

# The SCRIPTURE STANDARD

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

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## IN GOD WE TRUST

“For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, says the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.” Isaiah 55:8,9. By these words Isaiah expresses the majesty of God and the wisdom and love that He is able to bring to bear in His dealings with mankind. The purpose is not to belittle the thoughts and ways of mankind but more to elevate the grandeur of God’s mind. In the context of this passage God’s immeasurable love for His creation is demonstrated, a love that extends to those who repent and turn back to the Lord - and in returning to obedience to the Lord the promise is of an abundant pardon. I think that Isaiah recognised that God has more wisdom, more love and more forgiveness than we have. In fact not only does He have more, He has all wisdom, love and forgiveness. In short He is God, and we are man and His thoughts and ways are higher, nobler and better than ours. (cf Hosea 11:9)

## WISDOM AND WEAK THINGS

In what we commonly refer to as his first letter to the Church at Corinth, Paul first addresses the disunity in the fellowship caused by the apparent “personal allegiances” that were becoming prevalent by reminding the Church that true wisdom is vested in God. His stated purpose, amongst others, was that “**your faith might not rest in the wisdom of men but in the power of God.**” 1 Cor. 2:5. Paul expresses his determination that these Christians in Corinth should understand that God is the power and substance of the Gospel and that the superficial attraction of the style and eloquence of other teachers is no substitute. They were to refocus their thoughts on God and the message of saving grace delivered by His Son. “**He (God) is the source of your life in Christ Jesus, whom God made our wisdom, our righteousness and sanctification and redemption; therefore as it is written, “Let him who boasts, boast in the Lord.”** (2: 30,31). James gives us an excellent insight into what this wisdom entails when he says, “**But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, open to reason, full of mercy and good fruits, without uncertainty or insincerity. And the harvest of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.**” (James 3:17,18). I suspect that this is also an extremely good

definition of the 'weak things' that Paul writes about in the early part of the letter to Corinth quoted above.

Mankind is rash to rely on its own wisdom and ignore God in the conduct of its affairs. Christians are rash if we do not constantly familiarise ourselves with, and put into practice the teachings of Jesus. This is true in all areas of life but so far as this article is concerned is specifically true of attitudes to human relationships within society. I think that man is relying on his own wisdom and getting it wrong. I certainly don't want to fall into the trap of believing that everything that happened in the past should be regarded as 'the good old days'. Or that every development that takes place now is to be regarded as retrograde and signaling and heralding the end of civilization as we know it. However as my experience and observation of life increases two thoughts are becoming more firmly entrenched. The first of these is that it seems to be an entirely feasible proposition that as God is our maker, and as He has made us in his own image, then He knows what is best for us. Who could possibly be better placed to describe the sensible parameters of human conduct than the Great Designer Himself. The second is the sense that as man discovers more about God's wondrous creation he becomes more arrogant about his own 'cleverness'. Far from standing in awe at the fact that some of what God has created is gradually being understood, there is rather the sense that in discovering man increasingly believes that he is 'creating'. If that premise is true then it becomes inevitable that man will rely on his own wisdom and cleverness rather than in the power of God. And that is a mistake. Mankind is God's physical creation. Christians are His spiritual creation. And how well we are known! Read again Psalm 139 and wonder at the insight of David as out of the depths of his soul he penned that glorious description of God's knowledge of us.

### MAN'S WISDOM?

These thoughts were first provoked by an immensely sad article recently featured in the Independent newspaper. The main thrust of the article was to examine the pressures in the lives of teenage girls that are leading to an increase in the rate of suicides (and attempted suicide). The writer refers to "a generation in crisis". The words of one teenager are quoted, ""It got to the stage where I didn't want to go on. I had no friends, no money, I couldn't focus on anything and I hated the way that I looked and felt. One day I thought 'That's it, enough,' and I took a handful of painkillers."" And when you reach that kind of low, says Ellen, attempting to take your own life isn't scary at all. Not even when you are 15 years old." The article noted that the girl referred to was "intelligent, articulate and gorgeous." The article went on to report that research conducted by the Royal College of Psychiatrists reveals that for the first time the group showing the greatest increase in attempted suicide is 15-19 year old girls. The researcher concluded, "There is no doubt that more modern young females are feeling out of control of their lives."

The following is a selection of other statements drawn from the rest of the report, which, although out of their context here, can be taken at face value:

- "I think my problems started when mum found out that dad had been having an affair"

- “this generation of girls has grown up in a culture of consumerism” (Author, “Youth Lifestyles in a Changing World”)
- two-thirds of 15-16 year old are in debt and most experience excessive anxiety as a result (Research Company Mintel)
- “arguments, divorce or remarriage by parents contribute in particular to girls feeling unsettled” (Deputy Director Depression Alliance)
- Associated to this (problem of anorexia and bulimia) is the growing problem of self-harm, where girls gouge flesh with knives or razors in an attempt to vent inner turmoil, cope with low self-esteem and cry for help. Government research suggests that 200,000 11-15 year old girls are abusing their bodies in this way.

Why go into this level of detail from a newspaper report? Well it certainly isn't to gloat that, as Christians, we are smarter than the rest and that we can with a sense of superiority stand aloof from these problems. I would be surprised if to one degree or another some of the problems reflected above were not already present among some Christian communities. And we can be sure that if the gospel message is being delivered effectively we will eventually come across, and have to deal sympathetically with, people who bring with them backgrounds similar to those reflected above.

### CONFIDENCE IN GOD

No, the reason for dwelling on these matters is that we, those who trust in God and the teaching and example of Jesus, should reinforce our confidence in the fact that God, in His wisdom, has described for us ways of living and attitudes to life that are right for us. That stability and faithfulness in our family life is right. That storing up for ourselves treasure in heaven rather than on earth ensures the right perspective for our Christian lives and our eternal future. That our self-esteem should be perfectly adequately satisfied by the knowledge that the God of creation loves us so much that he was willing to send His Son to die for our redemption. The Psalmist said, **“The Lord has been mindful of us.”** And in that simple statement of fact is the richest blessing. That every cry for help uttered to Him is heard. That yes, even in the 21st century the biblical pattern holds good for God's creation. We can, should, must have the confidence that even surrounded by much scepticism about, and disinterest in God and His provision for us, the reality is that His way works. Despite every technological advance (many of them very much to be welcomed), every improvement in our quality of life and standard of living in the Western world, many people are still not finding the satisfaction and fulfilment that they crave out of life.

**“My ways are higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.”** Let us thank God for sharing His wisdom with us, for revealing Himself to us in Jesus. Despite the fact that so many ignore God in the conduct of their affairs we should not lose heart nor lose our wonder at the wisdom of His counsel. We must not stop believing that the Gospel does offer hope to the inner turmoil and cries for help, not just of teenagers but of all men and women. The apostle Peter said, **“Through him (Jesus) you have confidence in God, who raised him from the dead and gave him glory, so that your faith and hope are in God.”** (1 Peter 1:21).

## THE SS - ITS LIFE AND TIMES

The Scripture Standard has been around for more years than many of its readers. I thought it would be of interest to you just to look back down the years and see how it has changed.

The SS first saw the light of day in January 1935 with Walter Crosthwaite as its first Editor. Rather strangely he is never referred to by name in the first 12 issues, only as 'Editor'. Bro. Crosthwaite was a very well known evangelist travelling widely amongst the churches. He was a powerful, fiery preacher of the gospel and an outspoken advocate of Christian unity through adherence to the 'old paths'. In the first issue he declared his editorial policy as, '*We intend to publish articles by well known brethren bearing on our position and plea; notes on Bible readings; answers to questions of general interest, and helpful items for preachers*'. He was Editor for 20 years and was succeeded by Carlton Melling in 1955.

Carlton was a Librarian by profession and was Editor for almost 19 years, but various controversies in the churches made his time as Editor very difficult. With his health and eyesight rapidly deteriorating he retired at the end of 1973. James Gardiner, a Chartered Surveyor, then took up the pen and has edited the magazine till September this year. Both Carlton and James undertook the Editorship as a 'temporary' measure until a decision on a permanent appointment was made!

The first issues were produced with 12 pages in double column format. Below the 'Scripture Standard' header the slogan was '*What Saith the Scriptures*' (Rom. Iv. 3.). By 1938 the more familiar slogan, '*Pleading for a complete return to Christianity as it was in the beginning*', was in place and the magazine had increased in size to 16 pages.

Lists of suggested Scripture Readings, with notes on the readings, were a feature from the first issue and have continued to the present day. John Scouller presented the readings and notes for several years but by 1945 RB Scott of London was preparing them and continued to do so until his death in 1988 when Ian Davidson, the present contributor, continued this work.

The other regular feature, which has been very popular with readers, has been the 'Question Box'. By its nature it addresses the problems of the day and so generates its own interest. Len Channing conducted the first 'Question Box' in January 1956. The question posed then was "What is baptism for the Dead?" I suppose it must have seemed important at the time but with the whole of Scripture before them why such an obscure subject to start with? However, important questions were being raised and Len gave his answers in his own scholarly way. Later James Gardiner commenced his association with the SS via the 'Question Box'. For six years he gave his answers, being succeeded by Alf Marsden who gave over 22 years to this work until his sudden death early in 1997. Ian Davidson stepped in for a number of issues until Frank Worgan commenced his regular contribution. Frank, well known throughout the churches, brings his own style and depth of knowledge to us as Question Master.

Many other brethren have contributed articles and even a series of articles on particular topics. For instance Leonard Morgan ran a series titled 'Gleanings' for many years. It would not be possible to name all those who have contributed to our spiritual

life through the SS. By the nature of things those who wrote in the early years have passed on and are probably just names to you as they are to me. None-the-less a goodly number of able brethren have, down the years, blessed us with their work, wisdom and experience. We strive to maintain the same standard today and are pleased to welcome new contributors to the work.

It is quite interesting to look through the early issues and see the matters that concerned the brethren, the social attitudes of the day or the issues that caused controversy. For instance the October 1939 issue is simply titled 'WAR'. The opening lines of the editorial read, "*After weeks of suspense during which we hoped against hope that peace would be preserved and after what we believe were sincere and strenuous efforts in that direction by the Prime Minister, the fateful announcement was made, 'This country is at war with Germany.'*" I don't have any copies for 1945 to see the reaction to the end of the war but the question of the pros and cons of military service are a regular subject of discussion until the mid 50's. By contrast the June 1953 issue is titled 'THE GREATEST CORONATION' and refers briefly to the coronation of Queen Elizabeth 2nd before considering the crowning of Him who is 'King of Kings and Lord of Lords'.

During the last 68 years many good magazines have been started with great enthusiasm but many have failed. In the past the SS has survived in print by the generosity of brethren and, at other times, by the sheer determination of the Editor. Presently we distribute to about 18 countries world wide, from Australia and NZ in the south to Canada and the USA in the north. Six African countries, India, Malaysia, Singapore and, of course, nearer home both Ireland and Europe also have readers. The work of treasurer and distributor have always been combined and was the responsibility at first of AL Frith followed by Phillip Partington then by Paul Jones and currently by the writer.

*Looking forward* we will need new writers and readers. We need able writers - young and old, male and female - who can explore the issues of the day from a Christian and Biblical perspective. So if you have something useful to say, say it through the SS. Robert Marsden, our new Editor, will be pleased to receive suitable articles for inclusion in future issues. We need readers who will thoughtfully consider the articles in the light of Scripture and their implications for living lives that please God. As a reader, try and introduce us to someone else. If you can and do, who knows, maybe the good old SS will be able to usefully serve another generation of Christians!

JOHN KNELLER

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## THE BIBLE (Part 10)

John Wycliffe (1330-1384) is an important figure in the history of the Bible in English. He was educated at Oxford. He was appointed Master of Balliol College in Oxford in 1360. He resigned in 1361 to become vicar of Fillingham. He exchanged Fillingham for Ludgershall in 1368 and, after further study at Oxford, became a Bachelor of Divinity and a Doctor of Divinity. In 1374 King Edward III appointed him to the rectory of Lutterworth and, about that time, he began his interest in political

affairs and subsequently became associated with John of Gaunt. Although popular with the king and Parliament, Wycliffe was denounced by Pope Gregory XI, who called for his arrest in 1377. In the following year he began a systematic attack on the beliefs and practices of the church. The Lollards were a group who propagated his controversial views. In 1382 his works were condemned by a Synod in London and his writings were banned at Oxford.

It is doubtful if Wycliffe himself took any direct part in the work of Bible translation, but the translation deserves to bear the title "The Wycliffite Bible" because he was the inspiration behind it. There were two Wycliffite versions, an earlier and a later. The earlier one was produced between 1380 and 1384, while Wycliffe was still alive; the later one appeared after his death. Both these versions were based on the Latin Vulgate.

In 1529, Sir Thomas More condemned the English version by Wycliffe. He called Wycliffe "the great arch-heretic", who undertook "of a malicious purpose" to translate the Bible into English and "purposely corrupted the holy trust". After his death, a monk said of him that he was an "organ of the devil, enemy of the church, idol of heretics, image of hypocrites, restorer of schism, storehouse of lies, sink of flattery - stuck by the horrible judgement of God". - His body was eventually exhumed and his ashes were thrown into the river Swift at Lutterworth.

### WILLIAM TYNDALE

William Tyndale (1494-1536) was an English Bible translator and a Protestant martyr. He was an Oxford scholar and also studied in Cambridge. He made himself acquainted with the Greek New Testament by Erasmus. He was prevented from doing his work in England and moved, therefore, to the Continent. He began publishing an English New Testament in Germany at Cologne in 1525 and completed it at Worms. He also worked on the Old Testament (1530-1536). His translation later became the basis of the Authorised Version. Eventually, he was seized at Antwerp and condemned for heresy and burned at the stake. Of 1800 printed copies of the English New Testament, two complete volumes and a fragment are all that remain. One writer said: "The peculiar genius which breathes through the English Bible, the mingled tenderness and majesty, the Saxon simplicity, the grandeur, unequalled, unapproached, in the attempted improvements of modern scholars. . . all are here, and bear the impress of the mind of one man, and that man is William Tyndale".

### MYLES COVERDALE

Myles Coverdale (1488-1569) was not the scholar Tyndale was, but the best part of his life was devoted to making the Bible accessible to his fellow countrymen in their own tongue. He was a native of York and a graduate of Cambridge. In addition to the version regularly known as "Coverdale's Bible", which appeared in 1535, he edited the Great Bible of 1539 and had some part in the preparation of the Geneva Bible before its publication in 1560. He also produced diglots or bilingual editions in Latin and English - of the New Testament in 1538 and of the Psalter in 1540. "Coverdale's Bible was the

first to separate the books of the Apocrypha from the other Old Testament books and print them by themselves as an appendix to the Old Testament - a precedent followed by English Protestant Bibles ever since (in so far as they include the Apocrypha at all)" (F.F. Bruce).

### **OTHER EARLY BIBLES**

In 1537, a Bible by Thomas Matthew was issued. "Thomas Matthew" is best regarded as a pen-name; the editor was one John Rodgers, a former associate of Tyndale's, who later was the first of the Marian martyrs to be burned at the stake in 1555. Matthew's Bible was much influenced by Tyndale's translation.

The Taverner's Bible was a revision of Matthew's prior to the Great Bible. This Bible was named after Richard Taverner, reviser and layman.

The Great Bible first appeared in 1539. It was translated at the instigation of Oliver Cromwell, who had entertained the idea of having a copy of an English Bible made publicly accessible in every parish church in England. The Great Bible was actually Coverdale's revision of Matthew's Bible. From the second edition onwards, the Great Bible is sometimes called "Cranmer's Bible" because Archbishop Cranmer wrote the preface to it.

The Geneva Bible was first published in 1560 and was the work of William Whittingham and his associates. In the Old Testament, the Geneva Bible represents a thorough revision of the Great Bible, especially in those books which Tyndale had not translated. For the New Testament they took as their basis Tyndale's latest edition and revised it with the aid of Beza's Latin version and his commentary. The Geneva Bible is famous for its notes, which greatly irritated James I. They are unashamedly Calvinistic. The Geneva Bible was the first Bible to be printed in Scotland and its popularity there extended even after the publication of the Authorised Version.

The Bishop's Bible (first edition 1568) was a revision of the Great Bible. It superseded the Great Bible as the authorised version of the Church of England. Despite nineteen editions from 1568-1606, it was never as popular as the Geneva Bible.

### **AUTHORISED VERSION**

It is also known as the King James Version (1611). The proposal for a new translation came from Dr. John Reynolds, president of Corpus Christi, Oxford, a leader of the Puritan side in the Church of England and one of the greatest scholars of his day. King James I agreed and took a leading part in organising the work of the translation.

Six panels of translators (forty-seven men in all) had the work divided among them; the Old Testament was entrusted to three panels, the New Testament to two and the Apocrypha to one. Two of the panels met at Oxford, two at Cambridge and two at Westminster. When the panels had completed their task, the draft translation of the whole Bible was reviewed by a smaller group of twelve men, two from each panel, and then the work was sent to the printer.

The forty-seven men included most of the leading Biblical scholars in England. The rules which guided them in their work was sanctioned, if they were not indeed drawn

up, by James himself. The Bishop's Bible was to serve as the basis for the new translation. Old ecclesiastical words were to be kept ("church" and not "congregation", for example). Marginal notes were to be used only to explain Hebrew and Greek words and to draw attention to parallel passages. Words necessary to complete the sense were to be printed in distinctive type. The existing chapters and verse divisions were to be retained; new headings were to be supplied for the chapters.

The translators dedicated their work to the king and the dedication continues to be printed in the forefront of most British editions. Originally, there was a lengthy preface, "The translators to the Readers", which is printed nowadays only in very few editions. "The Authorised Version has often been called a well of English undefiled, and much of its purity is due to the fact that its water was drawn from the ancient springs. It has the universal note which gives it a place among the immortals. It has the Divine touch, even in its diction, which lifts it above the limitations of locality and time, and makes it valid and living for all the ages. Like a rare jewel fitly set, the sacred truths of Scripture have founded such suitable expression in it, that we can hardly doubt that they filled those who made it with reverence and awe, so that they walked softly in the Holy Presence" (William Muir's *Our Grand Old Bible*).

IAN S. DAVIDSON  
Motherwell

## QUESTION BOX

*Frank and Isobel Worgan are in the process of moving house and so Frank has advised that it will not be possible for him to produce his Question Box feature for the next couple of months. I know this is one of the favourite features of the magazine and that its absence will be a disappointment, but I think we should express our deepest thanks to Frank that he has continued to produce such informative and comprehensive answers over the last couple of years when so much of his time has been devoted to helping Isobel through her illness. I understand that Isobel is making steady but slow progress and I would ask that we continue to seek God's blessing on Frank and Isobel.*

## THE FRUIT OF THE VINE

Let me begin this piece with a confession. I know next to nothing about gardening. Living in a small city with a large farming community, my ignorance invites regular expressions of despair, pity and contempt from my farming neighbours. I am no more capable of producing fresh vegetables than I am of performing brain surgery.

There are, however, a few things that even I know. I know, for instance, that you can identify a tree by the things that you find growing on it. Apple trees grow apples, pear trees grow pears. I also know that you don't get fruit unless the whole tree is functioning properly.

Jesus knew these things too. They must have influenced his choice of a vine and its



branches as a metaphor for himself and his disciples (John 15:1-8). Jesus knew that his disciples were soon to face life without his physical presence and, in this last body of teaching, he showed them what the conditions of their new lives would be. The disciples were to continue the work of Christ by preaching the Gospel throughout the world (Acts 1:8): work that these unexceptional men would be unable to complete in their own strength.

In John 15:4, Jesus established a fundamental principle for all who would seek to live as his disciples, in whatever time or place: 'No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me.' It is a basic principle of gardening: branches separate from the vine, and therefore from the roots, will yield no fruit. Yet we so often fail to recognise that the same principle applies to our lives. We are unable to bear the kind of fruit of which Jesus speaks unless we are 'in' him. The fruit of the Spirit, that is the qualities of a godly life, are described in Galatians 5:22-26, but the context of John 15:1-8 suggests a further application. Jesus is preparing His disciples to be apostles, and the fruit they will bear may be seen in the new disciples that they will make for Christ, in fulfilment of the Great Commission (Matthew 28:19-20).

Of course, these are not mutually exclusive. Fruit is the visible evidence of the type of a tree, and the fruits of the Spirit are the visible evidence of a disciple of Christ. It is not enough to acknowledge Christ in private and live an unchanged life in public. The fruits of the Spirit are a witness to the world of the transforming power of Christ: they will lead to the other fruits, those of new disciples.

As I close, let me ask you to consider one final point. The branch, which stands for the Christian, is entirely helpless without the vine. Alone, it yields nothing. Similarly, the Christian gains nothing by efforts made in his or her own strength. It is the easiest of errors: the belief that, by my own work and self-discipline I can become more pleasing to God. It can never be. The Christian life is a process of surrender: to the Word of God, the Spirit of God, the sovereignty of God. Effort and discipline that are grounded in one's own strength are useless. It is only when they flow from poverty of spirit (Matt. 5:3) and dependence upon God that they draw upon the life-giving nutrition of the vine and begin to yield fruit.

SIMON MARSDEN

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## OUR MEDIATOR

There may be some who read this article who are in need of a 'pick-me-up'; if so read on.

In Paul's first letter to Timothy he reminds Timothy, and Christians everywhere, of what was achieved by the sacrifice of Christ Jesus relative to **reconciliation and redemption**. Paul writes, "**For there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.**" (1 Tim. 2:5)

I'm sure that we are all familiar with the role of the mediator. He is the one who brings together two parties who are at a variance with each other. In other words he acts as a 'go-between'. How often have we seen that in war-torn countries such as Bosnia in

the past or Afghanistan more recently, mediation has at some point been necessary by those who are striving to uphold the peace and thereby bring about an amicable settlement. Perhaps the most startling example in the recent experience was the 'Truth and Reconciliation Committee' that was established in South Africa in an attempt to overcome the legacy of years of apartheid. So it is in God's dealings with man; certain individuals have, through the ages, acted as mediators on behalf of God's people.

In the Old Testament we have Moses who was entrusted with God's law written on tablets of stone. There were also prophets who were God's spokesmen. Then there were priests, who were appointed by God to communicate on behalf of the Jewish nation. (ref. Heb 5:1)

As we move into the New Testament we find that Jesus, God's Christ, has become the mediator between ourselves and God. In fact the Hebrew letter describes Jesus as the **"mediator of a new covenant, so that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance, since a death has occurred which redeems them from the transgressions under the first covenant."** (Heb. 9:15). It is because of what Jesus achieved at Calvary that we can stand before our heavenly Father reconciled if we accept Jesus into our lives and are obedient in baptism to His will.

Jesus, through His sacrifice, supersedes everything under the Old Testament because He is at once our Prophet, Priest and King. His atoning sacrifice made it possible for us to have a right relationship with God, to set aside the enmity that the sin of mankind had introduced into the relationship. He came to do for us what we could not possibly have completed for ourselves. He broke down the barrier of enmity between God and ourselves by His ultimate sacrifice on the cross. In 1 John 4:10 we read, **"In this is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the expiation for our sins."** It is Jesus, the Son of God himself, who has covered our sin. It is through this very act that man has been made aware that he needs a mediator.

Let us always be mindful of what Christ has done for us by becoming our mediator. Thank you Lord for your inexpressible gift!

GORDON MELLING  
Wigan

## THE FIVE HUNDRED WITNESSES

In 1 Cor. 15, Paul deals with the argument being put forward by some among the Corinthians (verse 12) that there is no resurrection of the dead. By way of proof he describes how the risen Christ was seen by **"above five hundred brethren at once: of whom the greater part remain unto this present, but some are fallen asleep."** He seems to be suggesting that if they do not believe him, Paul, they must go and seek out any of those remaining brethren for further testimony. No one would make such a suggestion unless perfectly sure that the surviving witnesses would bear him out.

The fact that a crowd of five hundred people were all able to see the risen Lord at the same time, raises some interesting questions. Who were they, and where did this gathering take place, for instance?

## WHO WERE THE FIVE HUNDRED?

Sympathisers, most likely, who had seen Jesus before His death and could therefore recognise Him again, in those days before photographs were invented: people who had gathered to hear the strange news the apostles had to tell about the resurrection, but who were probably full of natural doubts about whether such a thing were possible. If the apostle Thomas could be a doubter, how much more so those who did not belong to the inner circle? The party of the Sadducees did not believe in any after-life, and Jesus had once reduced them to silence on this point (Matt. 22:34), by quoting the scripture where God spoke to Moses about his forefathers, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, in the present tense, as of persons who were still living. This serves to remind us that we are not the first people to live in an age of unbelief.

## WHERE DID THEY SEE HIM?

After His resurrection and appearances in Jerusalem, Jesus told his followers to follow Him into Galilee (Matt. 28:10), before they returned to Jerusalem at the time of His ascension. An outdoor gathering in the countryside would best fit the facts. The followers of Christ did not then have any buildings of their own, and buildings capable of holding five hundred people were probably not very common. Besides, the risen Jesus did not show Himself before unfriendly sceptics for a very good reason. Imagine if He had appeared in the palace of the High Priest, before the Sanhedrin, or in Pilate's judgement hall. Would not all those who saw Him, especially those who condemned Him, have been immediately struck with unspeakable terror? Even the guards at the tomb were paralysed with fright at the appearance of the angel (Matt. 28:4). The enemies of Jesus would have been forced to believe in the evidence of their own eyes, but how unwillingly! Jesus did not make converts in that way, except perhaps in the case of Saul of Tarsus, but Saul was at least sincerely in error.

Another requirement for five hundred people to be able to recognise Jesus all at the same time would be good light. We know that the lamps which they had at that time provided very restricted illumination, and doubters often make much of the fact that Jesus appeared to some of his followers at dawn or in the evening and was not recognised by them at first. But there were other occasions when he met them in the laytime (John 21:1) (Matt. 28:16-17) (Luke 24:50). So when he was seen by the five hundred all at once, it is quite likely that this was in broad daylight.

## CONVINCED WITNESSES

About twenty years later Paul describes these five hundred people as "brethren", so apparently all became Christians and remained so, and their number was only reduced because some had died. The Jewish legal system only required that evidence be supported by two or three witnesses (Duet. 17:6). It has long been part of our system of justice to suppose that twelve people on a jury can come to a conclusion as to what is truth or otherwise, and there were, of course, twelve apostles able to do so. But after this we have the enormous number of five hundred witnesses to the resurrection. If

these all filed through a court of law, one by one, who could disbelieve in the evidence?

One can only be astonished at the capacity of human beings to disbelieve facts which do not suit them. When the tomb of Jesus was found to be empty, the authorities quickly arranged for the guards to tell an improbable story about being asleep on duty and yet knowing who broke into the tomb and stole the body while they slumbered. Many people accepted this, rather than face the truth. (Mark 28:13-15). The chief rulers were most concerned about what would please their Roman masters (John 11:47-48). Then there were those among the rulers who believed but would not admit it "**For they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God.**" (John 12:43).

It is perhaps not surprising that this lack of belief in the resurrection had arisen in the church in Corinth, rather than other cities. Corinth in those days was a by-word for all kinds of immorality, and persons involved in that kind of life are very unwilling to acknowledge that they will have to answer for their deeds on a day of judgement. It is not evidence that is lacking, but the willingness to accept it with all that that will involve. "**If any man will do his (God's) will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God. . .**" (John 7:17).

ROSE M. PAYNE

## SCRIPTURE READINGS

Dec. 1	Isaiah 56	Acts 15:36 to 16:15
Dec. 8	Psalms 146	Acts 16:16-40
Dec. 15	Isaiah 1	Acts 17:1-15
Dec. 22	1 Kings 8:22-30	Acts 17:16-34
Dec. 29	Genesis 45:25 to 46:7	Acts 18:1-18

### PAUL'S SECOND MISSIONARY JOURNEY

Paul and Barnabas disagreed over John Mark. Barnabas wanted to take him on their second missionary tour. Paul thought otherwise. The result was two expeditions - Barnabas and Mark in Cyprus; Paul and Silas in Anatolia. It was a good result in hindsight.

At Lystra, Paul met again a young disciple named Timothy. He and his mother had been converted during the previous missionary visit. Paul decided to take Timothy with them. In the end he would turn out to be a faithful travel-companion and fellow-worker in the

cause of Christ. Paul had Timothy circumcised to avoid all sorts of problems. "It was a measure not binding in itself, but the neglect of which would expose to contention and opposition among the Jews, and greatly retard or destroy his usefulness. It was an act of expediency for the sake of peace, and was in accordance with Paul's uniform and avowed principle of conduct, 1 Corinthians 9:20" (Albert Barnes).

### PHILIPPI

Philippi was a colony of Rome. It owes its name to Philip of Macedon, the father of Alexander the Great. It was strategically located on the east-west Egnation road between Rome and Asia. One of the great ancient battles took place near here in 42 B.C. It resulted in the victory of Antony and Octavian (the future Emperor Augustus) over Brutus and Cassius, the assassins of Julius Caesar.

We read of the conversions at Philippi of Lydia and her household and the jailer and his household. The late

brother Jack Nisbet saw here the fulfilment of Isaiah's prophecy (11:1-10). If the gospel of Christ can bring together people like Lydia and the jailer, then today it can bring together people from all sorts of backgrounds. The gospel is the greatest force for unity in the world.

Paul and Silas were treated disgracefully in Philippi, despite the fact that both of them were Roman citizens. No wonder the magistrates (praetors) were alarmed when they realised they had publicly beaten two Roman citizens without a trial (16:37-39). The authorities in Rome would be far from pleased at the news. Roman citizens had rights and they must never be violated, especially by local magistrates. Paul insisted on an official apology. Perhaps, in this action, he was thinking of the future well-being of the congregation.

Paul later wrote an epistle to the saints at Philippi while a prisoner at Rome. I once spent a whole year studying it. It is one of the most uplifting letters Paul ever penned. It is the favourite of many.

### THESSALONICA

Thessalonica was a city and seaport of Macedonia. It was named by Cassander, one of the successors of Alexander the Great, in memory of his wife. The city was a strategic commercial and military centre in Paul's day. Luke informs us that the officials of the city were called *politarchs* (17:6). Once again, Luke is accurate in his political description.

Paul preached Jesus in the local synagogue. He reasoned from the OT scriptures for three successive sabbath days (2). The result was that a few Jews believed. However, they were outnumbered by Gentile God-fearers and women of high station in the city (4).

Opposition soon arose, which led to an uproar and an attack upon the house of Jason, Paul's host and a believing Jew. Jason and his companions were eventually hauled before the politarchs, who dealt with the matter sanely and had the Christians released on bail. Paul and Silas were forced to leave the city. It is important to read the epistles Paul later addressed to the saints of this famous city.

### ATHENS

Paul came to Athens via Berea (17:10-15). Berea is the modern Verria, a city of southern Macedonia probably founded in the 5th century B.C. It was a prosperous place with a Jewish colony.

Athens is one of the most famous cities in Europe. In Paul's day it was one of the greatest cultural centres in the known world. In fact, it was the capital city of literature and art and also the centre of philosophy. It was the native city of Socrates and Plato and the adopted home of Aristotle, Epicurus and Zeno. Paul encountered on Mar's Hill or Areopagus philosophers known as Stoics and Epicureans. "The Epicureans were the earliest scientific and liberal humanists. . . The core of the Stoic philosophy lies in the view that there can be no authority higher than reason" (Bryan Magee, *The History of Philosophy*). Paul's new message was met with scepticism. they described him as a "babbling" or a retailer of second-hand scraps of philosophy.

Paul's address before the venerable Court of Areopagus is an outstanding one. Personally, I think Luke records only a summary of it. But, what a summary! There are ten major points in the speech: the universe is not a product of chance but creation; God is independent of man; man is utterly dependent upon

God; all men are related by origin; God is a history-making God; there is a purpose to human existence; ignorance of God is inexcusable; universal repentance is essential; universal judgement is inescapable; the resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth is the greatest fact of all time. This was an address for a pagan society. It is an address for today because today we all live in a pagan world. These ten points should be emphasised again and again by all Christians everywhere.

We never read of Paul establishing a church in Athens. There is no subsequent letter to the saints in Athens. The vast majority reject his message. When people are full of their own philosophy, there is no room for the wisdom of God.

### CORINTH

Athens was the ancient centre of philosophy; Corinth was the ancient centre of pornography. Corinth is a city of Greece at the western end of the isthmus between central Greece and the Peloponnesus. In Paul's time it had two harbours - Lechaem and Cenchraea. The city was dominated by the Acrocorinth, a steep, flat-topped rock surmounted by the acropolis, which contained a temple of Aphrodite, goddess of love, whose service gave rise to the city's proverbial immorality. Corinth really became a synonym for wealth, luxury, drunkenness and filth.

Paul spent eighteen months here (18:11). His stay proved a turning point in his missionary life. "And when Silas and Timotheus were come from Macedonia, Paul was pressed in the spirit and testified that Jesus was the Christ. And when they opposed themselves, and blasphemed, he shook his raiment, and said unto them, Your blood be upon your heads; I am clean; from henceforth I will go unto the Gentiles"

(18:5,6). Initially, he did not have far to go. In fact, he went next door to the synagogue to the house of one Titus Justus. It is wonderful to read that "many of the Corinthians hearing believed and were baptised" (8b).

We meet one Gallio in this section of Scripture. Lucius Junius Annaeus Gallio was a son of the elder Seneca, the rhetorician, and a brother of the younger Seneca, the Stoic philosopher. He was proconsul in Achaia from 52-53 B.C. "A fixed point for Pauline chronology is thus afforded. . ." (J.H. Harrop).

IAN S. DAVIDSON

Motherwell

### TEST YOUR BIBLICAL KNOWLEDGE

1. What tribe was excluded from the census taken by Moses and Aaron?
2. On what day did the Israelites walk around the walls of Jericho 7 times?
3. What did Solomon threaten to cut in half with a sword?
4. What did Naboth refuse to give king Ahab?
5. How long did king Jabin of Canaan oppress Israel?
6. What Jewish festival commemorates the events of the book of Esther?
7. Who asked Jesus: "Are you the King of the Jews?"
8. Who will guard the 12 gates of the heavenly city?
9. On what island were Paul and his fellow travellers shipwrecked?
10. Jesus healed a lame man at the pool of Bethesda. For how long had the man been a cripple?

## COMING EVENTS

### MERCHANT STREET PETERHEAD 2002

9th & 10th November

*Speaker:* Andy Davies, Clarkston

7th & 8th December

*Speaker:* Robert Hughes, Kirkcaldy

2003

11th & 12th January

*Speaker:* David Murray, Aberdeen

8th & 9th February

*Speaker:* Alistair Ferrie, Dundee

1st & 2nd March

*Speaker:* John Mooney, Livingston

### On each occasion meeting times will be:

Saturday: 7.00 pm

*(followed by refreshments)*

Sunday: 10.00 am Bible Class

11.00 am Breaking of Bread

6.00 pm Gospel Meeting

### Annual Social:

12th & 13th April 2003

Saturday 12th at 3.00 pm and 6.00 pm

*Speakers:*

Joe Nisbet, Aberdeen

Graham Gorton, Manchester

These brothers will also speak on  
Sunday 13th at the times noted above.

### KINGS ROAD, STRETFORD MANCHESTER

2nd November 2002 at 7.00 pm

*Speaker:* Alan Ashurst

*Subject:* 'Get a Life'

To be held at :

**The Green Hut,**

**Kings Road, Stretford.**

For further information ring:

0161-865-4242.

### NEWTONGRANGE

We would like to point out that we will  
not be holding our  
**Annual Social**  
in October this year.

## OBITUARY

Our dear brother in Christ, George Sillman, passed away in Cedar Creek Lodge, Chilliwak, BC, Canada on the 23rd September 2002. George, who was 82, will be sadly missed by his family, the congregation at the Lord's Church in Chilliwak and his many friends across Canada.

EDITH GOFFINET  
Chilliwak

*(We were sorry to learn of Bro. Sillman's death. We never met but readers may remember some of the articles he contributed to the Scripture Standard in past years. He will be remembered as a faithful brother who ever sought the way of the Lord. J Kneller)*

## GHANA APPEAL

Our Ghanaian brethren continue to evangelise enthusiastically, sometimes at the cost of severe financial hardship to themselves, and we hear of new congregations being established.

This brings requests for Bibles and study literature. The cost of this and medical treatment has to take precedence over the construction of meeting places for new churches, desirable as these may be.

As mentioned before, Ghanaian brethren are liable to tropical diseases as well as illnesses common to European countries. One congregation reports a case of breast cancer which must be

treated urgently. They also tell us of a sister with elephantiasis. this is due to thread like worms which enter the victim through the agency of biting flies. It can cause intense skin irritation and the itching has been known to drive patients to suicide. If these filarial worms reach the head and the eyes the result can be blindness. Apart from the physical suffering death can result, so treatment is urgent. Another congregation requests help to treat eye ailments and early treatment for this is important. Not surprisingly, early deaths are not uncommon and there are numerous widows experiencing hardship.

In addition, delayed rainfall has resulted in fewer crops when they would normally be expected. This not only causes hunger to the farmers' families but denies them the surplus vegetables to sell as an income.

These are some of the needs of our Ghanaian brethren. Many lives have been saved in the past through donations to the Fund, as well as others brought to Christ. It is our prayer that this work may continue and we thank all who have donated.

Those wishing to help please make cheques payable to: Dennyloanhead

Church of Christ Ghana Fund and send to treasurer:

Mrs. Janet Macdonald,  
12 Charles Drive, Larbert,  
Falkirk, Stirlingshire. FK5 3HB.  
Tel: 01324 562480

Don't walk in front of me, I may not follow  
Don't walk behind me, I may not lead  
Walk beside me and just be my friend.

Albert Camus

A friend is one to whom one may pour out all the content's of one's heart, chaff and grain together knowing that the gentlest of hands will take and sift it, keeping what is worth keeping and with the breath of kindness blow the rest away.

Arabian Proverb

1. Levi (Numbers 1:47).
2. 7th day (Joshua 6:4).
3. A baby (1 Kings 3:25)
4. His vineyard (1 Kings 21:4-6).
5. 20 years (Judges 4:3).
6. Purim (Esther 9:26).
7. Pilate (John 18:33).
8. Angels (Revelation 21:12).
9. Malta (Acts 28:1).
10. 38 years (John 5:5).

**ANSWERS**

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