

The SCRIPTURE STANDARD

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

Vol. 68 No. 10

OCTOBER, 2001

THE BIG DIFFERENCE

Surely the greatest event in all history was the resurrection of Christ from the dead. And surely this event, apart from any other consideration, separates Christianity from all other religions by a vast unbridgeable gulf.

According to this morning's newspapers, Religious Instruction (R.I.) in schools (in decline for years) is now virtually non-existent. Apparently, even small schoolchildren are now so sophisticated that they will not endure religious instruction or take it seriously. Hardly surprising in many ways, especially when, in the classroom next-door, they are being taught the theory of evolution and that the idea of God is an ancient superstition. Our Minister of Education says that as R.I. is a legal requirement it will have to be carried out, but will have to be "made relevant to a modern society" and must embrace all world religions. (This will, of course, include lessons on Islam and the Koran at a time, ironically, when eight Aid Workers are on trial by the Afghan Taliban for "teaching Christianity", a crime in that country punishable by hanging).

Provided, of course, that a **truthful account** of all religions is given to pupils, we need have no fear that the sayings and doings of Jesus will make all other faiths pale away into utter insignificance. No other religious leader died purposely for his followers and certainly no other arose from the tomb thereafter. Christ's words and works made Him a "good man" in the eyes of the world, but His resurrection made Him much more. Paul said, "**If Christ be not raised, your faith is vain, ye are yet in your sins. And they which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished. If, in this life only, we have hope in Christ, we are, of all men, most miserable. But now is Christ risen from the dead and become the firstfruits of them that sleep. For since by man (Adam) came death, by man (Christ) came also the resurrection of the dead**" (1 Cor. 15:17). Some find the fact of the resurrection difficult to believe, and expect an explanation. Let us, therefore, consider the circumstances. An empty grave demands an explanation.

THINGS WHICH CALL FOR AN EXPLANATION

Some things *demand* an explanation. Think of all the incidents which confront us daily which call for investigation and explanation. A broken window; the key won't turn in the lock; no water will come out of the tap; a tyre on the car is losing pressure; an employee hasn't turned up for work; the cooker in the kitchen won't heat up, etc. etc. Doctors in their surgeries are bombarded each day with symptoms and questions from frightened patients requiring explanations - one is losing weight; one is unable to breathe properly; one is losing the sight in one eye; one is passing blood; one has an

alarming rash, and so on. The police are no strangers to situations requiring an explanation. They deal each hour with bizarre events and mysterious goings-on which all have an explanation, if it can be found. Perhaps the most serious situation is when a dead body is found - such a thing certainly requires an explanation. When was the person last seen alive and how did they die? Has a murder been committed? A blood-stained knife is found nearby and serious wounds are visible on the body. Enquiries and a search are made, witnesses are interviewed, clues and fingerprints are sought. Once foul play is confirmed, the police move on to identify the suspects; consider the motives and ponder the opportunities. *No one actually saw* what took place but **the facts** testify to what must have happened. The police and the lawyers try to discover the most likely explanation from the facts.

Deductions must be intelligently made. Someone who was alive and is now dead is a circumstance which demands an explanation. We are no strangers to such situations. *Jesus' empty tomb* equally demands an explanation. **Someone who was quite dead and is now certainly alive is surely a matter which requires an explanation.**

Deductions must be drawn from the facts and must account for *The Predictions; The Death; The Burial; The empty Tomb; The Appearances* and *The Impact*.

THE PREDICTIONS - Apart from the Old Testament predictions that Jesus would be redeemed from the power of the grave and that His soul would not be left to Sheol, or see corruption (Ps. 16:10; 71:20; Ho. 13:14), Jesus Himself predicted long before His death that He would rise again from the grave. His predictions may have fallen on deaf ears as far as His disciples were concerned but Jesus made these predictions regularly. **"From that time forth began Jesus to show unto His disciples, how that He must go up to Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day"** (Matt. 20:19). A few chapters later Jesus informed His disciples that *after He had risen* He would go before them into Galilee. When He came down from the mount of transfiguration with Peter, James and John He told them not to say a word of what they had seen **"until He had risen again from the dead."** He also challenged the Jewish leaders with the assertion, **"Destroy this temple (His body) and in three days I will raise it up."** These many predictions are most worthy of mention because they illustrate that Jesus had every confidence that He would conquer death and the grave (a confidence apparently not shared by His disciples) and that the resurrection was not therefore a clever but hasty stage-managed fraud perpetrated by His disciples (as is alleged by sceptics and Higher Criticism). To rise from the dead the third day after burial is an achievement defying description - to have **predicted it many times** beforehand, multiplies the marvel a hundred times.

THE DEATH - I understand that few sceptics nowadays attempt to deny that Jesus was certainly dead prior to being laid in the tomb. At one time it was argued that Jesus was but unconscious when He was interred, and the spices and coolness of the tomb brought Him out of His 'swoon.'

It was never explained, however, how He got out of the tomb and how he moved the 'exceedingly great' stone which blocked the tomb entrance, especially without any blood in His veins. The Roman soldiers may have been rough but they were also known to be efficient and when instructed by Pilate (at the request of the Jews) to hasten the deaths of those on the three crosses by breaking their legs, we read that they broke the legs of the other two but did not break the legs of Jesus because He was *'dead already.'*

THE BURIAL - Joseph of Arimathaea and Nicodemus wound the dead body of Jesus in linen clothes, with spices, and buried it in the manner of the Jews in a tomb hewn from the rock and rolled a **'very great'** stone against the entrance. The disciples of Jesus may have forgotten the forecast of Jesus that He would rise the third day but *the enemies* of Jesus remembered it and took it more seriously. They were alive to the danger that the disciples could easily remove the body of Jesus from the tomb and claim a resurrection. They therefore set in motion several precautions to make sure that this could not be done, and in all the measures they took they unwittingly created a situation which served later to provide unassailable proof of the resurrection.

Truly God works in mysterious ways His wonders to perform. The chief Priests and Pharisees went to Pilate and explained their fears saying, **"Sir we remember that that deceiver said while He was yet alive (They believed He was dead), after three days I will rise again. Command therefore that the sepulchre be made sure, until the third day; lest his disciples come by night, and steal him away; and say unto the people, He is risen from the dead. So the last error shall be worse than the first. Pilate said unto them, Ye have a watch: Go your way: make sure of it as sure as you can. So they went, and made the sepulchre sure: sealing the stone and setting a watch."** The only way for Jesus to emerge was by moving the stone so the Jews sealed the stone and placed a guard. It was now quite impossible for the disciples to take the body without detection. The first line of defence was the seal of the stone; the second was the guard. Had the Jews not taken such elaborate precautions they could, at a later date, have accused the disciples of having stolen the body. By making the sepulchre 'sure' (or lockfast, or thiefproof) the Jews unintentionally, and to their later chagrin, succeeded only in highlighting the fact of the resurrection.

THE EMPTY TOMB - Jesus had assured His disciples many times that although He would suffer many things in Jerusalem at the hands of the Jewish elders and Chief Priests, and ultimately be killed, yet He would emerge from the tomb on the third day. We might expect, therefore, that these same disciples would have all congregated at the tomb on the third day to watch Jesus break out of the sepulchre. *Not so*, nor did it seem that the disciples had even the haziest notion of trying to steal the body.

Indeed when the few women who first discovered the empty tomb, and had seen the Lord, ran back to tell the disciples, they **'believed not'** and **"Their words seemed to them as idle tales, and they believed them not."** The empty tomb was, therefore, to the disciples, *a complete surprise*. To the enemies of Jesus, the empty tomb was *a frightening embarrassment* - frightening because it called for an explanation (indeed a public explanation) and the true explanation could only be that Jesus had risen from the dead. However Public Relations men in every age can work wonders with a few lies and a few 'handouts.' Thus the guards who had been watching over the tomb (and who had understandably quaked and fainted 'like dead men' when they saw an angel, and earthquake) had to be bribed **'with large sums of money'** to say that they had slept on duty and the disciples had, as feared, stolen the body. Thus *the explanation of the empty tomb was clear to the Jewish elders and Pharisees* (if to no one else); i.e. that Jesus had, as He had predicted, risen from the grave on the third day.

THE APPEARANCES - Those sceptics who still feel that they can explain the empty tomb have now to deal with the appearances. It is difficult to take seriously that usual explanation offered by those who doubt the resurrection, that those who saw

Jesus after his death suffered from delusions or hallucinations. When we recall the many appearances Jesus made (over a period of 6 weeks), even to *five hundred brethren simultaneously*, one hesitates to believe that all suffered from hallucinations. Indeed when Jesus appeared to the disciples and Thomas, He invited Thomas to thrust his hand into the wound in Jesus' side to prove it was no apparition. Jesus also called for food that in the eating thereof He might assure all that He was no 'spook' or spirit. The appearances of Jesus (bodily) not only indicate the completion of Christ's redemptive work but also shed some light on the *nature* of that redemption, i.e. the inclusion of man's body in the scheme of salvation or, as Paul puts it, "**the adoption, to wit, the redemption of the body.**" (Rom. 8:23). The whole transaction of the resurrection centred around the tomb because that's where the body was. The only kind of resurrection is a *bodily resurrection*, hence the necessity for Jesus to "**show Himself alive with many (infallible) proofs**" and essentially to show his re-animated body. His appearances can not therefore be explained other than by conceding His resurrection.

THE IMPACT - Two thousand years later the impact is still reverberating around the world. Perhaps the most compelling evidence of the resurrection, apart from the empty tomb and the personal appearances, is the transformation of the Lord's disciples. After Christ's death the disciples were numb with depression and disappointment. Had they not watched Him die and heard his awful death-cry, "**Why hast thou forsaken Me.**" They were like soldiers of a defeated army; disconsolate and in hiding, wondering perhaps how they might pick up the threads of their former lives again, and start looking for jobs.

Then came *the transformation*, when they '**had seen the Lord.**' Their weakness is supplanted with courage; their depression with confidence; their sorrow with joy, which no future tribulation would ever diminish. Their abandoned interest was now replaced by a boundless and consuming zeal, ever prepared to die a martyr's death. To those who say the resurrection is a legend or folk-lore it should be evident that a legend takes many, many years to mature but the transformation of the disciples was immediate. Within a few weeks, Peter, who had denied the Lord, was preaching the resurrection, in spite of all threats against him, within a stone's throw of the tomb and scene of the crucifixion. "**Therefore, let all the House of Israel know assuredly that God hath made this same Jesus whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ . . . whom God hath raised up, having loosened the pains of death; because it was not possible that He should be holden of it . . .**" This was the theme and bedrock of every gospel discourse proclaimed in Jerusalem to those who had condemned Jesus, those who had seen Him die and perhaps even to the guards sent to guard the grave. Those in authority, the elders and the Pharisees, fumed, threatened and even beat the disciples for preaching the message but never, it seems, **thought it feasible to deny the resurrection.** Even some 30 years later, Paul said that most of the 500 witnesses to the Lord's resurrection were still alive and could be cross-examined. **The silence of the Jews** is therefore more eloquent testimony than the preaching of the apostles. After all, the Jews could have quickly silenced the preachers by going to the tomb and bringing out the body, and they would dearly have loved to have been able to do so, but they could not because, in the words of an angel, "**He is risen, He is not here.**"

Everyone who sees the light of day requires, sometime or other in their lives, to produce an explanation of the events surrounding the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus. The only true explanation is that Jesus, as He had often predicted, "**suffered many things of the elders and chief priests, and was killed, and was raised again**

the third day." His resurrection (like the sign of the prophet Jonas) is the only sign God gives to an evil and adulterous generation. The founders of other religions have beautiful and well-tended graves *but Christians can but point to the empty tomb. This measures the difference between Jesus and all others.*

EDITOR.

FULFILLED

(*Darbyism Refuted.*)

SENSATIONAL DISPENSATIONALISM

John Nelson Darby's Seven Era Premillennialism

Round about 1832, John Nelson Darby, an ex-Anglican priest and prominent founder member of the relatively small Plymouth Brethren movement, propagated a novel form of premillennialism generally known as "Dispensationalism". However the faith is "once for all delivered to the saints" (Jude 1:3), so new doctrines cannot be true. Despite that, this new doctrine, in its various forms, has permeated the evangelical world so much that many evangelical bodies do not regard as Christian those who oppose it.

Dispensationalists generally claim that there will be 7 eras of 1,000 years from the creation of the world, at about BC4004, to the end. Which would mean that we have now entered the 7th. and last dispensation of God's dealings with mankind.

Very briefly the theory is that the OT predicted the Lord Jesus coming into the world to establish an earthly kingdom for the Jews. The Jews having rejected the Christ this is postponed, meanwhile the Church is established, as a sort of stop-gap measure, until Christ comes invisibly to "rapture" its faithful to heaven. Then God will resume his aim to establish an earthly Jewish kingdom. Views of what happens then are complex and varied.

THE DANGER OF THE DOCTRINE

The implication of this stop-gap theory is that the Church and the cross was hardly, if at all, foreseen in the Old Testament. If the Jews had not rejected the Christ then he would have instituted a Jewish earthly kingdom and there would have been no cross, no salvation for the world and no Church.

I.C. Scofield claimed that salvation was by works for the Jews under the Old Covenant and by grace under the New:

"As a dispensation, grace begins with the death and resurrection of Christ . . . The point of testing is no longer legal obedience as the condition of salvation, but acceptance or rejection of Christ, with good works as a fruit of salvation". Scofield Reference Bible, 1909, 1917 (notes on John 1:17 sec. 2) p.1115.

The Scofield Reference Bible promotes Dispensationalism.

BIBLICAL REFUTATION - Prophetic Predictions Fulfilled

These Old Testament promises about God's plan for the Jewish Nation are fulfilled in the Church.

Predicted - Gentiles becoming God's people.

". . . I will say to *them which were* not my people, Thou *art* my people; and they shall say. *Thou art* my God." Hosea 2:23

"Yet the number of the children of Israel shall be as the sand of the sea, which cannot be measured nor numbered; and it shall come to pass, *that* in the place where it was said unto them, Ye are not my people, *there* it shall be said unto them, *Ye are* the sons of the living God." Hosea 1:10

Fulfilled - The Church is God's holy nation.

"... not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles . . . As he saith also in Hosea, I will call them my people, which were not my people . . . which was not beloved. And it shall come to pass, *that* in the place where it was said unto them, Ye *are* not my people; there shall they be called the children of the living God." Romans 9:22-26

"But ye *are* . . . , an holy nation . . . Which in time past were not a people, but *are* now the people of God . . ." 1 Peter 2:9-10

Predicted - Gentiles to be Priests.

"... I will gather all nations and tongues; and they shall come, and see my glory . . . and they shall declare my glory among the Gentiles . . . And I will also take of them for priests *and* for Levites, saith the LORD." Isaiah 66:18,19,21

Fulfilled - Members of the Church are priests.

"But ye *are* . . . , a royal priesthood . . . ; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light:" 1 Peter 2:9

Predicted - David's Tabernacle will be rebuilt.

"In that day will I raise up the tabernacle of David that is fallen . . . and of all the heathen upon whom my name is called, saith the LORD that does this" Amos 9:11

Fulfilled - The Church is David's rebuilt tabernacle

"Simeon hath declared how God at the first did visit the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for his name. And to this agree the words of the prophets; as it is written. After this I will return, and will build again the tabernacle of David, which is fallen down; . . . and all the Gentiles, upon whom my name is called, saith the Lord, who doeth all these things. Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world." Acts 15:14-18

Predicted - A new covenant will replace the old.

"Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah." Jer 31:31

Fulfilled - The Church is under that new covenant.

"... he took the cup, . . . saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me." 1 Corinthians 11:25

"Who also hath made us able ministers of the new covenant; . . ." 2 Corinthians 3:6

"For finding fault with them, he saith, Behold, the day cometh, saith the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah:" Hebrews 8:8

In that he saith, A new covenant, he hath made the first old. Now that which decayeth and waxeth old *is* ready to vanish away." Hebrew 8:13

"... Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, . . ." Hebrew 12:24

THE JEWS FORFEITED THEIR RIGHT TO THE OLD COVENANT

"Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt: which my covenant they brake, . . . saith the LORD:" Jeremiah 31:32

The Old was severed by God and the New introduced at the cross

"... that I might break my covenant which I had made with all the people. And it was broken in that day: . . . they weighed for my price thirty *pieces* of silver . . . In that day there shall be a fountain opened to the house of David and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem for sin and for uncleanness." Zechariah 11:10-12, 13:1

GENTILES ARE GRAFTED IN AND BECOME PART OF THE TRUE ISRAEL OF GOD

"... some of the branches be broken off, and thou, being a wild olive tree, wast grafted in among them, and with them partake of the root and fatness of the olive tree;" Romans 11:17

"In whom also ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ: Buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with *him* through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead". Colossians 2:11-12

SUCH ARE THE SEED OF ABRAHAM AND HEIRS ACCORDING TO THE PROMISE

"Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster *to bring us* unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith, But after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster. For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus. And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise." Galatians 3:24-29

So those who believe in the Lord Jesus and are baptised in water for the remission of sins are born into the promised kingdom. Compare: John 3:3-5, Mark 16:15-16, Acts 2:37-39, Romans 6:1-5 and Colossians 2:11-13

ALLAN ASHURST.

COMMUNION WITH GOD

A great source of consolation for the Christian is **communion with God**. When Christians meet together in public worship they commune with God, because the various items of public worship each constitutes a communion.

Another meaning for communion is "joint participation", and implies action between two parties. This "joint participation" is what the Christian has when he worships God. The first Christians communed with God 2000 years ago when "**they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine, and fellowship, and in breaking of bread and in prayers**" (Acts 2:42).

PRAISE

When Christians assemble themselves together to sing praises to God and when God receives the adoration offered to His name, there is a communion. "**Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns, and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord**" (Eph. 5:19).

Music has its place and purpose in the worship service. This place and purpose has been created by Divine authority, and singing is the only music provided in the New Testament plan. "**Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord**" (Col. 3:16).

From this the Christian learns that his heart must accompany his singing and be thoroughly in accord with the sentiment of the song being sung. In other words, it must be done in all sincerity, and directed as praise unto God and not for mere entertainment.

THE LORD'S SUPPER

The Lord's Supper is specifically referred to as a communion. "**The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which**

we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?" (1 Cor. 10:16).

The Lord's Supper was instituted by Christ, and delivered unto the apostles. **"Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you"** (Matt. 28:18-20). It was the practice of the assembly of the Church on the first day of the week. **"And upon the first day of the week when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached to them"** (Acts 20:7).

Thus practice of close communion with Christ is undertaken by the Christian that he may examine self. (1 Cor. 11:28). To eat the Lord's Supper regularly and worthily is to maintain spiritual vigour.

PRAYER

It is also true that the Christian receives consolation when he communes with God in prayer. Actually Christians when praying are talking to God, pouring out their hearts to Him with assurance that He hears them. Indeed prayer is as necessary to the Christian as the air he breathes.

The supreme example to follow in prayer is Jesus. Even Jesus needed to pray to His Father in heaven to fortify Himself against the great emergencies in His life.

Christians have a greater need to follow His example in order to obtain the extra help and consolation in overcoming the trials and temptations in their own daily lives. **"The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much"** (Jas. 5:16). A direct communion with God, prayer is . . . **"good and acceptable in His sight"** (1 Tim. 2:3)

PREACHING

In the scripture-reading and the message that explains it, readers and listeners learn more of God's will for them. He is telling them what to do and how to act. Here again the Christian communes with his God as he studies the Divinely inspired book - the Bible.

From the Old Testament scriptures two lessons of supreme practical importance stand out - the first being that God always rewarded and blessed those who were obedient. The second lesson is that God condemned and punished those who disobeyed Him. From a study of those 2000 years of history in the Old Testament it is plain to see God's word is steadfast and is not to be trifled with.

The New Testament scriptures containing God's will revealed through Christ and His chosen ambassadors, who were guided and confirmed in their message by the Holy Spirit, constitute a complete and perfect rule of faith and practice for God's people today. **"Therefore, we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things we have heard"** (Heb. 2:1).

GIVING

Giving is also an element of worship, and in giving there is communion with God. In the New Testament scriptures the Lord has presented a plan for financing of the work of the Church. As in the case of every other plan God has given, it must be put into operation by faithfulness on the part of the Christians. The obligation is an individual one.

This New testament plan has five characteristics. They are:

First - *Periodic*: **"Upon the first day of the week"**.

Second - *Personal*: **"Let each one of you"**.

Third - *Provident*: **"Lay by him in store"**.

Fourth - *Proportionate*: **"As he may prosper"** (1 Cor. 16:1-2).

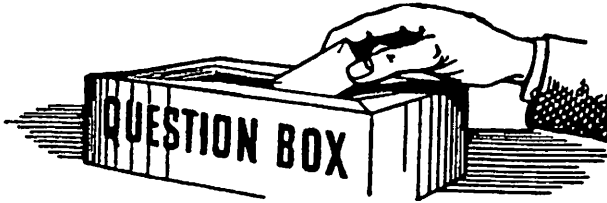
Fifth - *Purposefully*: **"Everyman according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give. Not grudgingly, nor of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver"** (2 Cor.

9:7).

When Christians give of their means and their time to the Lord's work they are consecrating their giving to the glory and honour of God, and they are in complete communion with Him.

Let us **commune** with our Maker in His way revealed in the scriptures, and receive His blessings.

B. MOODIE.



Conducted by
Frank Worgan

MELCHIZEDEK. Heb. chs. 5:10 and 7:1-9.

Recently there was brought to my attention a subject which inevitably fascinates every Bible Class that studies the letter to the Hebrews. The very mention of the name '*Melchizedek*' is sufficient to awaken the flagging interest of any group of students, because he appears to be such a mysterious Old Testament figure.

I have a clear memory of discussions held in the Bible Class that I attended as a boy in my home-congregation many years ago, and I must say that when Melchizedek was studied those discussions generated a great deal of heat, but very little light.

Hebrews ch.7:3 invariably prompted such questions as,

How could he be 'without father or mother?' and,

What is the meaning of 'having neither beginning of days nor end of life?'

There was always more speculation than illumination, with the result that, as far as I was concerned, this man - if he was a man! - remained a mysterious and mystical figure.

Not that in this *our* Bible Class was any different from others. I suppose it was to be expected that we should encounter these difficulties, because for centuries Melchizedek has fascinated both Bible commentators and Bible students alike, and many and varied have been the theories advanced to explain his identity, and especially his origin, in the light of the statements made in that verse.

1. Such is the mystery that has always surrounded the name '*Melchizedek*' that, in the 3rd century A.D., a sect arose known as 'the Melchizedekians', whose members believed that he was a '*Christophany*', that is, a pre-Christian manifestation of the Son of God Himself. Or, they said, he was the Holy Spirit in human form. Or, at the very least, they declared that he was an angelic being.

2. There is a theory, of Jewish origin from an even earlier period, which claims that Melchizedek was actually Shem, the son of Noah, who, having survived the flood, lived long enough to meet Abraham. I recall having read that at least one of the preachers of the early '*Restoration Movement*' held this view, but the notion seemed so ridiculous that I did not bother to record where I read it!

3. Yet again, there are other writers who have refused to accept that such a person as Melchizedek ever existed, claimed that he is an imaginary figure; an idealised, stylized character. But this view is impossible to sustain since the account of his meeting with Abraham is as factual as any other historical event recorded in the Bible.

What The Scriptures Reveal.

When we turn to the Word of God, we very quickly discover that, in the Old Testament scriptures there is not a great deal said about Melchizedek. He first appears, very briefly, in the days of Abraham in **Genesis 14**.

The second brief mention of him occurs 1000 years later in **Psalm 110:4**.

After this, we wait another 1000 years before he appears in the New Testament, in the two passages already mentioned, where most of what we learn about him is to be found.

'Melchizedek - King of Salem'

In **Genesis 14:18** we read that it was after Abraham had rescued his nephew Lot, that his meeting with Melchizedek occurred, and, in this verse, *'Malkiy Tzedeq'* is described as *'king of Salem'*, and *'priest of El Elyon'*, or, of *'God Most High.'*

This means that in this man were combined the offices of Priest and King - a fact which is of profound significance, as I hope we shall see.

His name, *'Malkiy Tzedeq'* means *'King of Right'* - or *'Righteous King'*, whilst the name of the city over which he reigned, *'Salem'*, is a form of *'shalom'*, which I think most people know, means *"peace"*. In later times this became the name of several towns or cities in Palestine, but it is interesting to notice that Salem is mentioned in the Tel-el-Amarna tablets, which date back to before 1400 BC, and, even before the time of Abraham, the city was known by that name.

Centuries later, in the days of Joshua, it was the city of the Jebusites which the Israelites were unable to capture (Josh, 15:63), and it is probable, because it was occupied and held by the Jebusites as their stronghold, until it was captured by King David several centuries later, (**2nd Sam.5:9**), that the city of Salem had acquired the name *'Salem of the Jebusites'* or *'Jebu-salem'*, which eventually became *'Jerusalem'*.

Certainly, the identification of *'Salem'* with *'Jeru-salem'* is established quite clearly in **Psalm 76:2**.

"In Judah God is known, his name is great in Israel. His abode has been established in 'Salem', his dwelling place in Zion."

Josephus, the Jewish historian, who lived in the 1st century AD, stated,

"The first founder of Jerusalem was a chief of the Canaanites, who, in our tongue is called "Righteous King"."

Thus, Melchizedek was King and Priest in the city which was later to become 'the City of David.'

'Melchizedek - 'Priest of El Elyon'

The fact that Melchizedek was both King and Priest surely reveals what a remarkable person he must have been. In an age of polytheism, here was a Canaanite king who knew the One True God - *'God Most High'*. or *'The Supreme God'*, and who served Him as priest.

In **Psalm 7:17** God, is described as *'Yahweh, the Most High.'*

Notice, also, that this is the first time the word "priest" (kohen), occurs in the Old Testament scriptures. From then on, it is used a massive 724 times, and it probably means *'one who mediates'*. When the New Testament scriptures describe Melchizedek as a priest, the word used is *'heireus'*, which means *'one who is holy and set apart for the service of God.'*

Furthermore, Abraham acknowledged Melchizedek's priesthood as being that of the God who had called him out of 'Ur of the Chaldeans', because,

i) He offered a tithe to Melchizedek. Later, according to the Mosaic Law, the people were required to recognize the position of the Priesthood by the giving of a tithe.

Here, Abraham, the federal head of Hebrew people and the Father of the nation, gave a tithe, not merely for himself, but for all his descendants - and this included the entire priestly tribe of Levi and Aaron, its first High Priest.

- ii) Abraham accepted bread and wine from Melchizedek,
- iii) And received a blessing from him.

This blessing of Abraham by Melchizedek is something that the Scriptures stress as very significant, pointing out that *'the lesser is blessed by the greater'* Heb.7:7. Or, as the R.S.V. renders the verse, *'the inferior is blessed by the superior.'* No wonder the inspired writer of the letter to the Hebrews exclaims, *"See how great he is!"* (7:4).

(To be concluded next month)

*(Questions to: Frank Worgan, 5 Gryfebank Way,
Houston, Renfrewshire, PA6 7NZ, Scotland)*

THE "CHURCH" AND "WORSHIP"

The letter to the Ephesians outlines the "church" most clearly and gives us a picture of faithful obedient people who delight in doing everything that Jesus wants us to do and it also reveals the reason for this obedience. If we say that it does not matter how the "church" conducts itself, we demonstrate a lack of understanding in our relationship to Jesus. This relationship is revealed in this letter to the Ephesians.

Question: What is the foundation of the "church"?

Answer: The "rock" (Rom. 9:33, 1st. Cor. 10:4-5, 1st. Peter 2:7-8, Ps. 62:1-2).

Jesus himself said he would build his "church" upon the "rock" (the statement that Peter had just made - that Jesus was the Christ the Son of the living God - Matt. 16:16)

Rev. 21:9 "I will show you the bride; the Lamb's wife" (Rev. 21:2) the Holy city adorned as a bride prepared for her husband.

As we read through the Ephesian letter and see outlined all of the things pertaining to acceptable conduct for those who believe and who have obeyed, we finally come to a metaphorical outline of the relationship between Jesus and the "church".

HUSBAND AND WIFE

Ephs. chapter 5:22 *Wife and husband* are used as the example; with Christ being the head of the "church".

Picture if you will, a young bride and groom, with the groom so much in love with his bride that he would willingly give his life for her if necessary (and in the case of Jesus, that is exactly what he had to do, purchasing his bride (the church) with his own blood.) Now picture the bride who loves her husband so much that she will do anything and everything to please him and nothing pleases her more than when she can do his will in every little seemingly insignificant detail.

5:24 The "church" (the bride of Christ) submits to Christ joyfully and willingly, finding satisfaction and fulfilment in every act of submission.

5:26 Jesus, the bridegroom, made his bride Holy (set apart for service to God) cleansing her by washing with water (baptism) through the "Word" (the word of God, the sword of the Spirit ch. 6:17)

5:29 Christ cares for his bride (the "church") and feeds her and she is (we are) members of his body (Matt. 19:5-6) "one flesh"

5:29 No man ever hated his own flesh but feeds it and cares for it just as Christ does the "church"

5:32 I am talking about Christ and the "church"

Have you heard the saying "she worships the ground he walks on" in reference to a

married woman? - This is the kind of real genuine heartfelt worship that we must have towards Jesus, not a limited, stilted, pompous worship that is all for show.

We must worship Jesus with an unconditional adoration.

Having examined all of the foregoing, and studied the letter to the Ephesians, can anyone say "it does not matter how, where, or with whom, we worship?"

G. SILLMAN
Chilliwack, Canada.

JOY OF OBEDIENCE

In Scripture the obedient are blessed. Obedience brings a real closeness to God.

Jesus is the greatest example of obedience. He obeyed God even to the point of death, so that we might have eternal life. There is no greater obedience than this.

In obeying God we declare our dependence on Him. Be willing to submit your life to Him. Trust in Him for the future; in Him it's secure. As we walk and grow in the Lord, obedience becomes the cornerstone to fellowship with God. If we obey He pulls us closer to Himself, revealing a new depth of love and blessing.

At times we will reach a crossroads where a decision has to be made. In this, be obedient to the will of God. Trust Him and let him be your guide; you will never lose out. Obedience is never easy, so stand firm in the faith.

With God all things are possible. (Math. 19:26). God loves. God cares. God gives strength, to overcome. Patiently pray, praise and worship Him. God will answer. Patience and obedience go hand in hand.

In family life obedient children are a blessing. In God's family obedient children are blessed!

Beloved, take Him at his word.

God is the Creator, In Him all things were made. It states in the Bible that we are created in His image. We are His; He loves mankind. Beloved, be obedient to His will and His word. In this you will be blessed. God wants a people that want Him.

Call upon Him, draw nigh, be blessed. God is patient. He awaits with an ever open ear to your petitions. Call upon Him and be blessed.

ANDREW P. SHARP, Newtongrange.

SCRIPTURE READINGS

Nov. 4	Exodus 12:1-20	Matthew 26:1-25
Nov. 11	Zechariah 13	Matthew 26:26-46
Nov. 18	Psalms 41	Matthew 26:47-58
Nov. 25	Proverbs 25:1-18	Matthew 26:59-75

ANOINTING AT BETHANY

The action of this woman (26:6-13) is recorded for all mankind and is a memorial to her. I like the fact that someone so humble was praised by Jesus. He liked to mix with the common folk like her and Simon the leper. Did

she foresee Jesus' crucifixion and death? I think so. Jesus told them plainly: "For in that she has poured this ointment on my body, she did it for my burial" (12). However, some commentators have suggested the anointing was carried out as a mark of devotion, but possibly also as a private acknowledgment of His Kingship.

The disciples thought the whole thing was a waste of money. I am sure Judas Iscariot was the main complainant, if a similar incident with Mary, the sister of Martha and Lazarus, is anything to go by (John 12:1-8). In fact, this incident seems to have stimulated Judas to

betray Jesus to the chief priests.

THE PASSOVER

Jesus kept this memorial feast with His disciples. The Passover commemorated the deliverance of the Israelites from Egypt and is still an important feast to the Jews. Details of how it should be observed are found in Deuteronomy 16. This chapter should be read in conjunction with Exodus 12.

Jesus foresaw His betrayal and, at the feast, identified Judas as the traitor. I can hardly take it in at times to think that one of Jesus' own disciples was willing to betray Him for thirty pieces of silver. As a consequence, Judas' name will always be associated throughout history with infamy. "He lives on the stage of Scripture as an awful warning to the uncommitted follower of Jesus who is in His company but does not share His spirit; he leaves the Gospel story 'a doomed and damned man' because he chose it so..." (R.P. Martin).

THE NEW MEMORIAL

It was on that dark betrayal night that Jesus instituted the Lord's Supper as a memorial feast to Him, the true passover. Paul later wrote: "**For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us . . .**" (1 Corinthians 5:7b). The commemoration of the Jewish passover has been superseded by the commemoration of the Lord's supper. The latter speaks of a greater sacrifice (Jesus Himself) and a greater deliverance (from sin).

I have always been struck by the simplicity of the Lord's Supper. There is nothing complicated about it. Yet, it is so profound in meaning. Jesus took one loaf and one cup. The broken bread speaks of His body once whole then wounded for us. The cup, containing the fruit of the vine, speaks of His shed life blood. "**For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you do show forth the Lord's death till He come**" (1 Corinthians 11:26). "To every disciple He says, 'For *you* my body was

wounded; for *you* my life was taken'. In receiving it the disciple says, 'Lord, I believe it. My life sprang from thy suffering; my joy from thy sorrows; and my hope of glory everlasting from thy humiliation and abasement even to death'. Each disciple, in handing the symbols to his fellow disciple, says, in effect, 'You, my brother, once an alien, are now a citizen of heaven; once a stranger, are now brought home to the family of God. You have owned my Lord as your Lord, my people as your people. Under Jesus the Messiah we are one. Mutually embraced in the Everlasting arms, I embrace you in mine; thy sorrows shall be my sorrows, and thy joys my joys. Joint debtors to the favour of God and the love of Jesus, we shall jointly suffer with Him, that we may jointly reign with Him. Let us then, renew our strength, remember our King and hold fast our boasted hope unshaken to the end'" (Alexander Campbell).

GETHSEMANE

Gethsemane lay on the west slope of the Mount of Olives. The name comes from the Aramaic *gat semen*, which means "an oil press". This garden was always a favourite retreat for Jesus and his disciples. "It should probably be contrasted with Eden, the garden where the second Adam prevailed over temptation" (D.H. Tongue).

We shall never know this side of heaven all the pain, the sufferings and the agony Jesus endured in Gethsemane. The "cup" (39,42) of which He spoke, was undoubtedly the cup of suffering. This cup was not removed from Him, but the Father gave Him sufficient strength to see Him through all the trials and tribulations. The hymn writer put it this way:

"Nor e'er Gethsemane forget,
But there Thy conflict see;
Thine agony and blood-like sweat
And so remember Thee."

Jesus craved sympathetic compan-

ionship at this time, but even His closest disciples were unable to supply it. They were tired and really unaware of what was going on. Jesus loved them and prayed for them. Soon their world was to be shattered.

ARREST IN THE GARDEN

Judas arrived with the temple police and the commander, who was the captain of the Temple. He betrayed his master with a kiss. Simon Peter was the one who drew the sword and cut off the ear of the high priest's servant call Malchus. Luke records: **"And Jesus touched his ear and healed him"** (22:51b). Again, it is staggering to read that one of the twelve betrayed the Master for thirty pieces of silver. What got in to Judas? The simply answer is - Satan (Luke 22:3). The devil used Judas as an instrument of evil. Of course, Judas was a willing instrument and was totally responsible for all his actions. It is preposterous to suggest that God fore-ordained everything this man did. God foreknew, but He did not foreordain.

Verse 56 is a very telling one: **"But all this was done, that the scriptures of the prophets might be fulfilled. Then all the disciples forsook Him and fled"**. It is easy for us to be critical of the disciples all these years later. But would we have acted otherwise? The point is: Jesus was left to face His ordeal alone.

HIGH PRIESTLY INQUISITION

Jesus was led to Caiaphas, the high priest. He was in this office from A.D. 18 to 36. He was son-in-law to Annas (John 18:13). These men probably shared high-priestly power. The scribes and the elders are also mentioned. They all constituted the Sanhedrin.

It is clear from the beginning that the Jewish authorities were out to destroy Jesus. Their hatred of Him beggars belief. Here was a man who went about doing nothing good, yet they wished Him dead. They were even willing to

call upon false testimony to have Him convicted and executed. Jesus spoke the truth, yet they charged Him with blasphemy (65). His teaching and miracles had proved beyond all doubt that He was the promised Messiah, the Son of God. Most of the Sanhedrin were so blinded by their wickedness that they could not see the reality or the truth. But they were all going to see the same thing in the future, which was **"the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power and coming in the clouds of heaven"** (64b).

Peter ended up denying Jesus. He did so three times. He failed the test. Here was further proof of His Master's saying: ". . . the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak" (41). All his life, I am certain that Peter never forgot this denial. Of course, later on he repented and confessed Jesus before the same body of men (Acts 4). People can change - and people can change for the better!

IAN S. DAVIDSON,
Motherwell.

TEST YOUR BIBLICAL KNOWLEDGE

1. Who Was Gideon's youngest son?
2. How old was Joshua when he died?
3. Who deceived her husband to help one of her twins?
4. David sent a soldier to his death in battle. Name him.
5. This plant grew on the Plain of Sharon.
6. Name the place of 12 wells and 70 palm trees visited by the wandering Israelites.
7. Who received John's second letter?
8. What kind of sea is before the throne of God?
9. Of whom is it said, he "cared for none of these things"?
10. Name the two men who accompanied Paul on his first missionary journey?

OBITUARY

Wallacestone: It is with deep regret that we record the passing of Brother John Myles. Brother John fell asleep in Jesus on Sunday 8th July, 2001, and was laid to rest on Wednesday 11th. Because of illness and old age, John had been cared for in Newcarron Court Nursing Home.

Due to being on holiday I was unable to attend the funeral, and John's family were unable to contact me in time. We extend our condolences to the family but are sure that John is now in God's keeping.

JAMES GRANT (Sec.)

NEWS FROM THE CHURCHES

Slamannan District: The quarterly Mutual Benefit Meeting took place in the meetinghouse at Motherwell, on 1st September when the subject discussed was "How do we define Worship?" In the chair was James Grant, Wallacestone, and the speakers were John Kneller, Tranent, and James R. Gardiner, Haddington. After the speakers had introduced the subject there followed, as usual, general discussion in the hall for one hour thereafter. As usual many interesting things emerged from these discussions and an enjoyable time was had by all. Our next meeting will be, God willing, on 1st December, 2001, at the Meetingplace of Tranent Church, when the subject will be on the question - "Has the Church anything to say about modern scientific developments: e.g. cloning, GM Foods, embryology, surrogacy, etc?" The speakers will be Graeme Pearson, Dunfermline and John Colgan, Tranent. The Chairman will be James R. Gardiner. Once again, we thank the sisters for the lovely refreshments.

HARRY MCGINN (Sec.)

EVANGELIST WANTED

The Slamannan District of Churches require an evangelist and all interested brethren should apply in writing to the District Secretary:-

Harry McGinn,
6 Westpark Drive,
New Cumnock, Strathclyde
KA18 4LJ.

COMING EVENTS

PETERHEAD:

Special Weekend:

Saturday 6th Oct. - 7pm

Sunday 7th Oct. - 10am, 11am, 6pm.

Speaker: D. Langdon (Glenrothes)

A warm welcome awaits all.

"SING ALONG"

Saturday 3rd Nov. - 3pm

Conducted by Kenneth Nisbet

Tea & Evening Session 7pm

All welcome.

ANNIVERSARY MEETING

Kentish Town Anniversary Meeting

will, God willing, take place on:-

Saturday 6th October, 2001

Afternoon 3pm & Evening 6pm

Tea at 4.45pm

Speaker: John Morgan

(also Speaker on Sunday).

All welcome.

ANNUAL SOCIAL

Newtongrange

Saturday, 13th October - 4pm

Speaker: Ian Davidson

All welcome.

Special Saturday Night Meeting

At KIRKBY IN ASHFIELD

With Bro. Frank Worgan

27th October, 2001

at 7.00pm

Special Saturday Night Meeting

At KIRKBY IN ASHFIELD

With Bro. Ernest Makin
16th March, 2002
at 7.00pm

KIRKCALDY LADIES DAY

18th May, 2002
(Details later).

**The Green Hut, Kings Road,
Stretford, Manchester.**

*An Invite to Special Meetings
to be held on*

SATURDAY, 13th OCTOBER, 2001

Subject: What does it mean to be free?

Speaker: Graham Gorton 6.00pm

Light refreshments: 6.45pm

Questions and Discussion: 7.15pm

*Enquires ring Allan Ashurst
0161 865 4242*

GHANA APPEAL

The work of evangelism continues and again we thank donors who have contributed to its success.

Medical aid has reduced suffering and death and, among present cases, we have a sister who has suffered a stroke along with hypertension and requires regular monthly treatment.

The father of one of our church leaders has also suffered a stroke along with high blood pressure and, although local brethren help in every way they

can, your contributions bring relief to these sufferers. That not only brings relief from physical suffering but it is encouraging to realise that other brethren care for them.

Another congregation has, with great difficulty, been trying to share its resources with two of its needy members, a widow and a handicapped brother. Could we show our concern by contributing to this need? It would certainly be very much appreciated. Those wishing to help, please make cheques payable to:- Dennyloanhead Church of Christ Ghana Fund and send to the treasurer Mrs. Janet Macdonald, 12 Charles Drive, Larbert, Falkirk, Stirlingshire. FK5 3HB Tel: 01324 562480.

1. Jotham (Judges 9:5).
2. 110 (Joshua 24:29).
3. Rebekah (Genesis 27:6-10).
4. Uriah the Hittite (2 Samuel 11:17).
5. Rose (Song of Solomon 2:1).
6. Eilm (Exodus 15:27).
7. The elect lady and her children (2 John 1).
8. A sea of grass like unto crystal (Revelation 4:6).
9. Galilio (Acts 18:12,17).
10. Barnabas and Mark (Acts 12:25).

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)

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