

# *The* **SCRIPTURE STANDARD**

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

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## **CLONES, GRAFTS & TRANSPLANTS**

On the front page of most newspapers this morning we have a marvellous picture of six identical cows, black in colour with similar white patches on their foreheads and legs. The picture can only be described as awesome, I suppose, for it heralds rapid progress (or regress) in the cloning processes, and in a year or two, in spite of all strong denials and rhetoric, we will probably live to see the first cloned human being. The cows in question have been produced in Massachusetts, USA, and Dr. Robert Lanza of Advanced Cell Technology Inc., says that this success with the cows opens up the possibility of cloning human-being "spare parts" which, unlike present spare-part surgery, will never be rejected by the body, and will allow people to live 200 years, and women to give birth at 70 years of age. And so things have greatly moved on since the first ever cloning of a mammal ("Dolly" the sheep), a few tears ago in a small Scottish village called Roslin (my birthplace). It was feared that "Dolly" the sheep would age quickly, but it seems that the six cows have shown the reverse to be the case, and that cloning produces "youth-giving" cells.

I don't pretend to understand any of this but we are certainly now in the age of cell embryonic manipulation, which will be very hard to stop and impossible to control. At the moment, justification for cloning is that it may, by the production of "spare-parts", lead to an extension of the present life-span, which, I suppose, man has been trying to do for centuries.

It's difficult to know exactly when man began seriously to fight the ageing process, but I know that, in my life-time, the process has been greatly gathering speed, and has moved from false teeth and spectacles, to new hip joints, knee joints; skin grafts; replacement livers and kidneys; "pace-makers", heart by-pass surgery and even replacement heart-and-lungs.

When the Psalmist asked God to give him a new heart, or at least renew the heart within him, we can be sure that he had no idea that, one day, men would be doing that very thing, in a literal sense. And so the day might well come, with all those grafts and transplants, that man will live until he is 200 years old. But what of God? What steps has God taken to renew hearts and minds, and to extend man's lifespan (not only until a person is 200 years of age, but life everlasting)?

### **SPIRITUAL SURGERY VERSUS SPIRITUAL RE-BIRTH**

Anything man can do God can do better. Man performs medical wonders in the way of grafting, implanting and transplanting but God, in the restitution of the soul and spirit of man, prefers to start from scratch. Make a fresh start. God has not favoured a

process of periodic visits to the operating table for futile sessions of remedial or cosmetic surgery, but has arranged for a *complete re-birth*. The world is now truly "the land of beginning again". Man can start again with a clean sheet. Jesus said that such a thing was not only possible *but essential* "**Ye must be born again**" (born of water and the spirit). No doubt medics, would love to have such a *physical* possibility (of being born again) in their armoury of weapons against ill health, but even Nicodemus knew that a man cannot physically be re-born. Jesus explained, however, "**that which is born of flesh is flesh; and that which is born of spirit is spirit**" and therefore what cannot be accomplished physically, can be wrought *in the spirit* and therefore Nicodemus should "*Marvel not*" at the wonderful possibility of spiritual re-birth. Chapter 6 of Paul's epistle to the Romans explains the 'mechanics' of this re-birth and explains that man must 'die' before he can 'live', and that *in baptism* a person is buried with Christ and emerges from that watery grave to walk *in newness of life*. He (or she) has become a *new creature*. Where else can a man 'trade in' a foul and evil soul, blackened with years of sin, and be presented with a new one, shining clean, and the opportunity of a new beginning. Amazing but admirable. Nothing could be more radical. Miraculous and marvellous. And so God does not stick plasters, or poultices, on the sick and ailing souls of men, but makes them anew - "**born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but God**" (Jn. 1:13). The new birth will never be something fully understood - it is too wonderful even to contemplate, and we can but join with the apostle Paul who, on occasions, was so overcome by the profundity of God's doings that he could but utter, "**Oh the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and the knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgements and His ways past finding out!**" (Rom. 11:33).

#### DOUBLE-FUNCTION OF GOD'S WORD

Before we can have a *birth* in the natural world we require a *begettal*; seed must be sown. The rule holds good, it seems, in the spiritual world and the apostle Peter explains that those born again are "**born again not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever**" and John adds that we are also '**begotten of God**' (1Jn. 5:1). And so the seed of begettal is the inspired word of God. We find, however, that God's word is not restricted to the purpose of begettal but is more wide-ranging than that, and is also the means by which the newly-born can thrive and grow. As previously mentioned, many natural laws operate in the spiritual world, and new-born babes in the spiritual world must be weaned "**on the sincere milk of the word**". Indeed this was one of Paul's criticisms of the Christians at Corinth i.e. that he was unable to give them spiritual meat from God's word, but had to keep them on a milky diet seeing they were yet more carnal than spiritual and were "**unable to bear**" the strong meat of God's word. Again, on the same theme, Paul regretted that those to whom he wrote (in the letter to the Hebrews) *who should have been teachers*, required to be "**taught again the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk and not of strong meat.**" Thus the N.T. contains strong meat as well as milk and we must *grow to maturity* by imbibing the nourishment in God's oracles. The N.T. is not only a volume to *convict the sinner* but also to *guide the saints*.

So far we have been regarding the Church as *the family of God*, with members being born spiritually into it, becoming brothers and sisters of the same parentage, children of the same Heavenly Father, but the Church is described *in many other ways* in the N.T., and we must be careful not to mix our biblical metaphors. For instance the Church is oft referred to as a *Body* and members regarded as the limbs and organs. The

Church is also a *Kingdom* and the members are subjects of the Great King. Sometimes the Church is regarded as a massive *sheepfold* and Jesus as shepherd of the flock. Sometimes as *the Bride* of Christ; sometimes as *'the Household of God'*; sometimes as *the Temple of God*; sometimes the Lord's vineyard with members as the labourers (or stewards); sometimes as *an army* with Jesus as captain and members as soldiers; sometimes as *a school* with a Great Teacher and earnest pupils. The Church is, indeed, like a sparkling gem, cut with many glowing facets.

### THE ENGRAFTED WORD - AND SPIRITUAL HYBRIDS

Thus far we have noticed the double-edged purpose of God's word - **firstly** of convicting sinners and, **secondly**, of guiding and instructing Church members. *In the first case* it appears as if the proper employment of God's word is that it should be scattered like seed. This indeed is the description given by Jesus Himself in the parable of the sower. The incorruptible seed of the gospel is broadcast in all directions (wastefully by modern agricultural standards) but everyone must have an opportunity of hearing the good news. As the parable says, only a small percentage of seed will bear fruit and, even then, weeds will choke the progress of many. *In the second case* it seems that the word is not scattered as seed but is *engrafted upon us*. James says, "**Wherefore lay aside all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness, and receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls.**" (Chap. 1:21). The apostle Paul (in Rom. 11) also mentions the fact that propagation by grafting was quite commonplace in his day. The scattered seed finds the good ground but once the faithful identify themselves they are **engrafted with the word of God** and, as James exhorts, they should *receive the engrafted word with meekness* and it will save their souls.

On leaving school at the age of 14 years I was sent to work in a market garden and saw grafting being done many times. To the uninitiated it may come as a surprise that nearly all fruit trees are produced by grafting, as are vines, shrubs and some rhododendrons. Many fruit trees are naturally susceptible to root disease, and insect attack, and so small branches (scions) from a mature fruit tree are inserted into the stump of a tree (rootstock) which is not susceptible to root disease. Similarly with roses. Briar is strong-growing and vigorous and thus constitutes a good vehicle for receiving the graft (or bud) of the tea rose. Obviously all growth *above the graft* is tea-rose and capable of producing beautifully scented blooms - all growth below the graft is tangled root-briar (not unsightly but which steals all the sustenance from the rose and might ultimately destroy it). Anyone having a rose garden knows the problem well, and knows that constant vigilance is necessary to prevent the roses from "reverting to nature" and the briar (suckers) from strangling the beautiful blooms.

The analogy used by James is not too difficult to understand. Those 'born again' must "*receive with meekness the engrafted word*". The wild and rough nature of 'Natural Man' (strong-growing but fruitless) is the stump of rootstock upon which God grafts His incomparable word. The vigorous energies of the natural man can now be channelled through the branch of God and produce an abundance of every good Fruit (or blooms). Again, all growth stemming from below the point of the graft will be from the 'natural man', and fruitless, but all development from above the graft will be conditioned and sweetened by God's word and will be well-pleasing. All fruitbearing must sprout from the pages of God's Holy Word. "Reverting to (human) nature" is a constant danger.

Before passing from this interesting analogy used by James it is profitable to reflect upon the 'grafted hybrids' that can be produced. Hans Winkler, experimenting in 1907, grafted black nightshade on to a tomato plant. Most of the resulting plants were

predominantly black nightshade but some had shoots which had the characteristics of black nightshade on the one side and the characteristics of a tomato on the other. This phenomenon is called a 'chimera' (after the mythological monster of that name - part dragon, part goat and part lion). There were many other mythological monsters, of course, such as Pan, with part of one animal grafted onto another, and even in the scriptures such creatures are described, especially in Daniel and Revelation. If we are not careful, and meticulously guided in our beliefs by the 'engrafted word' we could easily become a 'grafted hybrid' in the religious sense. How many religious hybrids are there in the world? How many doctrinal chimeras? Neither one thing nor the other.

### GENTILES BEWARE

Jesus said, **"I am the vine and ye are the branches"**. Jesus went on to say, **"Every branch in Me that beareth not fruit He (God) taketh away: and every branch that beareth fruit, He purgeth it that it may bring more fruit."** 'Purging' a fruitful branch of a vine so that it would be even more fruitful is a highly skilled job of knowing where and how to make incisions in the branch (bleeding the vine). The converse, however, that unfruitful branches would be amputated from the vine, was equally true and is something of which we should take a careful note, especially as Gentiles. Paul refers to this (Romans 11:7-24) (and whereas he refers to an olive tree rather than a vine it makes no difference to his objective). He says that if the root is holy so are the branches and clearly he refers to the Jews. (Salvation is of the Jews and the gospel is for the Jew first and also for the Greek). But God has broken off some of the *unfruitful branches* (Jews) from this imaginary tree and **grafted in** branches of a *wild olive tree* (Gentiles). Thus the Gentiles now enjoy the fatness of the olive tree. **"But"**, Paul warns the Gentiles, **"Boast not against the branches for thou bearest not the root, but the root thee. And think not the branches were broken off solely that the Gentiles could be grafted in."** NO! it was *because of unbelief* that the natural branches (Jews) were broken off **"and if God spared not those natural branches (Jews) take heed that He spare not thee (Gentiles)"**. This, says Paul, illustrates **"the severity and the goodness of God"** - on the Jews severity but on the Gentiles, goodness. But, warns the apostle, the process *can easily be put into reverse* and the Jews **"If they abide not still in unbelief, shall be grafted back in, for God is able to graft them in again."** Furthermore, if branches from a *wild olive tree* (the Gentiles) should (*"contrary to nature"* - or sound practice) be grafted into a *good olive tree* how much more seemly and natural would it be to replace the wild olive branches (Gentiles) with the original good olive branches (Jews). And so we have warning that the situation is always under constant review, and that we Gentiles must sustain our favoured position, not by Jewish default, but by virtue of our own merits. God, the watchful Husbandman stands by with the divine secateurs in His hand, and if, we (Gentiles) fall after the same manner of unbelief and unfruitfulness as the Jews, we shall assuredly suffer a similar fate.

### CONCLUSION

Sinful man could not save himself or pull himself out of the pit. Help had to come from some external source. God sent His Own Son to save us and by the 'New Birth' allows us to start afresh. We shall not succeed in our own strength or wisdom, and so God has grafted on to our vile natures His inspired word. But we must **"receive with meekness the engrafted word which is able to save your souls."** Unserved sinners must be born again and rise from the waters of baptism to walk in newness of life. If this has already been accomplished we must, therefore, continue in well-doing and be **'fruitful in every good work'** knowing that we have **'been saved to serve'** and

knowing that **'the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine.'** We must not 'Return to nature.' The rose must not revert to briar. **"Receive with meekness the engrafted word which is able to save your souls."**

The word "Cloning", by the way, comes from the Greek *Klon* (a twig or shoot) and refers to the fact that we can easily take a cutting from a plant, or tree, and produce an exact copy of the original! And so, people have been engaged in cloning for centuries, in the realms of horticulture, and long before the public's present novel association with men tinkering with embryos and things like "Dolly" the sheep. Consequently the basic meaning of the word is "to create an exact copy of a person or thing," and, when we come to think about it, that's really what Christians are trying to do: viz. to become exact copies of the Lord and Saviour - our Great Exemplar. And, of course, Jesus was, Himself, a twig (or scion) which would sprout up from the stump of Jesse (Isa. 11:1 & Rom. 15:12) and be "the righteous branch" (Jer. 23:5). The "engrafted word" is thus the means by which we can emulate Jesus, and gradually grow "to be an exact copy" of that peerless original.

EDITOR.

## RIGHTLY HANDLING THE SCRIPTURES

(Timothy 2:15)

We have entitled this lesson as above, because the Greek word "orthomeo" which is translated in the King James' version **"rightly dividing,"** which means "cutting straight, rightly treating, rightly handling, or applying."

The Amplified New Testament puts it this way: **"Study and be eager and do your utmost to present yourself approved (tested by trial), a workman who has no cause to be ashamed correctly analysing and accurately dividing-rightly skillfully teaching the word of God."** Or as the ASV puts it **"handling aright."**

There was no written Bible for more than 2,500 years of the world's history.

After it began to be written, it was 1,600 years on being completed. The Bible, - the divine revelation from God, was written by about 40 inspired men who lived in different times, and various parts of the world.

The New Testament part of the Bible is especially for us, who are living in these last days; but the **"things written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope."**

**There are three Dispensations of religion taught in the Bible:**

1. The Patriarchal - a family religion, lasted 2,500 years.
2. The Jewish - a national religion, lasted 1,500 years.
3. The Christian religion, a world-wide, universal religion, has lasted nearly 2,000 years; The scriptures are made up of three kinds of sentences: 1. Facts to believe, 2. Commands to obey, 3. Promises to hope for.

**The Bible contains three kinds of literature: History, Law and Prophecy. The Jewish law of the Old Testament served its purpose and has been abolished. The Prophecies have been fulfilled in Christ in the New Testament. We should read the Old Testament primarily for its historical value. The primary function of the Old Testament is to produce faith in God, to prophesy of Christ and the future developments, and give the history of the beginning of all things John 14:1; Heb. 9:27; and John 5:39.**

**The Bible reveals three Kingdoms: 1. Of Nature, we enter by a fleshy birth, 2. Of Grace (the Church) by new birth John 3:5; and 3. Of Glory, We enter by a resurrection**

birth from the grave.

Under each dispensation of religion God required *faith and obedience*.

The fleshy law of Moses was a temporary law, given 430 years after God made the promise to Abraham, which served the Jewish nation as a schoolmaster, till Christ (the promised seed) and great teacher should come.

Christ, having fulfilled the law, abolished it and took it out of the way, nailing it to His cross.

### CHRIST'S COMMISSION TO THE APOSTLES

Christ, after having selected the twelve apostles, put in three and a half years training them, gave the great commission, and had them to tarry at Jerusalem until they were empowered from above, by the overwhelming baptism of the Holy Spirit. Then they began carrying out the great commission.

According to Matthew's account of the gospel, **the great commission contained three commands:** (a) To teach or make disciples of all nations, (b) Baptising them into the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and (c) teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you. Matt. 28:19,20.

We cannot please God, nor come to Him without faith. Heb. 11:6. We must not only believe in God; but in His Son Jesus Christ as well. John 14:1.

The Old Testament properly studied will lead one to believe in God. The first four books of the New Testament lead us to believe in Christ. the four books teach us one gospel. John 20:30,31. Read John 3:16. Faith comes by (reading) hearing or listening to the word of God. (Rom. 10:17). But faith alone, as some believe, will not save us, for faith without works is dead. James 2:17.

If faith alone would save; then the great commission at Matthew 28:19 would read, "**teach or disciple all nations,**" and instead of having 27 books in the New Testament, we would just have four: Matthew, Mark, Luke and John.

Acts, the 5th Book of the New Testament, shows how the apostles, after being empowered by the Holy Spirit, carried out the great commission.

The commission required more than faith alone. **It required four things:** faith, repentance, confession and baptism. The first five books of the New Testament, if earned and given heed to, will save the world from past sins, and carries out the first two parts of the great commission.

If when a person is saved from past sins, God makes them sin-proof by some so-called sanctification, as some teach, we would only have the first five books of the New Testament.

But since there is a third part to the great commission: "**teaching them to observe all things which I have commanded you,**" we have other books or epistles in the New Testament: Romans to Jude.

In order to make the Bible complete, we have in the New Testament **one book of prophecy**, called Revelation, foretelling the history of the Church or Kingdom of Christ.

It tells of its battles, conflicts and final victory.

We should not go back to the Old Testament to learn of Christ's duties, nor to learn what a sinner should do to be saved.

We should read the Old Testament principally for its historical value, as its law has served its purpose and been abolished, and its prophecies have been fulfilled in Christ, as we learn from the New Testament.

### THINGS TO BEAR IN MIND

As a sinner we should not go to the epistles or Revelation to learn the first

principles of religion, neither should a Christian go to Matthew, Mark, Luke and John or Acts, to learn their duties.

When reading the Bible we should ask ourselves the following questions; Who is talking? To whom are they talking? And what is the condition of the person or persons spoken to? Is it addressed to Patriarch, a Jew, or a Christian? Is it addressed to a saint or a sinner? Is it addressed to an inspired apostle, or to an uninspired person?

Was it under the first commission to the Jews, or in the the time of the great commission of the apostles under the gospel dispensation?

The Bible contains all of God's messages to man, for all ages to come. It is the code of laws by which we will be judged. John 12:48.

We should fear God, and tremble at His living word.

There is danger of PERVERTING the Gospel, WRESTING the SCRIPTURES, or PREACHING A DIFFERENT GOSPEL, which has caused all of the religious confusion in the world.

At Matt. 22:29 Christ said, "**Ye do err, not knowing the Scriptures nor the power of God.**"

Paul says anyone PERVERTING THE GOSPEL, WRESTING the Scriptures, or preaching ANOTHER GOSPEL is anathema, or accursed, whether he be man or angel. (Gal. 1:9).

Now let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: "**Fear God and keep His commandments, for this is the whole duty of man.**" Eccles. 12:13.

G. WHITE.

## ELIJAH

One of the greatest of all the prophets who ever lived was Elijah. He is mentioned some thirty times in the New Testament, more than any other prophet. At the transfiguration of Jesus in Matthew 17 it was Moses and Elijah who appeared to Christ. Some have suggested that Moses was there because he was the great law-giver; Elijah was there because he was the greatest prophet. The Jews of Jesus' day considered him the greatest of all the prophets.

There was a belief, based on Old Testament prophecy, that Elijah would come to life again. This belief was foremost in the minds of many Jews. Some thought John the Baptist was Elijah. Others thought Jesus was Elijah. As Jesus died on the cross he cried out, Matthew 24:47ff says some thought he was calling Elijah. James and John wanted to call down fire from heaven as Elijah did and consume a village that refused to accept Christ. Jesus proclaimed that John the Baptist was the Elijah who was coming. John the Baptist came in spirit and the power of Elijah.

There is no doubt from the numerous New Testament passages that Elijah had a tremendous influence on the Jews of Jesus' day. He was the greatest of all the prophets. What was this great prophet like? What can we learn from Elijah that will help us in our lives for Christ? How is he an example to us? Let us notice some of the characteristics of this great man.

### OVERCAME DISCOURAGEMENT

Elijah was *a man who overcame discouragement*. All of us face disappointments and discouragements in this life. It is important to learn to overcome these set-backs and go on with life. Often, many are overcome with their disappointments and cannot deal with them. Elijah is an example to us of a man who overcame discouragement.

After his confrontation with the prophets of Baal (in 1 Kings 18) Elijah felt he had

won a great victory over idolatry. He had challenged Baal face to face and won a great victory. Perhaps he envisioned Israel turning to God once again. Instead the confrontation had little or no effect on the people, Elijah was forced to flee as Jezebel was angered, because he had killed her prophets, and sought his life. He runs miles away and ends up on Mt. Sinai, discouraged and disappointed. In 1 Kings 19:9 God asks him, **"What are you doing here Elijah?"** Verse 10 captures his feelings, his disappointments, as he answers God, **"I have been very jealous for the Lord, the God of Hosts; for the people of Israel have forsaken Thy covenant, thrown down Thy altars, and slain Thy prophets with the sword; and I, even I only, am left; and they seek my life, to take it away."** He worked hard for the Lord trying to get people to repent. The result was no one cared; he was the only one who cared and everyone was seeking his life.

All of us have felt like Elijah. We have been jealous for God, worked hard, and no one seemed to care. All of us have given our very best effort only to feel like a failure. How do you overcome the discouragement? How did Elijah overcome his discouragement?

**First**, Elijah got away by himself with God. God appeared to him in an earthquake, a fire, and a **"still small voice."** His spirits revived. This is essential in overcoming disappointment. I do not mean to suggest we need go to a mountain and wait for God to appear to us. But, essentially what Elijah did was to spend some time *alone with God*. When discouragement comes our way it is essential that we take some time to be by ourselves and spend a moment *with God* in prayer, study and meditation. Our spirits will revive!

**Secondly**, notice in verses 15-17 of 1 Kings 19 God sends Elijah *away from the mountain with work to do*. He is to go and anoint Jehu king and Elisha prophet. The tendency for most after working so hard and being disappointed is to quit. You don't want to get involved because you might be disappointed again. If others do not appreciate your efforts why make them. God's formula for Elijah was to get busy again. The best way to overcome discouragement is to get involved in the Lord's work again, with more zeal and more effort than before. Idleness feeds discouragement; involvement overcomes it.

**Lastly**, God tells Elijah that he is not alone. In verse 18 He tells him there are 7,000 in Israel who had not bowed the knee to Baal. It is important to remember when we are down that others do care. We think we have worked hard, given our best, and no one cares but us. But the truth is there are many with a fervent love for the Lord. There are many who will work side by side with us in the Master's service. We need to draw encouragement from others who are jealous for the Lord.

It is good sound advice for overcoming discouragement; spend time alone with God, get involved in His work again, and realise there are others who care.

#### MAN OF PRAYER

A second lesson to be learned from the life of Elijah is that he was *a man of prayer*. James writes in James 5:17, **"Elijah was a man of like nature with ourselves and he prayed fervently that it might not rain, and for three years and six months it did not rain on the earth."** James uses Elijah as an example of the power of prayer. He says when one is sick he should call for the elders, and they should pray for the sick person. The prayer of a righteous man, James proclaims, has great power in its effects. Elijah is an example of a righteous man who prayed and the effects of his prayer.

The most important thing James says about Elijah is that he was *"a man of like nature with ourselves."* Elijah was a man. Elijah was of the same nature as you and I.



He was not an angel; he was not a superhuman being; he was a man. This is what a man accomplished through prayer. Often, we think someone has a great prayer-life because he is so close to God. We think we can never have that kind of prayer-life, that kind of closeness. We have a tendency to exalt the man and make him something special.

James reminds us of the truth. Our relationship with God is developed through prayer. Anyone can do it. Elijah was not special. He was a man of like nature as us. Our prayers can be as powerful as his *if* we develop a powerful prayer-life. *If* we dedicate ourselves to God and do His will our prayer will be a prayer of power. Elijah was a man of prayer; he is an example to us.

### MAN OF BOLDNESS

Finally, Elijah was *a man of boldness*. Boldness was a characteristic of the apostles in the early Church (Acts 4:13). It is a characteristic that is lacking to some extent in the Church today. Boldness is what made the early Church grow. Boldness is needed in the Church today if we are to grow.

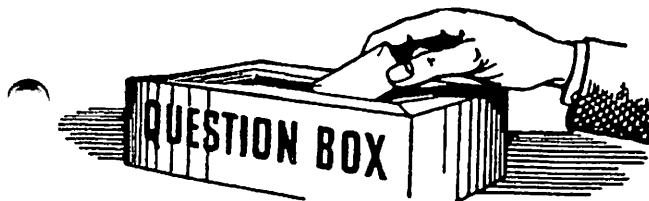
The boldness of Elijah is readily seen in the contest on Mt. Carmel. He was greatly outnumbered, 450 prophets of Baal to one. His boldness is seen in the way he challenged the prophets when Baal did not answer. "Cry louder!" he urged them. His boldness grew out of his faith in God. We need boldness and the boldness must come from a deeper faith in God. Elijah's boldness is seen in the sacrifice he offers. He soaked the offering with water so that no ordinary fire could start it, then he called upon God. His boldness is seen as he puts to death the prophets of Baal, an act that caused Jezebel to seek his life. Elijah was a bold man.

The Christian life is not an easy life. We often must take a stand against the demands of community, society, the movies, TV programmes, etc., in our homes our friends, and even our brethren. The call for courage comes from many different sources. Let us like Elijah deepen our faith and live with boldness that our calling demands.

### CONCLUSION

Elijah stands as an example to all Christians. The greatest of prophets whose righteous life led him to heaven without seeing death. He was a man who overcame discouragement; he was a man of prayer; and he was a man of boldness. Let us join in imitating him.

C. YOUNG.




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Conducted by  
Frank Worgan

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A question has been asked concerning the sin which David committed in ordering the census of the Children of Israel. The questioner invites us to look at the problem in these words:

*"In 2nd Samuel 24:1 it says that God moved David to number Israel. Yet in verse 10 David says he had sinned by doing it."*

The problem is further complicated when we look at the account of this event found in *1st Chronicles 21:1*, which states that *"Satan stood up against Israel and incited David to number Israel"*, whilst in verse 8, David's confession of sin is again recorded.

***"I have sinned greatly in that I have done this thing."***

If we examine the two descriptions of this tragic event, I think it becomes obvious that they are separate accounts, because they vary in several important respects. In other words, the one account is not a copy - i.e., is not taken - from the other. For example, 2nd Samuel tells us that those making the count were instructed by David to *'number Israel and Judah'* and to go *'from Dan to Beersheba,'* that is, from North to South.

In 1st Chronicles the order is reversed: *'Go number Israel from Beersheba to Dan,'* that is, South to North. There are also other slight but significant variations in the accounts which we cannot discuss here.

Now, there was nothing essentially wrong in the taking of a census. Numbers ch.1 also contains an account of a census, but this was taken at the command of God Himself, after the Children of Israel had left Egypt and become His people, at Sinai.

We see also, in Exodus 30:12-16, that there was an important religious significance to the census which God later allowed Moses to take. This was to be the formal enrolment of all those who were included in the covenant that God had made with the Israelites, and it involved the payment of half a shekel, as a token of the ransom of each soul reckoned to be of Israel.

Those enrolled were regarded as being in a covenant-relationship with God.

But the census we are to think about this month was different. Joab, a relative of David and the Commander in Chief of his army at this time was instructed to take the census, assisted by his army officers. This suggests that its purpose was not civic or religious, but military.

Commanded by David himself, it was designed to establish - and, no doubt, to proclaim - the military strength of his kingdom.

#### **A SERIOUS ERROR!**

Both accounts reveal that Joab certainly realised that David's plan was not a good idea and he warned against it. However, the king insisted on being obeyed and the census was taken.

The results recorded are different in the two accounts. 2nd Samuel 24 gives the total count as 1,300,000 fighting men. 1st Chronicles 21 states that the total was 1,570,000, but adds that Joab deliberately omitted the tribes of Levi and Benjamin, because he was opposed to the census. There is a reference to this deliberate omission in 1st Chronicles 27:24, which records that Joab *'began to number, but did not finish'*, and adds that the numbers were not recorded in the official chronicles of the reign of King David.

#### **WHO WAS RESPONSIBLE?**

**So, back to the question(s)!** Who was responsible for the numbering of the tribes?

Did God tell David to take the census? Was it *David's* own idea? Or was it simply that *'Satan'* tempted David?

Well, there is a very good rule of biblical interpretation, which we should bear in mind when we face problems such as this. It says that we should *always use a plain passage to explain a difficult one.* The plain passage, in this case, is 1st Chron. 21:1, which states that *'Satan stood up against Israel and incited David to number Israel.'*

You will notice that I have used inverted commas with the name *'satan'*, because the Hebrew word *'satanas'* from which the name is derived has the general meaning of *'adversary'*, or *'accuser'*. We have an example of this use of the word a little earlier, when, in 2nd Samuel 19:22, David says to the sons Zeruiah, *"What have I to do with you, ye sons of Zeruiah, that ye should this day be an adversary unto me?"*

The word David uses means '*a satan*'. He is not thinking of that evil being who is variously described as 'Lucifer' or 'the Devil'. He is using the word in the general and ordinarily accepted sense of '*opponent*', declaring that the sons of Zeruah had become his opponents. In fact, whenever a verse refers to the 'Devil' under the designation 'Satan', the definite article is always used. Strictly speaking, 'Satan' is not a proper name. He is described as '*the Satan*', and if the translators of the Old Testament had consistently followed this rule we should have no difficulty recognising to whom is referred.

Now, since David acknowledged that he had sinned in ordering the census, we cannot possibly believe that *God* led him to do something sinful and then imposed a terrible punishment on the entire nation **2nd Sam. 24:15**. God could never behave in a manner that would patently be unjust. Furthermore, **James 1:13** states clearly that God does not tempt anyone to do evil.

### THE SOLUTION

The answer to the puzzle appears to me to be that God was, indeed, angry with David, because He saw that the King no longer showed the whole-hearted dependence on Him, which he had demonstrated earlier in his life. After his successes as King, David had become proud, *and the Adversary, (the Satan), was quick to recognise this* and attacked him at this very weak spot.

The command to number Israel was rightly recognised by Joab as an act arising from David's pride. He was no longer trusting in the strength of God, but in his own military might.

After all, a potential army of 2,870,000 fighting men constituted a very powerful force, demanding the respect of neighbouring rulers, and there is no doubt that David was proud of his strength.

But, whilst '*the Satan*' may be *responsible for* temptation, Man becomes responsible for his own *response to* temptation, and although David's sin was great, what must be said to his credit is that although he was far from perfect he was always quick to admit his sins and to seek the forgiveness of God.

In the matter of this injudicious census, his conscience smote him and he said to God, "*Was it not I who gave command to number the people? it is I who have sinned and done very wickedly*" **1st Chron. 21:17**.

This, I suggest, clearly solves our problem and answers this month's question!

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

Email: frank@fworgan.freemove.co.uk)

## IN EVERYTHING GIVE THANKS

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

Jesus set the example of thankfulness (Matt. 11:25; John 11:41), the heavenly host engaged in it continually (Rev. 4:9; 7:12), the apostles and early Christians were thankful (Acts 27:35; 1 Cor. 1:4); why then should we not do that which they have

done? Psalm 136 speaks of such thankfulness. **"O GIVE thanks unto the Lord; for He is good; for His mercy endureth for ever, O give thanks unto the God of gods; for His mercy endureth for ever. O give thanks to the Lord of lords: for His mercy endureth for ever"** (vs1-3). The remaining twenty-three verses continue giving thanks unto God for His many great works and blessings.

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

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

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

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

G. M. ROBINSON.

## SCRIPTURE READINGS

July 2	Psalm 62	Romans 2:1-16
July 9	Ezekiel 36:16-38	Romans 2:17-29
July 16	Psalm 51	Romans 3:1-18
July 23	Genesis 12:1-9	Romans 3:19-31
July 30	Genesis 17	Romans 4

## THE MORALIST

"We know that there was another side to the pagan world of the century than that which Paul has portrayed in the first chapter. What about a man like Paul's illustrious contemporary Seneca,

the Stoic moralist, the tutor of Nero?" (F.F. Bruce). I, personally, think about Cicero (106-43 B.C.), whose letters I have always enjoyed reading. Alexander Campbell once said of him: "He is the greatest man pagan Rome ever produced . . . To most learned of her scholars, the most profound of her reasoners, the most eloquent of her orators, the most accomplished of her citizens. He was an honour to human nature". How will such men be judged, if they had no knowledge of God's revelation? Paul says that the moral law within or the law of conscience, the distinction between right and wrong, engraved on their

hearts, is His criterion (2:14-16). "Whether the will of God is known by the law of Moses or by the voice of conscience, knowledge of His will is not enough; it is the doing of His will that counts" (F.F. Bruce).

God knows the hearts of all men. Dear reader, He knows you and He knows me to perfection. He, of course, knows all our secrets (2:16). Nothing can be hidden from the Almighty. **"Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in His sight: but all things are naked and open unto the eyes of Him with whom we have to do"** (Hebrew 4:13).

### THE JEW

The word "Jew" means "praise" and the true Jew is the man whose life is praiseworthy by God's standards. **"But he is a Jew, who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God"** (2:29). One of the great tragedies of the Jewish people is that they did not live up to their responsibilities. Yes, they were given the Law of God, but they often broke it. It got to the stage that, as Paul wrote, **"the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you"** (2:24). (This is actually a quotation from Isaiah 52:5 and should be read in context.) They thought that circumcision was all-important, but **"circumcision has value if you observe the law, but if you break the law, you have become as though you had not been circumcised"** (2:25, N.I.V.).

Two good questions are these: **"What advantage then has the Jew? Or what profit is there of circumcision?"** (3:1). (On reflection, I think it is virtually one and the same question.) Paul's response is: **"Much in every way! First of all, they have been entrusted with the very words of God"** (3:2, N.I.V.). Here was a high honour indeed, but, sadly, they had not proved faithful to this trust. Some even

went on to argue that their faithlessness enhanced God's faithfulness; their unrighteousness established His righteousness. Why then should He find fault with me? (3:7). What foolishness! And the objector does not stop there, as we can see by reading on.

### JEW AND GENTILE GUILTY

The conclusion is clear: **"Jews and Gentiles alike are all under sin"** (3:9). Paul then gives us a catena of Old Testament quotations to prove his point. He mainly refers to the Psalms. What is sin? Sin is rebellion against God; sin is the failure to be what we were meant to be; sin is unrighteousness; sin is godlessness; sin is disobedience; sin is lawlessness; sin is selfishness; etc. To Paul, sin is a very real power that has enslaved men and women to Satan. "The flesh", which is human nature apart from God, is the bridgehead for the invasion of sin. Paul, for example, in his letter to the Galatians, compares the work of the flesh and the fruit of the Spirit (5:19-23). (An analysis of all the terms in this passage in the original Greek is a worthwhile exercise.) Sin is THE problem in the world. It produces death - spiritual, physical, eternal. What is death? Death is separation. On the day that Adam and Eve ate of the forbidden fruit they died, as God had warned them (Genesis 3:3). They lost their union with God. Things were never the same again. In fact, they were put out of the garden lest they did eat of the tree of life and live for ever (Genesis 3:22-24). Paradise was lost. But thanks be to God the story did not end there.

### JUSTIFICATION THROUGH FAITH

The Law diagnosed the disease (sin), but Jesus provided the remedy - Himself. Justification is now through faith in Him. But what is justification? In Greek the word translated "to justify" is *dikaion*. Note the ending -oun. "Greek verbs which end in -oun do not mean to make a man something: they mean to

reckon, account, treat a man as something; and to say that God justifies the ungodly is to say that God treats the sinner as if he had been a good man . . . In forgiveness we discover that, if we return to God, we return not to an avenging king, not to an offended judge, but to a loving father who treats his erring child with all the love that by rights should only go to a good man. In forgiveness we learn the amazing truth that, sinners, as we are, God still loves us as if we had been altogether good" (William Barclay).

What constitutes faith in Jesus? It involves absolute trust in Him and absolute obedience to Him. It means being sold out to Him, lock, stock and barrel. It entails our saying; "He is my everything? He is my all! "faith in Jesus recognises that HE is the only Saviour and that there is none other in heaven or on earth besides Him. To believe Jesus is to trust, honour and obey Him; to commit one's whole life to Him; to have that full confidence that what He has promised He will do. Faith, as one commentator has said, "is the reaching out of the inner man to embrace the Son of God so fully and completely as to lose one's own personality in identification with Him". This is the faith that justifies, sanctifies and saves.

#### ABRAHAM

To illustrate faith, Paul gives us the great example of Abraham - the father of the faithful. Abraham, of course, lived long before the giving of the Law. "It was not through law that Abraham and his offspring received the promise that he would be heir of the word, but through the righteousness that comes by faith" (4:13, N.I.V.).

The more I study this man, the more I am impressed. Please carefully read the following words: "And being not weak in faith, he considered not his own body now dead, when he was about a hundred years old, neither yet the deadness of Sarah's womb: he

staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God; and being fully persuaded that, what HE had promised, He was able also to perform" (4:19-21). Our faith should be that of Abraham. In fact, it should be stronger because we live on the other side of the cross; possess the complete and perfect revelation of God; and enjoy greater promises. Why then do so many lose faith and give up? Personally, I cannot understand it. I resolved a long time ago that I was staying the course with Jesus. All the sceptics, rationalists and unbelievers in the world are never going to make me lose my faith in my God. I have to endure their comments every week in the media. Sometimes their pontifications leave me breathless. They speak as if they know everything, but, in reality, they know nothing. Their wisdom is the wisdom of this passing age. It is foolishness to God. I only wish it were the same to all mankind everywhere. True wisdom is, of course, found in Jesus. "May your spiritual experience become richer as you see more and more fully God's great secret, Christ Himself! For it is in Him, and in Him alone, that men will find all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge" (Colossians 2:2-3, Phillips).

IAN S. DAVIDSON,  
Motherwell.

#### TEST YOUR BIBLICAL KNOWLEDGE

1. He cursed and cast stones at David.
2. Moses died on this mountain.
3. Samson carried away the gates of this city.
4. Jacob's name was changed to Israel at this ford.
5. This is a book of tears.
6. He was the captain of Saul's army.
7. Apphia and Archippus are mentioned in this letter.

8. The only one mentioned in the Bible was in Ephesus.
9. Here Paul said farewell to the elders of Ephesus.
10. Who was Jesus's first disciple?

## NEWS FROM THE CHURCHES

**Slamannan District:** The Mutual Benefit Meeting of the Slamannan District was held at Haddington, on the 6th May, when the question of how we could change the format and procedure of our Mutual Benefit Meetings to encourage a wider attendance was discussed by a goodly number and, as usual, many interesting points were raised and considered. Brother Jimmy Grant was in the chair, and the speakers were Graeme Scobbie and Harry McGinn. Our next meeting in September (DV) will discuss the question of "Section 28 - Keep or repeal" (homosexuality) when the speakers will be Ian Davidson, Motherwell, and Andrew McGinn, New Cumnock, and in the chair will be John Kneller. Grateful thanks are due to the sisters in Haddington for the excellent refreshments.

HARRY MCGINN (Sec.)

**Kentish Town, London:** The church here rejoices to announce the baptism of Vera Knock. We hope and pray that our new sister will be a great asset to the church and a faithful servant of our Lord Jesus Christ.

DOROTHY PROUD, (Sec.)

**Stretford, Manchester:** Brethren rejoice with us over the Baptism of Phiwayinkosi E. Gininza (from Swaziland), at Hindley on Tuesday April the 18th 2000. Brother Raymond Nathan conducted the meeting and Brother David Tennant (from Jamaica) immersed Phiwa into the Christ.

Phiwa has been brought up by his

family to love the Lord Jesus and had strong faith in God. David and Phiwa are fellow-students doing a one year crash-course at Manchester University. They became friends and David studied with him most evenings teaching Phiwa the way of the Lord more perfectly. When Phiwa goes back to Swaziland he will need grace and wisdom to advise his family of his conversion and to guide them into way of the Lord, particularly because they are prominent members in the denomination to which Phiwa belonged. We know of no churches of Christ in Phiwa's hometown of Mbabane, Swaziland. In that sense he will be isolated, but the Lord will be with him. He is studying the scriptures earnestly so that when he returns he could bring more to the Lord and start a church there. Do pray for him. Be encouraged to talk of the way of the Lord to your acquaintances, by David's example.

We are again very grateful for Hindley's generous hospitality in hosting the meeting.

ALLAN ASHURST.

## COMING EVENTS

### PETERHEAD

**Gospel Campaign assisted by  
Harding Students**

Dates: 18th to 25th June

*(Inclus., but no meeting on Friday 23rd)*

Times: Sunday 18th - 6 pm

Weekdays - 7pm

Sunday 25th - 6pm

*Speaker: Bert Richie (Coleraine) D.V.*

### BUCKIE

**Gospel Campaign with  
Harding Students**

Tuesday, 26th May to Sunday 8th June

**First Week:**

*Children's Meetings -*

Tues, Wed, Thurs, Fri, at 7 pm

**Second Week:**

*Gospel Preaching -*

Mon, Tues, Wed, Thurs, with

Harding Chorus at 7 pm  
**Sunday Gospel at 6 pm**  
*Speaker at these meetings,*  
*Bro. J. Nisbet.*

**CHURCH AT PETERHEAD**  
**Special Weekend**

Dates/Times: Saturday, 16th September,  
 7.00 p.m.

Sunday, 17th September, 10.00 a.m.,  
 11.00 a.m., 6.00 p.m.

*Speaker: Andy Scott (Kirkcaldy) D.V.*

**Gospel Mission**

Dates/Times: Wednesday, 15th to  
 Sunday 19th November

Wednesday to Saturday, 7.00 p.m.

Sunday, 10.00 a.m., 11.00 a.m.,  
 6.00 p.m.

*Speaker: Frank Worgan D.V.*

**ANNIVERSARY MEETING**  
**Kentish Town, London**

To be held October 7th at 3.00 p.m.

Tea at 4.45 p.m. and

Evening Meeting at 6.30 p.m.

*Speaker: John Kneller, Tranent.*

**VISIT THE HOLY LAND**

17-27th MAY, 2001

*For a brochure giving details of the*

*11 day trip - Contact:*

David Walker

22 Palmer Square, Great Billing,

Northampton NN3 9NP.  
 or Tel: 01604 412509

**THANKS**

Jimmy and Elsie Sinclair would like to thank everyone for their cards and phone calls during Jimmy's recent illness. He is returning to hospital every few weeks for treatment but is keeping well and attending all the services of the Church. Please continue to remember him in your prayers.

They also celebrated their Diamond Wedding on the 22nd of March with family and friends. They are very thankful to God for His many blessings during their long life together and again thank everyone for their cards and good wishes for the future.

1. Shimei (2 Samuel 16:5-6).
2. Nebo (Deuteronomy 34:1).
3. Gaza (Judges 16:1-3).
4. Jabok (Genesis 32:22-28).
5. Lamentations.
6. Abner (1 Samuel 14:50).
7. Philemon.
8. Theatre (Acts 19:29).
9. Miletus (Acts 20:17).
10. Andrew (John 1:40).

**ANSWERS**

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