

# The SCRIPTURE STANDARD

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

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## A MODERN STUMBLING BLOCK

IN the November issue of the "S.S." I described how a tract called "Why Water Baptism" came into my possession. It is issued by the Elim Pentecostal Church and with most of it we could agree except the section headed "Baptism - Not Necessary to Salvation". A subheading said, by way of explanation, "There is no scripture whatever for this error called baptismal regeneration. We are saved by faith and repentance in the Lord Jesus. The blood of Christ cleanses us from all sin (1 John 1:9) not the waters of baptism". It is noticeable in gospel literature of a certain kind that the scripture references in the scriptures regarding baptism are rarely or never actually quoted. The bald statement is made that baptism is not necessary to salvation and no doubt the reader usually accepts this without trying to find out what the New Testament actually says about the subject. It would be much more fair to quote the references and let the readers make up their own minds on whether baptism saves or not. One can but conclude that it is in the interests of the policy of those who soteach on the subject of baptism not to quote the actual scriptures. As related in the November issue I wrote to the Headquarters of the Elim Pentecostal Church and, in view of the fact that they claimed to be unaware of any scriptural references to baptism as a saving agent, I commended to their attention a list of such references. In response to several letters I have written to them they have recently sent me a copy of a reprint of the tract, "Why Water Baptism". They have decided to drop the paragraph entitled "Baptism - not Necessary to Salvation", and it does not appear in the new printing. Certain other items of the phraseology however could well be improved upon but I reckon that the Elim Pentecostal Church are to be commended for the step they have taken thus far. Having brought the matter up in the November issue in the first place it would not have been much less than fair of me not to mention this praiseworthy action of the Elim Pentecostal church and thus I raise the matter again. I'm not saying that all, or any, of the members have radically changed their minds on the subject but they have certainly amended the tract and I fondly hope some have changed their minds.

I understand that the "S.S." occasionally finds its way into the hands of those who are not as yet members of the church of our Lord Jesus Christ, or even into the hands of those who have not, as yet, realised the vital importance of scriptural baptism in God's plan of salvation and reconciliation, and if this be so I do hope that they will give grave and humble consideration to the following few remarks on baptism. The first thing we must be mindful of is that it is possible (in fact it is easy) to negate and nullify a commandment or ordinance of God by superimposing upon it the teaching or opinions of some man, or religious persuasion. This is nothing new and men have been doing it since time began. Amongst the Jews it was commonplace and

so we find Jesus, on more than one occasion, saying, "Why do ye also transgress the commandment of God by your tradition?" and, "Thus have ye made the commandment of God of none effect by your tradition" (Matt. 15:3,6). Countless hundreds in the world today are making the commandment of God regarding baptism of none effect by demoting and debasing it to something of little importance. Men cannot deny its existence, of course, in the pages of the New Testament for it is there for all to see but they do nullify its importance and in fact have strangled it to death. Some of us would be quite rich men if we had received a shilling for every time we have heard some, otherwise earnest, bible student say, "Oh yes I know about baptism but it's not necessary to salvation, you know". The sad thing about it is that in most such instances those who say such a thing usually are fairly, if not completely, ignorant of what is actually said in the New Testament about baptism, who it is for, and what it is for, Dear reader, is this your reaction to baptism? i.e. that it is not necessary to salvation? Have you studied carefully all that the New Testament had to say on the subject - really?

I have always been puzzled at the earnest bible students who could admit in one breath that baptism was a command from God, and in the next breath say that baptism was not necessary to the salvation of our souls. It is no exaggeration to say that God's holy ordinance of baptism is absolutely 'taboo' and is seldom ever mentioned in thousands of religious meetings throughout the country. It is not as if baptism is something which receives scant mention in God's word for in the New Testament there must be about 70 or 80 references to it. The late Will Steele was once invited to 'Brethren' meeting and asked to preach the gospel but not to mention baptism on any account - he found this to be an impossibility, of course. Brother Joe Nisbet and I were once 'ejected' from a gospel meeting near here, because we asked the preacher, after the meeting, why baptism had pointedly been omitted from the gospel address. On another occasion the preacher literally fled out of rear door of the hall when it was learned that we wanted to ask about a similar omission. Strange goings on you might think in meetings convened for the purpose of enlightening the ignorant in reference to what God would have us do to be saved.

It is recorded in Matt. 21 that on one occasion when the scribes and elders asked Jesus where He got His authority for the teaching he was giving, He said, "I ~~also~~ will ask you one thing, which if ye tell me, I in likewise will tell you by what authority I do these things. The baptism of John whence was it? from heaven, or of men? And they reasoned with themselves saying, If we shall say, From Heaven: he will say unto us, Why then did ye not believe him? But if we shall say, of men: we fear the people: for all hold John as a prophet. And they answered Jesus and said, We cannot tell. And he said unto them, Neither tell I you by what authority I do these things". We see then it is nothing new for 'religious' men to try and nullify the divine ordinance of baptism - they did it even in the presence of Jesus. In Luke 7, after Jesus' discourse on the greatness of John The Immerser, we read of the result - "And all the people that heard Him, and the publicans justified God, being baptised with the baptism of John. But the Pharisees and the lawyers rejected the counsel of God against themselves, being not baptised of Him".

For all the greatness of John he was not the Messiah, he was not the Christ, even by his own ready admission and so, if the baptism of John was important to God the baptism of Jesus Christ must be even moreso important. Thus we may legitimately ask those who would shun the baptistry, "The baptism of Christ, whence was it? from heaven or from men?" Was the baptism of Christ sent to us from heaven by God, or was it invented by some man? If it is from heaven, why then do we not receive it? why do we resist it and why do mortal men place an embargo upon it in their gospel meetings? DO we, like the Pharisees and lawyers, "reject the counsel of God against ourselves by not being baptised with the baptism of Christ? or do we justify God by our humble and willing obedience in His holy ordinance?"

Small wonder then that we read in Acts chapter 19 of the apostle Paul encountering, in Ephesus, disciples of Christ who due to lack of knowledge knew only of John's baptism and who after being instructed by the apostle Paul were baptised in the name of the Lord Jesus. Romans chapter 6 clearly declares that we must be buried with Christ, by baptism, before we can possibly rise to walk in newness of life. How men can preach the gospel without mentioning baptism is surely a mystery when one considers that specific mention is made of baptism in

every conversion mentioned in the Acts of the Apostles — the three thousand: the Samaritans: The Ethiopian treasurer: Saul of Tarsus: Cornelius and his household: the Corinthians: Crispus the chief ruler of the synagogue, and so on. And of course Jesus Himself was baptised to 'fulfil all righteousness'. If our respected friends say that baptism does not save them we must choose between believing them or believing the apostle Peter who says, while drawing an analogy between the saving of eight souls in the great flood of Noah's day, "The like figure whereunto *even baptism doth also now save us...*" (1 Peter 3:21). It is also difficult to imagine a situation where a man can claim to be saved and yet still be in his sins — but it is certainly true that the apostle Paul was yet in his sins (notwithstanding three days spent in penitent prayer) until Ananias said to him, "And now, why tarriest thou? arise and be *baptised, and wash away thy sins*, calling on the name of the Lord" (Acts 22:16). When we consider that baptism washes away our burden of sin it must be difficult for an honest preacher of the gospel to constantly omit its mention.

May it be that the readers into whose hands this little paper falls will make an earnest and honest study of this very vital matter, and treat it with the utmost gravity, as they would treat any holy ordinance of Almighty God, laying aside all preconceived notions obtained from religious friends (and clergymen) and may they search the scriptures diligently (like the noble Bereans) to see if those things are really so. Once we have learned the way God would have us go may we have the courage to travel it.

EDITOR

## GOD WILL NOT FAIL OR FORSAKE US

HOW often we humans experience depression! It is an age-old malady and has been with us from the beginning of time, but, with the aid of God, we can overcome it. For a few moments let us consider the great prophet, Elijah. He had just returned from his great victory at Mt. Carmel where the false prophets had been slain; and he had heard the wonderful declaration of the people "The Lord, he is the God"; but Jezebel was relentlessly pursuing him, and we read that Elijah "went for his life" to Beersheba. He reached the wilderness, alone and in despair, and even asked the Lord that he might die (like Jonah did many years after)! The Lord answered him in a wonderful way and provided him with two meals, when he was "at the end of his tether" as we say. (The Biblical phrase "because the journey is too great for thee" is very descriptive. How often this is the case with us!)

The prophet travels on, in strength of this food, for forty days and arrives at a cave on Horeb, the mountain of God. After a time Elijah hears a still small voice asking "What doest thou here?" Elijah replies that the children of Israel had forsaken God, and "I, even I only, am left and they seek my life to take it away". (He seemed to think that now the whole of God's purposes and kingdom were coming to an end). God's reply to Elijah must have been very revealing "I have left me 7,000 in Israel, all the knees which have not bowed unto Baal and every mouth which hath not kissed him".

Even if Elijah should die, God's work would not die — He would raise up someone to carry on His work. Therefore Elijah was bidden to "anoint Elisha to be prophet in thy place.

Elijah found Elisha ploughing, as we read, and cast his mantle upon Him. A simple ceremony indicating his successorship to the great prophet, but that alone wouldn't qualify him to fill the position. He put aside all other interests.

1. First he said goodbye to his parents and friends.
2. Left his ploughing (his occupation)
3. He arose and followed Elijah, waiting on him (probably 8 years) as a servant, for we read of him "pouring water on the hands of Elijah", etc.

When the day came for Elijah to be taken up to heaven by a whirlwind, he said "What shall I do for you before I go". Elisha said "Let a double portion of thy spirit be upon me". He asked a hard thing, but Elijah said "If you see me ascend, then it shall be so". Elisha saw Elijah ascend and his mantle fell back to earth. Elisha picked it up and returned to Jordan, and with it struck those waters and the river parted. Those who saw him said "The spirit of Elijah doth rest on

Elisha". Elisha suffered a great personal loss when Elijah was taken. In a way, all Christians pick up the mantle of those saints who have gone on before, and this is how God's work in the world progresses. The responsibility is ours! What a glorious ending it was for Elijah to be caught up to heaven and "hear the trumpets sounding on the other side"; and how glad he must have been that his prayer to die was not answered. As God was with Elijah and Elisha so He will be with us, "He will not fail or forsake us" so let us all be of "good cheer".

(Let us also remember that when Moses' work ended, Joshua's was just beginning.)

Mrs. E. C. Payne, Reading.

## IT IS MY PSALM — IS IT YOURS ?

Give me a faithful heart  
Likeness to Thee;  
That each departing day  
Henceforth may see

Some work of love begun,  
Some deed of kindness done,  
Some wanderer sought and won  
Something for Thee.

### PERFECT GOODNESS — "GOODNESS" Psalm 23:6

WHAT a world! Wars and rumours of wars. Shootings and murders. Bombs and the malicious setting on fire of property. Hi-jacks and kidnappings. Robberies with violence, sometimes on harmless elderly people. The permissive society with all that it means. Selfishness and greed. Famine in the midst of plenty. Millions short of the necessities of life. Millions of pounds spent annually on drink, beer, wine, and spirits. The awful spectacle of alcoholism increasing more and more, and causing great concern to many. More millions spent annually on smoking with its danger of lung cancer. Yet more million is spent on gambling, pools, general betting and bingo. The estimated street value of all controlled drugs seized during the year makes sad reading. Thousands of imported books, magazines etc. were seized on the grounds of indecency or obscenity. Cruelty to children. Cruelty to animals. Wife beating. And what shall we say about all the foul and suggestive language used nowadays.

### WELL MAY WE SAY WHAT A WORLD!

"Run ye to and fro through the streets of Jerusalem, and see now, and know, and seek in the broad places thereof, if ye can find a man, if there be any that executeth judgment, that seeketh the truth; and I will pardon it". Jeremiah 5:1 "And I sought for a man among them, that should make up the hedge, and stand in the gap before me for the land, that I should not destroy it: but I found none" Ezekiel 22:30.

Many of God's children have a feeling of utter helplessness, and feel so inadequate to stem the tide, when faced with a world that has gone mad, and when the power of the Devil is manifested on every hand and side. Man's inhumanity to man makes countless thousands mourn, yet, we feel powerless to halt the seemingly headlong flight to destruction. Beloved, take courage, we serve a living God, and if you are His child, He will take care of you, so why not take still another journey with your Lord Jesus to the "green pastures", and on to the "still waters". Leaving again the noise and bustle of life, so that we may share a communion, a fellowship with one who can impart strength and power for our daily needs. We can be encouraged by the messages of God's word on our theme of:—

### PERFECT GOODNESS — "GOODNESS" Psalm 23:6

Why not talk over with "the lily of the valleys", our theme for this month "the goodness of the Lord". I wonder whether He would remind us of that other "Keeper of the sheep", David, and the message He gives us in Psalm 27:13, "I had fainted unless I had believed to see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living". Read that again and again, be assured in your own mind, this glorious truth is no mirage, it is a blessed reality. Sometimes we can't see the wood for the trees. My brother, my sister, do not despair, although all hell seems unloosed:—  
"THE EARTH IS FULL OF THE GOODNESS OF THE LORD" Psalm 33:5.

Note what the Psalmist says "full of the goodness of the Lord". Oh, how blind we are, we are so busy looking at the sordid side of life, busy looking at the ugly things, we have forgotten

that God still lives. Lift up your eyes and see God's wisdom, God's power, God's goodness. View the earth and sky, with its clouds and falling rain, the rainbow, the sun, moon, stars: those sparkling hosts. The mountains and hills. The seas, lakes, rivers, trees and flowers. The blue sky, green fields, the rushing breeze, the joyous birds. The light, the air we breathe, the food we eat, the water we drink. See "the goodness of the Lord" in the seed, wheat, corn, meat, fish, fruit. See "the goodness of the Lord" in the supply of energy, oil, gas, electricity, iron ore, steel, tin, copper, wool and cotton. See "the goodness of the Lord" in the sacrificial labours of countless numbers of God's children. For beauty, truth, purity, meekness, and love.

Yes, God is good, In earth and sky,  
From ocean depths and spreading wood,  
Ten thousand voices seem to cry,  
'God made us all, and God is good'.

For all Thy gifts we bless Thee, Lord,  
But chiefly for our heavenly food;  
Thy pardoning grace, Thy quickening word,  
These prompt our song that 'God is good'.

"Oh how great is thy goodness, which thou has laid up for them that fear thee." Psalm 31:19.

"The young lions do lack, and suffer hunger: but they that seek the Lord shall not want any good thing" Psalm 34:10

"Thou crownest the year with thy goodness; and thy paths drop fatness" Psalm 65:11.

"For the Lord God is a sun and shield: the Lord will give grace and glory: no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly" Psalm 84:11.

"Oh that men would praise the Lord for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men! For he satisfieth the longing soul, and filleth the hungry soul with goodness" Psalm 107:8,9.

"O taste and see that the Lord is good: blessed is the man that trusteth in thee" Psalm 34:8.

"THE EARTH IS FULL OF THE GOODNESS OF THE LORD". Psalm 33:5

Have you enjoyed your time spent "in the green pastures", with "the altogether lovely one"? If so, let us continue our journey until we come to "the still waters". By those waters let us once more turn to the Word of God for our encouragement and blessing. May I draw your attention to some wonderful verses in the Book of Exodus.

"And the Lord said unto Moses, I will do this thing also that thou hast spoken: for thou hast found grace in my sight, and I know thee by name. And he said, I beseech thee, shew me thy glory. And he said, I will make all my goodness pass before thee, and I will proclaim the name of the Lord before thee; and I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will shew mercy on whom I will shew mercy" Exodus 33:17-19.

"And the Lord passed by before him, and proclaimed, The Lord, The Lord God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth" Exodus 34:6.

**"Shew me Thy Glory"**

**"I will make all my goodness pass before thee"**

Perhaps you could spend a little of your time, with profit, thinking of the goodness of the Lord to Moses... merciful... gracious... longsuffering... abundant in goodness and truth... what a wealth of thought can be yours. I feel sure that our loving heavenly Father would wish us to have a rich blessing as we think of the Good Shepherd, and knowing that the Apostle Paul said: "For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope" Romans 15:4. I ask you for a short while to think of the Lord Jesus, as we meditate on this thought: "I will make all my goodness pass before thee".

The life was manifested. "And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father) full of grace and truth" John 1:14.

No room in the Inn. "And she brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn" Luke 2:7.

The lamb of God. "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world" John 1:29.

The Light of the World. "I am the light of the world, he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life" John 8:12.

**The Bread of 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.

**The Fountain of the Water of Life.** "But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life" John 4:14.

**The Rejected Christ.** "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathered her chickens under her wings, and ye would not! Matthew 23:37.

"Pilate saith unto them, What shall I do then with Jesus which is called Christ? They all say unto him, Let him be crucified" Matthew 27:22.

**The Crucified Christ.** "And when they were to come to the place, which is called Calvary, there they crucified him, and the malefactors, one on the right hand, and the other on the left" Luke 23:33.

**The Forsaken Christ.** "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" Matthew 27:46

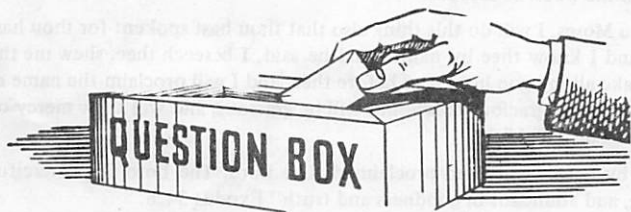
**The Risen Christ.** Fear not ye: "for I knew that ye seek Jesus, which was crucified. He is not here: for he is risen, as he said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay" Matthew 28:5,6.

**The Ascended Christ.** "So then after the Lord had spoken unto them, he was received up into heaven, and sat on the right hand of God" Mark 16:19.

I pray that the time spent beside the "Pastures of tender grass", and by the "waters of quietness", will be the means of helping you in your daily living for "the fairest among ten thousand".

This month's exercise:— Learn by heart the three verses quoted, and read again the passages of God's word most helpful for you. May the Lord's richest blessing be your portion.

LEONARD MORGAN.




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Conducted by  
Alf Marsden

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"Since divorces are now quite common everyday affairs we come across people who may want to be baptised and become church members. Such people may be married to someone who was previously divorced. Does their baptism cope with such a situation in that it is for the remission of sin, or after baptism would the immersed have to separate from his (divorced) spouse and children of the marriage if there were any?"

I take it that the questioner is envisaging a married couple outside the church, one of whom has been previously divorced. One or other hears the gospel message and obeys it, and consequently comes into the church. There is implicit in the statement 'does their baptism cope with such a situation in that it is for the remission of sin' the idea that the marriage they have entered into is a sinful union.

Let me say that my answer to this question is offered not as the ultimate and final solution but as a mere attempt to find out the truth. I am, as always, open to correction by those who know better. It seems to me that what we say develops on two ideas:

- 1) that the Bible teaches the absolute indissolubility of marriage, or
  - 2) that other possible explanations can be advanced which are in line with biblical teaching.
- We must now gather as much evidence as we possibly can so that we can indicate some guidelines along which the questioner might be resolved.

### The Genesis Record

It is clear from the Genesis record what God's intentions were. He created the polarity of the sexes so that union between the man and the woman could take place. "So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created He them" (Gen. 1:27). The record further indicates that the union should be an ideal and lasting one, "Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh" (Gen. 2:24). At this juncture it would seem that there was no question of divorce, and the fact that Adam and Eve were the only two people on earth would preclude any idea of remarriage to someone else. This then would be the basis on which Jesus would answer his questioners, "But from the beginning it was not so".

### Divorce Allowed

It is clear from a reading of the O.T. scriptures that God permitted divorce. Let us look first at the case of Abraham, Sarah his wife, and Hagar the servant of Sarah (Gen. 16:1-3). The scripture is quite explicit, and verse 3 reads, "And Sarah Abram's wife took Hagar her maid the Egyptian after Abram had dwelt ten years in the land of Canaan, and gave her to her husband Abram to be his wife". That they were married cannot be doubted because God would not permit sexual union outside of marriage.

Later we find Sarah asking Abraham to cast out the bondwoman and her son (Gen. 21:10). This displeases Abraham, but God tells him to do as Sarah says, so Abraham sent Hagar away. The putting away of a wife constitutes divorce and in this instance it was by the direct intervention of God. Read Genesis 21.

Again, if we read Deut. 24:1-4 we find there permission for divorce. It was permitted for a husband to send his wife away, and for the wife to remarry but not to a priest (Lev. 21:14). Two things were necessary according to the Deuteronomy passage: there should be issued a bill of divorce, and the husband should not have his former wife back to be his wife again. We learn two things from the above. First, that it is not possible for partners in marriage to divorce themselves. Second, that divorce and re-marriage is permitted by God and Moses.

### Teaching of Jesus

The Pharisees posed the question to Jesus, "Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause?" (Matt. 19:3). Jesus refers them to the Genesis passages and seems to indicate the indissolubility of marriage. However, when pressed further he endorsed the permission given by Moses, and then went on to teach that it was lawful for a man to put away his wife but only for adultery.

It seems to me that Jesus is teaching that man has no right to dissolve a marriage because God is the author of marriage. But God can and did allow marriages to be dissolved, and even in the days of Jesus, the husband had the right to put away his wife provided that he acted within the scope of the law of God.

### The Question

I think we are now ready to say something about the question, armed with the knowledge that we have gained from the Bible. In the first place we are thinking about a married couple, the inference being that they are not Christians, one of whom has been divorced previously. Their marriage would be legal according to man's law, and as we have seen from Deuteronomy the woman could remarry even though her husband had put her away for indecency. In the second place it would seem to me that it is never wrong to obey the gospel if one is really convicted. So then, we have the situation of a married couple, one a believer and the other an unbeliever. Now the questioner wants to know, "does the baptism cope with the situation in that it is for the remission of sins, or after baptism would the immersed have to leave his (divorced) spouse and children of the marriage if there were any?" I find the first part of the question quite interesting because it presupposes that the marriage they had entered into was sinful. This may not have been the case. In this context also, I would direct the questioner to the statements of Paul as found in 1 Cor. 7. "For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband: else were your children unclean: but now are they holy?" (1 Cor. 7:14).

Furthermore, as regards the latter part of the question, Jesus taught, "And I say unto you, Whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery: and whoso marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery" (Matt. 19:9). It is not likely that Jesus would want sin to escalate.

### Summary

My personal thoughts are these, and I give them as one who is acutely aware that he is not speaking the last word on the subject, but as one who is basing them on the evidence which is available.

1) I believe that God intended marriage to be ideal and therefore indissoluble. I can also understand the wisdom and the compassion of God in permitting divorce in those cases where the marriage had fallen from that ideal. But I believe that only God has the authority to do this, and I totally abhor the indiscriminate way in which man is handling this divine prerogative and consequently bringing the married state into ridicule and disrepute.

2) I think the questioner is right when he/she says that the church will have to deal with more problems of this nature in the future. I understand the church on earth to be the functional arm of God, and to this end I think that every case of this nature should be treated on its individual merit. This is why I consider it to be absolutely imperative that each community of christians should have wise and mature leaders who can unravel some of these complex personal problems.

3) I cannot bring myself to think that a loving and compassionate God would want a marriage to continue which had degenerated into a hellish nightmare. But having said that, I am convinced that many marriages which founder would not do so if the partners had made strenuous efforts to make them work.

4) The state of the world emphasises to me the need for christians to plan their marriages very carefully. It is always best for christians to marry fellow-christians if this is possible. We should always remember that the Lord taught celibacy also.

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

## WORSHIP

THERE is in the make-up of man a desire to worship something or other, whether it be a lifeless object like the Golden Calf or a living creature (i.e. like one's own child). This is not something which has slowly grown but we see it from earliest creation, for instance, when Cain and Abel offered sacrifices to God. After the flood, Noah's first act was to build an altar and to worship God. We also read wherever Abraham pitched his tent he also raised up an altar to God, as, in fact, did Isaac and Jacob.

Later in the history of the Jews, we find that God gave to the children of Israel the tabernacle worship and this continued until Solomon built the temple. At the completion of the construction of the temple Solomon and his people spent seven days in fasting and prayers. Thus it would seem that in the early centuries of time men were no strangers to the worship of God.

One of the striking things which seems to emerge from what we read about man's worship of God is that God provided a framework within which man had to confine himself in worship. Even in the building of the vehicle or site for worship, i.e. the tabernacle, and the temple itself, man had to see that he made all things according to the pattern provided by God. It was not simply a case of God being so grateful for man's adoration of Him that He would accept any old thing in any old way. This is a very important point and is illustrated dramatically for us in Lev. 10 where we read of Nadab and Abihu offering strange fire to God (doubtless with good intentions) and paying the penalty instantly with their lives. Their act of worship was turned into an act of disobedience by their disregard for the formality. Formality without the spirit is an empty kind of worship but Nadab and abihu found that the reverse was also true.



There is an ever present danger that man, in their desire to worship God, may mingle with those worshipping other Gods, through a feeling of common interest or otherwise. The history of the Jews is littered with instances of this kind and there are times when evil and witchcraft actually replaced the pure and acceptable worship of the true God. There is an equal danger today that in order for us to appear well-pleasing to men of other beliefs and religions we are prepared to adulterate the true worship with schemes and whims of our own making. We recall that great contest between Moses and the magicians of Egypt when the rod of Moses upon turning into a serpent swallowed up the rods (or serpents) of Pharaoh's magicians thus proving for all time that our God is greater than all the Gods of men, and He is truly worthy of all our worship and praise.

To worship God aright we must record Him a supreme position, and if this is not so then we will find ourselves in difficulties. The men building the Tower of Babel wanted to have equality with God and had their speech confounded. Many times we confound our own speech when we do not give God His true place in our lives, and worship. Sometimes we want to give God that supreme position but find it difficult because we still hold on to some of the things in the world and do not renounce them completely. Jacob's wife, Rachael had, for instance, her little idols hidden amongst the stuff in the caravan. It may be that our worship is hindered because of some little idol we have retained and hidden in the caravan.

The men of Beth-shemesh were reaping in the field, bringing in the harvest in the valley, when they saw the ark and they rejoiced to see it. To them God was in that box and no doubt many regard God as being capable of being kept in a box until required. Some pray only to God when a catastrophe strikes and others only think to worship God on a Sunday, or on the occasional Sunday. We rejoice that we can far exceed the joy of the men of Beth-shemesh and find evidence of God's presence outside any box; indeed in the harvest, in the wonders of creation and in the vast galaxies of the vaults of heaven-truly 'the heavens declare the glory of God and the firmament showeth his handiwork'. There certainly is one little box where God is not to be found and that is in that little glowing electric idol in almost everyone's living-room the mouth of which speaks more evil than good and more filth than purity.

How do we approach the worship of God? Challenged by the woman at the well of Samaria who said, "Our Fathers worshipped in this mountain, but ye say Jerusalem is that place to worship". Jesus silenced her with His reply, "Neither in this mountain nor in Jerusalem is the place to worship, but they that worship me must worship me in spirit and truth".

May it be that we shall endeavour to offer to God acceptable worship with reverence and Godly fear remembering that our God is consuming fire. Great is our God above Gods and greatly to be praised.

O' Lord my God when I in awesome wonder  
consider all the works They hand hath made  
I see the stars I hear the mighty thunder  
Thy power throughout the Univers displayed.

Then sings my soul my Saviour God to thee  
How great Thou art  
How great Thou art.

T. H. Blackmore, Worle.

## SCRIPTURE READINGS

APRIL 1976

4—Psalm 53	Romans 3:1-18
11—Psalm 106:1-19	Romans 3:19-31
18—Psalm 32	Romans 4
25—Genesis 3:1-21	Romans 5

### THE PRIVILEGE OF THE JEWS

IT is said that Frederick the Great once asked his chaplain for a proof of the truth of the Bible. The reply was simply "The Jews; Your Majesty". Whether I have a correct version of this story may be doubtful, but it conveys the truth that "unto them were committed the oracles of God". Their very existence as a nation confirms the truth of the BOOK. This very morning I read "For 30 centuries Jerusalem

has been an exception to the rules governing most great cities. No harbour, no river, no great trade route nourished her: only a trickle of water in the rocks". The fact is of course that the nation entrusted with the oracles of God had its centre there with God's approved sanctuary. God chose this city for this purpose through His servant David. I would not dare to say that He has not some purpose still to fulfill there. Personally I believe He has finished with it as a physical centre because we look for "the holy city New Jerusalem", the city of His saints prepared in heaven — something of spiritual diminsion, exceeding in glory anything mancan imagine though it is pictured for us in human dimensions in the last chapters of Revelation.

But Paul's thought passes immediately to the failure of that nation to show results commensurate with the privilege. Naturally today unbelievers criticise Christianity because a false picture is shown by its professors. The largest of professed christian bodies has been involved in wars and has actually used violence and worse to convert people to its beliefs. So the same criticism can be levelled against the Word of God in this way. Paul of course vindicates the Word as we also do. The Trustees have not exercised faith but have been disobedient. Their disobedience confirms God's righteousness. The privilege of the Jew condemned him and Christendom stands condemned too, but the standards were indeed right. As a matter of justice all fall under condemnation, all are guilty before God.

#### God's Method of Pardon

God must be absolutely right in all He does He is supremely just. Sin cannot be condoned. It must be condemned. The soul that sinneth must die. The law of Moses required absolute obedience for justification but there provision was made for the offering of sacrifices for forgiveness. The fires on the altar never were allowed to go out because sin was ever present. but it was not the sacrifices that were so to speak God's main concern. It was the faith and obedience of the worshippers, which He wanted. The requirements of the law made sin more obvious but could not offer justification. We have a simple case of redemption under the law (Ex.13:13) — "Every firstling of an ass thou shalt redeem with a lamb, and if thou wilt not redeem it thou shalt break its neck". The firstling belonged to God by the law but it

could be redeemed as required. Every sinner's life is forfeit on account of sin but on this same principle God himself provided the Lamb for sacrifice (Gen. 22:8). He has not condoned sin, but has provided a way of escape for sinners through the shedding of the blood of His own Son. And this is all a matter of grace. God has chosen to provide a redeemer to suffer for sin. So sin becomes so to speak, blacker and blacker, as the terrible nature of it is shown up by the tremendous nature of the sacrifice which alone could atone for it. The sinner looks to the Redeemer in heartfelt trust and recognises that what has been done for him is entirely God's own grace.

#### Abraham's Part

We presume there were at the time of this letter many Jewish christians who regarded the law of Moses as still being in force, and having a part in the new covenant relationship. The pride of race of the Jews was a very real difficulty in the early church while the Temple was still standing (it was finally destroyed in A.D. 70), the sacrifices were still being made and the priests appointed by the law were operating all the forms and ceremonies in a most wonderful building. Paul therefore makes clear that Abraham who was their father was accepted by God-on account of his faith, not on account of obedience to the law but on account of the faith he exercised before he received the seal of circumcision upon which they prided themselves, and which was the mark of every Jew. They needed to know perhaps for future ease of mind that God's promises were made long before the Law was instituted. Abraham was indeed their Father and one to be proud of and to imitate on account of his stalwart faith in God. He was thus not only the Father of the race but spiritually he is also father of all who follow his example, trusting and obeying God.

#### Justification Through Faith

As the sacrifice for our sins Jesus was offered up, but being perfect He could not be held by death. He is the Lamb of God without blemish,

and bearing our sins in His own body upon the tree, He redeems us. We are acquitted and our relationship with God is one of peace. We can therefore rejoice in hope of glory. This thought brings consolation in times of suffering, of which Paul is reminded no doubt thinking of the troubles which christians throughout the world were enduring. It would be no easy life

in the world's capital city. Hence he offers encouragement and shows that endurance strengthens the christian and he develops hope and love. One of the most striking statements of gospel truth is given by a contrast between the attitude of man to man and the attitude of God to man. The wonder of God's love is set against the background of man's selfishness. Sinner dealing with sinner will only very exceptionally be willing to die for one another but the ALMIGHTY GOD' the creator of all stoops to commend Himself to rebellious, sinful, careless creatures of His by sending His Own Son to die for the forgiveness and eternal life of those.

O may this glorious matchless Love  
This God-like miracle of grace,  
Teach mortal tongues, like those above,  
To raise this song of lofty praise;—  
Who is a pardoning God like Thee?  
Or who has grace so rich and free?

Our readings close with a contrast and comparison between the free and abounding grace of God through the One Man, and the universal bondage to sin and condemnation apart from Him.

R. B. SCOTT

## NEWS FROM THE CHURCHES

**Brighton:** We are happy to announce the baptism into Christ of Frederick Rich on 11th January. Fred has a son in Australia, who wrote to Wembley church secretary saying that his father, living in Brighton would appreciate help. This was passed on to us by Wembley in November and we immediately made contact, with the above final result, which has encouraged us all. We pray that the Lord's blessing will be with our new brother constantly.

Gilbert Smith has resumed residence in Brighton, and is once again worshipping with us regularly.

Our Anniversary services will be held (d.v.) on 3rd/4th April, Tea Saturday 3rd 5-30 p.m., Lord's Day 11 a.m. and 6.30 p.m.

A hearty welcome to all. W. I. ASCOUGH.

**Mill Hill, Blackburn:** We rejoice again in another sister asking to be accepted back into

fellowship with the church here, sis Elizabeth Carvill was received back into fellowship on Lord's day, February 1st, sister Elizabeth originally came from the Wigan area and was baptised in Blackburn many years ago, but has now returned to her Lord. We pray for her and hope she will be a worker for her Lord, now realising her loss in the past. T' TYSON

**Kentish Town:** Brother J. C. Bailey, on his way from Bombay to Montreal, is stopping off at London on Wednesday, March 3rd. To enable him to meet as many brethren as possible a meeting will be held, God permitting, at Hope Chapel on that day at 7 p.m. He continues his journey on Thursday.

## OBITUARY

**Bedminster, Bristol:** It is with much sorrow that we record the sudden passing of our Bro. Albert Gray on January 17th. He was never a robust man, and although not a public speaker was always found on the door to give a welcome to visitors. We commend to our Heavenly Father those who mourn, his devoted wife our sister Nora Gray, also Veronica and Royston.

L. DANIELL

**Hindley:** It is with deep sorrow that we have said our last farewell in this life to our dear Sister Ethel Bradley. She was a daughter of the late Henry Sharrock, a founder member of the church in Albert St. Newtown Wigan, and sister to one of our own members, sister Barker. She was added to the church sixty five years ago, and spent most of the time worshipping with the church in Wigan. For the last ten years she has been associated with the church at Hindley. Whilst here, she had the joy of witnessing her husband James added also to the church, and becoming a valuable working member.

She was very loyal in her support of the meetings and her joy was in the fellowship of the saints. She had a lovable way with her, and she will be greatly missed by us all.

We commend her sorrowing husband and all her dear ones to the care of one who has known our sorrows and our griefs, and thus can fully sympathize, succour and console. May they be fully blessed and find that "joy cometh in the morning". TOM KEMP.

### AN APPEAL FROM GHANA

The brethren at Adawso-Akwapim are engaged in putting up a modest meeting house. They are using local materials and their own labour. They have the land for this purpose on condition that part of it is used for educational purposes, and that the building is completed within a limited time. They are a small number earnestly seeking to keep to scriptural faith and practice including the use of one cup at the Lord's supper. They are in real need of monetary help, which will be most gratefully received and which can be sent through Barclays Bank International Money Order payable to Miss Kate Awuku, P.O. Box 13. Adawso. Akwapim, GHANA. Our sister is a retired head mistress, the first person of her years to accept New Testament Christianity. She is well-known to Brother David Arku-Mensah, who is now worshipping with the church at Eastwood and giving service as opportunity offers.

The church at Kentish Town has had the privilege of giving help over a period.

R. B. SCOTT.

### CIRCUMCISION

THE physical sign of circumcision was given to Abraham as an indication that he and those who received the sign afterwards and entered into a covenant with God and was one of the inescapable conditions for any man who hoped to share the blessings promised to Abraham and his posterity.

This sign was also included in the Mosaic law with equal severity. It was a physical religion. The primitive nature of the people required a religion which they could receive and understand through their five senses. While there was much which was spiritual embedded in this religion their leaders and teachers

sign in a very physical religion. The primitive nature of the people required a religion which they could receive and understand through their five senses. While there was much which was spiritual embedded in this religion their leaders and teachers failed to grasp this and concentrated on the physical. This raised circumcision to such proportions of importance to them that it superceded the very spiritual aspect of the act itself. This rite, like all others under the Law of Moses, was finished and removed at, and by, the death of Jesus.

The Apostle Paul was a Jew and as such was fully acquainted with all their practices and often used them as illustrations of christian subjects he was discussing. Col. 2:11 is one such instance. Circumcision is the cutting away or off of part of a man's flesh. Paul speaks of a cutting away or a separation as by "a circumcision not made with hands", (not of a physical nature). but the separation of a person from sensual desires and sinful attitudes of the mind, by the acceptance of, and obedience to, Jesus the Christ. By following the pattern set by Jesus, the works of the flesh, (see Gal. 5:19-20) will be abandoned by us. They will be cut away from our lives. This is the separation (circumcision) of the Christ and is essential if our lives are to be well-pleasing to God.

PAUL JONES

### CHANGE OF ADDRESS

JOHN K. KNELLER

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4 Glassel Park Road.,  
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Effective from 10th March, 1976.

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