

The SCRIPTURE STANDARD

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

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MARCH, 1979

LITTLE BITS OF PAPER

THEY say that there is nothing as useless as last week's news. This must be quite true although fish-fryers seem glad to get old newspapers and it is not unusual to see a fish-supper wrapped in the front page of 'The Times'. However when we come to think of it, worthless pieces of paper are not confined to old newspapers. The list ranges from bouncing cheques to Acts of Parliament. Counterfeit money is not worthless, but should be. During the war when countries were overrun by the enemy the existing currencies were sometimes rendered obsolete and we heard of people taking a barrowload of bank-notes to buy a loaf of bread – I think this was true at one stage of the German Mark. In the world of commerce lawyers spend a long time in framing leases and contracts because mistakes can be costly and render the document either a mill-stone round the neck or a worthless piece of paper. Words are so important. On a grander scale we may consider treaties between nations as, quite often, pointless pieces of paper. The Geneva Convention was violated so often during the last war that some considered it completely inconsequential. Great Britain had the foresight not to commit its Constitution to paper and therefore has no written Constitution, but even countries with written Constitutions encounter the criticism that the Constitution is a worthless document. Many negroes in America, and some Latins, reckon that regardless of the Constitution all men are not given equal opportunity in that country. The Labour government has, over the last decade, been bringing into this small island large numbers of Asians and Africans and when reminded of the very real dangers of racial animosity springing up have said that the matter would be dealt with by legislation. Christ can make men love their neighbours but it is not something that legislation can do. The answer, as far as governments are concerned, is to solve all problems by legislation. Much of such legislation has become a pathetic pile of worthless paper. We have lived long enough to see that prices can not be pegged by Acts of Parliament no more than can wages. It is going to be interesting to see how unions will be controlled, or picketing – we shall see yet more pointless paper. Contemplate for a moment the countless tons of waste paper which emanates each day in trash cans from the offices of the United Nations or the E.E.C. Headquarters. By contrast very little comes from the Stock Exchange because few deals on the Stock Exchange are committed to paper – it is not necessary, "Their Word is Their Bond".

Anyone reading an African newspaper may smile at some of the advertisements. It is not unusual, for instance, to see someone advertising for a job and stating that they are "B.Sc. (London) Failed". The inference must be that it is better to have failed to gain a B.Sc. than not to have studied at all. Two men in an office where I work used to maintain that a

degree or diploma was just 'a little bit of worthless paper' and, if a man could do the job, then qualifications were of little consequence. It is true that some men with no formal qualifications can do the job as well, and sometimes better, than those with qualifications. The two men said no more however when they were asked if they would take a brain operation from some unqualified person or one who had just failed 'his finals'. Are degrees worthless bits of paper — were the two men right? Hardheaded employers don't seem to think so, for nearly every job advertised asks for some formal qualification. I suppose it depends largely on the science, trade or profession. For instance if we go for an eye operation we would have a close interest in the qualifications of the surgeon. Similarly we would want our dentist or chiropodist or Architect to have formal qualifications. I must confess however to being completely unmoved to see that the local clergymen here are Doctors of Divinity. Nor does it inspire any confidence in me to see that a preacher is an M.A. or a B.A. — in fact it might put me off a little. There is nothing better than the right kind of education and no sensible person would belittle education but Theological degrees, to my mind, come very close to being 'worthless little bits of paper'. Theology and Christianity shouldn't be but very often are two very different things. The final assessment and judgement of the preacher is in what he preaches and how he preaches it. Think of the teeming thousands of clergymen in the country (or the world for that matter) who have high college qualifications, who lead men astray rather than teach them the truth; who can't show men the way into the kingdom of God because they have never entered themselves; who either don't know the truth or who know it but sabotage it, or pervert it.

The preacher who has never been to Bible College and preaches the truth is worth immeasurably more to God than the preacher who has high academic prowess yet fails to preach the truth. Thus the qualifications of the doctor reassures his patients, but the qualifications of the preacher does not reassure his audience — not in this country anyway. The preacher is judged solely on what he says and how he says it. Training and education may help him to say it better but when we look around at all the highly educated and highly trained clergymen — and hear what they teach we can't help from thinking that it would have been better for them to have sidestapped the college. If you consider this harsh criticism of theologians then consider the state of the religious world and think on how you would explain it. There is such a thing as educated ignorance of the Word. Jesus does not require us to be Doctors of Divinity and He did not seem to think that such qualifications were necessary — indeed His conversations with the Scribes and Pharisees (educated religious elite) seem to indicate that He considered that learning was no substitute for humility and obedience. When Jesus graduated it was in Suffering, at Calvary.

There are many other items of worthless little bits of paper floating around — some of it not just worthless but very dangerous. One thinks of Creeds, Confessions of Faith and promulgations of many various kinds, including the Book of Mormon, which would usurp the authority and destroy the integrity of God's Holy Word. The slogan, or motto, "We speak where the Bible Speaks — and are silent Where the Bible is Silent" (which would be wonderful if entirely true) arose, did it not, because the vast majority of Christendom clearly did not speak where the Bible spoke or were silent where it was silent. In 2 Kings it is heartwarming to read of the young king of Israel, Josiah, at tender age, purging from the land of Judah and beyond, all semblances of idolatry — idolatry which was rife even inside the Temple. During the restitution of the Temple a book was found amongst the builder's rubble and dust. Lo and Behold the book, on examination was found to be the Law of Moses — surprise, surprise to the people of God, who were evidently so far from the Word of God that they barely recognised it when it confronted them. Young Josiah was beside himself with anguish when he read the book and saw how far flung from it the nation were (Martin Luther probably felt likewise). He arranged a public reading of the book and at his urgent promptings the people vowed to cast off the yoke of idolatry and return to the purity of worship as revealed in the book which was lost and now was found. The Bible, is likewise lost again today, concealed below the dust and debris of years of denominationalism and sectarianism, (and kept concealed to a large extent by professional theologians). The Bible is lost to millions and the religious world has replaced it with little bits of worthless paper. Before builders build they have first of all to

clear all the rubbish from off the site. If we want to build on the solid rock of God's word and reproduce, in this day and age, the ancient order, and the church of our Lord Jesus Christ, in all of its simplicity and purity, then we must first of all excavate the religious debris which has accumulated over the centuries, and like Josiah, to restore to its rightful place the lost book – The Bible.

"The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul; the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple. The statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes. The fear of the Lord is clean enduring for ever: the judgements of the Lord are true and righteous altogether. More to be desired are they than gold, yea then much fine gold: sweeter also than honey and the honeycombe. Moreover by them is thy servant warned: and in keeping of them there is great rewards. "(Psalm 19:7-11). Compared with the Bible all substitutes are really just worthless little bits of paper. EDITOR

GLEANINGS

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

OUR THEME – ABIDING UNDER THE SHADOW

Our Text:—"He that dwelleth in the secret place of the most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty". Psalm 91:1.

Carlton Melling:— This is one of the "Great Texts of the Bible": every word is vital. But we shall try to show its importance by the significance which each word has in showing the relationship of the people of God to their heavenly Father.

Which is the most important word in the passage? Surely, the last, So we begin at the end, with the word ALMIGHTY. Who or what is the ALMIGHTY? During the first World War 1914-18 the Emperor of the German Empire was termed the ALL Highest. In that title Kaiser Wilhelm 11's subjects were treating him as the ALL-MIGHTY. But who is this ALMIGHTY? We have the answer in the very same verse as our text. Count back a few words and we find the words MOST HIGH – without doubt the MOST HIGH is the ALMIGHTY: what is said of the one is said of the other. Omitting the words between the two titles we have then the ALMIGHTY. Still tracing backwards we read of the SHADOW OF THE ALMIGHTY.

In Deut. 32:11 Moses is reminding the elders of the children of Israel how God has brought His people to Caanan, the Promised Land, after their 40 years' wanderings in the wilderness. They are still in peril. Moses likens the care and provision of God to that of the mother-eagle's protection of her young. The Israelites are familiar with the way in which the mother teaches her young to do for themselves what is necessary to preserve themselves in the future. The mother scatters the nest, flutters over her young and edges them towards the brink of the cliff in which the nest is built. The young are terrified as their mother pushes them in turn to seemingly sure destruction on the rocks below. Then, just at the right time the mother spreads her mighty wings, and bears the eaglets to safety and security. While she is descending the sun, shining high, casts the shadow of her pinions over the birds and under that shadow they are safe. Recall what our text says "under the shadow of the Almighty". The hymns aptly express this shelter and security: "In the shadow of His wings there is rest" and "Under His wings I am safely abiding". Not just an occasional of fleeting moment of prayer or rest or security, but an abiding, staying, living with God, yes, even in this life which now is, as well as that which is to come. Read John's Gospel, chapter 15, and notice how often Jesus tells His apostles to ABIDE in Him as HE ABIDES in them, Some of the sublimest teaching of Scripture is upon this theme and some of our greatest hymns, like "Abide with me" are inspired with

the thought. The one who has these relationships with the MOST HIGH, the ALMIGHTY, shall enjoy the blessings of the whole psalm which follows. This magnificent promise is a prelude to those blessings.

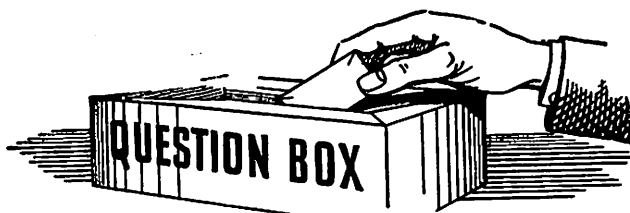
Mark Guy Pearce:- "We come forth from the 'secret place' but we "abide under the shadow of the Almighty". Difficulties and temptations tighten our hold upon His hand. In every mercy we see His love and thank Him. In the cares that meet us we learn to find opportunities for victory. In times of fear we keep at His side and communion with Him is as natural as it is blessed".

Campbell Morgan:- "It should be remembered that the true interpretation of this song must be sought in spiritual rather than material experience. Children of God are not always immune from physical plaque and pestilence; but they are ever guarded from destructive spiritual forces as they dwell in the secret place of the Most High. As we read this wonderful song of Christ we are admitted to the closest fellowship with God. In Him, our Redeemer and Lord, we may dwell indeed in the secret place of the Most High".

Samuel Chadwick:- "Power is the recompense of Prayer. It takes us long to learn that prayer is more important than organisation and mightier than all learning. Prevailing prayer makes men invincible. They who prevail in the "secret place of the Most High" cannot be beaten anywhere".

F. B. :- "Hidden in the Shadow". Help me, Lord, to tell
Of the peace Thou givest Those who there will dwell.
Thou dost every burden, Every sorrow share,
With this life so blessed Nothing can compare".

Selected by Leonard Morgan



Conducted by
Alf Marsden

"As a newcomer to the Church of Christ I wonder if you could help me with the following question: "Which is the true biblical teaching – that the Lord Jesus Christ is to reign on earth as a King, or that the world is to be burned up by fire when He returns?"

ON the face of it this question seems fairly straightforward to the uninitiated, but in fact it emphasises the question of Historic Pre-Millennialism which teaches that Christ's coming will be 'pre' or 'before' the thousand years reign on earth which pre-millennialists teach. This view has been taught in some form since the second century A.D. and has become crystallised in the more modern doctrine of 'Dispensationalism'. The doctrine of dispensationalism is a form of millennialism usually attributed to a man named J.N.Darby and is widely accepted today. It divides the Bible into seven dispensations, lays stress on the difference between Israel and the Church, and insists on a literal interpretation of Old Testament prophecies. Therefore, we must make a more detailed study in order to say something meaningful about the question, and we can perhaps accomplish this by looking at what some teach about a future reign on earth of Christ, and then to investigate what the Bible really teaches about the subject.

Historic Premillennialism

This doctrine teaches that the book of Revelation is a prophecy of future events, and is to be interpreted literally along with certain O.T. prophecies. Furthermore, it is taught that there is a distinct difference between the Church and the Kingdom. The millennium (simply, a thousand years) is the period of time between the resurrection of the just and the unjust, and also signifies the period of Satan's imprisonment. The same doctrine asserts that there will be a visible return of Christ to judge and rule the nations, and that the saints of the first resurrection will share in His reign; this period of time will close with the final judgment of the wicked. The closing days of this present age will see Israel returning to Palestine and this will be followed by the millennium and the fulfillment of the O.T. covenant promises. Near the close of the present age Antichrist shall appear but will be destroyed by Christ at His coming. These, briefly, are the important points of the doctrine.

We need now to look at the Bible texts used to support these views. Rev. 20:2-7 is the foundation text; without this text it is difficult to see how this doctrine could have arisen; it is insisted that this scripture is to be interpreted literally, especially the thousand year reign. Concerning O.T. prophecy it is taught that God promised David that his throne would be established forever (2 Sam. 7:12-17), and that the promise is to be taken literally (Ps. 89; Jer. 23: 3-5; Ezek. 37; Micah 4:1-8). It is also said that 'the regeneration' (Matt. 19:27ff) is a parallel to Acts 3:21, and that both these scriptures refer to a future time. The N.T. closes with the Kingdom (the earthly throne of David) not established; it is still in the future (Matt. 6:10; 26:29; Luke 23:42; 2 Thess. 1:4,5; 2 Pet. 1:10ff; Rev 2:25-28). The teaching says that the Bible reveals two resurrections and that the millennium falls between the two (Rev. 20:1-10; 1 Cor. 15:23ff; John 5:28ff); during the millennium Christ will literally come to earth and literally remain here for a thousand years (1 Thess. 4:13-17). Thereafter, there will be a new heaven, a new earth, and eternal kingdom of God.

The major criticisms of the millennial teaching are obvious when one consults the Bible with an open mind. The book of Revelation opens by referring to 'things which must shortly come to pass' (Rev. 1:1), indeed, if the Revelation was all futuristic then it could have had little relevance for the early church. Furthermore, the rigid literalism which millennialists insist on twists obviously symbolic passages; it is interesting to note that the same sort of literalism caused the Jews to reject Jesus. It is also evident that David on his throne ruling over Israel is a type of Christ's rule (Ezek. 37:24), because if David were to reign then literal David would have to be resurrected, but it is antitypical David (Christ) and not literal David who rules. It is also true, according to 2 Sam. 7:12ff, that if this referred to the millennium then the millennium would have no end (see v16). Furthermore, if literal interpretations are to be insisted on, then the problems associated with Revelation 20 are obvious.

Modern Dispensationalism

Dispensationalists speak of a 'Rapture' when the saints will be caught up to meet Christ in the air (1 Thess. 4:13-17; 1 Cor. 15:51-53); it is thought by some to be secret and sudden. After this there will be a period of unequalled tribulation on earth (DAN. 12:1; Matt. 24:21; Rev. 7:14). The saints (church) are taken from the earth (1 Thess. 4:13ff), and God deals with Israel again, restoring them to their own land. The tribulation lasts for 7 years (70th week of Daniel's prophecy, Dan 9:24-27) and is divided into two parts (3½ years each). During the first part the Jews return to Palestine, rebuild the temple and reinstate sacrifices and rituals, and make a covenant with Antichrist. In the middle of the week Antichrist breaks the covenant, enters temple (2 Thess. 2), abolishes sacrifices and terribly persecutes the Jews (Rev. 13; 14; 15). There is then a 'Revelation' when Christ comes to end the tribulation; He comes 'with' His saints to rule. A dispensation is a period of time during which man is tested in respect of obedience to some specific revelation of the will of God. The dispensationalists teach that there are seven dispensations: innocency, conscience, human government, promise, law, grace, and the kingdom. All dispensationalists are pre-millennialists but not all pre-millenn-

ialists are dispensationalists. There are certain other distinctions between Historic Pre-millennialism and Dispensationalism but space does not permit to go into these at this time.

A key point in the view is that Judaism must run a predicted course-giving way only temporarily to the church-and will finally literally be restored according to the O.T. However, our reading of the N.T. tells us that the O.T. prophecies foretold clearly the death and suffering of the Messiah; His blood was shed 'before the foundation of the world' for the church (1 Pet. 1:17ff; cf. Matt. 25:34; Luke 11:50,51; Eph. 1:4 to 3:11). From these scriptures we may deduce that if it was the purpose of Jesus to restore the literal royal rule of David to Israel, then why did He not say so? The plain fact is that the Kingdom is present on earth now in the form of the church; Jesus is a King with a throne. The church is anticipated in O.T. prophecy (Joel 2:28-32; Acts 2:17-21; Amos 9:11,12; Acts 15:13-18. See also Acts 3:24ff; 1 Pet. 1:9-12; Rom. 1:1,2; and many others). Dispensationalists take a pessimistic view of the gospel and the church, but the gospel is God's power unto salvation (Rom. 1:16) and Christ died for the church, and in the church His fulness dwells. (Eph. 1:22,23; Coll. 1:18ff). With its emphasis on the literal restoration of Judaism, dispensationalism is plainly incompatible with Christ's spiritual teaching, His sacrifice, and the teaching of the letter to the Hebrews particularly. The new covenant is everlasting (Heb. 13:20) and Christians are repeatedly warned against returning to and trusting in the ordinances of the Law.

The Day of the Lord

The earliest use of this statement is found in Amos 5:18-20. It would seem to indicate the occasion when God would intervene to punish the climax of sin in the world. In the N.T. the Day of the Lord refers to the Second Coming of Christ. It will be unexpected (1 Thess. 5:2; 2 Pet. 3:10), and there will be physical effects on the world which will accompany it (2 Pet. 3:12 ff).

There will be certain events related to His coming. Angels will accompany Him (Matt. 25:31) and He will come with His saints (1 Thess. 3:13); it is not clear if the 'holy ones' of the Matthew passage are the saints of the Thessalonian passage. The dead Christians will be raised first (1 Thess. 4:16) and this will be on the 'last day' (John 6:40,44,54). The reader will notice that in 1 Thess. 4:14-17 there is nothing mentioned about two 'comings' of Christ, nor that the Lord will come to the earth; Paul says, "so shall we ever be with the Lord".

It would appear that judgment will be held on the last day (Matt. 25:31ff; John 12:48). Also, the destruction of the world will take place on the last day (2 Pet. 3:1-13). Therefore, it seems very clear to me that the Second Coming of the Lord will be the 'Last Day', and as Peter says, "But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up" (2 Pet. 3:10).

Conclusion

So now we are in a position to answer our questioner. The Lord is not coming for a millennial reign on earth; He has a Kingdom now, the church, which He purchased with His own blood. Jew and Gentile have a common means of entry into the Kingdom, obedience to the gospel; there is no other way, nor is there going to be. The Lord will only appear once more, at His second Coming; at that time the world will be burned up, the elements will melt with fervent heat, the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and there will be a new heaven and a new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness. Christians should comfort each other with these thoughts and not be disturbed by the apostates around them.

I have only touched on this very great subject as the reader will understand. There are many in the church who say "just keep faith with Jesus and God and don't worry too much about events to follow"; that is good and as it should be. But we must never forget that the great truths are put into the Bible for our understanding and we should endeavour to understand them for our eternal benefit.

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

THE TREASURER'S REPORT

The financial position is little changed from last year. The balance we carry into 1979 is again sufficient to cover our expected costs till the end of the year. We expect the increased subscription rate to maintain this position so that we can enter next year, if the Lord will, with the same confidence.

Occasionally some of our overseas readers are concerned that their cheques drawn on American or Canadian Banks will create difficulties for us. I would like to assure them that our Bank readily accepts all our overseas cheques but charges us a handling fee. A few brethren send dollar bills direct and, of course, we receive the full exchange rate on them. We are pleased to receive payment by either method.

Our circulation figures for January 1979 are printed below, Please help us increase them if you can and also renew promptly when you receive your reminder.

JANUARY 1979

J. K. KNELLER

Africa 37; Australia & New Zealand 9; England 259; Scotland 194; U.S.A. & Canada 43; Elsewhere 3.

THE SCRIPTURE STANDARD BALANCE SHEET FOR 1978

	Income		Expenditure	
Balance b/f	£1,443.27	Printing 12 issues	£852.69	
Subscriptions	628.88	Printing Reading Cards	29.50	
Gifts	249.20	Postage	213.30	
Bank Interest	64.93	Stationery	10.20	£1,105.69
		Cash in Current A/c	516.96	
		Cash in Deposit A/c	838.94	
			1,355.90	
		Less cheque not drawn	78.84	
			1,277.06	
		Cash in Hand	3.53	£1,280.59
	<u>£2,386.28</u>			<u>£2,386.28</u>

Audited and found correct. J. McLuckie.

19th January 1979.

ONE STEP ENOUGH FOR ME

Proverbs 4:12 "When thou goest thy steps shall not be straitened". The Hebrew translation reads "As thou goest step by step, the way shall open up before thee".

"I'm journeying on the upward road,

That leads me home to Thee, my God;

I know that I can never stray,

So long as Thou dost lead the way".

Our lives are on a journey which we can only make one step at a time. We cannot hurry ourselves into youth, maturity or old age, we can but go as time allows. The important thing is to

take the right step at the right time. We cannot hope to retrace our steps once they are made. The young people's hymn reminds us:—

“Step by step O lead me onward,
Upward into youth;
Wiser, stronger, still becoming
In Thy truth”.

The Psalmist had the right idea when he said, “The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord”, and again, “Order my steps in Thy word”. We most surely learn that “It is not in man that walketh to direct his steps”. and the most sure way is to follow in the steps of Jesus.

“I know that I shall purer be
Whilst keeping in Thy company
My love for Thee will stronger grow,
As more of Thee I daily know”.

Journeys are more pleasant when spent in good company. The way does not seem so drear when you have a travelling companion to keep you occupied and while away the time.

The two who travelled to Ammaus found this to be true when “Jesus Himself drew near and went with them”. The time quickly passed by as He revealed to them the scriptures concerning Himself. O that we could have been there then. It was two transformed people who hurried back to Jerusalem to bring His disciples word that He was alive.

In Jesus we have a wide fellowship of friends of kindred minds and hearts who journey with us, and help us to endure the hardships of the way before we reach our destination. The call of the Israelites to passers by, as they journeyed to the promised land, was “come with us and we will do you good”.

Friendships grow on us. Little by little we learn the value of a true friend, and our love for each other blossoms with each step that we take. Is it not so also with our God? As our confidence in Him grows, so does our love. His care, loving kindness and love become a part of ourselves. Daily and hourly we grow in the knowledge and likeness of our Saviour and Lord.

“Thy strength to me, O Lord impart,
Reign Thou for ever in my heart;
For then I know each day I'll be
Each step the nearer unto Thee.”

As Paul, we shall find His strength perfected in weakness. We shall be the stronger as we rest completely in Him and rely upon His will and word working in us. This does not mean He does everything for us and we nothing in return, but rather that we avail ourselves of the means which He has supplied. As we are always in need of help, so we shall have access to His constant source of Power through His indwelling word. The things we find ourselves incapable of doing, He will help us to perform if we allow His power to work in us. Relying less upon ourselves, and more upon Him, we shall find the ability to do the seeming impossible. “All things are possible with God”.

Following in the steps of Jesus we will know the warmth of His abiding presence and its glow will encourage us to follow on until death the way that leads to everlasting life.

“O let me see Thy footmarks and in them plant mine own,
My hope to follow duly is in Thy strength alone.
O call me, guide me, draw me, uphold me to the end,
And then in heaven receive me, My Saviour and my Friend.

So may our prayer always be,

“One step, O Lord, enough for me,
As long as I am following Thee.
Thy blessed word points out the way,
Each step to take from day to day.

TOM KEMP

WHENCE SUCH STRENGTH?

ASK the best member of the church how he became strong and he will tell you it was the result of using the means which the Lord provided for his followers. For several years he has been a close reader of the scriptures and he has not only read the Bible, but he has meditated upon it until he has become filled with it. And he is a man of prayer. He has asked for grace to help in time of need and he obtained it. Now, if this zealous brother should cease to meet and worship, cease to pray and read the Bible, he may become a backslider — perhaps an apostate.

Alfred Ellmore, Gems, Proverbs and Allegories.

WOULD YOU BE GREAT

“True greatness is not found on the pinnacle of prominence, the promenade of popularity, the road to riches, nor in the labyrinthic lanes of man’s learning; but by condescending as a humble servant, ministering unto the needs of all within reach” (Selected).

“Whosoever will be great among you shall be your minister: and whosoever of you will be the chiefest, shall be servant of all” (Mark 10:43,44).

THE GOOD FIGHT OF FAITH

IN fighting the good fight of faith, we should first engage in civil warfare, conquering whatever is mean and base and jealous and unworthy in our souls.

SCRIPTURE READINGS

APRIL 1979

A CHANGE

We hope the readings from John’s gospel have been a source of spiritual enlightenment to all who have read and listened. There is no substitute for either hearing or reading a gospel. In the four absolutely unique books so named, Jesus is portrayed. The rest of the New Testament would be unexplainable apart from these outlines of the greatest teaching and practice ever made available to mankind. The public reading is a privilege and an exercise

open to almost every brother in the assembly, and seriously undertaken may be a training for public speaking.

1—Jeremiah 6:9-21	Jude
8—Numbers 1:44-54	Acts 1
15—Joel 2:13-32	Acts 2:1-21
22—Psalm 110	Acts 2:22-47
29—Deuteronomy 18:9-22	Acts 3

JUDE (or JUDAS)

Who was Jude? The brother of James of course. But which James? His introduction of himself must have indicated to those who first read his letter a sign of authority. We suppose therefore that it is James “the Lord’s brother” (Gal. 1:19), regarded with the same respect as the apostles themselves (Acts 15:13). Scripture and tradition agree in this. James wrote the letter bearing his name. James and Jude alike do not press a claim of relationship to Jesus Himself — we think out of natural modesty. They are mentioned by name by Matthew (13:55), and as being with the apostles in Acts 1:14.

However our interest is in this not so well known letter. It contains the most vigorous denunciation of those false Christians who infiltrated the church in its early days — and we can safely assume brought about the great apostasy. Both John (1 John 4:1-6) and Peter (2 Peter 2:1-20) and Paul (2 Tim. 3) wrote of the same. There must have been collusion quite naturally between Peter and Jude, their prophesies and warnings being so similar. Such warnings were in time heeded by only the few, and the apostasy developed into the apostate church holsing sway over Europe for the centuries preceding the “reformation”.

Jude had intended to write positively about our salvation but he saw the danger of subtle inroads of wicked men in the guise of enthusiastic Christians, and thus felt there was a greater need to issue solemn and urgent warnings against them. However at the beginning he provides the key, a very positive one “to contend earnestly for the faith once and for all delivered to the saints”. This is in fact the plea of churches of Christ. It does involve the rejection of additions and subtractions from what has been revealed in the writings of the New Testament in relation to the faith. While Jude considers his readers do know “once for all” verse 5 R.V.) that once saved

is not always saved because of the history of believers in the past, he finds it necessary to quote the cases of failure. The Israelites came through the wilderness but did not reach the promised land, angels had sublime power but failed to keep to their proper position, and the divine judgement was executed upon Sodom and Gomorrah, engaged in unrestricted sexual perversity. In general those to be watched and avoided are guided by their lusts for the world the flesh and the devil (1 John 2:15-17). Cain illustrates envy and hatred, Balaam the love of money, and Korah the lust for power. The love-feasts practised in the church were for loving fellowship and unselfish sharing of food, and would provide opportunity for subtle greed and selfish cliques (vv. 18 & 19).

In the short space of these few verses Jude has packed the characters of the apostles and their methods, and instructions for the safe walk in Christ, including efforts to recover the backsliders. Verses 24 and 25 form a truly grand doxology.

Beginning at Jerusalem

The character and the capacities of Doctor Luke were chosen by the Holy Spirit to provide us with two history books quite unmatched by any other writers. In "the former treatise" (what a charming description) is portrayed the supremely perfect Son of man; Now He comes to light in the persons of His apostles and His church, and to LIFE! He indeed "began to do and to teach" when talking and walking with His chosen disciples over a period of about three years and a half, exercising the utmost patience and love towards them (and to all of course) while knowing what they did not; what tremendous responsibility and work they faced. Forty days of instruction in the Scriptures, discussion of the kingdom they would establish, and promise of divine help were used in His resurrection body before ascending from the mount of Olives into the heavens out of their sight. What days they were for enlightenment and encouragement. Little wonder was it that they had to be told "Why stand ye 'gazing up' into heaven?" We may try to enter into their feelings without success. (see Luke 24:44-51; Acts 1:9-11).

In our troubles and in our labours we need to adopt the plan the apostles and "the women, and Mary .. and His brethren" for

they continues stedfastly in prayer. Doubt has been expressed at times as to Peter's wisdom in making choice of one to replace Judas. It is safe we think to assume that there was divine approval. The number of the apostles was increased to thirteen when God appointed Paul, but we have noted that the twelve tribes of Israel became thirteen by Joseph's two sons - Dan is not mentioned in Rev. 7. Twelve apostles are mentioned in Rev. 21, a point of no immediate consideration. We note that 120 disciples, including we are sure the womenfolk, were together when the Holy Spirit descended. The apostles took the lead, and had quite unique authority (Acts 2:14 and 5:12 & 13). They took also the brunt of the attack of the authorities, in particular Peter and John, at first.

The Keys of the Kingdom

We have considered the special position and treatment of Peter in the concluding chapter of John's gospel, probably written many years after Acts. God's greatest saints have their weaknesses that we may not be too discouraged by our own. The Peter who in moments of trial denied his Lord and even swore a lie, became the fearless Peter who stood up in the midst of Jerusalem and accused all within hearing of murdering the Son of God. Was it just a miracle or did his very failure under trial, and his subsequent forgiveness and restoration so work upon his character as to produce so wonderful a change? Surely the combination of the divine and human is illustrated here! The apostle Paul had his "thorn in the flesh" so that he might understand his necessary reliance upon the Saviour, and glory in his weakness. The people of Jerusalem were to glorify God for the power of Peter. So he was chosen to be the mouthpiece of the Lord, and wield the keys of the kingdom on the day of Pentecost. We note his reliance upon the Scriptures which his hearers would be aware of and respectful of, and most of them had known Jesus and largely witnessed His cruel death at their insistence, and against the will of Pilate. The right-minded among them were terrified at what they had done and readily repented. It is known that as many as a million Jews came together at the times of the Feasts at Jerusalem. Three thousand is indeed a large number but how small a minority when reckoned in comparison.

Have we considered how great a responsibility was thus imposed upon the "ignorant and unlearned men" (knowing this to be perhaps a faulty translation)? How greatly the power from on high was needed — and supplied!

R. B. SCOTT.

OBITUARY

Cleveleys, Lancs.: The church here are saddened to record the passing of our sister Ethel Hudson, widow of the late George H. Hudson formerly of the Summer Lane, Birmingham congregation. By the grace of God she attained the age of 92 years, having been a member of the Lord's body for almost 80 of those years. Most of her contemporaries have already passed on and she will probably be remembered now mainly by former Sunday School scholars, some of whom have already written words of sympathy. Many ex-U.S. servicemen will also recall the one who was hostess to them during the war years. Teacher hostess, deaconess, elder's wife — these were but some of the many ways in which our sister sought to serve the master whom she loved.

Although she and her husband spent their earlier years in Birmingham, she was in fellowship with the congregation here in Cleveleys for the latter 22 years of her life. She was a constant inspiration and example to all "us young 'uns" being in her customary place on the front row at all meetings. On the very day of her death, Sunday February 4th, she had remembered her Lord as usual. Had the Lord spared her, she would have been in her place for the evening meeting. We shall miss her but we rejoice that she now sleeps in the Lord, awaiting that great day when He shall awaken her with all the other faithful saints who have finished their course.

Eric Winter, Sec.

Baulah Road, Kirkby-in-Ashfield: The church here is sad to announce the death of Sister Lily Longden on Friday 26th January, aged 83 years. As many will know, Sis. Lily was the second wife of the late Bro. Will Longden, well known at Kirkby and throughout the churches.

Sis. Longden had been a member of the church for 23 years having previously been attached to the Methodist. She had proved to be a faithful attender at the Lord's Table until recent years, and her last long illness was borne bravely.

The church is sad at her passing but we have consolation in knowing that she has passed to her reward in Christ Jesus. To her children and to all who were near and dear to her, we extend deepest sympathy and commend them to the love of our Heavenly Father.

The funeral service and interment took place at Eastwood on Thursday 1st February.

On behalf of the church
Tom Woodhouse.

Slamannan: It is with sorrow we announce the death of our esteemed Sister Nellie Guiney on 12th January, aged 76. For a number of years she was unable to attend the meetings through failing health.

Her sufferings were long and severe borne with great Christian fortitude. She always had a warm and appreciative smile for those who visited her and it was her joy to speak and learn about matters pertaining to her Church. The Church was her life having been baptised at the early age of 16 years on 31st July, 1918. Both she and our Bro. John Wilson, sr., were baptised the same Sunday evening by our late evangelist, Bro. Walter Hammond. She was zealous in every good work her hand found to do until overtaken by acute pain. It is grand to know that the child of God, leaving this present world, passes out of suffering and weakness and enters into Jesus' blessed care.

Bro. Tom Nisbet, Tranent, conducted the funeral service both in the Church and at the graveside, a goodly number of brethren and friends being present. It can truly be said she is at rest from her labours.

"When the weary ones we love
Enter on their rest above,
When their words of love and cheer,
Fall no longer on our ear,
Hush! be every mourner dumb,
It is only 'Till He Come!'"

M. Neilson.

COMING EVENTS

Hayfield Road, Kirkcaldy: Annual Social
Saturday 21st April, 1979, at 3.30 p.m.
Speaker: A. E. Winstanley
Followed by Week's Mission from Sunday
22nd April to Sunday 29th April meetings
each evening (except Saturday) at 7'30 p.m.
Your prayers and support will be welcome.
A. Roberts, Sec.

CHANGE OF ADDRESS

Brother and Sister W, Brown have moved from
Dunfermline to 70 Kepplehills Drive, Bucks-
burn, ABERDEEN. Tel No: Aberdeen 714033

PRAYER

PRAYER is not eloquence, but earnestness;
not the definition of helplessness, but the
feeling of it; not the figures of speech, but
compunction of soul.

There is no burden of the spirit but is
lightened by kneeling under it. Little by little
the bitterest feelings are sweetened by the
mention of them in prayer. And agony itself
stops swelling, if we can only cry sincerely,
"My God, My God".

DONT RUSH THROUGH LIFE

Take time to think – thoughts are the very
source of power.
Take time to play – play is the secret of
perpetual youth.
Take time to read – reading is the founda-
tion of wisdom.
Take time to pray – prayer can be a rock
of strength in time of trouble.
Take time to love – loving is what makes
living worthwhile.
Take time to be friendly – friendships give
life a delicious flavor.
Take time to laugh – laughter is the music of
the soul.
Take time to give – any day of the year is too
short for selfishness.
Take time to do your work well – pride in
your work, no matter what it is, nourishes
the spirit,
Take time to show appreciation – thanks is
the frosting on the cake of life.

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