

# The SCRIPTURE STANDARD

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

Vol. 66 No. 10

OCTOBER, 1999

## THE FRIEND OF GOD

In the August editorial I mentioned the promises made by God to Abraham, and how we (all nations) have been undeserving beneficiaries. Clearly, God thought highly of Abraham. And what endeared Abraham to God? His *faith* (in God). Let us reflect, for a moment, upon this special faith of righteous Abraham.

Surely there can be little doubt that Abraham is the most prominent figure of the Old Testament.

With him, as the great ancestor of the Hebrew race, the history of Israel begins. The familiar intercourse that Abraham enjoyed with God earned him the name of 'Friend Of God', a term by which he is known in the east even to this day. Abraham's great faith in God is unsurpassed and was "**counted unto him for righteousness**". By it he secured all of the blessings promised unto him by God, and such was his faith that, many thousands of years later, it is still the object of great admiration, and a perpetual theme of praise. It was inevitable I suppose, that mere natural descent from Abraham was popularly supposed by the Jews to confer the blessings and attributes of Abraham (upon the Jews exclusively) and this was an error exposed both by John the Baptist and by Jesus Himself. "By faith" **the Gentiles** can be brought within the range and scope of the promises made to faithful Abraham, and this is the grand and glorious basis of much of what Paul has to say to the brethren at Rome and Galatia. Abraham ranks not only as the great ancestor of many nations but also as *a prophet* (Gen. 20:7) through whom the revelation was begun. Mainly however, he was *the founder* of the religion which was to gather *all peoples* within its scope. So closely is the revelation associated with Abraham that God, the Supreme Deity, is never spoken of as the 'God of Adam', or of Moses, Enoch or Noah, but solely as '**the God of Abraham**'. God had a personal covenant with Abraham and made him many promises. God said that He would make Abraham a father of many nations and of kings; that God would give certain land to him, and to his generations after him; that God would give him a son in his very old age and that from that son would spring a progeny as numerous as the stars at night or the sand on the sea-shore. Sarah, his wife, would be 'the mother of many nations' in her great old age albeit she had been barren all the days of her life. Perhaps the most far-reaching promise of all was that "**in his seed would all the nations of the earth be blessed.**"

### FAITHFUL ABRAHAM

It is not for nothing that Abraham is called '*faithful Abraham*'. Abraham's faith was

solidly put to the test several times in his lifetime, but it emerged each time completely untarnished. When God promised Abraham a child by Sarah, Abraham was not only physically 'as good as dead', and Sarah his wife was much more so, but, in spite of greeting the promise with a certain hilarity, Abraham believed God and it was counted to him for righteousness. If we recall that Abraham was 100 years old, and Sarah 90 years old, when Isaac was eventually born we can perhaps understand the initial amusement and also the measure of the old man's faith - especially when we remember that Sarah, even in the prime of youth, was *quite incapable of conception*. Occasionally we see on T.V. the birthday celebrations of some dear old lady who has amazingly reached the age of 100 years. There she sits in the hospital propped up in blankets, surrounded by smiling but watchful nurses. The old lady croaks a few words of appreciation to the well-wishers and is then wheeled away back to bed, in case the excitement will prove too much for her. If someone was to suggest that the old lady would be giving birth to a child soon, we can imagine how such a suggestion might be received - by the old lady herself, by her friends and by the medical profession. This was *the kind* of faith that Abraham required, and *had to sustain*, for about twenty years, until Isaac was actually born. Abraham's faith was again put to the test, some years later, when God called upon him to put Isaac to death - this very son given in fulfilment of God's solemn promise, and upon whom depended all the other promises and blessings. Oftentimes Abraham must have been puzzled and perplexed at God's instructions, especially to sacrifice Isaac, but his trust in God never wavered.

#### THE FRIEND OF GOD

We read from Romans Chap. 4 some amazing statements about Abraham; matters which had evidently escaped the notice of the bulk of the Jews. As already mentioned, the Jews placed great trust in the promises God gave to 'Faithful Abraham' and basked in his reflected glory. They assumed, quite wrongly it seems, that because Abraham was righteous they were righteous, and that because Abraham was 'the friend of God' they were also God's friends. John the Baptist encountered this attitude, and was prompted to declare to the Pharisees and Sadducees who came for baptism, "**O generation of vipers, who hath warned thee of the wrath to come. Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance. And think not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father; for I say unto you that God is able of these stones to raise up children to Abraham.**" Evidently the Jews regarded it as sufficient righteousness that they were descended from so holy a man as Abraham.

John Baptist regarded them as being far removed from Abraham; referring to them as 'vipers'. He assured them that their claimed pedigree was of little consequence in God's eyes, and that if God wanted, He could raise children to Abraham from the very rocks strewn around in Jordan. Mere nativity or accident of birth was not enough - God looks for *personal* integrity. Jesus encountered the same spirit when He told the Jews that they could know the truth and the truth would make them free.

They replied, "**We be Abraham's seed and were never in bondage to any man,**"

The claim, of never having been in bondage, was quite untrue, of course, for their fathers had been slaves in Egypt; enslaved in Babylon; repeatedly subjected to servility by the Assyrians, in the thralldom of Herod the Great, and were at that very moment under the yoke of a Roman occupation. Jesus added the fact that, far from being the '**children of Abraham**' they were in fact, children of the devil.

If they had been the children of Abraham they would have done the works of Abraham - but no, they did the works of the devil and his children they were. They

were not 'free' as they supposed but were in true bondage - in the bondage of sin. Truly "his servants ye are to whom ye obey" (Rom. 6:16). Only the truth could make them free.

### JUSTIFIED (WHILE IN UNCIRCUMCISION)

The apostle Paul, in turn, encountered this same smug attitude amongst the Jews and even amongst *members of the Church*. Thus, in this epistle to the Christians at Rome he directs the main thrust of the letter to the *Judaizing Christians* who were advocating a confidence in *the Mosaic law, in circumcision, and in the paternity of Abraham*. In this wonderful chapter (Chap. 4) Paul emphasises the fact that Abraham was justified (made just) in God's sight by virtue of his *simple trust* in God (faith) - not by the accomplishment of great deeds (works). One is tempted, like Luther, to say that Abraham was justified by faith only, but faith is never alone. Certainly he was not justified by his works.

If he had, says Paul, his justification would have been a matter of *a debt owed him* by God - but no debt, or payment thereof, was involved - Abraham was justified purely by *God's grace*. His justification was *a free gift* through the graciousness of God. Paul then quotes David, extolling the happiness of the man whose iniquities are forgiven and whose sins are covered (i.e. who is justified) by God's great generosity. Is this blessed state (where God freely forgives sin) the preserve of the Jews, or does it extend to the Gentiles as well? To prove that it indeed extends to the Gentiles, Paul proceeds to show that 'Father Abraham' was a *Gentile (in uncircumcision)* when he was justified.

Abraham "staggered not" at God's promise, "being fully persuaded that what God had promised He was able also to perform" (v.21). On the basis of *that simple trust* (in seemingly unlikely events) Abraham was justified. It had *nothing to do* with circumcision.

It had *nothing whatever* to do with the Mosaic law. The Jews prided themselves in their unique traditions, in their God-given rite of circumcision, and in their exclusive access to the law and the testimony, but Paul is saying that these things are of little consequence, for God justifies *men of faith* exclusively, on the basis of their unfeigned faith, and that this principle stretches back in time to Abraham. It is not some new 'Christian' doctrine. (We should note that Abraham's faith did not begin in his old age, but went as far back as Ur of the Chaldees: see Heb. 11:8).

### THE TRUE CHILDREN OF ABRAHAM

As Paul has just quoted, David taught the principle (Ps. 32) and the Jews were unlikely to challenge David. This truth would doubtless rock the Jews back on their heels, and they would challenge the matter, but the facts were there for all to inspect in the O.T. It was at least 13 years (and probably 20 years) *later* before Abraham was circumcised (in his 100th year). Thus he was justified 13 years *prior to being circumcised*. It was also, as Paul points out (in Gal. 3) some *430 years later* when the Mosaic law was given on Mount Sinai. Thus, says Paul, circumcision or the law have not the slightest bearing upon salvation, except perhaps to retard it, and both Gentile and Jew must now be justified *in* precisely the same way i.e. *by faith (in Christ Jesus)*. Just as Abraham was justified *by faith* so must we all be justified. If we read Gal. Chap. 3 in conjunction with Rom. 4 we shall understand it much better and we shall read of Paul's interpretation of the promise made to Abraham that "in his seed would all the nations of the earth be blessed". Paul explains that that word "seed" is used in the singular (not in the plural) and refers to just one person; Jesus Christ. "And the scripture, foreseeing that God *would justify the heathen through faith, preached*

before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed. So then they which be *of faith* are blessed with faithful Abraham." Thus the gospel was preached many thousands of years ago to 'Faithful Abraham'. Who then are the true 'Children of Abraham'? - the Jews? . . . Let Paul answer, "Know ye, therefore, that they which are *of faith*, the same are the children of Abraham." (v.6). Isn't all this truly wonderful?

To sum up then; Abraham was not saved by his deeds (or by the works of the law) else he could have boasted that his justification was due to him as a *debt*, but rather, his justification was due entirely to the generous grace of God, given, in Abraham's case, because of his supreme faith in God's words. This justification was given to him *while he was yet a Gentile*, many years before circumcision came into being, and hundreds of years before the Mosaic law was given. Thus Jewish nationality, circumcision or the Mosaic law had no bearing whatsoever in Abraham's justification. Men and women today, whether Jew or Gentile, can be justified in exactly similar fashion i.e. by *the grace of God* given to those who have genuine *faith* in God's promises **through His Son**. Thus all *believers* are the true "Children of Abraham".

#### BUT WHAT KIND OF 'FAITH'?

There are those, of course, who might disagree with all that has been said so far, and who would quote James (Chap. 2) where James says that Abraham "was justified by **WORKS**" (v.21) ". . . when he offered up his son Isaac upon the altar". A close examination of James Chap. 2 will, however, assure us that there is no contradiction between the words of Paul and those of James. Paul insists that Abraham was justified by his faith (unquestioning trust in God) whereas James is describing *how* that trust found its expression: i.e. in what Abraham was prepared to do. James avers that any 'faith' which fails to find *some expression in deeds* is no faith at all: i.e. "**faith without works is dead, being alone**" and James illustrates the point by referring us to the case of Abraham. Abraham's faith "wrought with his works" and by "his works" (deeds) was his "*faith perfected*". James cites the fact that Abraham was quite prepared to slay his only son Isaac: the son given to him by promise: the son for whose birth he waited nearly twenty years. Thus Abraham's faith *was such* as to thrust him into awesome action. When Abraham raised that knife, preparatory to plunging it into his son, he demonstrated the *depth and quality* of his faith in God. After all, Abraham could have argued a very strong case for refusing to kill Isaac, but he did not even try. His obedience was unquestioning. And so Paul's arguments in Rom. 4 stand intact, and Abraham was justified solely by his faith in God: his "works" merely confirmed the calibre and strength of his faith.

Many of us in the world lay claim to having faith in God. The *extent, strength and depth* of that faith will soon become evident once it is put to the test: just as Abraham's was. Only then will we know whether we have a "saving faith", or if our faith is dead, being alone. If, when the gospel is preached to us, and its terms are made known to us, we respond to it with pre-conditions of our own, we can be sure that we do not have a saving faith. If, when Christ commands us to "**Repent and be immersed**" we begin to "hum and haw", and to conjure up "ifs and buts", we can be sure that our faith is not of the type God requires. Abraham never quibbled, or questioned the requirements of heaven. His obedience was prompt, complete and unquestioning. That is the kind of faith that God admired in Abraham, and that is the kind of faith that God will look for in us, today. May He find it.

## READING, WRITING AND TEACHING

### THE O.T.

Moses gave instructions to ancient Israel which involved teaching "these words which I command you this day" (Deut. 6:4-9). The practice of teaching was a broad, life-permeating activity. The family were to discuss the scriptures in their homes, as they travelled, in times of rest and activity. The commands were to be written and bound on hands and face and written on the doorposts of house and yard gate. The written words were made obvious so that Israel could *read them* as well as hear them.

**Joshua**, successor to Moses, was charged to meditate on "**this book of the law day and night**" (Joshua 1:8). The expression, "**shall not depart out of your mouth**", in that passage, may indicate that Joshua was to read orally, a practice found in the account of the Eunuch (see Acts 8:30). "Day and night" suggests *a regularity of practice*. Religious leaders need to be acquainted with God's word in order to counsel the people of God to walk in His ways.

The king of the nation was given instruction to "**write for himself in a book a copy of this law . . . and it shall be with him, and he shall read in it all the days of his life**" (Deut. 17:18-19). As a rule this practice was not followed and when the kingship arose, the office of prophet also accompanied it. The priests were supposed to teach the law (see Ezekiel 7:26), but apparently they were not fulfilling that function so the prophets delivered oracles calling the people to repent (see Zechariah 1:3). At times the scriptures were called to the attention of a king who disregarded them (see Jeremiah 36:21-23). Few of Israel's kings could be described as "men of the book". Israel's fate illustrated this lack.

**Josiah's** reform was spurred on by the finding of "the book of the law in the house of the Lord" (2 Kings 22:8-10). Hilkiah gave the book to Shaphan who in turn "**read it before the king**". Josiah attempted sweeping religious reforms in an attempt "**to perform the words of this covenant that were written in this book**" (2 Kings 23:3 See verses 4-25). It was too late. God's anger was already afire "**because of all the provocations with which Manasseh had provoked Him**" (v.26).

### THE N.T.

**Jesus** was taught to read in the village school in Nazareth. On at least one occasion he read publicly from the synagogue rolls (Luke 4:16-21). After reading he applied the prophetic passage to His own ministry (see Isa. 61:1-3). Such boldness in applying prophecy to oneself offended the village people. That childhood education which Jesus received enabled him to quote from memory passages of scripture during his temptation (see Matt. 4:4, 7, 10). His hometown folk marvelled at his presentation in their village saying, "**What is the wisdom given to Him?**" (Mark 6:2). Jesus was well acquainted with the Old Testament scriptures from His youth.

The apostles used the Synagogue to proclaim Christ to the people (Acts 17:2, 3). They were readers of scripture and encouraged their hearers to "**examine the scriptures daily to see if these things were so**" (Acts 17:11). The apostolic writings abound in references to the Old Testament. One who reads Isaiah 40-66 is caused to marvel often because of familiar passages known already by reading the Epistles.

The eunuch is a prime example of a common worshipper who wrestled with the meaning of scripture. Possibly because he was a nobleman, he could afford at least the scroll of Isaiah, an expensive luxury probably not affordable to most. Had that man not been reading from scripture it would likely have been vain for Philip to offer to proclaim the Christ from Isaiah 53:7, 8. Or, had the eunuch not been reading with a

keen questioning mind, he may have read over the passage without asking the vital question, "About whom, pray, does the prophet say this, about himself or about someone else?" (Acts 8:34).

### A LANGUAGE FOR ALL

The scriptures of ancient Israel were in Hebrew, with a few portions in Aramaic. But by the time of the first century A.D., the Old Testament had been translated into Greek. Popular demand for the Bible had caused it to be placed in the current language of the empire. Other briefer statements, announcements, or inscriptions had been written in more than one language, and it was fitting that the Bible should be in the international language for all to read and use.

Isaiah's messages were apparently refused at the time. He said, "Bind up the testimony, seal the teaching among my disciples" (Isaiah 8:16). Instead of looking to the mediums and wizards for information, Isaiah counselled, "(Go) To the teaching and to the testimony" (8:20). If the current generation would not listen, then Isaiah was to "go, write it for them on a tablet, and inscribe it in a book, that it may be for the time to come as a witness forever" (30:8).

Jeremiah was told, "Write in a book all the words that I have spoken to you" (Jeremiah 30:2; see also 25:13; 29:1; 36:32; 51:60). Jeremiah was not well received by his own contemporaries. But because his words of warning and woe were surely to come true upon the nation, his prophecies were written down for future generations to read. Although Jeremiah was forced to go to Egypt with the refugees under Johanan (Jeremiah 43:5-7), his words were known and read in Babylon and Persia (See Daniel 9:2).

Daniel was a reader of scripture. He "perceived in the books the number of years which, according to the word of the Lord to Jeremiah the prophet, must pass before the end of the desolation of Jerusalem, namely seventy years" (Daniel 9:2; see Jeremiah 29:10). Although Daniel is not described as a prophet who spoke oracles to the people, like the "former prophets" (See Zech. 7:7), he apparently wrote his words for the future: "But you, Daniel, shut up the words, and seal the book, until the time of the end" (Daniel 12:4).

Even in ancient Israel there must have been optional reading materials which the Preacher would not recommend. His word recommended the "sayings of the wise" and counselled, "My son, beware of anything beyond these" (Eccl. 12:11-12). The believer in today's print-swollen world should also practice discernment of reading materials. "This book of the law shall not depart out of your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it; for then you shall make your way prosperous, and then you shall have good success" (Joshua 1:8).

J. PENNINGTON.

## DEVELOPING SELF-WORTH

By Marg Brown, Meaford, Ontario

As we begin our task of developing self worth, we must first look at the word "worth" itself. The dictionary defines "worth" as "something of value, someone deserving of something". We are going to develop, then, a "value" in ourselves; a sense of "satisfaction" in ourself; a feeling that we are "deserving" without becoming proud or boastful.

One subject we are all very familiar with is ourselves. We know things about ourselves that are unknown by others. We have opinions, feelings and thoughts that we keep entirely to ourselves. We have characteristics and habits that often are seen only by those who are very close to us. We also have our obvious personality that is in full view of everyone. All of these facts create for us an image of ourselves, or, a feeling of self-worth.

How can we develop self-worth? Remember that we have to develop something of value, someone deserving. To try and accomplish this task we are going to look at it from three different viewpoints: (1) How do I see myself? (2) How do others see me? (3) What does God want me to become?

### HOW DO I SEE MYSELF

How do I see myself? To answer this question we have to take an honest look at ourselves. We should make a list of all of the good qualities we have, and a list of all the not so good qualities.

I know it is hard sometimes to try and list good qualities for fear of feeling proud or boastful. It is important for us to realise that to have a feeling of "self-worth" we have to emphasise our good qualities. By qualities I refer to *character* qualities rather than talents.

For us to do an effective self-analysis we have to be objective. We have to be aware of our not-so-good qualities, as these are the ones we will have to work on to develop a greater feeling of value of ourselves.

We also have to look at our qualities and make sure that we are utilizing them in our daily lives. If we are not using these qualities, we are not going to have a feeling of satisfaction in ourselves. Sometimes our view of how we are using our qualities may not be a proper view at all. Some of the qualities that we feel are good could be used in the wrong way. We must examine *what we do*, and what our *motives* are. Eventually we will realise why we did "this" or "that" and depending on the motive, it will either build up or wear down our feelings of self-worth.

### HOW DO OTHERS SEE ME?

How do others see me? Do you think it is important to our own "self-worth", how others see us? Now think of the question, "What kind of person do others see me to be?" I know it is difficult to know what others think of us, but if we look at ourselves in relationships with others, we can get an idea of the image we are projecting.

Certainly our relationships vary from one person to another, so let's break our analysis into these categories: (1) Family members, (2) Close friends, (3) Acquaintances and/or co-workers, (4) Outsiders or onlookers. It is difficult to draw some conclusions on how people may see us, but this is for our benefit. An example here may be that an acquaintance may think we are polite and courteous in dealing with others, but our family may think we are rude and domineering. What kind of effect is this sort of inconsistency going to have on our feeling of "self-worth"? We may realise that we are inconsistent, and we must strive to eliminate this double character standard.

Because of these inconsistencies, people will react differently toward us. Other's reaction to us affects our self-image. Our self-image will affect our feelings of "self-worth". By this I mean, for example, if we try to be friendly with someone and they give us the "cool" treatment we may immediately think we are at fault, or we are not acceptable for some reason or another. On the other hand, if others seem happy when we are around it gives us a good feeling about ourselves.

With these things in mind we should look at the question: Should we try to be what

others want? I suppose when we say this quickly and without much thought, we could say "yes", then with more consideration we would say "no". Each of us make an evaluation for ourselves and decide what we should be as a good Christian. We can never please everyone else all at the time, but we must have a good feeling about ourselves, and a healthy self-image. If God is to be our true Master, we must take control of our lives in the light of His Word.

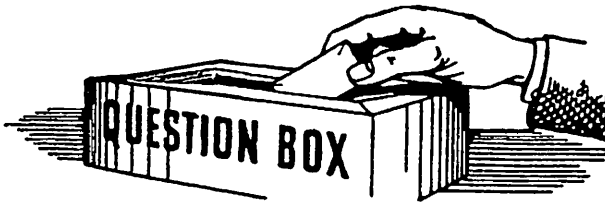
**WHAT DOES GOD WANT OF ME?**

What does God want me to become? For us to have a feeling of "self-worth" we must know that we are acceptable to God. We must feel that we are secure in His love for us. Being secure in His love assists us in developing the many virtues and characteristics listed for us in the New Testament:

- |                                  |                                       |
|----------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| Cheerfulness - Philippians 4:4   | Liberality - II Corinthians 9:6-15    |
| Cleanliness - II Corinthians 7:1 | Love - I John 4:7,8                   |
| Courage - Philippians 1:27, 28   | Meekness - Matthew 5:5                |
| Diligence - Romans 12:11         | Mercy - Matthew 5:7                   |
| Discretion - Ephesians 5:15-17   | Obedience - Romans 13:1-7             |
| Endurance - 2 Timothy 2:3        | Patience - Hebrews 10:36, 37          |
| Faith - Mark 11:22-24            | Peacefulness - Romans 12:18           |
| Faithfulness - I Corinthians 4:2 | Prudence - James 1:19                 |
| Forgiveness - Ephesians 4:31, 32 | Pure Thinking - Philippians 4:8       |
| Friendliness - Romans 12:15, 18  | Purity - II Timothy 2:22              |
| Gratitude - Philippians 4:6      | Steadfastness - Ephesians 6:10-18     |
| Honesty - Romans 12:17           | Sympathy - I Peter 3:8, 9             |
| Honour - I Peter 2:17            | Temperance - I Corinthians 9:25-27    |
| Humility - Philippians 2:3-11    | Truthfulness - Ephesians 4:15, 25, 29 |

We must compare our analysis of ourself, and our analysis of how others see us, to this list. As we strive to improve these qualities in ourself, and utilize them daily we will develop a greater feeling of self-worth. It is a constant challenge to improve as we grow in the knowledge of Christ.

M. BROWN.




---

Conducted by  
Frank Worgan

---

*This month's question has been sent in by a brother who wonders if he has encountered 'contradictory texts' - (his own words) - in the scriptures.*

**THE PASSAGE QUOTED**

The first passage to which he refers is the prophecy of Jeremiah, relating to the establishing of a new covenant, Jer. 31:31ff.

His second reference is Matt. 10:5-6, which states that the Twelve were sent 'to the lost sheep of the house of Israel', Matt. 10:5-6.

He then quotes Matt. 15:24, where the Lord declares that He was 'sent to the lost sheep of the house of Israel'.

Finally, he mentions two passages, Rom. 11:11 and Eph. 2:11-21, in which Paul refers to the salvation of the Gentiles.



Our brother's main problem appears to be with the passage in Rom. 11, because he states:

*"The bone of contention is that the Gentile world was drafted (sic.) in, only because Israel had rejected Christ. Should Christ have been recognized and accepted by Israel, what would have been the fate of the Gentile world?"*

His difficulty is created by the assumption made in his first sentence, where he appears to imply that the salvation of the Gentiles was only made possible by the Jewish rejection of the Christ. In other words, he seems to imply that, if the Jews had recognized and received Jesus as their Messiah, there might have been no salvation for the Gentiles.

### IMPORTANT CONSIDERATIONS

There are several facts which we should first consider.

1. When the Jews rejected Christ they did so because this was the choice they made for themselves. John 1:11 states that *"He came to his own ('idia' = 'that which belonged to him') and his own ('idion' = 'they who belonged to him') did not receive him"*. That is, they refused to accept Him.

2. They were not predestined to do so and their rejection of the Gospel formed no part of the divine plan of redemption.

3. Although it was not divinely planned, their refusal to accept the Christ was divinely foreseen, Isa. 53:vv7-9. In Rom. 11:21, Paul declares that God had been extremely patient with His *'disobedient and rebellious people'*.

The fact that the Gospel was preached *'to the Jew first'*, was in recognition of the special relationship which existed between God and Israel, and the special place which that nation occupied in God's plan, Rom. 9:5.

### PAUL AT PISIDIAN ANTIOCH

We find, in Acts 13:14ff, that when Paul spoke to the Jews in Pisidian Antioch, he first reminded them of their history, recalling the fact that God had promised that a Saviour would come through the House of David, (v. 23), and then declaring that Jesus is that Saviour. Now, notice v. 39:

*"And by Him (Jesus) all that believe are justified from all things, from which you could not be justified by the Law of Moses"*.

The significance of this statement was clearly not lost on the Gentiles, because they begged that this message might be preached to *them*, the following Sabbath. Since the population of Pisidian Antioch was overwhelmingly Gentile, the following Sabbath almost the entire population came together to hear the good news.

When the Jews became angry and opposed Paul and Barnabas, they were told:

*"It was necessary that the gospel should be first preached to you, but, since you thrust it from you and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles" (v.46).*

### WHY DID THEY 'TURN TO THE GENTILES'?

This question is answered in the next verse.

*'For so the Lord has commanded us, saying, I have set you to be a light to the Gentiles, that you may bring salvation to the uttermost parts of the earth'.*

The scriptures teach that it was always God's plan that the whole human race should be offered the gift of salvation from sin. This was revealed in His promise to Abraham, found in Gen. 22:18, to which Paul refers in Gal. 3:8-9. If they had made the right choice, the Jews would have fulfilled and honoured an important role in God's plan, as bearers of the message of salvation to all mankind. But their unbelief denied them this privilege.

At Pisidian Antioch, the preachers drove home their message by quoting the prophecy found in Isa. 42:6, which states that the Messiah would be: *'for salvation unto the ends of the earth'*, and the result was that many of the Gentiles were glad and believed the Gospel, (v.48).

### THE ORIGINAL MESSAGE

Bible students will surely have noticed the great similarity between this sermon preached in Pisidian Antioch, Paul's first recorded sermon, and the message proclaimed by Peter on the Day of Pentecost, the day the Church was established.

Peter's conclusion was essentially the same as that of Paul.

*"The promise is to you (Jews) and to your children, and to all that are afar off (Gentiles), and to everyone whom the Lord our God calls to Him."* Acts 2:39.

### NO CONTRADICTION!

It is worth remembering that, if an interpretation which we place on any part of the Word of God creates a conflict with any another passage; the problem lies, not with the scriptures, but with our interpretation.

A careful examination of what Paul wrote to the churches in Rome and Ephesus reveals no contradiction, since he wrote under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. His teaching concerning the salvation of both Jews and Gentiles is made abundantly clear in the **Ephesian letter**, to which our questioning brother also refers.

In the first chapter, he writes about the great purpose formed by God, which was designed to:

*'unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth'* (ch. 1:10).

In the second chapter, he states that, involved in this divine purpose, was the creation of *'one new man'* - a new Body - consisting of both Jews and Gentiles, thus producing peace between the two, where previously hostility had existed.

He points out that they both, Jews and Gentiles, needed reconciliation to God, and therefore the message of peace must be preached to both; to those who were *'afar off'* (the Gentiles) and also to those who *'were near'* (the Jews) ch.2:17.

As a result, both Jews and Gentiles, have been united in the One Body.

Both have access to God through the One Spirit, so that they are no longer to be designated *'strangers'* (the Gentiles) and *'sojourners'* (the Jews), but must be recognized as fellow-citizens, and members of God's family.

### CONCLUSION

This was always God's purpose in sending His Son, even though Israel as a people never understood the role that He had planned for them in His scheme of redemption. They were never able to understand His purpose because of the warped view they held of the rest of mankind. They believed that they - and they alone - mattered to God, and, if one good thing came out of their rejection of the Christ, it was that the offer of salvation to the Gentiles made the Jews open their eyes.

In **Rom. 11:14**, Paul implies that his ministry among the Gentiles and their acceptance of salvation, had the effect of *'making Israel jealous'*, and he therefore *'magnified'* his ministry, in order to *'save some of them'*.

However, neither the *rejection* of the Christ by the Jews, nor his *acceptance* by them, would have had any ultimate effect on God's intention to offer salvation to the Gentiles.

The only effect produced by the Jewish decision to reject the Lord, was on the *manner* in which the Gospel came to the Gentiles. They had chosen to reject the privilege of bringing the message of God's salvation to the world. But it was always

God's intention that the Gentiles should hear the Good News.

The aged Simeon recognised this, for when Mary and Joseph brought the infant Jesus to the Temple in Jerusalem, *'inspired by the spirit'*, Simeon said:

*" . . . mine eyes have seen Thy salvation, which Thou hast prepared in the presence of all the people; a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and for glory to Thy people Israel."* (Luke 2:29-32).

We should be eternally thankful that the possibility of salvation comes to us, not 'by courtesy of the Jews', but 'by the Grace of God'.

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

## CHRISTIANITY ISN'T FAIR

"It isn't fair!" the indignant lady protested; and as I paused to hear her story I had to agree. For several years now, the same woman had faithfully prepared lessons and taught the children's classes. Others, equally capable of the job, had accepted no responsibilities, made no effort to assist in this demanding effort; and when their aid was solicited they had dozens of "ready made" excuses.

Somehow, it didn't register that the teachers *also* had headaches, were "nervous", had household problems, weekend guests, working husbands and demanding children. *"It isn't fair!"* that some take all the time-consuming, often exasperating, thankless work, while others go "scot-free". We could reasonably expect an equitable sharing of the load.

For that matter, "It isn't fair" that the same few do all or most of the "visiting". "It isn't fair" that the same ones are continually called upon to furbish "rides" for the aged and infirm. "It isn't fair" that the same ones feed the visiting preacher, clean the church building, furnish the bulk of the contribution, put out the bulletin, care for the sick. But thirty-four years of preaching and working with congregations has taught me that too "few" usually do these jobs.

### CHRISTIANITY ISN'T A "FAIR RELIGION"

Does that shock you? Well, give it some thought before rejecting it. Was it "fair" that the most godly, pure, compassionate, self-less man to walk the face of the earth was crucified upon Calvary? What was "fair" in the beheading of John, or the stoning of Stephen? If like circumstances prevailed today' would you speak up loud and strong? Even though it meant that you, from among many saints, had to suffer death? Or would you argue that "it isn't fair" that one should die (especially *this* one) while others are unmolested?

Is it "fair" that Christians regularly meet for worship, while others have that day for fishing, hunting, or just "resting"? Christians have to support the work of the Lord, while others *get* to spend that money on new golf clubs. Is that the way you feel about it? If so, I predict that you will soon buy a new set of clubs - at the Lord's expense.

For Christianity IS UNFAIR by all worldly standards of "fairness". One of the first rules is, "if any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me." Again, "ye are not your own . . . you are bought with a price".

The teacher who continually *gives*, and *gives*, and *gives*; does so because he, or she, has first given *self* to the Lord. If that teacher or worker in any portion of the Lord's vineyard begins to operate on a "fair" basis - doing only what "everyone else" does - usefulness to the Lord will cease.

**"If they had been mindful of that country from whence they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned."** (Heb. 11:13-16). Read all verses, study awhile, and then tell us if you think it is "fair"!!!

Robert F. Turner.

## HURRY HE IS COMING!

I had an opportunity to work in a bakery while going to high school. I remember one particular day when the telephone rang and one of the ladies went to answer it. She put down the phone like it was hot and yelled, "He's coming!" I wondered what in the world was going on? The ladies ran for their hair nets and the men ran for clean aprons and clean caps. The boss told me to sweep the floor, and cover all the containers. There was a wild and excited look in his eyes. Everyone was running around like chickens with their heads cut off. I thought to myself, "Who is coming?"

Suddenly through the front door entered a man in a suit with a case under his arm. As I observed him he began to walk around and check the bakery for any health hazards. I then realized that he was the inspector for the Board of Health. After he left everyone breathed a sigh of relief and went back to work. One of the ladies told me that all the places of business always watched out for the other. The first one to see the inspector coming would then call the other business. They had a system of warning.

I couldn't help but think that in one way or another the Bible speaks of the return of Christ hundreds of times. When he returns he will be as a thief in the night, because no one will be expecting him. He will come without warning. He will come literally as he went away. He will be visible in that every eye shall see him. There won't be any telephone call from God to get us ready. The only warning we receive is through His word. We must be prepared to meet the Lord or be prepared to accept the penalty for slothfulness.

When Jesus comes again we won't have time to run around our homes and put away the trashy literature and magazines and put the Bible in their place. There won't be time to hide our "skimpy" swim wear, our halter top dresses, our short shorts, our tight pants, our mini skirts and pull the plug on our TV.

When Jesus comes again there won't be time to prepare a speech on all the good things we have been involved in. There won't be time to tell him how our neighbours and friends hindered us in his service. There will be judgment, **"So then each one of us shall give an account of himself before God."** God will not accept our excuses nor will he give us time to repent. Today is the time to prepare ourselves for his coming.

Remember, "He is coming!"

J. BOAR

## SCRIPTURE READINGS

Nov. 7	Deut. 18:9-22	Luke 24:13-35
Nov. 14	2 Kings 2:1-12	Luke 24:36-53
Nov. 21	Daniel 7:1-14	Revelation 1
Nov. 28	Genesis 3:8-24	Revelation 2:1-17

### ON THE ROAD TO EMMAUS

Christ's appearance to the two on the

road to Emmaus makes fascinating reading. The Master asked them about the recent events and they said of Jesus: ". . . who was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people" (24:19). He later expounded unto them from the scriptures the things concerning Himself (24:27). Moses and all the prophets are mentioned (24:27). On His meeting with His apostles afterwards, we read: "And He said unto

them, These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the Psalms, concerning me" (24:44). Here we have reference to the divisions of the Old Testament scriptures in Jesus's day - the Torah, the prophets and the writings, which began with the book of Psalms. Jesus had a deep reverence for the scriptures and regarded them as the word of God. I must view the thirty-nine books in the same way as the Lord.

The two men declared: "Did not our heart burn within us, while He talked with us by the way and while He opened to us the scriptures?" (24:32). I should have liked to listen in to His talk. It must have been a wonderful experience for them. They heard the Teacher of all teachers at work. He was truly The Master.

### THE ASCENSION

The Ascension took place forty days after Jesus' resurrection (Acts 1:3). We read: "And it came to pass, while He blessed them, He was parted from them, and carried up into heaven" (24:51). Heaven is the dwelling place of God. It is a realm beyond time and space. The Hebrew writer penned these words of Jesus: ". . . who being the brightness of His glory, and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high, being made so much better than the angels, as He has by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they" (1:3-4). Peter wrote ". . . who (Jesus) is gone into heaven and is on the right hand of God; angels and authorities and powers being made subject to Him" (1 Peter 3:22). In heaven, He has been crowned KING OF KINGS AND LORD

OF LORDS (Revelation 19:16). He reigns over a kingdom that will never be destroyed (Daniel 2:44).

### THE BOOK OF REVELATION

AUTHOR: the apostle John.

PLACE: island of Patmos (1:9).

DATE: c.96 A.D.

AUTHORITY: It is declared to be "the Revelation of Jesus Christ" (1:1).

PURPOSE: ". . . the letters to the churches, and the book as a whole, were needed to encourage them to stand firm. God is in control, no matter how things may look. Christ, not the emperor, is Lord of history. He has the key of destiny itself. And He is coming again to execute justice. There is a glorious, wonderful future for every faithful believer - and especially those who lay down their lives for Christ" (the Lion Handbook of the Bible).

STYLE: The book expresses its meaning through symbols and imagery. "The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto Him, to show unto His servants things which must shortly come to pass; and He sent and signified it by His angel unto His servant John" (1:1).

KEY WORDS: "Throne" and "Lamb".

### CHAPTER ONE

The book of Revelation is a book of prophecy. "Revelation" is the Greek word *apokalupsis*, which means an uncovering. "Revelation means the uncovering of that which has hitherto been covered, the drawing back of a veil which has hung over a person or thing, the laying bare what has been hitherto concealed; and the book before us is a revelation instead of a mystery" (William Milligan). It is important to read and study this book because, as John said: "Blessed is he who reads and they who hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein: for the time is at hand" (1:3).

John addresses the seven churches in Asia (now a part of Turkey). They were

**Ephesus** (the forgetful church); **Smyrna** (the suffering church); **Pergamum** (the false church); **Thyatira** (the immoral church); **Sardis** (the dead church); **Philadelphia** (the faithful church); and **Laodicea** (the lukewarm church). The seven golden lampstands represent these seven churches (1:20).

There is a lot said about Jesus in this chapter. He is described as "the faithful witness" (1:5); "the first begotten of the dead" (1:5); "the prince of the kings of the earth" (1:5). "Alpha and Omega or the beginning and the ending" (1:8,11); "the Almighty" (1:8). He is seen in the midst of the congregations (1:13), which reveals His continuous watchfulness and care for His people. I believe this same care and attention is upon all His congregations today. The saints, therefore, need not fear anything that the world throws at them. ". . . greater is He who is in you, than he who is in the world" (1 John 4:4).

The resurrection of Jesus is highlighted (1:18). I like the fact that the Master now has "the keys of Hades and of death" (1:18). Brethren, why need we fear anything, including death? The second coming is also mentioned by John (1:7). The verse reminds us of the words of Paul: "And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them who know not God and who obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ" (2 Thessalonians 1:7-8).

#### THE CHURCH AT EPHESUS

Ephesus was the greatest city in Asia. It was described as The Light of Asia, The Market of Asia, The Gateway of Asia, and The Vanity Fair of the ancient world. Here stood one of the seven wonders of the ancient world - the temple of Artemis or Diana. This temple was not only associated with pagan religion, but also with crime and

immorality. Paul laboured here for three years and later wrote "The Queen of the Epistles" to the church. John himself carried on the work in this commercial, political and religious centre.

In the letter, there is praise and reproof. For example, the saints had left their first love (2:4). The reference is probably to their love for one another. The call is for repentance (2:5). The deeds of the Nicolaitans are also mentioned - hated by both God and the brethren. Their founder, Nicolaus, could be the same man mentioned in Acts 6:5. If so, he had become a heretic. The Nicolaitans are also found in the Pergamum letter (2:15).

#### THE CHURCH AT SMYRNA

"Smyrna had been for centuries a strongly pro-Roman city, and being a prosperous commercial centre it had a large population of Jewish bankers and merchants. The Christians in Smyrna thus experienced persecution from both Jews and Romans, on religious as well as on political grounds" (Robert Wallace Orr). Smyrna was the loveliest city in Asia. It was called The Ornament of Asia, The Crown of Asia and The Flower of Asia. It was also a great cultural centre for literature, music and the theatre.

We read: ". . . and I know the blasphemy of them who say they are Jews, and are not, but are the synagogue of Satan" (2:9). These are terrible words to read, and the reality of the devil is so clear in this short letter. He is out to persecute, oppress and destroy all the saints and will use whatever instruments he can, even fallen Jews.

#### PERGAMUM

Pergamum was the capital of the Roman province of Asia. It was famous for its great acropolis, which stood eight hundred feet high. On it were many temples, including that devoted to Asclepius, the god of healing. The popu-

larity of this cult made Pergamum the Lourdes of its day. "Pergamum was the first city in Asia Minor to have a temple dedicated to Augustus and Rome. As capital of the province it became the centre of the imperial cult in the whole region" (G.R. Beasley-Murray).

Satan's seat is mentioned (2:13). This could well refer to the temple of Asclepius, whose emblem was a serpent. The martyrdom of Antipas is sad but encouraging (2:13) and Balaam and Balak are given as a warning (2:14). The call is again for repentance (2:16). The rewards are very special.

IAN S. DAVIDSON, Motherwell.

## TEST YOUR BIBLICAL KNOWLEDGE

1. She was an Egyptian maid in Abraham's household.
2. To what lame descendant of Saul did David show kindness?
3. How did Elisha help the lady of Shunem?
4. He was a champion of prisoners of war from Judah.
5. What king had fifteen years added to his life in answer to prayer?
6. He was Absalom's killer.
7. Paul dwelt in this city for "two whole years in his own hired house".
8. Name the parents of John the Baptist.
9. Paul said of them that they were "in Christ before me".
10. Name the porch of the temple where Peter and John were found together.

## NEWS FROM THE CHURCHES

**Slamannan District:** The quarterly Mutual Benefit Meeting took place at Motherwell Meeting-house on the 11th September, 1999, when the subject discussed was "What was a N.T. Evangelist (such as Timothy and Titus) and can we

have such evangelists today?". The speakers were Bro. Jimmy Grant, Wallacestone, and Bro. Bill Cook, Dunfermline. The Chairman was Bro. Ian Davidson, Motherwell. This subject was last discussed at these Mutual Benefit Meetings in 1982, and reappears from time to time. As usual the subject proved most interesting and a lively discussion followed upon the talks given by the two speakers. God willing, our next such meeting will be on 4th December, at 4p.m. in Tranent Meeting-house, when the subject will be "Why did God send John the Baptist, and what was the significance of his work?". The speakers will be Bro. John Kneller, Tranent, and Bro. James McGinn, New Cumnock. The Chairman Bro. Mark Plain, Tranent. Once again, many thanks are due to the sisters at Motherwell for their excellent refreshments.

HARRY MCGINN (Sec.)

## COMING EVENTS

### PETERHEAD

#### ANNUAL SOCIAL WEEK-END

OCTOBER 2nd & 3rd

SATURDAY at 3.00pm

*Speakers: Frank Worgan*

*Bob Eckman*

*Sunday meetings as usual.*

#### SPECIAL WEEK-END MEETINGS

OCTOBER 30th & 31st

SATURDAY at 7.00pm

*Speaker: Mitch Vick*

*Sunday meetings as usual.*

#### SPECIAL WEEK-END MEETINGS

NOVEMBER 13th & 14th

SATURDAY at 7.00pm

*Speaker: Ian Starrs*

*Sunday meetings as usual.*

#### SPECIAL WEEK-END MEETINGS

DECEMBER 4th & 5th

SATURDAY at 7.00pm

*Speaker: Adam Barr*

*Sunday meetings as usual*

ANNUAL SOCIAL  
NEWTONGRANGE  
SATURDAY, 9th OCTOBER, 1999  
at 4.00pm

Speakers: John Kneller, Tranent  
Graeme Scobbie, Dennyloanhead

A warm welcome is extended to all.

**GHANA APPEAL**

I begin with the good news of the engagement of sister Florence Tamatey and brother Peters, both of the new Gbawe congregation in Accra. Let us pray for them in their future marriage, and also that their efforts together for the Lord will bring many to Christ,

We are very happy to see the effectiveness of the committee of six trustworthy and conscientious men of good report, chosen by representatives of the Ghanaian churches. We have always been aware of the need to use the Lord's money effectively and this is being well managed by these brothers. They understand local situations and investigate each individual requirement carefully so that the funds are used to best advantage.

On a sadder note, we have learned that exceptionally high winds in the Bolgatanga area have caused considerable damage to the new church meeting-

house there, and so repairs will be necessary. We pray for the encouragement of our brethren there, and throughout Ghana, who work hard and zealously to bring others to Christ. Your help has been invaluable in helping them to achieve the really excellent results which speak for themselves.

Those wishing to contribute should make cheques payable to "Graeme Pearson (Ghana Appeal)" and send it to Graeme Pearson, 13 Fairways, Dunfermline, Fife, KY12 0DU (Tel: 01383 728624).

Thanks to IMB for cheque for £100 received.

BILL COOK.

- 10. Solomon's porch (Acts 3:11).
- 9. Andronicus and Junia (Romans 16:7).
- 8. Zechariah and Elizabeth (Luke 1:5ff).
- 7. Rome (Acts 28:30)
- 6. Joab (2 Samuel 18:14).
- 5. Hezekiah (Isaiah 38:5).
- 4. Oded (2 Chronicles 28:9-15).
- (2 Kings 4:18-37).
- 3. He raised her son from the dead
- 2. Mephibosheth (2 Samuel:9).
- 1. Hagar (Genesis 16:1).

**ANSWERS**

THE SCRIPTURE STANDARD is published monthly.

PRICE PER COPY— POST PAID FOR ONE YEAR

UNITED KINGDOM.....	£9.00	
OVERSEAS BY SURFACE MAIL.....	£10.00	(\$16.00US or \$20.00Can)
OVERSEAS BY AIR MAIL.....	£14.00	(\$22.00US or \$28.00Can)

PLEASE MAKE CHEQUES PAYABLE TO "SCRIPTURE STANDARD"

DISTRIBUTION AGENT & TREASURER:

JOHN K. KNELLER, 4 Glassel Park Road, Longniddry, East Lothian. EH32 0NY.

Telephone: (01875) 853212 to whom change of address should be sent.

EDITOR: JAMES R. GARDINER, 70 Avon Street, Motherwell, Lanarkshire,

Scotland. ML1 3AB. Telephone: (01698) 264064

"The Scripture Standard" is printed for the publishers by

Lothian Printers, 109 High Street, Dunbar, East Lothian. EH42 1ES Tel: (01368) 863785