8:9) – riches that have

nothing to do with earthly wealth or prestige. For our sakes he set his face steadfastly towards Jerusalem (Luke 9:51). For our sakes he had to undergo a baptism of anguish and suffering. He had a deep compelling yearning to go through with it – for our sakes. “How am I straightened till it be accomplished?” Luke 12:50. When some Pharisees advised Jesus to get away because Herod was determined to kill him he said “Go and say to that fox, Behold I cast out devils and perform cures to-day and to-morrow and the third day I am perfected”. That will be it - finished, and for what kind of people was he doing it “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, which killeth the prophets and stonest them that are sent unto her! how often would I have gathered your children together, and ye would not!” Can you see that in these things God is in his anointed one reconciling the world to himself?” Such a LIFE, such love influenced the whole world. This is not the beauty of an eastern type holy man – an aesthetic, or of a ‘do-gooder’. This is the beauty of one who is entirely loving. Whose love is greater than the hatred or indifference of those he loves. The beauty of self-giving love. This is real living - real LIFE. “Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread? and your labour for that which satisfieth not? Hearken diligently unto me and eat that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness” (Isaiah 55:2).

Luke 12:15. “A man’s life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth”... It doesn’t, does it? ALLAN ASHURST, Manchester.

CORRESPONDENCE CLASS

THE EARLY HISTORY OF THE CHURCH OF CHRIST or THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES Chapter 9

- 1 State what you know of Saul from his own statements re his birthplace, his ancestry, and his persecution of the Church. Do not refer to his life following his conversion.
- 2 To whom did Saul intend to take the letters?
- 3 ‘Of this way’. Cite other instances where this term is used and state what is meant by it.
- 4 Describe the interview Saul had with the ascended Christ.
- 5 Why did Jesus tell Saul that a certain disciple in Damascus would tell him what he must do?
- 6 For what purpose did Ananias lay hands on Saul?

Answers, which should be written on one side of the paper only, should be returned to:- Edward Jess, 34 Charles Street, Penicuik, Midlothian, Scotland.

ASK

“The steps of the way I know not,
But my leader I know full well;
My hand is in His, I fear not –
In the depths of His peace I dwell.

He knows where He leads; I know not,
But I trust in His love each day:
My heart is His own; I fear not,
For the way is my Lord’s highway.”

“Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us.” Ephesians 3:20.

ASK WHAT DO I ASK? ASK WHAT DO I ASK? ASK WHAT DO I ASK?

IN previous articles attention has been drawn to several facts regarding our question, Ask, what do I ask? Shall we re-cap for a moment or so. Do not forget that our asking must be according to God’s will, we cannot, we dare not come to Him in prayer to ask anything other than His divine will. Then our attention was drawn to our Lord’s words in the 15th chapter of John and the seventh verse “If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will and it shall be done unto you”. If we abide in Christ, and His words abide in us, the perfect will of our heavenly Father will be our concern in our asking. The same thought surely is prevalent in the words of the Apostle John, when he said:- “And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight” 1 John 3:22.

We must also remember that in coming to the mercy seat, our prayers, our petitions must be made "in the name" of the Lord Jesus. If we keep the above facts clear in our minds, we can come boldly to the throne of grace, to make our requests known to Him. We can be assured that if our prayers are according to His will, He will hear, and answer.

"Call unto me, and I will answer thee, and shew thee great and mighty things, which thou knowest not" Jeremiah 33:3. [Jeremiah 29:12

"Then shall ye call upon me, and ye shall go and pray unto me, and I will hearken unto you"

'And call upon me in the day of trouble: I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me' Psalm 50:15.

"He shall call upon me, and I will answer him: I will be with him in trouble, I will deliver him, and honour him" Psalm 91:15

"Seek ye the Lord while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near" Isaiah 55:6

"Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you" James 4:8

ASK WHAT DO I ASK?

One feels a sense of inadequacy in dealing with such an important subject, and can understand a little of the truth of the words of the Apostle Paul when he said:— "For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known" 1 Corinthians 13:12. In our study of the precious word let us reverently search the scriptures, to find God's will, to grasp hold firmly of those things that are revealed, and not be led away by false teaching. Moses said:— "The secret things belong unto the Lord our God: but those things which are revealed belong to us and to our children for ever, that we may do all the words of this law" Deuteronomy 29:29.

ASK Do I ask that God should perform miracles as He did in days of old? *

May I now quote at length what John A. Hutton wrote when dealing with the statement in Job 15:11 "Are the consolations of God too small for thee, and the word that dealeth gently with thee?" (RV). He says: "As appealing to ourselves not to be claimed obvious and concrete proofs from God, these words are most timely; they ought, even as we say them over to ourselves, to insinuate into our hearts a certain comfort, and at the same time a certain warning and precaution. For there is a tendency, and it has risen with new force in our day, to ask for something more than faith, to ask really for evidences and proofs which shall be indisputable and concrete. We are witnessing in our own time another illustration of how extremes meet—people in the name of a spiritual necessity demanding proofs and contacts and corroborations which are simply material. In the childhood of faith it may have pleased God to grant to those who looked to Him out of some perplexity or fear — to grant some proof of his nearness and of His love to them; some proof which, they being yet children in these matters, might persuade and reassure them. But surely we whom Christ had made men and women in the things of the spirit are falling away from our own possibilities, and are consenting to something lower and less demanding than we are competent to meet, when we cry out for signs, for proofs, for things seen to persuade us of the reality of things unseen. It is a craving which we must resist. It may very well be that we shall never be quite free from such a craving. And there is nothing wrong in us having such a craving so long as we understand that it is something which is not to be pampered or indulged.....

What is it that we want to be assured of which Christ does not assure us of? What more do we want to know? Or is it that we cannot trust Christ, cannot cast all the weight of our yearnings upon His words and upon His experience and report of the love of God? Or are we like children who will not believe unless they see - nay, that is unfair to children; that is true only of grown-up people who have now the perplexities without the insight and imagination of children. I can see quite clearly that our Lord was afraid that this craving would again and again come over His people; that it would assail and torment the finer souls who first and last should give their hearts to Him - the craving for some indisputable sign, for some contact other and lower than the contact of aspiration, of faith and hope and love".

"Miracles", says Fuller, "are the swaddling-clothes of the infant churches", and says Trench, "we may add, not the garments of the full-grown. They were as the proclamation that the king was mounting the throne; who, however, is not proclaimed every day, but only at his ascension.

When he sits acknowledged on his throne, the proclamation ceases. They were as the bright clouds which gather round and announce the sun at his first appearing his midday splendour, though as full, and fuller indeed, of light and heat, knows not those bright heralds and harbingers of his rising. Or they may be likened to the framework on which the arch is rounded, which framework is taken down as soon as that is complete". We do not need today the manifestation of miracles as shown in the Old and New Testaments, God's final message is given to us by His Son, and today, we have the precious Word of God, for our standard and guide. The message of that word is that "The just shall live by his faith". Habakkuk 2:4, in the Revised Version, we have the words:— "My righteous one shall live by faith" Hebrews 10:38. The writer to the Hebrews tells us "Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen" Chapter 11:1 (RSV).

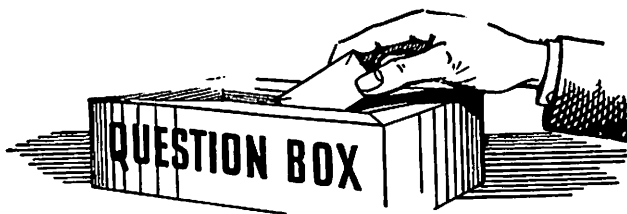
ASK WHAT DO I ASK?

I could pray for a start, that my little faith, may be deepened, that I may have a strong dynamic faith in Christ, the Son of the living God. I could pray that the Apostle Paul's prayer to the Ephesians, may be my prayer:— "That he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by His spirit in the inner man; That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, May be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth and length, and depth, and height; And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God" 3:16-19. No, I have not forgotten I have referred to the verses before, why should I apologize, for again drawing your attention to these wonderful and glorious truths. Read the verses over and over again, and let the Spirit filled messages flow into your hearts, and so bring joy to your soul. How often I have deserved the rebuke that our Lord Jesus, gave to Thomas, "be not faithless, but believing". "Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed. John 20:27-29. Peter said:— "Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory" 1 Peter 1:8.

"Stayed upon Jehovah hearts are fully blest;
Finding, as He promised, perfect peace and rest".

God willing, we shall continue with our theme ASK WHAT DO I ASK? next month. May the Lord's richest blessing be your portion.

LEONARD MORGAN.



Conducted by
Alf Marsden

"IF only the gospel of Jesus Christ and obedience to his commands can save from sin, what will be the end of those who know not God as we do, i.e., worshippers of Buddha, Hindus, etc. Have these, and others like them, any hope of pardon on the day of judgement? Furthermore what will God's judgement be upon those of our culture, who are not members of the church of Christ?"

THIS is a question of crucial importance when we realise that hundreds of millions of people throughout the world subscribe to many and varied religious groups. To rephrase the question, the questioner is asking, 'Does not the sincere Buddhist or Hindu worship the same God as we do; or is Jesus Christ the only way to God?'

This question is charged with emotion. I have stayed in far eastern countries and the obvious sincerity, devotion and, indeed, fanaticism shown by adherents to the religions mentioned make one feel, emotionally, that in some way these people cannot be deluded in what they believe,

but whenever we feel confused in this way, the only thing to do is to resort to the Bible and appeal to its clarity, precision and truth, and this we shall now do.

Is Jesus Christ the only Way?

Christians believe he is because the Bible teaches it. Peter healed a lame man at the beautiful gate of the temple. When the high priest asked by what power he had wrought the miracle, Peter said that it was by the name of Jesus Christ whom they had crucified. He then went on, "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved" (Acts 4:12). Prior to this, Jesus himself had said, "I am the way the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me".

Therefore, the christian in Faith cannot but affirm that Jesus Christ is Saviour, and if, as many people suggest, we are all worshipping the same God but in different ways, then so far as salvation is concerned God has made it very clear that the only means of access to Him is through faith in Jesus Christ and obedience to His commands. Consequent upon this Jesus could say, "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world" (Matt. 28:18-20). Yes, Jesus is the only way! Much as we may admire the fidelity and constancy that people in many religious groups may exhibit, we can only say that if they have not obeyed Christ Jesus in all things then they cannot be pleasing to the God of heaven.

Differences in World Religion

The fundamental concept of Buddhism is that each person must achieve 'enlightenment' himself; no one else can work it out for him. The Buddha never claimed deity, indeed, it is difficult to see how he could if his teaching was that the individual must work out his own salvation. According to Buddhist beliefs, the ultimate goal for the individual is nirvana, which is a state of extinction of desire. Buddha taught that all pain and suffering came from desire. An individual must try to overcome this desire by following the Eightfold Path to Enlightenment; when he has achieved this he will have achieved nirvana, which is total nothingness. There will be no desire because there will be no life or consciousness.

What then? No God, no Christ, no salvation, no eternal life in heaven, no anything. Whatever nirvana may be, and I am not scoffing here, it is not the way to the God of heaven.

The Hindus also have their nirvana but the concept is different than in Buddhism. The god of the Hindu is Brahman, and nirvana is ultimate reunion with him. He is the all-pervading force of the universe. Nirvana in the Hindu religion is achieved through a continuous cycle of birth, life, death, and rebirth. This applies not only to the human kingdom but also to the animal and the insect kingdoms. Immediately at death - whether animal, insect or human - there is a rebirth in another form either up or down the scale. If the life has been good, then there is a movement up the scale with less suffering and poverty; if the life has been bad then there is movement down the scale. If a human life has been particularly bad then the rebirth may be as an animal or an insect. As most people know, the cow is sacred to the Hindu, but what we have said regarding insects explains why the Hindu is loath to kill them also.

So what about Hinduism? Brahman instead of God, no Saviour, a process of reincarnation. If the God of heaven is not Brahman, which he undoubtedly is not, then the Hindu also needs to seek Christ before he can be saved.

When we look at the Muslim religion we find that 'Allah' - as the Muslim God is called in the Koran - is not displayed as the father of Jesus Christ. All knowledge comes through Mohammed, and it is significant that Mohammed, like Buddha, never claimed deity. A believer must follow the Five Pillars of Islam, i.e. repeating the creed, pilgrimage to Mecca, alms to the poor, praying five times daily, and keeping Feast of Ramadan. Heaven, to the Muslim, is a paradise of wine, women and song. He refrains from these in life so that he might achieve them in heaven.

I have examined in brief detail Buddhism, Hinduism, and the Islamic religion because these three major non-christian religions claim countless millions of adherents throughout the world.

The tragedy is that none of these religions will give salvation as we understand it. Their great faults are that Jesus Christ is not the Saviour, and that the way to their supposed heaven is by merit. With these ingredients (and others) they cannot be pleasing to the God of heaven.

What of our Culture?

The sin of sectarianism in the so-called christian world cannot be overlooked. When Paul gathered the elders together at Mileus he warned them, "Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them. Therefore watch" (Acts 20:30,31). You will notice that Paul said that disciples would be drawn away. He also warned that 'of your own selves shall men arise'. It must be acknowledged by all that in apostolic times there was only one church. That church was the church of Christ. (See Matt. 16:13-18). Soon, however, men began to speak perverse things. The apostles doctrine was replaced by the doctrines of men. The Papacy arose followed by a multiplicity of protestant sects. The plain directives concerning baptism were ignored and replaced by unscriptural forms. The clear and simple form of church government as laid down by the apostles was replaced by forms of ecclesiastical organisations. We have now reached the situation where many so-called church leaders are saying that many portions of God's word are myths and fables. Men, indeed, have drawn disciples away from the pure and unadulterated primitive gospel. I think we have to conclude that men who have perverted the true christian gospel in our culture are as guilty before God as those of other cultures.

The restoration of the primitive church and the teaching of the apostles must replace all human and unscriptural elements. Let the words of Peter echo and re-echo around the world. "Repent, and be baptised everyone of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2:38). "And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers" (Acts 2:42). This is the only way to ensure our salvation!

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

SCRIPTURE READINGS

APRIL 1977

3—Deut. 24:1-19	Matthew 19:1-15
10—Ex. 20:1-21	Matthew 19:16-30
17—Lev. 19:1-18	Matthew 20:1-19
24—Gen. 37:3-28	Matthew 20:20-34

JESUS AND DIVORCE

ONCE the authoritative nature of the teaching of Jesus became clear (Matt. 7:29), and could be seen as not being in line with the AUTHORIZED teaching of the day, the AUTHORIZED teachers of the day developed decided and subtle opposition. They must take every opportunity to belittle Him in the eyes of the people. Despite the common people as they did ("This people that knoweth not the law are cursed" - John 7:49) they feared them, and knew that they could only work their will upon Jesus by subverting them into opposition to Him. This they finally succeeded in

doing (Matt. 27:20), but their earlier efforts had been fruitless, and other motives had meanwhile affected the crowds. It was the design of the Pharisees in the case we are considering now, to trap Jesus into an appearance of opposition to Mosaic institutions, regarded by the whole nation with deep respect. Jesus certainly taught chastity so He would oppose divorce. His answers completely defeated their purpose while giving no divine authority for ever breaking the marriage bond. Adultery is breaking that law and all sexual intercourse outside marriage is sin. However there is one exception mentioned by Matthew but not by Mark or Luke. The outcome of the teaching of Jesus in today's society is dealt with by Bro. Marsden in the March 1976 Scripture Standard. Further discussion of it is not necessary here.

Jesus took opportunity to comment for His disciples on the subject of celibacy by stating the three conditions in which men and women either cannot, or can choose not to fulfill the marriage relationship. The emancipation of women due solely to Christian teaching leaves a full fellowship and friendship between the sexes open to all. The early

Christians were accused of wrong relationship because this holy fellowship was their normal behaviour, just as they were accused of idolatry on account of the bread and wine on the Lord's Table.

Jesus and the Children

It seems natural that Matthew with his clerkly ability under divine guidance introduces the lovely picture of Jesus with the children immediately after stating the law which protects children from the horrors of the divided home or the one parent situation. This is not to say that children are always treated rightly when there are two parents and a normal family, but when sin starts off the wrong condition how hard it is on the children! The disciples felt they had to protect Jesus at this juncture from what they thought was unnecessary interruption but whatever the circumstances Jesus was always open to earnest suppliants. So He not only rebukes them but takes opportunity to teach a lesson. First He takes the children in His arms (one translator dares to write "folds them"), blesses them and then commends the childlike attitude of humble acceptance as a necessary prerequisite to following Him. It was a custom to have the

children blessed by a Rabbi. It is not surprising 'When mothers of Salem their children brought to Jesus' - these were not from Jerusalem as far as we know but see verses 1 & 2 of the chapter. How far would they bring them just to be touched by those holy hands!

Jesus and the rich young ruler

Matthew speaks of his youthfulness, Luke of his being a 'ruler', all three record his riches. Rulers of the synagogue were chosen who could give time to the duties of the synagogue. Hence leisure is likely where there is plenty of money. The eminence of the man makes it more surprising that he should come running as Jesus was moving away on his journey, and knelt before Him. It assures us that he was in real earnest. He must have known something of the power and character of Jesus, and His sheer goodness. The ruler's acknowledgement of this goodness brought a thought-provoking question. In his humble approach had he realised the claims of Jesus? Did he know of the mastery over the storm, or over the demon-possessed who had been released? We do not know but he obviously knew enough to make him profoundly respect Him. We are not surprised having the facts before us that 'Jesus beholding

him, loved him'. Jesus loved all people certainly but to some His heart warmed in a special sense, perhaps as in John's case - 'the disciple whom Jesus Loved'. We note that love did not make concessions to the sensibilities of the beloved, it 'hit right home'. We cherish the hope that this genuine character did finally choose the right way. He could hardly forget the encounter.

Jesus and riches

That the rich young ruler had received his ultimatum Jesus knew. That a great moral and spiritual struggle would follow before he could accept it was certain. His possessions possessed him, but the possibility remained. At least one of the disciples was under temptation through love of money, and did Peter (19:27) think of reward too much, and what about James & John (20:20)? Material prosperity can be a serious threat to spiritual wholeness at almost any time. Hence the almost exaggerated (looked at with western eyes) statement of Jesus about the camel and the needle's eye. God can give strength sufficient for resistance (1 Cor. 10:13). Otherwise we are in danger indeed. An amplification of the matter is given by Mark (10:24) "them that trust in riches". It is the love of money by which we get material possessions that is "a root of all kinds of evil" (1 Tim. 6:10). Certainly here is a solemn warning against getting rich, but it is not forbidden as some would have us think. The ambition to possess it and its power is wrong but it may indeed be used with spiritual profit in doing good, being rich in good works, ready to contribute and sympathise in so practical a way as to receive the commendation "Inasmuch as ye did it unto the least of these" (Matt. 25:40). We bear in mind that in the first flush of the Christian spirit there was an outpouring of generous giving. Those who had, giving to those who had not, and over the centuries giving has been the genius of the faith. Unfortunately money has also had a fatal effect of turning the Roman church into a begging institution with colossal riches and thousands of professional clergy running the organisation. Jesus gave Peter an answer which looked to distant future but also gains of a wide range even in this life, surely through the spread of the gospel over the world, the love generated by it providing for needs in a way hitherto unknown. As in the case of James and John's request it involved suffering (20:23 Mark 10:30) as well as honour.

Unequal Reward

The story of the labourers giving varied times of work and receiving the same pay must surely be intended to teach all disciples of Jesus to trust the matter of reward entirely to their Master. We have to realise that no one at all is equal. Every individual is a person quite unique. There may be similarities but it remains true that no one person is like another in detail. The cry of today seems to be "What has he got that I have not got? If he gets more than I there must be something done to bring me up to his standard". Such utter selfishness is foreign to the spirit of Christ and no Christian must share it. We must rejoice with those who rejoice and sorrow with those who sorrow without respect of persons, and rest completely satisfied that "all will be well" because all is in the unerring hands of our Father in heaven.

R. B. SCOTT

NEWS FROM THE CHURCHES

Buckie, Scotland: Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised "The word of the Lord shall not return unto him void, but shall accomplish that which He pleases".

It is with great joy that we report the baptism of few souls, Mr. & Mrs. David McKay and Ruth and Hunter Pirie, daughter and son of Bro. and Sis. Bill Pirie on Lord's Day evening 23rd January 1977. May our young brethren receive grace and strength to become shining lights for our master. John Geddes,

Peterhead, Scotland: I have been asked by the church here at Peterhead to inform readers of the Scripture Standard that we had two baptisms on Sunday 23rd January. They are husband and wife Andy and Freda Sinclair. We were delighted to win two more souls. Andy is the engineer on board my boat. He has also a share of the boat. I have been studying with him while out at sea. I also

I would also like if you could publish the change of secretary. It used to be Bro. Andrew Brown. I took over the position last year and I forgot to inform you of the change.

William Swachen (Secretary)

OBITUARY

Beulah Road, Kirkby-in-Ashfield: It is with deep sadness that we record the passing of our oldest member, Bro. John Henry Longden who died on January 23rd aged 84 years. His death and the circumstances of it were a great shock to his family and the church here, and his passing was very grievous to us all. We nevertheless remember our Bro. very kindly. He was a faithful and true christian devoted to the deep principles of his faith, and only ill-health could keep him from meeting around the Lords Table where he was a regular attendant. His fellowship with his brethren was sincere and loving and he will be greatly missed by us all. He will be remembered for his great love of music, being an able precentor for 50 years. He was immersed into Christ 70 years ago when he and his family met with the Selston Church. Truly a life lived for his Master, whose return he now awaits to take him to that life and crown which is laid up for the faithful.

We commend his wife and family and all who mourn his passing, to the tender compassion of our Heavenly Father. Our Brother John was laid to rest on Monday 31st January after a service in the meeting-room conducted by Bro. Geoffrey Ellis who also officiated at the graveside. T. Woodhouse (Sec.)

Newtongrange: The Church has been saddened by the loss of one of its members. On Thursday 6th January Sister Iris Kirkwood died after a long illness. She was laid to rest on Tuesday 11th January, Brother Jim Morris conducting the funeral service. We commend her sorrowing loved ones to the loving care of our Lord Jesus Christ. Robert Hunter Sec.

Burn's Street, Ilkeston: The church here record the passing from this life of our dear sister Iris Winifred Faulks at the age of 56 years. She died in the Ilkeston hospital on Dec. 14th 1976 She was a faithful member for 25 years although continued ill-health prevented her from attending the Lord's table for many years. We commend her husband Bro. Frank & Son Dennis and all the family to our loving Heavenly Father, who is able to comfort and sustain in time of need.

"The fight is oe'r , The battle won".
The Elders Reuben Gregory, Horace Gee,

COMING EVENTS

Kirkcaldy, Scotland: The church at Kirkcaldy are pleased to announce that they are holding their annual social on 23rd April, 1977, and that Bro. John Morgan, Hindley, has agreed to be the speaker. The meeting will commence at 4 p.m. and all brethren and friends will be made welcome.

Blackburn, Millhill: Week-end Meeting, on Saturday 16th April at 7.30 p.m. & Sunday 17th April at 6.00 p.m.

Speaker G. Gorton, Rochdale.

Special Meetings:

Saturday May 7th at 7.30 p.m.

Sunday May 8th at 6.00 p.m.

Speaker J. Diggle, Ilkeston.

All our brethren invited to all these meetings.

Tony Tyson, Sec.

Slamannan Social: The church here intend D.V. holding their annual Social on Saturday 16th, April 1977, commencing at 4 p.m. to which all members and friends are cordially invited.

Speakers:- Bro. Leonard Morgan, Hindley,
Bro. Jim Sinclair, Jr., Tranent.

Mary S. Neilson.

SERMONS IN A NUTSHELL

A group of scientists working on an important research project got so annoyed with the inefficiency of some of the workers in the laboratory that they put up this sign: "Are you helping with the solution or are you part of the problem?" We in the church are working on a great project, that of saving souls and keeping them saved. Are you helping with the solution or are you part of the problem?

THANKS

On behalf of the Longden family from Lincoln, I would like to thank relatives, friends, neighbours, all chapel friends from near and far, for kindness and sympathy shown to us, especially my mother, to our recent bereavement. Also to all the work of those who went out to look for my father, those responsible for the funeral and service arrangements.

These are the expressions of us all.

Betty, Gren, (Jean, Ann & Lynne) Daughters.

I trust the Lord will permit me to discard crutches on Feb. 22. Thanks to so many for prayer and sympathy. R. B. & M. E. Scott.

BUILDING FUND REPORT

The Church of Christ meeting in Ulverston would like to thank all the brethren who have so far responded to the appeal for help to purchase premises of our own. To date we have received £1304.44. We have also promises of at least £150. Other support has been promised to help with advertising Bible lessons, and tracts, and follow up visitation. Many letters of encouragement have strengthened our faith. As yet we have not been successful in finding premises. The property for which we were negotiating was not after all sold. Since then we have tried for two other properties without success. At the present time we are advertising for suitable premises and have contacted the estate agents in the hope that these will locate something suitable.

We are now the only Church of Christ in the town, and are advertising in the local paper. We are truly grateful for the help that has been given to us so far, and would ask that the brethren continue to pray for us, for we need your prayers. John Thistlewaite, Mary Cox.

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4 Glassel Park Road, Longniddry, East Lothian EH32 ONY to whom change of address should be sent.

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