

The SCRIPTURE STANDARD

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

VOL.53 No.11

NOVEMBER 1985

THE LORD BE PRAISED

Do you ever have the feeling that, as individuals, and as congregations, we fall far short in our praise of God? The entire O.T. reverberates with praises to God, from the Genesis onwards, and in this the Jews were particularly enthusiastic. Throughout the book of Psalms, even in its more sombre parts, bursts of praise and acclamation to God cannot be subdued. The entire theme of the Psalmist is "Praise to God" not only with the lips, but with the harp, trumpet, timbrel, cymbals, and in the dance. "Praise ye the Lord. Praise the Lord, O my soul. While I live will I praise the Lord: I will sing praises unto my God while I have any being." (Ps. 146:2). The Psalmist calls upon Jerusalem and Zion to praise the Lord (even the poor and needy); and gradually widens the scope of his call until he includes all the world. Then in the climax of the final chapters of the Psalms he calls upon the angels to praise the Lord, and the sun; and the moon; and "all ye stars of light"; the heavens; and the waters that be above the heavens; he calls upon the dragons and all creatures of the deeps; fire; and hail; snow; and vapours; stormy wind; mountains and all hills; fruitful trees and cedars; beasts and all cattle; creeping things and flying fowl; kings of the earth and all people; princes and all judges of the earth; both young men, and maidens; old men and children — "Let them praise the name of the Lord; for His name alone is excellent; His glory is above the earth and heaven. Praise ye the Lord" (Ps 148,149). Can we really imagine the extent of this man's enthusiasm to praise God? Do we, in any sense, share that enthusiasm? "While I live", proclaims the Psalmist, "I will praise the Lord". Is that how we feel? Do we ever get as excited about it as David? It is said that if our religion lacks that ecstatic desire to praise God, then our religion is dead. Is God's praise a dominant note of ours?

God is worthy of All Our Praise

In Acts 2 we read that the early church continued steadfastly in the *apostles doctrine* and *fellowship*, and in *breaking of bread*, and in *prayers* but there is no mention of praise. This is because praise was present in all the activities of the early saints and, in fact, permeated their entire lives. In fact we read (a few verses later) that the early church not only continued in all these things (apostles doctrine etc) but they had many things common, selling possessions as necessary, and "did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart, PRAISING GOD and having favour with all the people." (Acts 2:42-47). And so the early church were addicted to praising God; not just in song but in general acclamation. W.E. Vine tells us that 'praise' can be expressed by about four or five different Greek words. *Aineo* means "to speak in praise of" and is always used of praise to God (a) by angels (Luke 2:13) or (b) by men

(Luke 19:37; Acts 2:20; Rom. 15:11). *Humneo* denotes to sing, laud, sing to the praise of (Acts 16:25; Heb. 2:12; Matt. 26:30). Singing of paschal hymns called by Jews 'The Great Hallal' (Mark 14:26). *Psallo* means, primarily, to twitch or twang (as a bowstring) in the Septuagint and in the N.T. denotes to sing a hymn (Jas. 5:13). *Exomologeō* means to praise and confess God's name (Rom. 15:9).

Surely God is worthy of all our adoration, glory and praise. No other religion has such a place for praise for no other religion has such a God. Our God is the only true and living God — the God of creation; the God who sustains the world in its place. Those who "commune with nature" and believe that one is nearest to God in a garden, can hardly fail to be constantly praising God for His creative powers and the breathtaking beauty of the rose or the snowdrop. Those who know God even better, praise Him for His other marvellous attributes — His holiness, His righteousness, His mercy, His faithfulness, His kindness. As men sit eating their daily bread, some are disposed to recognise the bountiful hand of God and to thank Him for his great providence and for all the temporal blessings which fall upon the just and the unjust. Others recognise that many acts of deliverance, personal and national, have been supervised by God and so are prepared to praise Him from such deliverances; and from danger and catastrophe. Still others observe the great blessings God sent into the world in the person of his Son, and never cease to thank God for the Great Deliverer and for God's great work in man's redemption.

Praise the God of all Creation,
 Praise the Father's boundless love;
 Praise the Lamb, our Expiation,
 Priest and King, enthroned above;
 Praise the Fountain of Salvation,
 Him by whom our spirits live;
 Undivided adoration
 To the Great Jehovah give.

Praise and Emotion

Occasionally, on T.V., we see documentary films of what goes on in other church buildings; in the form of worship, and recently we saw some of Baptist Churches in the 'Bible Belt' of America. Buxom coloured ladies, (evidently highly-trained singers), backed by immaculate rows of supporting choristers all rigged out in natty uniforms, manage to wind themselves up, and the onlookers, into great paroxysms of rapture with their songs and music, and then subside, at the end of the performance, amid tears and sweat, into complete exhaustion. I thought at the time, and since, that if that represented 'praising God' then we here in Haddington, fall very far short of it. Even our West Indian friends, in London, become quite animated in their meetings with guitars, tambourines and dancing down the aisles. Many religious groups seem to emphasise this active display of emotions in their worship to the detriment of other things, such as the study of God's Word. We, on the other hand, perhaps emphasise Bible Study to the detriment of an enthusiastic pursuit of 'Praising God'. The British are rather reserved (The Scots moreso) and there are many brethren I could not picture banging on a tambourine or dancing up and down the church building. However at the same time it must be said that sometimes, to hear us sing, a stranger might never guess that we were singing on the most glorious theme in the world. Given that we are not an extrovert people, our singing and praise oftens seems to lack lustre and to want enthusiasm. This is a generalisation of course, and there are exceptions I know, but some brethren may agree that our praise seems to lack energy and zest. The psalms sung by the Free Kirk are doleful dirges, while in some other denominations the hymns can sometimes be described as 'frothy' childish 'jingles'. Surely hymns need not be doleful to be reverent, nor need they be infantile to be

bright. The quality of hymns and hymn-tunes should match the purpose; and the purpose could not be more important — the praise of God. Other groups, believing the purpose to be so weighty, take the view that such a matter can not be left to amateurs and so arrange for professional musicians and singers to be hired, and that, like our Bible-Belt friends, accomplished choirs should be formed. Occasionally we see advertisements in the press offering a fair stipend to a needed soprano or baritone in one of the local influential places of worship. I can never quite comprehend the mentality of those who reply to such adverts, and offer to sing praises to God, in the choir, for a certain sum per annum. I know a church organist who will quickly move from one church to another for a few pounds more on the salary. How does God react to all this, I wonder? Organists and Choirs, singing and playing their hearts out (for so much per year). Should we be paid for praising God? Should we need to be paid for doing *any of the work* in the Lord's vineyard? Can we imagine what God feels about this type of praise?

Praise in the New Testament

Almost every religious body agrees that God can, and should, be praised with the aid of music but are not agreed whether it should be vocal or instrumental, or both. The New Testament never seems to mention *instrumental music* at all, but always refers to hymns and psalms and the singing of them. After all, hymns and psalms mean very little played on mechanical instruments. Here are some of such references in the N.T. (1) "And when they had *sung a hymn* they went out into the mount of Olives" (Matt.26:30). (2) "But about midnight Paul and Silas were praying and *singing hymns* unto God" (Acts 16:25). (3) "Therefore will I give praise unto thee among the Gentiles, and I will *sing* with the understanding also" (1 Cor. 14:15). (5) "Speaking one to another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, *singing* and making melody *with your heart* to the Lord". (Eph 5:19). (6) "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly; in all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, *singing* with grace in your hearts unto God" (Col. 3:16). (7) "In the midst of the congregation will I *sing* thy praise" (Heb. 2:12). (8) "Through him then, let us offer up a sacrifice of praise to God continually that is, *the fruit of lips* which make confession to His name" (Heb. 13:15). (9) "Is any among you suffering? Let him pray. Is any cheerful? Let him *sing praise*". (Jas. 5:13). From these examples we see that mechanical music is not mentioned at all but that we have many invitations and exhortations to *sing* God's praises making melody with the harp (sorry, *heart*). The sacrifice of praise is to be the *fruit of our lips*, and when we sing we should sing with *the spirit* and with *the understanding*. Thus we should not sing hymns with words which are unscriptural or words, the meaning of which, we do not understand. We should also sing with the spirit, the proper frame of mind and appropriate interest and gusto. Is it possible that sometimes our singing is rather mechanical and our thoughts elsewhere? Does our bursting urge to praise God, show? It has been said that the Cavaliers trembled when they heard Cromwell's Ironsides singing their psalms. Would the powers of darkness tremble when they hear us singing our hymns on a Sunday morning?

A Lifetime of praise

Praise is not, of course, confined to singing hymns but is, or should be the keynote of our lives. Paul urged the disciples at Philippi to "Be filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God." We must *do all* to the praise of God. Some say it is our duty to praise God, but surely it is very much more — it is an honour and a privilege. And the true servant of God has not perfected God's praise until he can still praise not only in days of sunshine, but in times of great sadness and adversity. think of the dreadful blows dealt out to God's

servant Job. Tragedy and catastrophe brought about his complete ruin but yet Job, in great physical pain, could still blurt out the words, The Lord gave, and the Lord taketh away. Blessed be the name of the Lord."

May it be that we shall try to capture such a spirit. May it be that we shall try to emulate the zeal of the Psalmist. He seemed to believe that if he failed to praise God the very stones would praise God in his stead. "Praise the Lord, O my soul. While I live I will praise the lord". Do we fall far short in our praise of God. As individuals and as congregations? Let's think about it.

Sing praise to God, who reigns above,
The God of all creation,
The God of power, the God of love,
The God of our Salvation!
With healing balm my soul He fills,
And every faithless murmur stills:
To God all praise and glory!

EDITOR

THE NEW TESTAMENT TEXT

Foreword

On the 21st October last year I delivered an address, which I titled "Unjust criticism of the King James Version". I later sent a copy of this address to the Scripture Standard, which was printed early this year.

Since then I have continued my studies and I am amazed at the work which is presently going on, to seek the original text.

There was a point that I made in my address concerning the last 12 verses of Mark's Gospel which I defended by saying "that we can quote with confidence".

Having studied the latest evidence, it is with reluctance that I must say that I no longer believe this.

Very briefly my reasons are as follows:—

- 1) Within these verses are five expressions never used by Mark and three words never found any other place in the New Testament.
- 2) Men like Clement of Alexandria, Origen, Eusebius and Jerome did not have any knowledge of these verses.
- 3) Many manuscripts contain asterisks at verse 8 with notes to indicate spurious additions.
- 4) The connection between verses 8 and 9 is awkward.
- 5) The rhetorical tone differs totally from the simple style of Mark's Gospel.

The loss of these 12 verses, does not however alter the Gospel message, but it will however cause people to wonder how the N.T. text is derived at.

THE NEW TESTAMENT TEXT

Paul exhorted Timothy to study, to show himself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the Word of Truth.

The Bible is the perfect Word. Hundreds of times we read that "God spoke". It was not the word of Moses, Joshua or Daniel but God speaking through these people. "All Scripture is given by the inspiration of God." (2 Tim. 3:16).

Any correct translation is inspired. There is not one good reason why we should not hold up a correct translation and say "This is the inspired Word of God".

A problem facing the church today is that if you ask in a Bible class, "What sayeth the Scriptures?" you may get a dozen answers, most of which are only the theological views of the so-called translators.

Our first concern in Bible study today is to be sure we have the pure word of God before us. Today there are 5,338 Greek manuscripts which are either complete or partial letters of the New Testament. It is very important we try to recover the exact meanings of these writings to ensure we receive the message the author intended.

The two most popular Greek Texts which are used today are

- 1) The United Bible Societies 3rd Edition and
- 2) The 26th Edition of the Nestle-Aland Text.

These texts are almost identical. They are eclectic, (This means they have been through a process of selecting the best of the text.)

They both rely heavily on a relatively small number of ancient manuscripts.

When I study my Bible I often research into single verses. Commentators often refer to what is written in the oldest manuscripts as a conclusion to their interpretation. Sometimes I read articles which criticise the most ancient manuscripts and favour younger manuscripts. This can cause a lot of confusion to the average Bible student. I, therefore, have done some research into this subject which not only enlightened me but created within me a desire to share my findings.

It would be a great help if we could turn to the original manuscripts and check our present-day versions against them. Unfortunately, we cannot do this as we do not have the original manuscripts. Scholars refer to the originals as "the autographs".

I believe that it was the Will of God that these autographs have perished. Can you imagine what would happen if the original letters that Paul and the other apostles wrote were still in existence today? There would be pilgrimages to see them and someone would make a lot of money out of it.

We have, as I have already said, 5,338 manuscripts to assess but no two manuscripts are entirely identical. This is not surprising when you think about it because these manuscripts were copied or dictated. When I attended Technical College I had to take all my notes down by dictation or copying and when I studied for my exams and read what I had written it amazed me sometimes at my errors.

The common mistakes in these manuscripts were spelling, hearing or tiredness. To give you an example in Codex 109 the scribe wrote a genealogy across the page rather than down the page with the result that everyone was given the wrong father and God was the son of Aram.

In spite of all the variants that exist there is in fact no great disagreement among those who study the text and its' witnesses over 97% of the text.

It is my intention to briefly discuss the three approaches to the text. These are:-

- 1) Follow the received text of the sixteenth century.
- 2) Follow the majority text.
- 3) Select the reading to be followed on Eclectic principles.

To appreciate the 3% difference (It is very important to NOTE that this entire address is only about the 3% difference in the text.) We must study these texts, I will attempt to give a very brief introduction to each of these approaches.

1) We will begin with the 'Received Text' which is also commonly known by its Latin Title 'Textus Receptus'. It was given its name when it appeared in the preface to a printed Greek New Testament published by the Elzevir brothers in 1633, 22 years after the publication of the King James Version.

They used the term in support of their claim that their publication represented the text accepted at that time.

This text is based on six manuscripts and these were amended and checked against the latin Vulgate.

However the Received text is not identical with the text found in the majority of the manuscripts.

The King James Version is based on the Received Text.

The argument for the 'Received Text' is found around the promise of God to preserve His Word.

As the New Testament was written originally in Greek, the promised perservation focuses particularly on the Greek manuscripts of the New Testament.

This testimony or witness was given in a greater degree to the Greek speaking church, than to other churches.

While the Greek speaking church retained the true text, erroneous copies of the text were being made in other churches.

The first erroneous copy was copied and developed at Rome. It was adopted there. This Family of manuscripts known as the Western family of manuscripts.

Some time later the church at Alexandria decided to edit this Western text and restore it to it's original purity. They went too far by cutting out too many verses and so formed a third type of text, which has become known as the Alexandrian.

The Greek church were hostile to both the Roman and the Alexandrian manuscripts and when they produced their text, it was received as genuine and many copies were made. The contention therefore is that the true New Testament text is found in the 4th century Greek manuscripts.

Most of these manuscripts are Egyptian, which should not surprise us, as Egypt has the right climatic conditions to preserve manuscripts.

This sounds all very well, but let us have a look at the objections to this theory.

First of all, there are no facts to support the theory that the Greeks preserved the true text.

Secondly, the Greek text does not support the 'majority text', whereas the Roman and Alexandrian texts do.

Finally there are no facts to substantiate the theory of the origins of the Alexandrian and Western manuscripts.

Because of the lack of evidence, the 'Received Text' has been dropped by modern translators.

Graeme Pearson, Glasgow

(Bro. Pearson's article was too long for one publication and unfortunately I have had to split it. The second and final part will appear, God willing, in next issue. ED.)

GLEANINGS

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

HOW TO KNOW GOD BETTER

"I count all things but loss . . . that I may know Him." What am I prepared to pay for my knowledge? What did Paul pay? "The loss of all things." He looks as though his discipleship had cost him home and kinship and inheritance. But nothing was allowed to count in comparison with the knowledge of Christ. Nothing else was allowed for one moment to intrude its allurements. Ease, money, fame, were counted as "dung" that he might know Christ. I do not wonder that this man had visions, and heard things which could not be put into speech! I do not wonder that his letters abound in doxologies as he contemplates the unfolding glory of his Lord! Have I an altar of sacrifice in my life? What am I prepared to offer upon it? Have I shed any blood? Have I ever tired myself out for Jesus? Have I been willing to be mis-understood for Jesus? Have I been willing to stand alone for Jesus, and suffer apparent defeat? If my discipleship has brought me into these deserts, then I know the meaning of the gracious promise which announces that "the desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose." If we would know the Lord, we must be "ready to be offered". The altar must be always built, and we must be prepared for sacrifice. If we know "the fellowship of His sufferings," we shall know the radiant glory of His resurrection."

J. H. Jowett

THE BIBLE

“Staff of the weary, to the wounded, balm,
 Light in the darkness; the tempest, calm:
 Hope, in despair; in deepest sorrow, joy;
 Source of pure bliss, that suffers no alloy.
 Oh Book! more sacred, blest, and dear to me
 Than aught but Him, whose love hath written thee.
 Thou art His representative below,
 Oh! May I never, never let thee go;
 Till, through the riches of redeeming grace,
 I gaze upon thine Author, face to face!”

M. S. Ross

THE ONLY SAFE PATH

“Abstain from all appearance of evil! Sophronius had a fair daughter named Eulalia, and she asked him one day for permission to visit the gay Lucinda. “I cannot allow it,” said the Greek father, “Then you must think me exceedingly weak”, said the girl, indignantly! Sophronius picked up a dead coal from the hearth, and handed it to his daughter; but she hesitated to accept it. “Take it, my child — it will not burn you.” Eulalia obeyed, and the milky whiteness of her hand was instantly gone. “Father, we cannot be too careful in handling coals,” said the vexed daughter. “No,” said Sophronius, solemnly, “for even when they do not burn they blacken.” Ye weaker ones — the cup may burn you; but if it will not burn, it will blacken — so beware. Touch not, taste not, handle not!”

J Ossian Davies.

SCIENTIFIC CANT

“All the operations of nature are the result of God’s agency. What is called science refers these operations to laws — laws do everything. We are sick of this cant. What are these laws? Science cannot answer. I call not that philosophy which give me an intelligible and adequate cause for events. I see the rivers flow and the ocean roll and the stars of heaven wheel along the dome of night; I mark the revolutions of the sun, see the clouds laden with oceans coursing through the upper fields of air, and the showers descending on the earth, and the lands bursting into new forms of life; I feel that there must be some mighty power at work in the universe. Who or what is it? I am told “law”. I do not understand the answer; I am not satisfied. The Bible tells me God, and I bow; my philosophy and my deepest instincts acquiesce in the response.”

Dr. Thomas

PREACHING

“We are not left in doubt as to the matter of Christ’s preaching, for ‘when many were gathered together, insomuch that there was no room to receive them, no, not so much as about the door, he preached the word unto them.’ There was no change of method adopted by the Lord during His course of ministry; no learning by experience of a better plan. His first word of command to His evangelists was, ‘As ye go, preach.’ His last, ‘Preach the Gospel to every creature.’ Not an evangelist suggests that at any time during His ministry He turned aside from preaching to entertain, and so attract the people. He was in awful earnestness; and His ministry was like Him. Had He been less uncompromising, and introduced more of the ‘bright and pleasant’ element into His mission, He would have been more popular.”

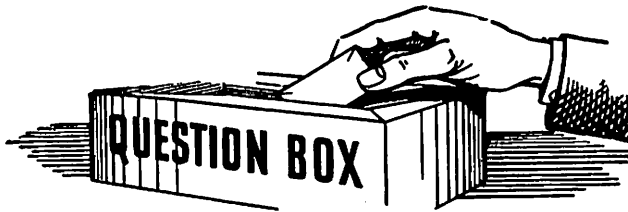
Archibald Brown.

EXPLAIN ME?

"In the days of Joseph Barker, an infidel lecturer in a mining town in the North of England concluded an address in which he thought he had demolished all the arguments for the Bible, Christ, and Christianity, by saying, "Now I hope I have succeeded in explaining to you that the existence of Jesus Christ is a myth." He had hardly finished speaking, when a miner, who had entered in his grimy clothes, stood up and said: "Sir, I'm only a working man, and I don't know what you mean by the word 'myth'. But can you explain me? Three years ago I had a miserable home, I neglected my wife and children, I cursed and swore, I drank all my wages, till someone came along and showed me the love of God and of His Son Jesus Christ. And now all is different. We have a happy home, I love my wife and children, I feel better in every way myself, and I've given up the drink. A new power has taken possession of me since Christ came into my life. Sir," and his face was all aglow, "Can you explain me?" The lecturer had no explanation to give, and that working man sent people home feeling that the Bible was still the Word of God, that Jesus Christ was anything but a myth, and that the gospel "is the power of God unto Salvation to everyone that believeth" (Romans 1:16)."

T.W.T.

Selected by:- Leonard Morgan
396 Atherton Road,
Hindley Green



Conducted by
Alf Marsden

"We frequently read in the Bible about 'dreams' and 'visions'. Would you please explain the difference, if any?"

Dreams and visions! Conditions attributed to the human condition and beloved of mystics, songwriters, romantic novelists, and such like. Millions of people, otherwise quite sane and intelligent, have been 'dreaming' of 'White Christmases' ever since the song was written and sung. 'Visions' of beauty, poise, and elegance stare out at us from glossy magazines and brochures. Such ideas are designed quite specifically to appeal to the emotions and are sensually evocative, and they seem to bear little relationship to the Biblical concept of visions and dreams.

I use the phrase 'conditions attributed to the human condition' because I believe that the subject should be taken out of the super-natural realm as much as possible. The reader will no doubt be able to recall the famous 'I have a dream' speech made by the late Dr. Martin Luther King shortly before he was shot to death. It seems to me that Dr. King's 'dream' was an intrinsic consciousness, which came across in almost prophetic terms, of the reality of complete future racial integration which he and others would strive to bring into being; in other words, his 'dream' was a product of his human condition. Bearing this in mind, although not exclusively so, let us turn our attention to the Biblical concept of dreams and visions. At the outset, having made the point of the importance of the human condition, we must acknowledge that we understand that the *influence* of the Spirit of God can be brought to bear on every aspect of the human condition.

Dreams

Dreams. What are they. How do they come? I have not the slightest doubt that a psychologist would be able to advance theories which would make a lot of sense, but as I am certainly not qualified to comment on this channel of knowledge, I will stick to Biblical concepts. In the Book of Ecclesiastes we read, "For a dream cometh through the multitude of business" (5:3). The N.I.V. gives the same passage, "As a dream comes when there are many cares". Now I take this to mean that the agitated state of the mind can conjure up in the sub-conscious state, such as when we sleep, ideas which have a *direct relationship* to the thoughts which have exercised the mind during its *conscious* state, such as when we are awake; and so we dream. Let us apply this Biblical concept to a Biblical example.

Jacob, as is recorded, deceived his father Isaac and stole the birthright of his brother Esau. Rebekah, their mother, who had conspired with Jacob, learned that after the days of mourning for Isaac, Esau planned to kill Jacob. She thus encouraged Jacob to flee immediately from the wrath of Esau and go to Haran to live with her brother Laban. Thus Jacob had to flee from his own family, he was threatened with death, and he had to pass through hostile territory; furthermore, he was no doubt thinking that because of his perfidy, God also would have forsaken him. It was in this trauma of mind that he fell asleep and had the dream of the ladder stretching from earth to heaven, and God Himself reiterating His promise to him. Whatever the source of the dream, and I am inclined to the view expressed in Ecclesiastes, it certainly gave Jacob great encouragement, and resolve of purpose.

Concerning Solomon at Gibeon, we are expressly told that the Lord *appeared* to him in a dream, and asked what He should give to him. This seems to indicate that Deity used dreams to communicate the Divine revelation to specific people on special occasions. See 1 Kings 3:5ff.

It is quite evident from the O.T. that there were false prophets and dreamers of dreams who, by the statements they made to others, subverted the Will of God. In this context read Deuteronomy 13:2ff., and Jeremiah 23:25ff. We can see from these scriptures that God sternly condemns the dreamer of dreams who expressed the figment of *his own* imagination as if it were the truth of God.

It would seem that the revelation from God by dreams was confined to earlier days; as a matter of fact, many of the recorded dreams in the O.T. are concerned with people who were not of God's *chosen* people, Israel, e.g., Pharaoh (Gen.41); Nehuchadnezzar (Dan. 2:1); and others. The interpretation of dreams was granted to some, particularly Joseph and Daniel.

In the N.T. it would appear that dreams were used almost exclusively to give specific directions in times of difficulty and peril, e.g. instructions for Joseph to flee into Egypt (Matt. 2:13); Pilate's wife (Matt. 27:19). Here again we are left with an interesting thought; if the dream of Pilate's wife is attributed to the action of God, then it would appear that God, through the dream, was attempting to thwart His own Will, i.e. in the crucifixion of Jesus. However, in the case of the Magi (Matt. 2:12) *their* dream was ostensibly *furthering* the Will of God.

In view of the fact that there is so little reporting of dreams in the N.T., I think we must conclude that more importance is attached to the *conscious* decisions that man has to make relative to his acceptance by God, in other words, the directions for man's salvation have been clearly revealed, and the warnings of non-compliance have been clearly stated.

Visions

According to the dictionary, vision is the act or faculty of seeing, sight; the power of discerning future conditions, foretelling; that which is seen in a dream or trance. In order to complement this, I believe that we should also define the word 'trance'; this

can be 'a sleep-like state, a mental abstraction from external things, total absorption in anything, or a state of ecstatic experience. As many of the recorded visions are directly connected with prophecy, we can safely assume that the state of mind in which a prophet was when he received a Divine communication is important.

Ezekiel is quite literal in what he *saw*. In Ezek. 1:1 we read, "as I was among the captives by the river of Chebar, that the heavens were opened, and I saw the visions of God". This is a direct communication from God, literally recorded. Similarly with Daniel concerning the dream of Nebuchadnezzar. Daniel consulted with his companions, "That they would desire mercies of the God of heaven concerning this secret" (2:17,18). Verse 19 then says, "Then was the secret revealed unto Daniel in a night vision. Then Daniel blessed the God of heaven."

On the other hand, Isaiah, out of the burden of that which was oppressing him, records a truly *prophetic* vision, "The vision of Isaiah the son of Amoz, which he saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem in the days of Uziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah" (Isa. 1:1). We must understand, of course, that concerning prophetic statements there would always be a dual witness to the events prophesied; the prophet's own spiritual nature which would be filled with the message of God, and the prophet being seized upon by the Divine Spirit so that no error would be made in the thing prophesied. You will remember that when Paul wrote his letter to Rome he indicated the assurance of salvation like this, "The Spirit Himself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God (Rom. 8:16).

Concerning the Apostle Paul, we have a recorded ecstatic experience which seems to transcend the natural but we cannot be sure of this. It is generally accepted that in 2 Cor. 12 the Apostle is referring to his own experience in what may be a trance-like experience. He himself says that he did not know whether he was 'in the body, or out of the body'; he just couldn't tell. As regards Peter, the scripture states quite specifically that he went into a trance, and it was in this state of trance that he had his vision. He *saw* certain things, but didn't understand what they meant. It was in his conscious and released state of mind that God revealed to him by subsequent events what the Divine Will was. (See Acts 10 and 11).

Conclusion

It is quite evident that dreams and visions are very closely inter-woven. From what we have studied — and there is quite a bit more to be looked at — it would seem that dreams were used as the vehicle for instruction and direction. Visions, on the other hand, seem to be part of the phenomena of prophecy. Beyond that I would not like to go.

(All questions please, to Alf Marsden, 377 Billinge Road, Hayfield, wigan, Lancs.)

SCRIPTURE READINGS

DECEMBER 1985

| | |
|-------------------|----------------|
| 1—Zech. 11 | Matt. 27:1-25 |
| 8—Psalm 53 | Matt. 27:26-44 |
| 15—Psalm 22:1-21 | Matt. 27:45-66 |
| 22—Psalm 22:22-31 | Matt. 28 |
| 29—Deut. 30 | Galatians 1 |

JESUS BEFORE PILATE

I recall having at one time an animated conversation with two Episcopalians

who claimed that Pontius Pilate was born in Scotland, or Caledonia as it was then called. I know of no historical evidence for this assertion.

Pilate was an upper middle-class Roman. In A.D. 26 he was appointed by the emperor Tiberius to be the fifth procurator of Judaea. I understand that in this position he had the power of life and death, appointed the high priests and controlled the temple.

Pilate is mentioned outwith the Bible by Cornelius Tacitus, Flavius Josephus and Philo of Alexandria. Philo wrote that

"by nature he was rigid and stubbornly harsh, was of a spiteful disposition and an exceedingly wrathful man". He spoke of the "bribes, acts of pride, the outrages, the cases of spiteful treatment, the constant murders without trial, the ceaseless and most grievous brutality" of which the Jews might accuse him.

Peter said to the Jews on one occasion: "The God of Abraham, and of Isaac, and of Jacob, the God of our fathers, has glorified His Son Jesus, whom you delivered up and denied Him in the presence of Pilate, when he was determined to let Him go" (Acts 3:13). This stance by Pilate is clearly seen in the gospel records. However, in the end he did the wrong thing because he was afraid to do the right thing. He sacrificed Jesus in order to keep his position and to further his ambition.

The encounter between Jesus and Pilate is to me one of the most striking in all the scriptures. Here we had the Son of God with a representative of a son of the gods (a title of Caesar). John's account makes compelling reading.

Pilate therefore said to Him: "Are you a king then?" Jesus answered: "You say rightly that I am a king; for this cause was I born and for this cause I have come into the world that I should bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth hears my voice". Pilate said to him: "What is truth?" and when he had said this, he went out to the Jews and said to them: "I find no fault in Him at all" (John 18:37-38). The tragedy for Pilate was that The Truth was right there with him.

THE CRUCIFIXION

W.E. Vine has pointed out that this method of execution was borrowed by the Greeks and Romans from the Phoenicians.

In Old Testament times dead bodies were occasionally hung on a tree as a warning (Deut. 21:22,23 and Joshua 10:26). Such bodies were regarded as accursed (Galatians 3:13) and had to be removed and buried before night came. This practice accounts for the N.T. reference to Christ's cross as a tree. (Acts

5:30; Acts 10:39; acts 13:29 and I Peter 2:24).

Jesus' crucifixion took place outside the city wall at Calvary. The word Calvary is from the Vulgate, where the Latin *calvaria* translates the Greek *kranion*; both words a translation of the Aramaic *gulgolta*, meaning "skull".

The following passages reveal the momentous importance of the crucifixion of Jesus.

"For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved, it is the power of God" (1 Corinthians 1:18).

"But God forbid that I should glory except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world" (Galatians 6:14).

"For He Himself is our peace, who has made both (Jew and Gentile) one, and has broken down the middle wall of division between us, having abolished in His flesh the enmity, that is, the law of commandments contained in ordinances so as to create in Himself one new man from the two, thus making peace and that He might reconcile them both to God in one body through the cross, thereby putting to death the enmity" (Ephesians 2:14-16).

"For it pleased the Father that in Him all the fulness should dwell, and by Him to reconcile all things to Himself by Him, whether things on earth or things in heaven, having made peace through the blood of His cross (Colossians 1:19-20).

"And you, being dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He has made alive together with Him, having forgiven all your trespasses, having wiped out the handwriting of requirements against us, which was contrary to us: and he has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross" (Colossians 2:13-14).

THE RESURRECTION

I wish I had the ability to express in writing my thoughts as I read: "He is not here, for He is risen, as He said. Come,

see the place where the Lord lay" (Matthew 28:6).

The resurrection of Jesus is the greatest fact in history. The apostle Paul declared this.

If Christ was not raised, the Christian message is empty and there is no content to faith (1 Corinthians 15:14). If Christ was not raised, the apostles are liars (15:15). If Christ was not raised those who died in Him are gone. They have perished (15:18). If Christ was not raised, all hope is limited to this life and we are miserable above all men (15:19).

Jesus did not prove he was the Son of God by dying on the cross. That proved he was the Son of man. He proved divine Sonship by His resurrection. (Romans 1:4).

I am reminded of what Alexander Campbell said in his debate with Robert Owen: "The resurrection of Jesus Christ, which is the capital item in the apostolic testimony; and the fact on which the whole religion, and hopes of Christianity depend and terminate, I feel strongly disposed to show that this is the best attested fact in the annals of the world. For I wish to have it placed upon record, and to be known as far as this work ever shall extend, either in time or place, that in our view, the shortest and best, because the most irrefragable way, to prove the whole truth and absolute certainty of the Christian religion, is to prove the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. This proved, and Deism, Athesim, and Scepticism of every name, fall prostrate to the ground."

THE LETTER TO THE GALATIANS

Writer — Paul (Galatians 6:11).

Those Addressed — the saints of Galatia. Galatia was a Roman province in Asia Minor, now called Turkey. Acts 13 and 14 record how Paul founded churches in the southern cities of Antioch, Iconium, Lys-tra (Timothy's home town) and Derbe on his first missionary journey. There were two follow-up visits (Acts 16:6; 18:23).

Date — probably about A.D. 52.

Purpose — The New Bible Dictionary: "Galatians was plainly written to con-

verts of Paul's who were in imminent danger of adulterating the gospel of Christian freedom which he had taught them with elements of Jewish legalism... The 'churches of Galatia' had evidently been visited by Judaizers who cast doubt on Paul's apostolic status and insisted that, in addition to faith in Christ which he inculcated, it was necessary to be circumcised and conform in other respects to the Jewish law in order to attain salvation. When news of this reached Paul he wrote this letter in white-hot urgency, denouncing this teaching which mingled grace and law as a different gospel from that which he had preached to them in Christ's name — in fact, no gospel at all — and entreating his readers to stand fast in their new-found liberty and not place their necks again under a yoke of bondage".

Genuineness — Thomas Hartwell Horne has written: "The genuineness of this epistle was never doubted. It is cited by the apostolic fathers, Clement of Rome, Hermas, Ignatius, and Polycarp; and is declared to be authentic by Irenaeus, Clement of Alexandria, Tertullian, Caius, Origen, and by all subsequent writers."

THE GOD-GIVEN GOSPEL

Our word gospel is from the old English term godspel which literally means "good tidings". The Greek word is *euaggelion*.

The *euaggelion* is "the good news of truth" (Galatians 2:5, 14; Colossians 1:5); it is "the good news of peace" (Ephesians 6:15); it is "the good news of God's promise" (Ephesians 3:6); it is "the good news of immortality" (2 Timothy 1:10); it is "the good news of the risen Christ" (1 Corinthians 15:1ff; 2 Timothy 2:8); it is "the good news of salvation" (Ephesians 1:13).

Paul wrote: "But I make known to you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached by me is not according to man. For I neither received it from man, nor was I taught it, but it came through the revelation of Jesus Christ (Galatians 1:11-12).

The gospel that all should preach is the gospel that Paul preached. Paul himself repeated this warning: "But even if we, or an angel from heaven, should preach any gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed" (Galatians 1:8). That is as clear as the sign I saw recently on the army firing ranges on Salisbury Plain - "DANGER AREA: YOU HAVE BEEN WARNED!"

Ian S. Davidson, Motherwell.

CHRISTIAN, James 1:17-21

According to the dictionary definition, a Christian is one who believes, or professes to believe, or is assumed to believe in Jesus Christ, and in the truth as taught by Him. However, the world's definition is not strict enough to be the one in the Book, the Bible, as given to us by God. What is a Christian?

"Christian" is never an adjective — it is not descriptive — yet it must mean something or Agrippa would not have been almost persuaded to become one, (Acts 26:28). He believed, but was it to the saving of his soul? "Christian" is a name to live up to; a name in which to feel no shame (1 Peter 4:16); a name given by God to those who are disciples of His Son, Jesus Christ (Acts 11:26).

What is it to be a Christian?

1. It is to be more than just a believer: Even though one must believe (Acts 16:31) to avoid being damned (Mark 16:16). One must have a faith "which worketh by love" (Galatians 5:6), for "faith without works is dead" (James 2:20). Yes, one must believe, then exercise that power given him as a believer, and become a son of God (John 1:11-13) being born of God, into the kingdom of God.

2. A Christian is one whose relationship has been changed, who is a new creature, a friend of Christ, no longer a friend of the world (2 Corinthians 5:17; John 15:14,15; James 4:4). NOW he can

call on God, as his Father because by faith, having been baptized into Christ, he is a child of God (Galatians 3:26, 27). NOW he has become a pilgrim (1 Peter 2:11) yet with an obligation to the world in which he lives. He is the salt of the earth (Matthew 5:11). You may want to read (Romans 12:14-21). NOW he is a soldier of the King, and is to be "a good soldier of Jesus Christ" (2 Timothy 2:3,4). Not warring after the flesh mind you, but spiritually fighting against and pulling down everything that is exalted against God (2 Corinthians 10:2-6).

3. A Christian is not the church, rather the church is made up of Christians, as God adds them to it (Acts 2:47). The church can not do my work for me: Raising my children (Ephesians 6:4); earning a living (1 Thessalonians 4:11,12; 1 Timothy 5:8); or caring for my own family (1 Timothy 5:16; Ephesians 4:28) unless I am physically unable to do so.

Does It Pay To Be a Christian?

This is the chief consideration of almost any endeavour. Jesus commented on this in Luke 14:28-32.

It is very dear, costing in fact all that we have (Luke 14:33). It requires a real sacrifice on our part (Matthew 16:24) even the sacrifice of our own bodies (Romans 12:1,2), And suffering will be ours (2 Timothy 3:12).

Does it pay? Is it worth it? The devil tries to convince you that in no way it can be worth all of that. Jesus says that it doesn't pay to be lost! He and all Christians who have gone before agree that it IS worth it, well worth it. Read Romans 8:16-18, 32; 2 Corinthians 4:17 and 1 Peter 1:4.

"What is your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away" (James 4:14). You will have to decide for yourself. Is the investment of this "little time" worth the glory,

happiness, and blessings of living eternally with God, Christ, the saints of old and the very best of earth ? ? ?

You decide!

— Jim Beech.

WATCH

“Watch, therefore, for you do not know on what day your Lord is coming... You must be ready, for the Son of man is coming at an hour you do not expect.” (Matt. 24:43,44).

THE time was the 19th of May, 1780. The place was Hartford, Connecticut. The day has gone down in New England history as a terrible foretaste of Judgement Day. For at noon the skies turned from blue to grey and by mid-afternoon had blackened over so densely that, in that religious age, men fell on their knees and begged a final blessing before the end came. The Connecticut house of Representatives was in session. And as some fell down and others clamoured for an immediate adjournment, the Speaker of the House, one Col. Davenport, rose to his feet. He silenced them and said these words. “The Day of Judgement is either approaching or it is not. If it is not, there is no cause for adjournment. If it is, I choose to be found doing my duty. I wish, therefore, that candles be brought.”

Alistair Cook: “Letters from America”

THE LAST BAGGAGE

What may we take in our cold dead hands
To the great white throne away?
What may we take to plead for us
In the light of judgement day?

The crumbs of bread to a hungry wail;
The words of cheer to the poor;
The heart of hope that we left behind
When we entered that troubled door.

The little song that we blithely sang,
When the words were needed so;
The cheerful look and the kindly hand
We may take when we're called to go.

But never a cent to the Throne of God.
Though millions we may claim;
Never a cent to plead for us,
Save the pennies in His Name.

The little words in kindness said
To a heart that was burdened so;
The flower we left in the withered hand
Before we turned to go.

QUESTIONS FOR CHRISTIANS

1. Does your milkman know you are a Christian? Does your paper boy know that you are a member of the Lord's church?

2. If you had to go to heaven on the testimony of your next-door neighbour, could you make it?

3. When you became a Christian did the church gain a member on whom to depend?

4. Which appeals to you most on Sunday: Bible study, business meetings in support of the church's welfare; or your favourite pleasures which you allow yourself?

5. If you should be called from the land of the living, is there any business in the Master's kingdom left unfinished by you—forgiving someone, helping to restore a backslider, etc.?

6. If a friend were to ask you what he should do to be saved, could you with your New Testament show him?

7. If the Lord were to pay a sudden visit to your house for a few days, are there any bad habits you would have to change while He was with you?

Woodstock Church of Christ (Cape Town) Bulletin.

NEWS FROM THE CHURCHES

Dennyloanhead, Scotland: The church at Dennyloanhead, re-commence their Saturday evening meetings (on second Saturday of each month) from October to March, at 6 p.m. each evening. Scheduled speakers are Alex. Brown (Oct), Ian Davidson (Nov), Graeme Pearson (Dec),

J. R. Gardiner (Jan), John Kneller (Feb) and Hugh Davidson (Mar). All welcome to these meetings (God willing).

Joe Malcolm (Sec)

Kitwe, Zaire: A week long camp meeting was held in August at LIKASI in Zaire. About four hundred people came at different times for the camp meeting. They came from forty-three congregations of the Church of Christ, mainly in Zaire's SHABA PROVINCE. Some Christians travelled 720 kilometers to the meeting from DILOLO on the Angolan border. One man made a two thousand kilometer round trip from a congregation in KASAI in Central Zaire, co-worker JOHN RAMSAY of DENVER, COLORADO, recently returned to the field, was a key speaker at the camp meeting on first principles of New Testament Christianity.

Chester Woodhall.

Stretford, Manchester: Through the personal work of our sister Rosalind Phang yet another soul has yielded to the Lord. Kim Chiang Png, a fellow student also from Singapore was baptised into Christ on 16th September 1985, at Argyle Street, Hindley, Wigan. He has been having Bible studies with us for months and we have had the joy of watching his faith in Jesus growing stronger week by week. To God be the glory. He is from a Budist family and is now returning to Singapore. He will need the prayers and any encouragement we can give him.

We are grateful to the brethren at Hindley for their kind assistance.

Allan Ashurst.

Slamannan District: The Quarterly Mutual Benefit Meeting was held at Brightons, on Saturday 21st September, when a goodly gathering began their discussions after tea. The chairman was Bro. J. R. Gardiner and the speakers were Bro. Harry McGinn (New Cumnock) and Bro. Mark Plain (Snr) (Tranent). The subject for discussion was "What does 2 Peter 1:20 mean when it speaks of 'Private Interpretation' ". After the introduction of the subject by the speakers a

lively discussion followed. A rich time of fellowship was enjoyed by all. The next meeting will, God willing, be held at Tranent 7th December, when the Chairman will be J. Kneller, Tranent, and the speakers J. McLuckie (Tranent) and J. R. Gardiner (Haddington). The subject is to be "Does God hear the Unsaved or only Christians?"

Hugh Davidson (Sec)

Tranent, Scotland: Many brethren met with the church in Tranent on the evenings of Saturday and Sunday, 5th & 6th October, when brother Jack Nisbet, of Ulverston, addressed the meetings. A time of rich fellowship and spiritual uplifting was enjoyed by all those attending. Brother Nisbet spoke of the evil day: of God's mercy and of our choice. The church in Tranent wishes to thank all who supported these meetings and to thank brother Jack for coming and being our speaker.

J. Colgan. Sec.

Kitwe, Zambia: The television is mail order from Hong Kong. The video player is from London. Both are Multiple system enabling us to play both British and American VHS tapes — which look the same but are different in playback.

In one month about ninety people from fourteen congregations have been to the Woodhall's home in Kitwe on different occasions and watched two series of American video tapes. The themes were Old Testament and Life of Christ. Talks were given to reinforce the film content.

As with the computer, the phrase "Rubbish in, Rubbish out" applies to video. All tools of communication merely add to the existing opportunities. No doubt General William Booth would enquire "Why should the Devil have the best use of video?" Why indeed?

The Christian video ministry organized by the Woodhalls and assisted in August by Wellington Mwanza, on vacation break from Namwianga Bible College, has been very popular with the Zambian Christians.

Angela Woodhall.

AID TO INDIA FUND

We continue in a modest way to try and assist our less better off brethren in India.

During the year cash aid was sent to Bro. Chukka who distributes this to the churches at Penumanchilli, Jeedigunta and Visakapthum to help buy Bibles and have gospel tracts printed.

Bro Paul Subhan also reports the work at the Hospital is continuing. The gospel is preached to people who come for medical care and those who show an interest are given Bibles.

Bro. Asgar Ali in Pakistan runs a Correspondence Course and we have sent money to him to help with this.

Bro. Balaraju reports that landlords of Karamchedu village raided the Christian community with spears, knives, axes, raping and killing and causing severe injuries. 15 members were killed. We have sent cash aid to help the survivors and those who are in hiding.

I would like to thank everyone for their support during the past year and for the many anonymous donations.

Miss Ruth Nisbet.

For we never can tell in the casual friend,
Just how will fall the spray.
We are only sure that the things we give,
Are the things we take away.

BREAKING THE BREAD

An article on the above subject appeared in the "Light", published in USA, and written by the Editor, Jerry Johnson. On the basis that Truth need never fear close examination I offered to print Bro. Johnson's article in the "Scripture Standard" (so that British readers could read a fairly definitive statement on the matter) in exchange for me writing a reply to Bro. Johnson's article to be printed in the 'Light' (so that American readers could hear the other side of the controversy.) Unfortunately Bro. has declined the offer but I have asked him to tell his readers that such an offer was made, just in case American readers think that Bro. Johnson's views can not be easily challenged or refuted.

ED.

If you think it is costly to be a Christian, think of the final payment for not being one.

THE SCRIPTURE STANDARD is published monthly.

PRICES PER YEAR - POST PAID BY SURFACE MAIL

UNITED KINGDOM and COMMONWEALTH \$5.50
CANADA & U.S.A. \$10.00
AIR MAIL please add £1.50 or \$3.00 to above surface mail rates

DISTRIBUTION AGENT & TREASURER:

JOHN K. KNELLER, 4 Glassel Park Road, Longniddry, East Lothian, EH32 0NY
Telephone: Longniddry (0875) 53212 to whom change of address should be sent.

EDITOR: JAMES R. GARDINER, 87 Main Street, Pathhead, Midlothian,
Scotland EH37 5PT. Telephone: Ford 320 527

"The Scripture Standard" is printed for the publishers by Walter Barker (Printers) Ltd.,
Langley Mill, Nottm. Tel. Langley Mill (0773) 712266