

The SCRIPTURE STANDARD

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

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PASSING JUDGEMENT

Man being the belligerent and aggressive creature he often is, requires some effective scheme of law whereby his uncivilised and anti-social behaviour is held in check. The Police and Prison Service; the Courts of Law and Judges, have the very difficult task of detecting crime, identifying the criminal, proving guilt, judging culpability, and having an appropriate penalty brought to bear. Every society in every country has eventually to come to terms with man's criminality, and even in Jewish history, the chosen people of God required a system of prescribed offences and penalties to fit the crime. INJUSTICE, through failure of the legal system is not unknown, and many prisoners have spent their entire jail sentence in trying to prove their innocence. Obviously most prisoners protest their innocence, but a small percentage are, indeed, vindicated and later released. We all expect justice in a free society, and find it difficult to tolerate **injustice**, or unfairness. Even as very small children we bitterly rebelled against unfairness and greatly resented being blamed for something we didn't do: so much so that even in old-age, such occasions still live in our memory.

VARIOUS TYPES OF JUDGEMENT

In the context of Justice and Injustice, a small family of words comes to mind, beginning with the word "JUST". A **just** man is one who is fair, honest, reasonable and upright. Joseph (Mary's husband) "**was a good man and just**" (Luke 2:50). Simeon was "**just and devout**" (Luke 2:25) and the centurion "**was a just man**" (Acts 10:22). "JUSTICE" is the next word in the family. We expect justice from just men. Christians are supposed to be just; and we should expect justice from them. In the big outside world, however, justice is often a very scarce commodity and men have to repair to Courts of Law for "JUSTIFICATION". If their cause can be justified they will receive a "JUDGEMENT". A fair "Judgement" depends upon the quality of the "Judge" and in some countries, where bribery and corruption obtain, 'bent' Judges are not uncommon. If juries are involved, the prospect of fair play can become even more remote, and there is currently considerable unrest in Britain over the jury system.

All these words, **Just, Justice, Justification, Judge and Judgement** all apply in the *spiritual* realm as well as in the worldly. God is the ultimate Judge, of course, and will judge the world in righteousness by that Man whom he hath ordained: even Jesus Christ. Such is the importance of this little group of words that they appear in the Bible

about 900 times. Obviously the word “**Judgement**” carries various shades of meaning, and we must handle it accordingly. Cruden gives quite a nice little definition of these various meanings, thus:- (1) A sentence, or decision of a Judge. (2) The necessary wisdom or prudence to discern right from wrong, or good from evil. (3) The righteous statutes and commandments of God (see Ps. 119:7,20). (4) Justice and Equity (Is. 1:17). (5) God’s decrees and purposes concerning nations or persons. (Rom. 11:13). (6) Courts of Judgement (Matt. 5:21). (7) The Last Judgement (Matt. 25:31).

Every hour, we are called upon to make decisions, form opinions and make judgement. As Cruden suggests, there are various types of judgement, and as the N.T. suggests, some kinds of judgement we are forced to make, and some form of judgement we are required to avoid.

OUR UNSUITABILITY TO JUDGE

For instance, in Matt. 7:1-5 Jesus reminds us that man is largely quite incapable of rendering justice to his fellow man and should, therefore, refrain from passing judgement on others. “**Judge not**”, says Jesus, “**that ye be not judged**”: i.e. if we want to minimise God’s judgement of us, we should minimise our judgement of others. Jesus went on to describe the rather ludicrous picture of men, and women, with large planks in their eyes trying to remove little splinters from the eyes of neighbours. William Barclay makes some interesting comments on this passage, too lengthy to quote here, but he cites his three main reasons for man’s unsuitability to pass judgement on his neighbour: viz. (1) **We never have the full facts, nor do we know the whole person.** This is very true and quite often we form a whole theory based upon the slightest snippet of misinformation. The worst form of exercise is jumping; jumping to conclusions. Were we to be privy to all the facts, and special circumstances, our criticisms might prove to be entirely misplaced, and even extremely cruel. (2) **Mr. Barclay’s second point is that it is almost impossible for man to be entirely impartial in his judgement.** Few of us would quarrel with this generalisation, and as Dickens said, it is the easiest thing in the world to find faults in people we don’t like. We are all swayed by former bad experiences, or even by perceived slights. We also instinctively react to the general appearance of a person, and ‘pigeon-hole’ him or her accordingly. This, indeed, was the reason behind the admonition of James (James 2:1) against “**respect of persons**” and the adulation given in the Church to the rich man, with the gold ring, and goodly apparel: and the relegation of ‘the poor man in vile raiment’ into a quiet corner. This spirit, unfortunately, is not entirely dead. Our innate prejudices affect our judgement and we react accordingly: often adversely to those who are German, French, black, white, or who are car salesmen, turf accountants, or who have long hair, etc., etc. As a small boy I remember that my mother would never have trusted a woman who dyed her hair, or a man who wore suede shoes, and often wonder what she would make of the sights and sounds of today. A well-qualified male accountant said, recently on the radio, that his interview for a top Executive post was going really well, until some of the panel noticed that he had an ear-ring. (3) **Mr. Barclay’s third point was that no man is good enough to pass judgement upon another man.** (Perhaps some readers may disagree with this third point, but I think we know what he means). The best of men are men at best. We have all sinned: there is none righteous, no, not one. We have all quite enough to do with our own shaky existence, without pontificating on the efforts of others to cope with their lives. The old Indian proverb says “**Never criticise a man until you have walked a mile in his moccasins**”.

We should also note the warning that Jesus added to His admonition to “Judge not”. He assured us that **“with what judgement ye judge, ye shall be judged, and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again”**. When tempted to pass judgement on others we should bear Jesus’ words in mind. The standard we look for in others God will look for in us. The *measuring tape* we use in our assessment of others will be the tape that God will use to measure us. If we think that others should be doing more (and we usually do) then God will require us to be doing as much. If we think that others should be giving more, or loving more, or praying more, or sacrificing more, or forgiving more, then that is fine, but God will require that level of service from us. In this passage Jesus has been using the term “Judge” in the sense of personal criticism, or condemnation. We can say this with some confidence, because in a parallel passage (in Luke 6:37) Jesus said **“Judge not and ye will not be judged: condemn not and ye shall not be condemned: forgive and ye shall be forgiven. Give and it shall be given unto you again, good measure and pressed down...”**

APPEARANCES: THE DANGER

But, as Cruden points out, the word “Judgement” has various shades of meaning, and occasionally we all have a responsibility, and a duty, to **form judgements**. Faced with the problems and difficulties of everyday living, we are **forced** to make decisions, implement them and stand by them. If someone comes to us with a doctrine, or point of view, we have to **decide and judge** as to whether we are hearing truth or error. Similarly, if we read a tract, book or other literature we, again, must form some judgement upon it. If we listen to a speaker, publicly or privately, we quite naturally, find ourselves in agreement or otherwise. We may be cordially invited to go down a certain path and we must judge the wisdom of such a course. Sometimes the Church may decide upon a specific plan of action, and presumably all the members have employed **their own judgement** in reaching such a decision. This was true even of Spirit-inspired apostles, and we find (Acts 15), in the dispute over circumcision, that the matter was referred to the Apostles and Elders in Jerusalem **for a judgement**: and it was only after *much “disputing”* that the apostles (James being the spokesman) passed their judgement (or “sentence” v.19) on the issue. Similar instances may come to mind: I suppose that the neglected Gentile widows (Acts 6) would be another one.

Presumably it is because of this necessity for us to make judgements that we should be exhorted to make honest judgements. Although Jesus said, **“Judge not”**, He also said, **“Judge not according to appearances, but judge righteous judgement”**.

There is no contradiction in this: as some suppose. Jesus is saying that we should not judge (condemn) others: but, when judgements were required of us, we should make sure that they were just and fair: not necessarily based upon how things look. One of man’s many weaknesses is that he is unduly influenced by what he sees: even mesmerized; to the point where his common-sense and judgement is affected. Man looks upon appearances: God looks beneath and beyond. Just before David was chosen to be king, seven of the sons of Jesse were paraded in front of Samuel with a view to selection to be king. Samuel was impressed with what he saw, for in outward appearances the men, especially Eliab, were very handsome, tall and strong; **“But the Lord said to Samuel, look not on his countenance, or on the height of his stature: because I have refused him: for the Lord seeth not as man seeth, for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart”**. (1 Sam. 16:7).

GOD ALONE, IS JUDGE

Even centuries after Samuel's day, nothing had changed and Paul found it necessary to challenge the Corinthian Christians thus: **"Do you look on things after the outward appearance?"** (2 Cor. 10:7). The opinion (or judgement) that many had of Paul was that he was unimpressive in appearance, weak, ineffectual and inconsequential: and certainly not an apostle. Paul finished the quotation by saying, **"If any man trust to himself that he is Christ's, let him of himself think this again, that as he is Christ's even so are we Christ's"**. In the context of "judgement" Paul had much to say, and disdained the criticism he received from the Corinthians. He said, **"But with Me it is a very small thing that I should be judged of you, or of man's judgement, Yea, I judge not mine own self... but He that judgeth me is God."** (1 Cor. 4:3). Paul also condemned lawsuits among brethren; not only should it be unnecessary to have to go to law to get justice from a fellow Christian, but it would be far better for the wronged party to accept it. Paul also insisted that if the saints were to "judge the world" they should certainly be able to judge their own internal disputes. Nor should a brother **"judge or set at naught"** a brother. (Rom. 14:9). None of us are paragons of virtue and quite often we condemn and criticise others for something we occasionally do ourselves; and, in such circumstances, Paul says, are merely passing judgement upon ourselves. (Rom. 1:1). We are all equally servants of the same Master, even Christ, and to that Master we stand or fall. Only the Master can fairly judge the servant, and this is perhaps Paul's most powerful argument against us setting ourselves up as judges. He says, **"Who art thou that judgest another man's servant; to his own Master he standeth or falleth."** (Rom. 14:4). James also has much to say on this subject but space is short. James it is who describes how partial we are in our judgements, making allowances for those and such as those, and coming down heavily on those we never really liked much in the first place. He also agreed with Paul, **"There is one lawgiver, who is able to save and destroy: who art thou that judgest another."** (James 4:12).

CONCLUSION

Surely it has already all been said. "Judge not" and we shall not be judged. We should be quick to hear but slow to speak. We should possess all the facts before making pronouncements. Solomon said, **"He that answereth a matter before he heareth it, it is a folly and a shame unto him"** (Pro. 18:13). We all want justice and to be treated fairly: we should try to accord the same to others. Nicodemus said, **"Doth our law (Moses' law) judge a man before it hears him"** (John 7:51). James also reminds us to mix great helpings of mercy into our judgements, and says, **"For he shall have judgement without mercy; that hath showed no mercy: and mercy rejoices against judgement."** (James 2:13).

Even everyday men saw the sense of all this and Abraham Lincoln said, "He has a right to criticise who has a heart to help." Archbishop Garbett said, "Any fool can criticise and many of them do." C.E. Carruthers said, "In judging others, folks will work overtime for no pay." The poet Burns said, "But gently scan your brother man; still gentler sister woman."

Paul's advice is best. If we have to judge at all, we should judge **our own selves**. He says, **"For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged. But when we are judged we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world."** (1 Cor. 11:31). In all, let justice (at least) be done and let us mix it, if possible, with a little tolerance, love and understanding.

THE BIBLE (Part 5)

A lot of people think that the ancient church councils gave the books of the Bible their Divine authority. This is not the case at all. The books possessed and also exercised Divine authority before such bodies made their pronouncements. In other words, the Bible is not an authorised collection of books, but a collection of authorised books. They were not holy scriptures because they were selected for the canon, but they were accepted into the canon because they were holy scriptures. N.H. Ridderbos has written: "Church councils and other authoritative bodies have come to conclusions regarding the canon, and these judgements have, indeed, performed an important function in effecting the acknowledgement of the canon. But it is not a church council, nor an other human authority, that has canonised the books of the Bible or given them Divine authority." W.Carl Ketcherside in his book *Deep Roots* wrote: "The Bible was not written by the Church. It was written to the Church. The books were not accepted as canonical because the Church had produced them, but because it had received them. The authority stemmed not from their acceptance, but from their origin. Canonicity did not create authority nor increase it, but simply recognised it. It was in the giving and not the gathering of the books that the authority resided".

THE OLD TESTAMENT BOOKS

We turn now to the canon of the Old Testament Scriptures. To me it is crystal clear that the thirty-nine books of the Old Testament were all frequently endorsed as canonical by Christ and His apostles. Jesus never got into an argument with His fellow Jews on the subject of the canonicity of these books. Their authority was recognised by all orthodox Jews. Consider the following passages: "And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, Jesus expounded unto them all the scriptures concerning Himself" (Luke 24:27). "And Jesus 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 are written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms concerning me. Then opened He their understanding that they might understand the scriptures." (Luke 24:44,45). See also: Matthew 21:42; 22:29; 26:54,56; Mark 14:49; 15:28; Luke 4:20,21; John 7:38 & 41,42; 10:34-36; 13:18; 17:12; 19:28 & 36,37; 20:9; Acts 1:16; 8:32; 17:2,11; 18:24,28. Acts 28:23 is an interesting passage: "And when they had appointed him (Paul) a day, there came many to him unto his lodging, to whom he expounded and testified the kingdom of God, persuading them concerning Jesus, both out of the law of Moses and out of the prophets, from morning till evening".

Consider also: Romans 1:2; 9:17; 10:11; 15:4; 16:25-27; I Corinthians 15:3,4; Galatians 3:8,22; 4:30; I Timothy 5:18; 2 Timothy 3:14-17; James 2:8,23; 4:5; I Peter 2:6; 2 Peter 1:20,21; 3:15,16.

FLAVIUS JOSEPHUS

The testimony of the great Jewish historian, Flavius Josephus, is important. As a contemporary of the apostle Paul, he wrote: "We have not an innumerable multitude of books among us, disagreeing from and contradicting one another, as the Greeks have, but only twenty-two books, which contain the records of all the past times, which are justly believed to be Divine. And of them, five belong to Moses, which contain his laws and the tradition of the origin of mankind till his death. This interval of time was little short of three thousand years; but as to the time from the death of Moses to the reign of Artaxerxes, King of Persia, who reigned after Xerxes, the prophets who were after Moses wrote down what was done in their times in thirteen books. The remaining four books contain hymns to God and precepts for the conduct of human life. It is true, our

history has been written since Artaxerxes, very particularly, but has not been esteemed of like authority with the former by our forefathers because there has not been an exact succession of prophets since that time. And how firmly we have given credit to these books of our own nation is evident by what we do, for, during so many ages as have already passed, no one has been so bold as either to add any thing to them, to take any thing from them, or to make any change in them, but it is become natural for all Jews, immediately and from their birth, to esteem those books to contain Divine doctrines, and to persist in them, and, if occasion be, to die for them; for it is no new thing for our captives, many of them in number, and frequently in time, to be seen to endure rocks and deaths of all kinds upon the theatres, that they may not be obliged to say one word against our laws or the records that contain them". We observe that Josephus mentions twenty-two books. How does this number square with the thirty-nine Old Testament books contained in our Bibles today? There is no discrepancy. According to his classification, Judges and Ruth make but one book; the two books of Samuel, two of Kings and two of Chronicles, makes but three; Ezra and Nehemiah are one, Jeremiah and Lamentations are one, and the twelve Minor Prophets are but one. I think the ancient Israelites like the number twenty-two because there are twenty-two letters in the Hebrew alphabet.

THE CHRISTIAN FATHERS

We should not overlook the testimony of the Christian Fathers here. The earliest dateable Christian list of Old Testament books was drawn by **Melito**, bishop of Sardis, about A.D. 170. His list contains all the books of the Hebrew canon with the exception of Esther. **Epiphanius** of the fourth century, bishop of Salamis in Cyprus, lists twenty-seven books, but these correspond to our thirty-nine, except that Lamentations is not included by name. **Origen** (185-254 A.D.) gives a list of canonical Old Testament books, which he enumerates as twenty-two. It corresponds to our thirty-nine, although with Jeremiah and Lamentations (taken as one) he includes a work entitled *Epistle of Jeremiah*. **Athanasius**, bishop of Alexandria, in his Easter letter for A.D. 376 arranged the O.T. books so as to yield twenty-two. These correspond to our thirty-nine, except that Esther is omitted and Jeremiah has appended to it Lamentations and Baruch. F.F. Bruce has written: "For Christians, however, it suffices that the Hebrew canon of the Old Testament was accepted as divinely authoritative by our Lord and His apostles. The apostles, no doubt, found in their Master's attitude to these writings sufficient warrant for theirs, and he accepted them, not because their canonicity had been handed down by tradition, but because He recognised their divine quality. In many points He condemned the Jewish tradition, but not with respect to the canonicity of Scripture".

NEW TESTAMENT BOOKS

The books of the New Testament Scriptures number twenty-seven. Their canonicity rests on the authority of the apostles and other inspired members of the primitive Church. As Robert Milligan has pointed out: "This is evident from: (1) the entire unanimity with which all the primitive Christians received and adopted these books as their only infallible and all authoritative rule of faith; (2) the fact that these twenty-seven books were all in existence and most of them were extensively circulated in the churches, and actually quoted as canonical by the Apostolic Fathers, and others, for more than fifty years before the cessation of miraculous gifts; and (3) the internal evidence of the books themselves. Such is the connection between the several books of the New Testament that they must all stand or fall together".

I have always been interested in the writing of William Paley (1743-1805). In 1794 he published a book which was required reading for entrance to Cambridge University

until the 20th century. The book is entitled: *A View of the Evidence of Christianity*. My copy is dated 1819. In it, he gives reasons for accepting the authority of these twenty-seven books. For example, he points out that they were quoted or alluded to with respect, as possessing an authority which belonged to no other books. They were so authoritative that they conclusively settled all questions and controversies among Christians. They were publicly read and expounded in the assemblies of the early Christians. Commentaries were written on them, harmonies formed out of them and versions made into different languages; and they were attacked by the early adversaries of Christianity as books containing the accounts upon which the religion was founded.

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(TO BE CONTINUED)

I PRESS ON

Before his baptism in Damascus Saul of Tarsus had been a zealous Pharisee, taught by Gamaliel and advanced in Judaism well beyond others of his own age, but, after that, his zeal was directed to serving his Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ. So he then could say **"But one thing I do; forgetting what is behind and straining towards what is ahead, I press on towards the goal to win the prize for which God has called me Heavenwards in Christ Jesus"** (Philippians 3:13,14).

We have all had our share of successes and disappointments but these are all in the past. As God's children, if we confess our sins, God is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins, and purify us from all unrighteousness. (1st John 1:9). So, once we have repented of them we can put them out of our minds to get on with the job in hand, which is the advancement of God's Kingdom. Although we can learn from past mistakes and successes, we should remember that we are now in the present and it is that, as well as the future, that concerns us.

We are told in 1st John 4:8,16 that "God is love". We were created as an object of that love and how hurtful it must be for our Creator when his people depart from him to go their own ways. yet he continued his plan for our redemption, culminating in the sacrificial death of his Son on the cross.

While Jesus was taking our sins to himself as he paid the price for our salvation, the Father had to turn away from him for that brief period - how agonising that must have been for the Father as well as for the Son, but they did it for us. He who is pure and without sin became sin for our sakes. Through that, Jesus established his Church on earth and now, having done that, he has passed the baton to us, if we use the analogy of a relay race.

DISCIPLINE OF THE ATHLETE

Athletes who take part in important events train intensively for them. In fact, they dedicate their lives to that. If a secular athletic event, such as the Olympic Games, is considered so very important, how much more urgent is the spiritual race we are asked to run? It pushes the importance of all these secular events far into the shade. They will disappear into history, as will the competitors themselves, but the work that Jesus' disciples do will last for eternity.

Paul told the Philippian church that he was straining towards what was ahead, and pressing on towards the goal.

Just as an athlete in training strains to reach a physical condition as near to perfection as he or she can, so a disciple of Jesus strains to reach a spiritual condition as

near to perfection as he or she can get - as near to being like the Father and the Son as they possible can, with the help of the Holy Spirit.

But what is our motivation for this? If it is simply self interest - that if we do this, then we will get this great reward - then we are deluding ourselves. Remember what Paul told the Corinthian church: **“If I give all I possess to the poor and surrender my body to the flames, but have not love, I gain nothing”**.

Our motivation must be love and our love is in response to the wonderful love that the Father and the Son have for us (1st John 4:19; 3:1,16; Ephesians 1:7; 2:4-10,13; Titus 3:5,6). That is far greater motivation than for a secular event.

It is worth noting that this love extends to one another. Jesus said, **“As I have loved you, so you must love one another”**. (John 13:34; 15:12).

PERSEVERANCE

We should remember that our spiritual race is not a sprint - it is a marathon and our pace must continue to the end. Our ability may change due to illness, or physical weakness, but our enthusiasm must stay constant at the same high level that it always was. It is not our success-rate that counts, but our drive and enthusiasm as we press on, and the manner in which we do it, with the fruit of the spirit (Galatians 5:22,23). After we have done all that, we are not responsible for the extent of the increase, or even lack of it. We leave everything in the Father's hands.

We know, too, that we are not alone. Paul said, **“I have been crucified with Christ and Christ lives in me”**. We received the gift of the Holy Spirit at our baptism and he is just another of the wonderful blessings we receive as God's children (Acts 2:38).

As Paul told the Ephesian Christians, we receive all spiritual blessings **“in Christ”**.

PRAISE AND PRAYER

An athlete in training must receive proper nourishment; otherwise he would become physically weak and listless. In the same way a disciple of Jesus Christ must continually receive spiritual nourishment and that comes through continual close contact with the Scriptures which are God breathed. We need to know and understand what is in our Bible, but what is also very important is to feel the closeness of the Author as we read it.

After telling the Roman church that the gospel is the power of God, Paul went onto say **“For in the gospel a righteousness from God is revealed, a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written; the righteous will live by faith”** (Romans 1:16,17).

It is also essential for disciples of Jesus to keep in close contact with the Father in prayer. As we are told in Philippians 4:16 **“Do not be anxious about anything but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God”**. In prayer we are communing with our divine Father and so it must be done with reverence, diligence and concentration. It consists, of course, of more than just requests - it also involves praise, thanksgiving and intercession.

FELLOWSHIP AND WORSHIP

It is extremely important, too, for God's children to meet together in worship, particularly as we remember Jesus' death as he described for us. In Hebrews 10:25 we are told **“Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another - and all the more as you see the Day approaching”**.

What wonderful blessings and privileges are given to God's children; but with privilege comes responsibility so, in order that God will be glorified and that we retain these blessings, let us too, strain towards what is ahead *and press on towards the goal*.

BILL COOK



Conducted by
Frank Worgan

"In Leviticus 16:16 we see a direct link with Hebrews 9:23. The question is: What are 'the heavenly things'? And why should they require purifying, being in heaven?"

Here is the verse to which reference is made in the question:

"It was therefore necessary that the copies of the heavenly things to be purified with (or by) these rites; but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these," (RSV).

The 9th chapter of the letter to the Hebrews refers to the Tabernacle and the animal sacrifices which were offered according to the Mosaic Law.

I might say, in passing, that it is worth noting that all illustrations used by the writer of this letter, as he deals with the subject of Worship, are based on the Tabernacle system and not on the Temple. This is because;

(1) Whilst the Tabernacle was built by Moses in obedience to the *direct* will, plan and command of God Himself, the Temple was built according to the plan of David, under the *permissive* will of God.

(2) A Tabernacle - a moveable structure - was more appropriate to the needs of a pilgrim people, than was a Temple. The replacing of the Tabernacle with the more permanent Temple indicated that Israel had lost sight of her 'pilgrim' character.

THE INTRODUCTION

In chapter 9:1-10, the writer introduces a discussion of things with which his readers would undoubtedly be familiar; namely, the furnishings of the Tabernacle and the sacrifices that were offered in it.

He is careful to point out, however, that everything included in worship offered according to the Covenant enacted at Sinai, was merely preparatory and represented or portrayed, something to come later which would accomplish what had been impossible to achieve under the Mosaic system.

The frequent references to '*blood*' are significant. That word is mentioned 12 times in this chapter alone. The reason for this is given by the writer when he states that, under the Law, '*almost everything is purified by blood, and without the shedding of blood there would be no remission of sins*' (v.22).

THE PROBLEM

It is this reference to 'purification' that is the crux of the question which we are requested to consider.

We have no difficulty in following the writer's reasoning when he refers to the purification, or cleansing, of the Tabernacle and everything and everyone connected with it, because we recognise that this cleansing was necessary for the purpose of sanctification.

This was the way in which people and things were made fit for the service of God.

It is here, however, that we are reminded of the vast difference between what was effected by the blood offered in the Tabernacle by the *Aaronic* High Priest, and that which was offered by the High Priest who was '*after the style of Melchizedek*', the Lord

Jesus Himself.

The Tabernacle and the High Priest who served in it, along with the sacrifices he offered, were only copies of the 'true' or 'real' sanctuary, which is Heaven itself, and of the True High Priest, who offered blood, which *really* took away sin.

That word 'copies' is the word '*hupodeigmata*' and means that they were '*imperfect representations of the real*'. As symbols, or types, they conveyed a sense of the 'true', but what they were and what they accomplished, fell far short of the reality.

The meaning of the passage therefore, is that under the Mosaic system, God was willing to allow the High Priest to enter the Holy of Holies and approach Him on behalf of the people, as he bore the blood of an animal sacrifice which was, in itself, a confession of their guilt before Him. But Heaven itself, the true Holy of Holies, could not be entered on that basis. A better sacrifice was required. That better, effective sacrifice was that of the blood of Christ Himself.

We need not see a difficulty in the use of '*sacrifices*' in v.23, and '*sacrifice*' in v.26, because the word '*sacrifices*' relates to those that were offered on the Day of Atonement, which is the occasion referred to in v.6, whilst the '*sacrifice*' mentioned in v.26, is the one, true act of atonement, accomplished by the shedding of the blood of Christ.

TRUE PURIFICATION

The writer implies that the use of animal blood served an important purpose as the means of ritual cleansing. In verse 13 we are told that such sacrifices were effective in '*purifying the flesh*', and v.22 states that '*almost everything*' was '*purified with blood*'.

But such sacrifices were ineffective in the infinitely more important matter of the cleansing of the heart and conscience. This is stated in v.9, where we read that they were sacrifices '*which cannot perfect the conscience of the worshipper*'.

What we see here, therefore, is a reference to the contrast between the *physical* (bodily) *cleansing*, for which the Tabernacle and the animal sacrifices were sufficient, and the *spiritual cleansing*, that of the conscience, or the spiritual side of Man's being, which needed the 'better sacrifice'.

The writer states that the 'heavenly' or 'spiritual' things, are only cleansed by the sacrifice of Christ Himself.

Verses 13-14 appear, to me, to provide the answer to our question:

"For if the sprinkling of defiled persons with the blood of bulls and with the ashes of a heifer sanctifies for the purification of the flesh, how much more shall the blood of Christ, who, through Eternal Spirit offered Himself without blemish to God purge our conscience from dead works, to serve the living God".

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IN EVERYTHING GIVE THANKS

Circumstances of life are not always pleasant. There is much sorrow, heartache and pain; but in every situation and in everything we are to "give thanks". The best reason for such thanksgiving is that it "is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you" (1 Thess. 5:18). It is God's desire we be thankful. Our whole life should be a continual "thank-offering" for the many blessings we receive. From childhood we are taught to say "thank-you." Such a virtue in life will serve each one well that practises it. It is much easier to help someone when we know it is appreciated by them.

Jesus set the example of thankfulness (Matt. 11:25; John 11:41), the heavenly host engaged in it continually (Rev. 4:9; 7:12), the apostles and early christians were thankful (Acts 27:35; 1 Cor. 1:4); why then should we not do that which they have done? Psalm 136 speaks of such thankfulness. **"O GIVE thanks unto the Lord; for he is good: for his mercy endureth for ever. O give thanks unto the God of gods: for his mercy endureth for ever. O give thanks to the Lord of lords: for his mercy endureth for ever"** (vs. 1-3). The remaining twenty-three verses continue giving thanks unto God for his many great works and blessings.

The Christian life is characterised by thankfulness. Gratitude and gratefulness should be expressed in joy and in sorrow, for prosperity and for adversity, in the assembly of the saints and on the bed of affliction. Examples of such are numerous throughout the scriptures. When the brethren at Ephesus were told to sing and make melody in their heart to the Lord, they were to do so **"giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ"** (Eph. 5:20). We are to **"offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to his name"** (Heb. 13:15). The brethren at Colossae were to walk in Christ being **"rooted and built up in him and stablished in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving"** (Col. 2:7).

Thanksgiving should be offered unto God through Christ Jesus our Lord (Rom. 1:8). We should offer thanks before our meals as Jesus did (John 6:11). We should remember to thank God for the bread and fruit of the vine when we partake of the Lord's Supper (Luke 22:19-20). Many fail in this regard when they thank the Lord **"for the opportunity to partake"** or **"pray for this bread and cup."** Somehow, they never get around to thanking God **"for the bread"** and **"for the fruit of the vine."**

Disciples are to be careful for nothing but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God" (Phil. 4:6). God knows we have needs, and desires we ask of him for those things we need, but we should always do so with thanksgiving. Nothing is worse than to assist someone and receive not even a "thank you." Always remember to offer "thanks" to those who have helped you in some way.

We should believe Romans 8:28 which says that **"all things work together for good to them that love God"**. Not everything will be pleasant or joyous, but the end result will fit us to be partakers of our heavenly home. Should we then not give thanks in everything?

G. M. ROBINSON

SCRIPTURE READINGS

July 7	Psalm 118	Acts 4:1-22
July 14	Psalm 2	Acts 4:23-37
July 21	Genesis 3:1-19	Acts 5:1-16
July 28	Daniel 6:16-28	Acts 5:17-42

THE RISE OF PERSECUTION

Jesus had warned His disciples of the persecution to come (Matthew 10:

16-42). Chapter four of Acts reveals the first persecution of the early Church. Peter and John were the victims. They showed tremendous courage and would not be silenced in preaching the good news of Jesus.

Peter and John were brought before the Sanhedrin after a night in custody. This is the same Jewish body before which Peter had denied his Lord three times. But we now read of a different Peter - full of the Holy Spirit (8) and

fearless in the service of the Master, He was a changed man. I like what is said in verse 13: **"Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were unlearned and ignorant men, they marvelled, and they took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus"**.

The Sanhedrin, dominated by the Sadducees, did not like these apostles preaching the resurrection from the dead (4:2,10). But they had a major problem on their hands: they could not deny the miracle that had been performed on the crippled man (16). Their response was to threaten Peter and John. Back came the answer: **"Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, you judge. For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard"** (19,20). The apostles were true eye-witnesses and ear-witnesses for the Lord. Peter later wrote: **"For we have not followed cunningly devised fables when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of His Majesty"** (2 Peter 1:16). John later wrote: **"That which was from the beginning, which we have listened to, which we have seen with our own eyes, and our own hands have handled concerning the Word of Life - the Life was manifested, and we have seen and bear witness, and we declare unto you the Life of the ages which was with the Father and was manifested to us - that which we have seen and listened to we now announce to you also, in order that you may have fellowship in it with us, and this fellowship with us is fellowship with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ"** (1 John 1:1-3, Weymouth's Translation).

CONTINUOUS EXPANSION

Peter and John were released and immediately joined themselves to their

fellow-believers. The apostles reported everything that had happened to them with the result that the saints offered a prayer to God. There followed a shaking of the place in which they were assembled and **"they were filled with the Holy Spirit and they spake the word of God with boldness"** (31). (Is this not a good example of God answering prayer?). They quoted Psalm 2:1-2 in their prayer. The "Christ" of Acts 4 is the "anointed" of Psalm 2.

The early saints possessed a good communal spirit. The community ideal included a radical sharing of property. On Acts 4:32-35 Donald A. Hay has written "It is probable that this spontaneous sharing of goods can be related back to the teaching of Jesus on not being anxious about food or clothing, and His exhortations to give to the poor." We have Barnabas mentioned (in this chapter) for the first time. He was a very special individual in the early history of the Church. Some have asked the question: How did a Levite come to have landed property? The answer may be that it was a burial plot, which he had acquired in the neighbourhood of Jerusalem.

ANANIAS AND SAPPHIRA

The pooling of property at that time was purely voluntary. The sin of Ananias and Sapphira, as one commentator has pointed out, "consisted not in keeping back part of the money received for their estate, but in pretending that the part which they handed over was the whole. And the lie told to the Church was reckoned as told to God the Holy Spirit." Why at this time did God deal with them so ruthlessly? J. W. McGarvey has written: "To learn that the Spirit could be deceived would have undermined the whole fabric of apostolic authority, and might have overthrown the faith of many, if not all. The attempt brought on a crisis of vital importance, and

demanded such a vindication of the power of the Spirit as could be neither mistaken nor forgotten. The immediate effect was precisely the effect desired: 'great fear came upon the whole Church and upon all who had heard these things.'

A FURTHER ATTEMPT AT PERSECUTION

The priestly authorities once again tried to inhibit the work of the early saints, but with little success. It appears that all the apostles were put in prison on this occasion. An angel of the Lord was involved in their release (5:19,20). The subject of *angels* is a fascinating one and worthy of much study. Angels are all over the Bible and two are even mentioned by name - Gabriel and Michael. Of course, there are holy angels and fallen angels. The concept of the personal guardian angel was strong at the time of these events.

The apostles, on their release, had gone to the temple to preach Jesus, as the angel had instructed them (20). They would not be silenced. Their answer to the Sanhedrin was: "**We ought to obey God rather than men**" (29). This section of Scripture (30-32) contains the fourth summary of the primitive apostolic preaching in Acts. The three previous ones are found in 2:22-36; 3:13-16 and 4:10-12. Jesus is described as *Prince* and *Saviour*. God has raised Him from the dead and through Him there is repentance and forgiveness. The message could not be clearer.

Gamaliel features strongly at the conclusion of chapter 5. He was a doctor of law and a member of the Sanhedrin. He was of the more liberal wing of the Pharisees, the school of Hillel (probably his grandfather), as opposed to the school of Shammai. Paul later acknowledged him as his teacher (Acts 22:3). His recorded speech is both reasoned and persuasive (34-40). I

especially like these words: "**But if it is from God, you will not be able to stop these men; you will only find yourselves fighting against God**" (39, N.I.V.). I often wonder why Paul was so unlike his rabbi when he set out to persecute the early saints.

The apostles rejoiced in their suffering (41). Past words of Jesus must have been ringing in their ears: "**Blessed are they who are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for their's is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets who were before you**" (Matt. 5:10-12).

Luke is a marvellous writer. He details the facts clearly and plainly. "From beginning to end this book (Acts) tells of apostolic preaching and its results, preaching by the apostles or their co-labourers and its success, and of converts to Christianity or opposition to it. No other book records so widespread and persevering proclamation of God's truth, and so deep-rooted and far-reaching consequences" (Alexander Brown). "The picture which emerges is of a self-effacing man possessed of strong human sympathies who regarded himself as a servant of the Word. With his considerable literary, historical and theological gifts, he was well fitted to recount the story of the beginnings of Christianity in a new way, adapt to the needs of the second generation in the Church" (I. Howard Marshall). "The faith of a modern Christian in the inspiration of the Bible can be strengthened by reflecting on Luke, the only Gentile writer in the scriptures. Superbly gifted, admirably trained, this doctor who in many ways showed himself to be authentic, was so consecrated and so sensitive to the gui-

dance of the Holy Spirit, that he gave to the world two documents that unfailingly point men and women to the Saviour" (Werner G. Marx).

IAN S. DAVIDSON
Motherwell.

BOOK REVIEW

"Journey into Yesterday"

by *Ruth B. Coles*

This is Ruth's *Diary/History* of the 14 years in which she and her beloved husband, Reg, spent in Papua New Guinea. It is now published, and will be a lasting memorial to the work, which she and Reg did to help the people of PNG and in promoting the gospel of Jesus Christ in that land.

The book contains over 200 pages and includes many photographs. The cover is a stunning view of the mountains of PNG with Ruth walking up a "path."

It is a book which is easy to read (if you can remember the place and people names) and is an account of the incidents in these years, which were, to her, the most important.

The title reflects the lifestyle of the people of that land, who appear to the western eye as living in conditions which existed here many centuries ago. She records her work as a teacher of the gospel and as a nurse to the communities in which she worked. Ruth gives much commendation to the work, which Reg did in teaching the villagers, in the Waria Valley, skills as well as preaching the gospel to many people.

Their work resulted in the formation of at least 6 churches and hundreds of men and women put on Christ as a result of their teaching and preaching.

This record of their work included accounts of the construction of houses, meeting places, and even an airstrip, as well as accounts of their own illness and

accidents. There were the risks of flying into and out of their airstrip (which was 2 hours travel through the bush from their house). Their mission of mercy through the night, sometimes in atrocious conditions, with their guides and storm lanterns, to attend to medical emergencies. Their success in preaching the gospel and training native preachers who now do the work in that region. Their persecution by sects who were determined to have them thrown out of the country. The bugs and creepy crawlies, which became an integral part of life (Ruth loathed the centipedes above all else). The book frequently records Ruth's gratitude to God and gives glory to Him for the blessings, which they were given, and the success, which they achieved.

To my knowledge, Ruth began to write the book shortly after Reg's death and it has, due to circumstances, taken about 8 years to bring this to publication.

The following quotations commend the book:- "The work in the Waria Valley was the high point of our lives because we were working together with a common aim, to teach as many people the gospel as possible . . . to teach others to carry on teaching others . . ."

"I appreciate very much that I have been permitted to go into so many homes to attend to the people. They have so little of the things we in the West take for granted and yet they are happy. Our aim was not to change the customs of the people but to teach them the love of God through His Son, Jesus Christ, and to try and raise their standard of living."

"It was because of Reg's unshakeable faith that I was persuaded to go with him to Papua New Guinea." Thank God for their work and witness for our heavenly Father.

The church in Kirkcaldy is handling

the sale of the book in the UK, all proceeds go to the Ruth Coles Memorial Fund whose purpose is to pay for students from the remote parts of PNG and their families, to relocate to the city of Lae and attend the Melanesian Bible School for the duration of the course.

The cost of the book for delivery in the UK is £9.00 including postage and packing. Please make cheques payable to "Church of Christ, Kirkcaldy" and send them to:

ROBERT HUGHES,
Church of Christ,
Hayfield Road,
Kirkcaldy. KY2 5DG.

TEST YOUR BIBLICAL KNOWLEDGE

1. What was the name of the king whom Nehemiah served during his captivity?
2. This book of the Bible is a book of tears.
3. What was the older name for Jerusalem?
4. Joshua set up six of these cities. What were they?
5. Jeremiah saw this tree budding.
6. What feast did king Hezekiah revive?
7. A parable of Jesus about a tree without fruit. Which tree?
8. Who told Paul about a Jewish plot against him?
9. Philip had four of these?
10. Name the island where John, the author of the book of Revelation, was imprisoned?

NEWS FROM THE CHURCHES

Slamannan District: The quarterly Mutual Benefit Meeting took place in Haddington Meeting Place on Saturday, 4th May, when the subject discussed was

"Will the bodies of the wicked be immortal?" and the speakers were Bro. Graeme Scobbie, Dennyloanhead, and Bro. James Grant, Wallacestone. The Chairman was Bro. Ian Davidson, Motherwell. Numbers attending were down on this occasion, but those who were there enjoyed a pleasant time of fellowship and an interesting discussion. Our next meeting, God willing, will be at Motherwell, on Saturday 7th September, when the subject will be "1 Cor. 13:10 refers to the coming of 'that which is perfect'. To what does Paul refer?". The speakers will be Bro. Mark Plain, Tranent, and Drew McGinn, New Cumnock. The Chairman will be James R. Gardiner. We thank the sisters at Haddington for the splendid refreshments.

H. MCGINN, (Secretary)

Manchester: Rejoice in the Lord with us over the baptism into Christ of Patrick Cunningham and Matthew Ashurst on Thursday the 16th of May 2002.

We are grateful to the Church meeting in Longshoot, Wigan for allowing us to use their facilities.

Patrick will be meeting with the Church in Stretford and Matthew will be meeting with the Church in Buxton.

This is a time of great encouragement to both congregations and we pray that the Lord will bless both Patrick and Matthew in their new life in the Lord.

ALLAN ASHURST.

COMING EVENTS

PETERHEAD
Gospel Mission

from Sunday 16th June to Sunday 23rd with no meeting on Monday 17th
Speaker: Bert Ritchie (Coleraine, N.I.) assisted by the Harding Students

NIGERIAN APPEAL

Those thinking of giving assistance to the recent appeals in the "S.S." by brother Sam M. Hayioye, of Enwan, Nigeria, may wish to hesitate until an adverse report on brother Hayioye is clarified.

(Ed.)

GHANA APPEAL

Your contributions help in so many ways brethren, and we continually receive letters of appreciation.

Open air preaching is used effectively in evangelism and your donations have enabled this to be extended into more remote areas. As new churches are established, there is a need for meeting places and funds are used to supply the necessary materials, the members themselves supplying the labour.

The sister who discontinued hospital treatment because of her inability to clear her existing hospital debt, has now been able to recommence treatment through your help.

Sisters in another congregation are in need of treatment for hypertension and malaria and there is also debility elsewhere due to stress. Others are suffering from stomach complaints with symp-

toms of ulcers, while one brother's ailment is causing facial disfigurement.

In an area heavily dependent on farming, a lack of rainfall over the last three years has been disastrous. This is causing severe distress especially for widows and sick people. This is happening in an area of strong Church growth.

There is always a natural concern for children and we would like to pass on to contributors the special thanks we received from the four children who recently became orphans for the practical help you gave them.

Those wishing to help please make cheques payable to: Dennyloanhead Church of Christ Fund and send to the treasurer Mrs. Janet Macdonald, 12 Charles Drive, Larbert, Falkirk, Stirlingshire. FK5 3HB Tel: 01324 562480.

1. Artaxerxes (Nehemiah 2:1).
2. Lamentations.
3. Jesus (1 Chron. 11:4).
4. Cities of refuge (Josh. 20).
5. An almond tree (Jer. 1:11).
6. Passover (2 Chron 30:1 & 5).
7. A fig tree (Luke 13:6-9).
8. His nephew (Acts 23:16).
9. Daughters (Acts 21:9).
10. Patmos (Rev. 1:9).

ANSWERS

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