

The SCRIPTURE STANDARD

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

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THE PROFIT MOTIVE

This week, the business world has been staggered by the collapse of Barings Bank, Britain's oldest merchant bank. It appears that their Singapore agent, in an attempt to maximise profits, lost the incredible sum of £700 M in risky investments: thus bringing about the downfall of the bank. Other banks in this country have, however, been making huge profits: mainly by the simple process of reducing staff and making the remaining staff work harder and longer. The profit motive has never been stronger and competition is fierce. Each financial institution is galvanised solely to this end (i.e. profit) and most other considerations (such as morality and staff well-being) are of little consequence. Even "the man in the street" is now a small investor; bent on maximising the returns on his paltry bank account, and there never was a time when we heard so much about interest rates; real growth, money management and profit.

'Profitability' was a dirty word amongst workers for a while, but now that the 'working classes' are, increasingly, having 'a piece of the action' in business, it is now sensible to want profitability. 'Growth' and 'increase' are also words which now arrest close attention especially in the context of Shares and Unit Trusts. As long as our gain is not another man's loss, it seems right and proper that there should be **profit, growth, prosperity and increase**. After all, no man can employ workers at a loss – not for long anyway. Jesus, I believe, endorsed these words in His parables and teachings, with the proviso that first things must come first. For instance, it would be very unprofitable even if a man were to acquire the entire world, yet lose his own soul. Jesus, it seems, can take no real pleasure in servants who are 'unprofitable', or in disciples who do not 'grow', or in churches which can show no 'increase'. Indeed at the Great Assize, when the real Profit and Loss Accounts are examined Jesus says (Matt. 25) that **unprofitable** servants will be consigned to outer darkness.

Early in the O.T. we read of husbandry geared to '**make increase**', of flocks and harvests, and prosperity was usually a sign of God's approval and blessing. This is hardly surprising when we consider that God gave most things the power of procreation and self-multiplication and indeed said "**Be fruitful and multiply.**"

(Incredibly, some plants have three million seeds in each pod, and so a strong capacity for 'increase' was in the mind of God). Natural laws obtain the spiritual world and so, when we come back to the N.T., we see that Jesus expects growth in His Kingdom in all ages (by means of the incorruptible seed of the gospel). Christ's Kingdom was made to be self-perpetuating and His labourers in the vineyard (to change the figure) are expected to sow the seed and to water. God will give the increase. We might not fully understand this, but then Jesus suggests as much when

He says that 'the Kingdom of God is as if a man should cast seed into the ground; and should sleep, and rise night and day, and the seed should spring and grow up, he knoweth not how . . ."

And so while there might be an element of mystery as to how, and when, God gives the increase, and how a small piece of leaven leaveneth a whole lump, yet never-the-less Jesus looks for growth in His disciples (as individuals) and increase in His Church (as congregations).

THAT YE MAY GROW THEREBY

Consider how worried and heart-broken parents are over the stunted growth of a child. If growth stops will it start again: or will the child be a dwarf? These are perfectly understandable worries and so we can appreciate the glad assurance given by Luke that Jesus, as a child, "**increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man.**" (Similar bulletins were issued in the case of Samuel and John the Baptist). Physically, Jesus was a healthy specimen but He also **grew** in wisdom, and in favour with God and man. These are all subjects of slow, but steady, growth and men do not acquire wisdom overnight, or in the cradle.

I make these references to physical growth (and concern over lack of it) for a purpose: because quite often in the N.T. Christ's disciples are referred to as 'new born babes', and concern expressed about their **spiritual** development.

Obviously Christ has no desire to have children spiritually crippled, any more than normal parents would want their off-spring to be physical pygmies. The apostle Peter exhorts that we should strip away all malice, guile, hypocrisies, envies and evil speakings and that, 'as new born babes desire the sincere (un-adulterated) milk of the word that we may grow thereby.' (1 Peter 2:2). Only those who have closely watched the fascinating business of feeding a hungry baby can appreciate the real strength of this injunction. While the feeding bottle is being prepared and cooled, baby becomes more and more fractious and when the bottle is brought within grasping distance is grabbed and almost swallowed whole. They certainly '**desire**' their food. Do we grab all opportunities to be fed with the sincere milk of the word, or have we often to be 'force-fed' and, even then, has the milk got to be laced with something else?

Paul, like Peter, uses this analogy when he remarks upon the fact that many 'new-born babes' neglect the God-given diet and remain Lilliputian in terms of spiritual growth. He complains (to the Hebrew Christians) that there are many things he would like to say about Christ (and some hard to be uttered) but he can't because they are 'dull of hearing' (lack perception). "**For**" he says, "**when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat. For everyone that useth milk is unskilful in the word of righteousness for he is a babe. But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.**" And so Paul agrees with Peter, that we should become as 'new-born babes' and desire the sincere milk, but also insists that we should grow away from the 'bottle-fed' stage, and eventually be able to tackle the 'strong meat' of the word. Having been taught, we, in turn, should become teachers. We should also become '**skilful**' in our handling of the word of righteousness.

Would Paul make the same criticism if he came amongst our churches today?

Paul thanked God that the faith of the Thessalonians '**grew exceedingly**' and their love for the each other '**abounded**', and so it was not all 'doom and gloom' by any means. Peter exhorts that we "**grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ**". The aim is, it would seem, that by growing in grace and knowledge we shall ever be in pursuit of perfection. "**Therefore**" says Paul, "**leaving behind the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection . . .**" and,

of course, perfection is an ongoing quest. We have to work at it for it will not be thrust upon us, and our efforts must continue "Until we all come (in the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God) unto a perfect man; **unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ.**" (Eph. 4:15). **Christ's own perfection must be our aim.**

IT GREW AND MULTIPLIED

Individuals must grow, and churches must increase and multiply. The Kingdom has within itself the means of self-perpetuation, but the **means** must be employed. The mustard seed, as Jesus pointed out, is indeed the smallest of seeds but grows into a surprisingly large plant, outstripping all other herbs so that even birds might find shelter in its branches. Likewise the K. of G. sprang from a humble beginning (a babe in a manger) but very soon acquired a prodigious size throughout the entire world. We, living 2,000 years later, can see how relevant the analogy of the mustard seed has been. Truly as Zechariah suggests, we must never despise the day of small things (or small beginnings); great oaks from small acorns grow. Accordingly in Acts 16:5 we read that, only a few years after Pentecost, "So were the churches established in the faith, and **increased in number daily.**"

Having been in Jerusalem the Church might have co-existed, with all and sundry, quite comfortably (keeping shop) for long enough but great persecution came. Acts 8 describes how Saul (later Paul) led a persecution so fierce that all the members of the Church (except the apostles) were obliged to flee from the city and were scattered throughout all Judea and Samaria. Thus Saul, quite unwittingly, accomplished a purpose quite the very opposite of what he intended, and set in motion the rapid expansion of Christ's kingdom throughout the then known world. Saul, instead of dousing the flames had kicked the burning embers in all directions. However, we read that those who were scattered abroad "**WENT EVERYWHERE PREACHING THE WORD.**" Surely this was the secret of success in respect of the early Church. Had the members kept silent, in case of further persecutions, nothing would have happened, but they went everywhere **preaching the word.** Persecution, I suppose, firms up the resolve of the truly faithful and puts to flight the frivolous. Later, (Acts 9:31) the churches "had rest" and were edified and "**were multiplied.**" Just as Israel "grew and multiplied" in Egypt, so also in Christ's Kingdom "the word of God grew and multiplied" and this phrase occurs several times in the Acts. Indeed it was at just such a time that we read that "as the disciples multiplied, there arose a murmuring of the Grecian (Christians) against Hebrew (Christians)." History shows, I think, that as the Church grows so does trouble within the Church: *and error grows just as fast as truth.* Was this what Paul meant when he warned the Church, at Colosse, not to be beguiled by those who intruded into questions beyond their ken, that they should, (with proper nourishment) thrive and increase, and "be increased **with the increase of God?**" Does this presuppose that some 'increase' is **not the increase of God,** and that we should closely scrutinise our claims of progress?

Certainly the Church at Laodicea grew but not on the proper level. It grew in quantity not in quality: it increased 'in goods' and regarded itself as successful, prosperous, and very well to do. Jesus described that church as "**wretched, and poor, and blind, and naked**" and made the (very 'unChristian') comment that He would spue it out of His mouth (Rev.3).

It seems almost impossible for men to take God at His word. Under the old covenant The Jews had to adulterate the words of Jehovah, and by adding the 'traditions of the elders' frustrated God's will. Men are no better under the new covenant and many appendages have attached themselves to the word, **and to the Church,** and we worship in vain if we teach, as doctrine the commandments of men. Any 'increase' must be **the 'increase of God.'**

CONCLUSION

It has been said that if we do not travel forward, we actually move backwards – there is no standing still. This may, or may not, be true, but it is true that our one consuming passion should be the prosperity and the true progress of Christ's eternal kingdom. We certainly expend much time and energy on our own material increase: and on our creature comforts.

Perhaps we should ponder again what Jesus said about **profitability**, with reference to His servants, and I suppose He was directing His remarks to those of us who hope to do just enough to 'scrape through' into heaven. Jesus referring to the wide gulf between master and servant, pointed out that no master is very likely to actually thank his servants for their services. **"So likewise ye, when ye have done all those things commanded you, say; We are unprofitable servants; for we have done only that which it was our duty to do."** (Luke 17:10). Jesus does not really need us but we need Him. He owes us nothing and it is only by His Grace that He tolerates us, and will save us. If we claim to be His servants we should reflect upon the kind of service we give Him. Do we give the minimum service or hope to get away with nothing much at all? What would we do if we had a servant who was lazy, arrogant, indifferent, unreliable, surly, unpunctual, disinterested, slovenly, disobedient, and always complaining? What would we do with such a one? What then does Jesus think of us as servants, and what should He do with us?

Let us then, while opportunity lasts, seek **growth** and **increase** as individuals and churches; and strive to be really **profitable** servants in the service of the Master. We must try to **add** to our early faith. This is the true profit motive.

"And besides this, giving all diligence, ADD to our faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; and to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience Godliness; and to Godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness love. For if these things be in you, and abound, they make that you shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ" (2 Peter 1:5).

EDITOR.

GLEANINGS

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

"TRIUMPHANT FAITH"

"Although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls: YET I WILL REJOICE IN THE LORD, I WILL JOY IN THE GOD OF MY SALVATION." Habakkuk 3:17-18.

ALTHOUGH – YET

Habakkuk was a prophet of God.

The writing of the prophet consists of three chapters only, if you read them for the first time, you may have difficulty in grasping the message.

Our Lord gave us this message: **"IF YOU SEEK, YOU WILL FIND"** I think it would be perfectly true to say, that not many messages have been spoken or written from this prophet, but I pray that some thoughts expressed will be a source of blessings to your soul.

Shall we look at the value of the context:-

Habakkuk 1:1-3.

"The burden which Habakkuk the prophet did see. O Lord, how long shall I cry, and thou wilt not hear! even cry out to thee of violence, and thou shalt not save. Why dost thou not show me iniquity, and cause me to behold grievance? for spoiling and violence are before me: and there are that raise up strife and contention."

Habakkuk lived in an age when the outlook on circumstances seemed to contradict his faith in the righteous government of God.

The times were characterised by violence, iniquity, spoiling, strife and contention. And God seemingly was doing nothing about it.

HENCE THE CRY OF THE MAN OF GOD

“O Lord, how long shall I cry, and thou wilt not hear! even cry out unto thee of violence, and thou wilt not save” Hab. 1:2.

Habakkuk could not understand the ways of God, neither do we at times.

How many times have we prayed to God, and seemingly did not get an answer, of course, not the answer we wanted.

He did what we should do, he brought the problem to God, so making it possible for God to give him an explanation.

Let us now turn to chapter 2:1-3.

“I will stand upon my watch, and set me upon the tower, and will watch to see what he will say unto me, and what I shall answer when I am reproved.

And the Lord answered me, and said, Write the vision, and make it plain upon tables, that he may run that readeth it.

For the vision is yet for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak, and not lie; though it tarry, wait for it, because it will surely come, it will not tarry.”

Oh how marvellous is the word of God.

“Though it tarry, wait for it, because it will surely come, it will not tarry.”

TAKE TIME TO BE HOLY

**“Take time to be holy, let Him be thy guide;
And run not before Him, whatever betide;
In joy or in sorrow still follow thy Lord,
And looking to Jesus, still trust in His word.”**

SEVEN WORDS

Hab. 2:4.

“Behold, his soul which is lifted up upon the tower, and will watch to see what he will say unto me, and what I shall answer when I am reproved.”

And what did the Lord say?

“THE JUST SHALL LIVE BY HIS FAITH.”

This statement is repeated three times in the New Testament. **Romans 1:7.** **“For therein is the Righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith; as it is written. The Just shall live by faith.”** **Galatians 3:11.** **“But that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God, it is evident: for the Just shall live by faith, but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him.”**

God’s children should take these seven words **“THE JUST SHALL LIVE BY HIS FAITH,”** and place them in our memory **IN LETTERS OF GOLD.**

WANTED MEN AND WOMEN OF FAITH

Let us keep in our minds that faith is the Principle of Life.

Habakkuk could not understand the ways of God, hence he had to receive this vital lesson **“THE JUST SHALL LIVE BY HIS FAITH.”**

We are perplexed at times by the seeming inactivity of God, **BUT HE IS WORKING.**

In Habakkuk’s days God was working alright, he was using the Chaldeans to teach God’s people a lesson.

The soul of the prophet had been brought into very real fellowship with God.

“For the vision is yet for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak, and not lie, though it tarry, wait for it, because it will surely come to pass, it will not tarry.”

“Although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls; Yet will I rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation. Hab. 3:17-18.

BY FAITH

“But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he that cometh to God, must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them, that diligently seek Him” Heb. 11:6.

“By faith Abel . . . by faith Enoch . . . by faith Noah . . . by faith Abraham with Isaac and Jacob . . . through faith Sarah . . . by faith Isaac . . . by faith Jacob . . . by faith Joseph. . . by faith Moses . . . by faith the harlot Rahab . . .

And what shall I more say? For the time would fail me to tell of Gideon, and of Barak, and of Samson, and of Jephthae, of David also, and Samuel, and of the prophets: Who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions . . .” Hebrews 11.

“THE JUST SHALL LIVE BY HIS FAITH”

Selected by Leonard Morgan.

THE PASSOVER – WHAT’S ALL THE FUSS ABOUT?

Last month we looked at the first Jewish Passover, we now turn to their last Passover:-

PROPOSITION 2

“That Jesus ate the unleavened bread with His disciples on Thursday evening, was crucified on Friday afternoon, was buried later that same afternoon. Spent all Saturday in the grave. Rose from the dead early on Sunday morning.”

- (a) Jesus rose from the dead as the sun was rising on Sunday morning (Mk. 16:2 (proi); Mt. 28:1 (epiphisto); Lu. 24:19 (batheos); Jn. 20:1 (proi).
- (b) Jesus lay in the grave on Saturday, the Jewish Sabbath, (Jn. 19:42; Lu. 54-56; Mk. 16:1; Mt. 28:1).
- (c) Jesus was laid in the grave on Friday afternoon (Lu. 23:50-54-56); (Sabbath drew on); Jn. 19:42; Mt. 27:57 (opsia); Mk. 15:42-46 (opsia).
- (d) Jesus died on Friday afternoon, (Jn. 19:31) (before the Sabbath); Lu. 23:44-46 (after 9th hour); Mk. 15:34-42 (after 9th hour); Mt. 27:46-57 (after 9th hour).
- (e) Prior to Jesus dying on the Friday afternoon, there was darkness over the land from the 6th hour to the 9th hour (Mt. 27:45; Mk. 15:33; Lu. 23:44).
- (f) Pilate released Jesus to be crucified on the Friday morning (Jn. 19:14-17 (6th hour); Lu. 23:24-26; Mk. 15:15; Mt. 27:26).
- (g) Early on the Friday morning the chief priests with the elders and scribes and whole council held a consultation and took Jesus to Pilate. (Mk. 15:1 (proi); Mt. 27:1-2 (proi); Lu. 22:66 - 23:1 (when came day).
- (h) Sometime before daybreak on Friday morning the Romans, together with the officers of the Jews, arrested Jesus and took Him to Annas/Caiaphas, (Jn. 18:3-12 (with lanterns and torches); Lu. 22:54; Mk. 14:53; Mt. 26:57).
- (i) Late on Thursday night Jesus goes with His disciples to Gethsemane to pray (Mt. 26:36; Mk. 14:32; Lu. 22:34-39 (before cock crows); Jn. 18:1).
- (j) Sometime after sunset on Thursday night Jesus gathers with His disciples for the Lord’s supper (Lu. 22:7-38 (then came the day); Jn. 13:1-26; Mk. 14:12-31 (on first day); Mt. 26:20-35 (opsia); 1 Cor. 11:23 (nuktos).
- (k) Shortly after sunset on Thursday evening Jesus asked His disciples to locate the place to hold the Lord’s supper (Lu. 22:1-13 (then came the day); Mt. 26:17 (the first of unleavened bread); Mk. 14:12 (the first day of unleavened bread); Jn. 13:1 (before the feast of the Passover).

All the points in proposition 2 have been proven, however to reinforce the starting time for these events it is proposed to look at it from another viewpoint under proposition 3. It was necessary to work backwards because the timing of Jesus rising from the grave is clearly demonstrable from all four Gospel accounts.

The system of keeping time at the time of Jesus was in accordance to Roman, Greek, and Hebrew systems and people's use of the various systems seemed to have varied; much like our adoption of the metric or imperial system today. The following notes provide some guidance in this shadowy area.

NEW TESTAMENT DEFINITION OF TIME

EVENING

There are several Greek words used to describe evening, None of them directly correspond to Jewish words. Different lexicographers ascribe different meaning to the same words in different passages. It is therefore important to look carefully in the context in which the word is used to establish its possible meaning. It would be unwise to be dogmatic as to the precise meaning of a word where Greek scholars are not in agreement. This should not be thought surprising as the same probably could be said in trying to define on what the English 'evening' means today.

hespera – (Lu. 24:29; Act. 4:3-4; Act. 28:23) somewhat equivalent to the English 'evening'

opsia – can mean late evening after sunset (Vine, Thayer, Zodhiates); or 3 p.m. to 6 p.m. (Thayer, Zodhiates).

opse – late in the day (Vine, Thayer, Zodhiates); but does not mean 'after' (Vine); sometimes in later writers to mean 'later' (Thayer).

MORNING

proi – Early in the morning, very early before dawn, also as in Mk. 13:35 the watch that ushers in the morning (Zodhiates).

bathus – early, very early, literally deep twilight, earliest dawn (Zodhiates).

epiphosko – In Mt. 28:1 to dawn as the daylight, to grow toward daylight (Zodhiates).

NIGHT

nuktos – night, darkness (1 Thess. 5:5).

DAY

The Jewish division of the night into 3 watches continued to Roman times but the Roman's custom was to have four equal watches – evening, midnight, cockcrow, morning (Mk. 13:35).

Evening (opse) was the close of the day when evening began. The 6 p.m. - 9 p.m. watch

Midnight (mesonuktion). The 9 p.m. - midnight watch.

cockcrow (alektorophonia). The third watch from midnight to 3 a.m.

Morning (proi) early in the morning. The watch from 3 a.m.

The day was also divided into 12 equal parts starting around 6 a.m., third hour - 9 a.m., sixth hour - 12 noon or (Greek) 6 a.m., ninth hour - 3 p.m.

PROPOSITION 3

That the events preceding Christ's death follow those of the First Jewish Passover

- (a) Two days before the Passover Jesus was in Bethany (Mt. 26:1-6; Mk. 14:1-3).
- (b) The chief priests seek how to put Jesus to death as the Feast of Unleavened Bread, which is called Passover, was approaching (Lu. 22:1).
- (c) The disciples ask where to prepare the Passover on:-
 - i) The first of unleavened bread (Mt. 26:17) (note! the word 'feast' is not in original text).

ii) The first day of Unleavened Bread, when the Passover was being sacrificed (Mk. 13:12).

The first day of Unleavened Bread was Nisan 14 when it was eaten in the evening (Ex. 12:18).

The Passover was sacrificed on Nisan 14 'between the evenings' (Ex. 2:6). Therefore the disciples asked where to prepare the Passover sometime during Nisan 14.

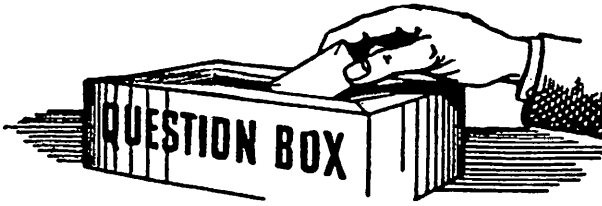
- (d) The Lord's supper was held before the Feast of the Passover (Jn. 13:1) this Feast was held on Nisan 15 (Ex. 34:25; Nu. 28:17). As the Passover feast was held in the evening, after sunset at the start of Nisan 15, and as the search for the room did not commence until Nisan 14. The Lord's supper must have been held on Nisan 14. The same day that the search was made for the place to eat it.
- (e) The Lord's supper was held in the evening (Mt. 26:20).
- (f) It therefore follows that the Supper was held on the night of Nisan 14.
- (g) Before the Passover could be eaten the whole house had to be purged of leaven (Ex. 12:15). The first unleavened meal that was eaten was on Nisan 14. Any one eating leaven on Nisan 15 was cut off from the congregation of Israel (Ex. 12:15). To ensure this did not occur Nisan 14 was used to thoroughly check the house of any traces of leaven. It is highly doubtful that any one would go straight into a strange room and partake of the Passover Feast without the traditional search for traces of leaven. This supports the view that the Lord's supper was held on Nisan 14.
- (h) All four Gospel accounts mention the preparation day: a review of these shows when the Passover was.
- i) Pilate delivered Jesus to be crucified on "the day of preparation" for the Passover (Jn. 19:4).
 - ii) The Jews ask Pilate that the crucified should have their legs broken because it was "the day of preparation" for the Sabbath (a high Sabbath) (Jn. 19:31).
 - iii) Joseph of Arimathea asked for the body of Jesus because it was "the preparation day" that is the day before the Sabbath. (Mk. 15:42).
 - iv) Joseph put Jesus' body in the tomb on "the preparation day" just as the Sabbath was to begin (Lu. 23:51-54; Jn. 19:42).
 - v) The day after "the preparation" the chief priests and Pharisees asked Pilate to secure Jesus' tomb (Mt. 27:62).

The term 'Passover' as a day was taken either for the killing of the lamb (Ex. 12:21) on Nisan 14 or eating the lamb on Nisan 15 (Ex. 12:11). But we know from Mk. 14:12 that the disciples were with Jesus on the day that the lamb was slain, therefore the Sabbath then must have been on Nisan 15 and Jesus crucified on the Friday afternoon of Nisan 14. The Lord's supper must then have been on the Thursday evening Nisan 14.

The Lord's supper must have been some time before the Jews ate their Passover (on Nisan 15) as the Jews would not enter Pilate's residence because they might have got defiled before they ate the Passover (Jn. 18:28).

From the above it has been ascertained that the events of the first Passover were followed by the events of our Lord's crucifixion and that He was crucified as the Jewish sacrificial lambs were slain.

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Conducted by
Alf Marsden

“2 Peter 2:21 “For it would have been better for them not to have known . . .”

“In view of this statement, should we hesitate to preach to certain people?”

I, personally, would have very little idea who the ‘certain people’ might be to whom I would hesitate to preach or teach. Having said that, I have a problem regarding some who have ostensibly been converted. Have they been converted because of the euphoria of an emotion-driven Meeting; has someone persuaded them (other than the Gospel); do some put themselves forward as candidates for immersion simply because someone else has done it? If some or all of such reasons are valid, then the reality of living the Christian life can weaken resolve – seemingly inherent in a total commitment at baptism – to go on living the Christian life in an increasingly religiously-hostile environment. When that happens, they may become prey to false and liberal teachers, which brings us to the real point of the question: if such a thing happens, and defections take place, then are we as preachers and teachers to blame for the initial conversion, and should this deter us from future promotion of the Gospel?

WARNINGS

Warnings, in the Christian sense, are designed either to :a; advise us not to break God’s laws, and (b) to watch out for those who would lead us astray. Warnings can be either heeded or unheeded, dependent on the pressure put on the warned one. Warnings many times come from the older (based on experience) to the younger (with little experience). The inherent self-reliance of youth, however, means that many such warnings are ignored :until it is too late).

Some warnings may have greater potency if given by someone who is nearing the end of life, and has been well-loved and respected. Both Paul and Peter fall into this category, and both state this fact in order to give their warnings more force. Both warn against the same problem: false teachers. In 2 Tim.4:2–5, Paul exhorts Timothy to contend for the truth because, he says, some Christians will have ‘itching ears,’ not enduring sound doctrine. In v6 he goes on, **“For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand.”** Then in v7 comes his personal testimony, **“I fought a good fight, I finished my course, I have kept the faith.”**

Peter takes up the same theme, **“We have not followed cunningly devised fables,”** and **“we were eyewitnesses of His Majesty, power, and glory.”** In v.13 he says, **“as long as I am in this tabernacle I want to stir you up by putting you in remembrance,”** Then comes the reference to his own mortality, **“Knowing that shortly I must put off this my tabernacle, even as our Lord Jesus Christ hath shewed me”** (v.14). So we see similar warnings by two great Apostles. They didn’t close their eyes to reality. They knew that the pristine purity of the Church was being eroded by false teachers. But did they stop preaching and teaching? No, they didn’t.

DECEPTION

Perhaps the main aim of false teachers is to deceive. This was clearly seen by the attitude of Satan in the Garden; he plainly deceived Adam and Eve by lying to them and so deceiving them. In 2 Peter 2:13 Peter emphasises the seductive power of false teachers when he says, **“sporting themselves with their own deceivings while they feast with you.”**

He also indicates where these predators have their greatest success: the unstable soul (v.14). It is very true that the unstable soul was seen as a great threat even in those early days. Paul warns against this in his letter to Ephesus, **“That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive”** Eph. 4:14. If this was so then, what about today? The multiplicity of so-called Christian faiths which say, “Oh you don’t have to worry about what you believe; we’re all going to the same place.” Or the insidious attack of atheistic humanism which says, “Well you can see how much the world has advanced. Why do we need God?” The message of the Apostles, and of the Bible is clear. We should keep our eyes firmly fixed on Jesus, the Christ of God. We should stop dithering and honour the commitment we have made. If we are taught anything other than what we have accepted, then we should always measure such teaching against God’s Word, the Bible, and if it falls short, then we should reject it. We should take the advice of Paul, **“But speaking the truth in love, may grow up in him in all things, which is the head, even Christ”** Eph. 4:15. If we don’t have the stability of soul, how on earth do we have the temerity to teach others?

DOUBLE STANDARDS

Balaam has always troubled me. Peter says that **“he loved the ways of unrighteousness.”** You will find the relevant scripture concerning Balaam and Balak in Numbers ch. 22. Balak was frightened by the strength of Israel and sent for Balaam to curse them. Balaam knew that God would never allow that, but the appeal of the riches which Balak had promised was great. God forbade him to go the first time, but he appealed to God a second time even though he knew God’s mind. Why did Balaam appeal a second time? Well, he was like many Christians; he thought God would change His mind. Anyway, God permitted him to go, but only on the stringent condition that he spoke only the words that God would give him. This is what happened every time Balak opened his mouth. Balaam sent him away in anger, but it seems that Balaam told him that the Israelites could be seduced by embracing the idolatry and impurity of the worship practised at Baal-peor. This is evidently what happened and Balaam paid for this with his life. Read Numbers 31:16.

There should never be any double standards by the Christians. We have embraced God’s standard of righteousness, Christ Jesus the Lord. Any lowering of that standard for personal gain will lead us only into unrighteousness.

Peter says, **“Remember Balaam; he loved the wages of unrighteousness.”**

UNFULFILLED PROMISE

“Oh, Jesus, I have promised to serve thee to the end.” That promise, like many marriage promises, remains unfulfilled. Peter is appealing to those who had made such a promise; don’t be seduced by false teachers. If we were charitable, I suppose, we might have some sympathy for these early Christians. Many of them, for reasons best known to themselves, were probably expecting a ‘quick return on their investment,’ i.e. they were expecting a quick return of the Lord. When an expectation is unfulfilled we become prey to other influences.

In a newly-converted person there is the promise of a useful and fruitful life for the Lord; it doesn’t always materialise. On one occasion Jesus spoke of an unclean spirit leaving a man. The unclean spirit wandered around seeking a place to go. Finding none, it decided to return to its previous abode. It found the place clean, swept and garnished, so it took seven other spirits more wicked than itself to occupy the place again. Jesus concludes by saying that the second state of the man was worse than the first. Luke 11:25. The record of the incident by Matthew has Jesus concluding, **“And so shall it be also unto this wicked generation.”** Matt. 12:44.

This seems to be a perfect example of a person being cleansed from sin by obedience to the Gospel. The tragedy would be if that person's life wasn't filled by Christ, and so, being bereft of that divine security, succumbed to a greater degree of sin than before conversion. The greater sin would have been in knowing Christ and then becoming prey once again to evil influences. The force of this teaching would not be lost on Peter, and that is why he says, **"For if after they have escaped the pollutions of the world . . . they are again entangled therein, and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning. For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them."** He likens it to a dog returning to its own vomit.

The warning is always there, but I feel we cannot refrain from preaching the Gospel because this may happen: part of our responsibility as Christians is to see that it doesn't. For the many converted by the Gospel, **their** lives will be enriched by Christ and the Holy Spirit indwelling them, and so producing fruitful lives.

If we were unsure of the validity of a person's response (I suppose this would be covered by the questioner's 'certain people' then we might consider teaching them further before immersion. There is, however, great danger in this. The issue would have to be handled skilfully and prayerfully so as not to discourage the would-be convert.

(All questions please, to Alf Marsden, 20 Costessy Way,
Winstanley, Wigan. WN3 6ES).

"THE LOST CHURCH"

When was the church of Christ restored? We are not hedging when we say we do not know. God keeps the record book. The Lord is the head of the Church (Eph. 1:22), not any man! The idea of "apostolic succession" is simply a tool of bigotry, ego and pride. Our faith does not reside in tracing men and movements – but in the word of God, the seed of the kingdom (Lk. 8:11). Thus when men started throwing off the shackles of tradition, untruth, popery, denominational allegiances and all hindrances to pure Christianity, they were on their way to restoring the primitive Church. All that was needed was to break the ground of indifference, pull the weeds of error, burn the stumps of pride, and then sow the seed of the kingdom which is the word of God. It produces now what it produced then, the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ (Acts 2:1-47; Acts 18:8; 1 Cor.1:2).

By whom was it restored? The answer is by many, many men in various places of the world. Yes, by all those devoted people who said: "Away with the doctrines of men, the hierarchy of Rome, and the disunity in religion, and let us go back to the Bible". The Church of Christ was restored by those who came out of the maze of conflicting doctrines and by those who began to plant the pure gospel of Christ into good honest hearts (Rom. 1:16).

It has been said that Alexander Campbell restored the Church of the Lord. I know, however, of no informed historian who so teaches. Seven years before Campbell left Scotland to come to the United States in 1809, there was a congregation of the Lord's people in Alabama. Fifteen years prior to this James O'Kelley in North Carolina and Abner Jones in Vermont made the same plea. In Great Britain the Haldanes were also pleading for New Testament Christianity. Back as far as 1521 in Switzerland a man by the name of Zwingli was pleading for precisely the same thing.

The only thing it takes to become a member of Christ's Church is to do what men did in apostolic times (read Acts 2:36-47). You can become a child of God by doing the things recorded there. Why should we confuse the issue by referring to men and movements? We should humbly place our trust in the Son of God who gave us the Church and be thankful it is on earth today.

Yes, the church went into the dark ages and came out of the dark ages. How do we know? Because the word of God has never perished from the earth and contained therein is the New Testament church, the kingdom Daniel said would never cease to be (Dan. 2:44) after it was set up. From its beginning on Pentecost of 33 A.D. till the end of time it has not (nor shall it) cease to be!

J. Ramsay.

SCRIPTURE READINGS

May 7	Genesis 1:	John 1:1-18
May 14	Isaiah 40:1-11	John 1:19-34
May 21	Deutr 18:14-22	John 1:35-51
May 28	Psalms 69:1-18	John 2:

JOHN'S GOSPEL RECORD

AUTHOR: the apostle John, who was probably the disciple "whom Jesus loved" (John 19:26). He was the son of Zebedee, a fisherman of the town of Bethsaida on the shore of the Sea of Galilee. His younger brother was James and his mother's name was Salome.

DATE: uncertain, but probably late in the first century.

PURPOSE: to inspire faith in Christ Jesus as the Son of God. The key text is: **"And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book: but these are written, that you might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you might have life through His name"** (20:30,31).

POINTS: The gospel record of John is different from the other three gospels, which are called synoptic gospels. John, for example, omits the account of the birth of Jesus; His baptism and temptation in the wilderness; the events of the last supper; the suffering in the garden of Gethsemane and His ascension to heaven. His record says nothing of the healing of the demon-possessed; nor does it contain any of Jesus' parables. However, John, uniquely tells us about the marriage feast at Cana (2:1-11); the conversation with Nicodemus (3:1-15); the encounter with the woman of Samaria (ch. 4); the raising of Lazarus (ch.11); the way Jesus washed His disciples' feet (13:1-17) and

the teaching regarding the Holy Spirit (chs. 14-17). Only in John's gospel does Thomas speak (11:16; 14:5; 20:24-29); does Andrew's personality come through (1:40,41; 6:8,9; 12:22) and do we get a glimpse of Philip's character (6:5-7; 14:8,9). There are many other details unique to John too numerous to mention here.

John was one of the inner-circle of Jesus' closest friends. In Acts he is always seen as a companion of Peter. Galatians 2:9 is his only appearance in Paul's letters. John, of course, wrote not only his gospel record, but also the three epistles that bear his name and the book of Revelation. Strangely enough, Revelation is the only work in which John's name is actually found. He wrote that late on in his life while banished to the isle of Patmos in the Mediterranean. Obviously, the sole-surviving apostle was regarded at that time as a dangerous man by the Roman authorities. Personally, I believe he was spared by God to meet the challenge of one of the most insidious and destructive philosophies Christianity has ever had to face. That philosophy was Gnosticism.

To challenge the gnostic views, John emphasised the real humanity of Jesus as well as His divinity. The Gnostics taught that all matter was evil and, therefore, the Son of God could not possibly come in the flesh. John declared: **"And the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us . . ."** (1:14). The real Jesus was there at his baptism and the real Jesus was there at Calvary (1 John 5:6). Just to show how challenging Gnosticism was to the early church I give you the following statements: "Gnosticism is the most monstrous system of philosophy which the human

brain ever conceived.” “Gnosticism was the gigantic serpent which lurked by the cradle of the infant church.” “Gnosticism was pagan in origin, combining elements of western intellectualism and eastern mysticism.” “To the Gnostics, contempt for and hatred of the common man were part and parcel of their religion.” “The gnostic system was loveless to the core.” “The Gnostics regarded those who trusted in revelation as ignorant of the greater mysteries of knowledge, which came from the inner light.” “By its exclusively intellectual tendency, Gnosticism abandons the noble banner of Christian spirituality and returns to the dualism, which was the curse of the ancient world.”

THE LOGOS

Logos is the Greek term translated “Word” in the first chapter (1,14). To the Jews, a word had an independent existence and did things. The power of words can be seen throughout the O.T. scriptures. Genesis chapter 1 is a good example. There have been three manifestations of the word of God – the spoken word, the written word and the Living Word in the person of Christ Jesus Himself. Language has been defined as pictured or embodied thought, feeling and emotion. Jesus as the Word revealed perfectly the thoughts, feelings and emotions of God. As John commented: **“No man has seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him”** (1:18).

The Logos also had a Greek background. To the Greeks, the Logos was the reason of God: the principle of order under which the universe continued to exist. As William Barclay has commented: “The Logos was nothing less than the mind of God controlling the world and every man in it.” The ancient Greeks were fascinated by the idea of the Logos creating, guiding and directing everything. So John took this term, which everyone understood, and used it to get across the

message about Jesus. He is the Logos; He is the Mind of God. What a revelation to the ancient world!

JOHN THE BAPTIST

We read: **“There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. The same came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light; that all men through him might believe. He was not that Light, but was sent to bear witness to that Light . . . he confessed, I am not the Christ . . . I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness. Make straight the way of the Lord, as said the prophet Isaiah”** (1:6-8;20,23). John said of Jesus during his ministry: **“He must increase and I must decrease”** (John 3:30). And Jesus spoke thus of John: **“Verily I say unto you, Among them that are born of woman there has not risen a greater than John the Baptist: notwithstanding he that is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he”** (Matthew 11:11). John was the harbinger who came in the spirit of Elijah. He prepared the way of the Lord and helped set up the kingdom over which Jesus reigns. He died a martyr’s death, which was not uncommon for a prophet of God. His was an outstanding character.

MIRACLE AT CANA

At Cana in Galilee, Jesus turned the water into wine. This was His first recorded miracle. The word for miracle in the N.T. scriptures is the Greek term *dunamis*, which simply means “power.” A miracle is a display of supernatural power in attestation of the truth that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the Living God. One writer has put it this way: **“Miracles did not make Jesus the Son of God. They merely acted as substantiating proofs that He was what He claimed to be. I am absolutely convinced by the life He lived and the words He spoke that Jesus is the Son of God. I believe the miracles for Jesus’ sake as well as believing in Jesus for the miracles sake.”**

Today the world is full of scepticism and people no longer believe in miracles. The real problem, of course, is not with

miracles, but with the nature of God. If God is omnipotent then surely these demonstrations of power are possible. Indeed, surely they are expected.

JESUS CLEANSSES THE TEMPLE

I was speaking to a Mormon the other day and we got on to the subject of the ancient temple. We spoke about this incident of Jesus cleansing the temple because the money-lenders had made it a den of thieves. It was important that the temple of God remained pure. The point I wanted to make to my Mormon friend, who still believes in temples made of stone, was this: the temple of God today consists of living stones and is a spiritual temple (1 Corinthians 3:16; 2 Corinthians 6:16; Ephesians 2:20; 1 Peter 2:5). It too must remain pure. May God drive from us everything that would prevent this.

Ian S. Davidson,
Motherwell.

TEST YOUR

BIBLICAL KNOWLEDGE

1. How many days did it take Jonah to travel through Nineveh?
2. Where were the bones of Joseph buried?
3. What age was Sarah when she died?
4. In which city did Paul heal a man who had been lame from birth?
5. The book of Acts closes in which city?
6. Where did Miriam die?
7. How long was Isaiah stripped and barefoot as a sign against Egypt and Ethiopia?
8. Who fell out of a window while Paul was preaching?
9. Who was Paul's first co-worker?
10. Who was the father of the Edomites?

NEWS FROM THE CHURCHES

Slamannan District: The Quarterly Mutual Benefit Meeting took place at Dennyloanhead Church Meeting-house on Saturday, 4th March when the subject

discussed was "Can Christians buy Lottery Tickets as the proceeds go to good causes, charities etc. and nobody loses much? Is it evil to win money? Why?" In the chair was Bro. Peter Sneddon and the speakers were Bro. Harry McGinn and Bro. Mark Plain. As was anticipated, the discussion ranged over a wide area including making money on Stocks and Shares, bank interest and investing money with the profit motive. The next Meeting, God willing, will be at Haddington on 3rd June, when the subject will be "What are the most effective ways, nowadays, of preaching the gospel.?" The chairman will be Mark Plain, and the speakers will be Ian Davidson, Motherwell, and James Gardiner, Haddington. A most enjoyable time was spent at Dennyloanhead and we thank the sisters there for the lovely catering.

H. McGinn (Sec.).

APPEAL FROM NIGERIA

P.O. Box 159

Badagry,
Lagos State,
Nigeria.

I have just recently received five issues (May-Sept, 1994) of the "Scripture Standard" and read with interest in the August issue the letter from Bro. Assanama Uffert Akpan of the church at Iyi-enu Ogidi, Onitsha, Nigeria, stating that as a one-cup congregation they were being ostracised by the multi-cup brethren. The situation there is not different from what we too are experiencing here in Badagry. Out of about 43 congregations of the Lord's church in Lagos State, only two congregations use one cup and one loaf in the observance of the Lord's supper.

In our own case we have purchased a parcel of land and have started moulding bricks for our permanent meeting-place. The price of building materials is getting out of hand, hence we would greatly appreciate any financial support or assistance you can

give us through the columns of the "S.S." We are on our own, and like the Onitsha congregation, are ostracised by the individual cups brethren. We are for the truth, even if we are only two congregations. May God bless us as we try to serve the Lord.

Bro. Emmanuel H. Hokon.

ISRAEL

7th - 19th May, 1966

By the time you are reading this I should have received the brochures for the next trip to Israel. I am planning to lead another group and we will be going in May, 1966. Learning from experience of the past two trips, I am confident that this will be even better. We will spend seven nights in Jerusalem exploring the Old City and the surrounding towns before travelling to Galilee. In Tiberias we will stay 4 nights on the lake side, from where we will experience the flavour of Galilee at a leisurely pace. The programme for this trip has been carefully selected to preserve our past highlights and to introduce us to some new areas. With what will effectively be two extra days in Galilee, we will have more time to relax, swim and enjoy.

If you would like a brochure then contact:- David Walker, 22 Palmer Square, Great Billing, Northampton NN3 9NP. Tel.: (01604) 412509 (home) or (01604) 784519 (church office).

GHANA APPEAL

Once again we extend our thanks to the donors who have conscientiously helped our Lord's church in Ghana. Our Ghanaian brethren effectively use the funds donated in extending the church there and we find great joy in seeing the co-operation of brethren in this way even although they are thousands of miles apart geographically. The number of congregations continues to increase in number and spiritually as well.

The lack of rain has been very severe

this year and we have received a number of letters about the state of the health of our brethren in Ghana, the cocoa crops are burning daily as a result of the drought. We have therefore sent out one thousand pounds to selected areas in Ghana and instructed the brethren to use this as wisely as they can under the circumstances.

Donations should be sent to Graeme Pearson (Ghana Appeal), 13 Fairways, Dunfermline, Fife. KY12 0DU. Tel. 01383 728624.

Thank you once again for your support and encouragement, both are very much appreciated.

Bill Cook and Graeme Pearson.

THOUGHTS ON TIME

Time like an ever rolling stream,
Bears all its sons away;
They fly, forgotten as a dream
Dies at the opening day.

Viewed broadly time has three dimensions - Past, Present and Future. "Distance (in time as well as space) lends enchantment to the view." A distorted vision of the past tends to draw our eyes from the realities of the present and to fill our minds with satisfaction, for it magnifies our achievements and minimises our failures, eventually lulling us into self-satisfied complacency.

On the other hand if we realise the error of dwelling upon the past - the time which has gone beyond recall - we draw our minds forward, we find it all too easy to swing into rosy visions of the future. Very quickly we are lost in radiant views of those adventures we propose; of the deeds we intend to perform; of the sacrifices we mean to make. But, the time is not yet ripe for all these things.

We are so like the pendulum of a clock. swinging from one extreme to the opposite. We would like to stop the clock. Oh that we might realise that the past has gone for ever and the future never arrives; all we truly have is NOW! Paul writes, "Already it is time to wake out of sleep." Or as J.B. Phillips

translates, "wake up to reality!" God says "NOW, is the accepted time: NOW is the day of salvation."

If we are to adventure for the Lord, It must be NOW; If we would do a gallant deed, it must be done today; if we would sacrifice, be it treasure (sold to give to the poor); be it sinful desire (resigned unto the purifying of the soul 1 John 3:3); be it righteous freedom (not excused to avoid offending a weaker brother); it must have immediate implementation. DO IT NOW!

Paul Jones.

COMING EVENTS

ANNIVERSARY MEETING

Kentish Town, London

Our 124th Anniversary Meeting
on 7th October, 1995 at 3 p.m. & 6 p.m.

KIRKCALDY SOCIAL

Saturday, 15th April, 1995
at 3.30 p.m.

Speaker : M. Heinemeier

BUCKIE SOCIAL

Saturday, 6th May, 1995

Speaker: Jack Strachan, East Kilbride
All Welcome

REBUKE A WISE MAN

Proverbs 9:8-9 reads: "Reprove not a scorner, lest he hate thee; rebuke a wise man, and he will love thee. Give instructions to a wise man, and he will

yet be wiser; teach a just man and he will increase in learning." Although this inspired advice is directed to the rebuker, it sets forth how one may determine the character of the person who is rebuked. One who hates his rebuker is a scornful rather than a wise man. All who are rebuked classify themselves by their attitude toward the one who has rebuked them.

Christians need to learn to accept and use criticism (rebuke) properly. Each rebuke should be carefully evaluated for its worth. Upon determining the validity of a rebuke, the one rebuked should make correction, and he should love his thoughtful critic. We must not be so proud as to reject, without consideration, all censure. Our prayer should be: Help others to care enough to love them because they care. With this attitude, we can help each other to be better Christians.

1. Three (Jonah 3:2).
2. Shechem (Joshua 24:32).
3. 127 (Genesis 23:1).
4. Lystra (Acts 14:8).
5. Rome (Acts 28:4).
6. Kadesh (Numbers 20:1).
7. Three Years (Isaiah 20:3).
8. Eutychus (Acts 20:9).
9. Barnabas (Acts 13:2).
10. Esau (Genesis 36:43).

ANSWERS

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