

# The SCRIPTURE STANDARD

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

VOL. 32. No. 8.

AUGUST, 1965

## *The Genesis Flood*

LAST MONTH we reviewed a book entitled "The Twilight of Evolution," by H. M. Morris. In the article we referred briefly to the author's treatment of the Flood as recorded in Genesis 6-8. In this article we review a further and much more elaborate work dealing entirely with that stupendous event—"The Genesis Flood: the Biblical record and its scientific implications," by John C. Whitcomb, jr. and H. M. Morris, author of "The Twilight of Evolution" (Presbyterian & Reformed Pub Co., Philadelphia, 1964, \$6.95, 50/-).

Readers may remember that we mentioned the chapter in "Twilight of Evolution" on "Water and the Word." That phrase exactly sums up the theme of this second book, for it is a treatment of the Flood in the light of the word of God. The authors fearlessly accept and expound the scripture record: they are not afraid to oppose and contradict the dogmatic but unproven statements of "science falsely so-called," and this they do by closely examining these assertions. They are thoroughly qualified for such a task, for they are themselves scientific and technical experts. That being so, not everything they write will be understood by inexperienced readers like ourselves, but the language is never technical nor does it descend to scientific jargon. Even though one may not grasp the meaning readily, one realises that the authors know what they are talking about.

Like the Genesis account of creation, the same book's account of the Deluge has been openly ridiculed by disbelievers, or dismissed as being simply myth or legend. Even those who accept the Bible as the inspired word of God have been apologetic in explaining away the two events, spiritualising them almost out of existence and making them devoid of meaning. So far as regards the Flood, certainly the many legends in various widely-scattered countries and civilisations about a mighty deluge ages ago do give some evidence that such an event occurred; but to these doubters one such tradition is of equal authority with another, and the Bible account is no more literally true than, for instance, the Gilgamesh epic of Babylonia.

This book is a comprehensive and detailed examination of every aspect of the Deluge. It is written with immense learning. Throughout, quotations are made from books or statements of scientific scholars who reject the Bible story, so that these are allowed to state the case for themselves. No attempt is made to evade legitimate criticism or doubt. But the Bible is shown to contain the answers to such objections, or the explanations of difficult points. One is left marvelling at the all-sufficiency of scripture to "convince the gainsayers."

To show the fullness of this study of the Genesis Flood we mention some of the topics dealt with: arguments for and against a universal Flood are stated, and the authors show from scripture that the Flood was not local in a small area of the Middle East, but worldwide, destroying all animal and human life except that contained in the ark of Noah: the evidences of the rocks (geology) are shown to reveal this, far from proving the immense age of the earth as suggested by the geologist Lyell a hundred years ago; the duration of the Flood is demonstrated; various scientific methods of measuring the ages of rocks are set out; fossils; radiation; and origin of mineral deposits. We are not qualified to judge, except where scripture speaks, of the correctness or otherwise of the authors' treatment

of these subjects; but it is clear from the frankness with which scientists with anti-scripture views are quoted and examined that, even scientifically, let alone scripturally, the commonly-accepted beliefs (or unbeliefs) concerning the Flood are themselves even more open to doubt and refutation.

One aspect of the study upon which the writers are particularly strong is their demonstration that in dealing with the Creation and the Deluge we cannot apply tests adopted and approved by modern science. For we are in the realm of the miraculous—the direct activity of God, Who is not bound by any “laws of nature” discovered by man, nor even by His own creation. God is Creator, not subject to His own work. Thus, the scientific doctrine of “uniformitarianism” is attacked: uniformitarianism insists that in the universe all things, life and non-life, proceed according to natural law along the path of inevitable progress, and that there are no deviations from this order. But the authors of “The Genesis Flood” point out from scripture that at certain great crises in history God has “intervened,” stepped in: for instance the Creation was God Himself acting; so was the Flood; so was the scattering of nations at the building of the tower of Babel; and, above all God was acting in the Person of Jesus Christ—the Word in the beginning that was with God and was God, becoming flesh; and the miraculous events at the Pentecost when the church came into being. So far as regards the Flood, the authors term this action of God “catastrophism.”

It is refreshing and gratifying to discern the wholehearted acceptance of and loyalty to the word of God with which this vast subject is dealt with in this book. The authors will have none of the metaphysical or spiritualising treatment adopted by the “neo-orthodox” school of expositors such as Karl Barth, Emil Brunner, etc. This “neo-orthodoxy” teaches that it does not matter whether an event recorded in the Bible is literally true. What matters is the lesson we draw from such event: for instance, it matters not whether the Fall was a literal happening; what matters is that all men are fallen and need God’s salvation. Carried to its ultimate, Bultmann with his “demythologising” of scripture teaches that the resurrection of Jesus Christ did not bodily and literally take place: what matters is whether in my life and experience Jesus Christ lives. Therefore, nothing in the Bible means what it says, though what it does mean is left for everyone to decide for himself. And so goes the authority of the Word of God. There is then no such thing as “Thus saith the Lord.”

Finally, “The Genesis Flood” shows the vital connection between the Deluge, the meaning and truth of scripture, and God’s work of redemption through Christ. Rejection of the plain and literal accounts of Creation and Flood inevitably takes away the meaning of the fall of man and his need of redemption.

We conclude with quoting from page 458 of the book under review: “It was none other than the Son of God Himself who taught Christians to accept the historical accuracy of the Old Testament in general and the book of Genesis in particular. Standing upon this infallible foundation, the Christian is perfectly confident that modern scientific theories (coloured as they are by the presuppositions of finite and fallible men) cannot possibly constitute the final word on the origin and early history of man. And beyond that . . . when all the evidence is in, the Christian’s faith in the Son of God and in the verbally inspired special revelation of God will be found to have led him to an accurate knowledge and understanding of these vitally important matters.”

EDITOR.

## *‘These my brethren’*

ON this particular Sunday we had arranged to visit a remote village about fifty miles away from Lilongwe (the main town of the Central Region). There has been a congregation in this village for many years, and the late village headman heard the gospel when he was in the Southern Region, where he was contacted by Church of Christ missionaries from Britain. He died last year, but his successor will be his son or his nephew, who are both Christians.

At 10 a.m. we arrived at the village expecting to preach and break bread with the Lord’s people there, but we were dismayed to hear the wailing of the women—there was to be a funeral and our meeting would be delayed for several hours.

A tremendous emphasis is placed on funerals by both Christian and non-Christian Africans. Very few people would think of missing a funeral and almost certainly the Christians in this village would not have broken bread on this Sunday if we had not been there. In other words, they neglect to remember Christ’s triumph over death for the sake of a funeral. In spring and autumn there is often a high death rate amongst young children, and the large number of funerals tends to dis-

rupt the church meetings. Consequently, it is easy to feel annoyed because one's plans for the day have been disrupted, rather than to sympathise genuinely with those who mourn.

I must confess that I felt a bit that way, but I had a tinge of regret later when I thought of the sad circumstances in which this woman died. She died after giving birth to her first child. The mother was probably in her mid-teens—girls are married off very young. She had received no medical attention during her labour; her life probably could have been saved but she must have gone through great suffering before she died. The baby will be fed by another mother with a young baby, and probably this mother will not be able to feed both babies properly.

The Christians greeted us on our arrival and told us the sad news. We then walked slowly to the dead woman's house, singing a hymn as we went and at the house the mourners joined us in singing the same hymn. We sang another hymn, Bro. Mahonga (an evangelist) prayed and expressed his sorrow and then we left the mourners and returned to the church building, where Sister Higginbottom led a children's meeting.

At noon, we went to the grave and sang hymns while the men dug the grave. A group of men sang hymns and walked from the grave to the house and back several times, singing as they walked—this is, I think, to prepare the way for the body to the grave. The grave is usually dug ten to fifteen feet deep, and then a recess is dug out, so that no earth is thrown over the body, which would be disrespectful to the dead.

We made another visit to the house and Bro. Mahonga preached. We returned to the grave and sang hymns again. The women then appeared in single file carrying big stones on their heads or shoulder-high in the palms of their hands. They placed the stones by the side of the grave and went away. Soon after 12.30 p.m., we walked and sang to the edge of the village where the coffin, wrapped in white cotton, with a red ribbon in the shape of a cross, was waiting to be collected from the cross-bar of a bicycle. The men reverently took the coffin and we walked back into the village for a short distance, when we were met by the women who were also singing. The women carefully took the coffin and walked in front of the men to the house (normally women walk behind the men), where the young teenage girls wept and wailed as the coffin was carried into the house. The women went into the house and put the body into the coffin. It is the task of the younger teenage girls to walk round near the house and weep, and to utter cries of despair. In this case, the grief was real—because the dead mother was only a bit older than they are. The husband walked and wailed right round the village. I don't know how real his grief was; I have no reason to doubt it, but I know that some men think more of their children than they do of their wives.

The grave was not quite ready, so Bro. Higginbottom preached at the house and then we returned to the grave, which was now ready. So we went back to the house again. The men pushed a two-wheeled ox-cart up to the front door of the house. An old woman emerged from the house and she wailed loudly, and so did the husband, who followed. The coffin was brought out of the house and placed carefully in the cart. Some older women climbed into the cart and wept and "kneaded" the coffin. We then walked slowly to the grave, singing a hymn. The coffin was immediately lowered into the grave, using bark ropes.

An unusual incident was that the dead woman's brother was in such a frenzy that he tried to prevent the men from lowering the coffin into the grave, but he was carried away in a hysterical and stiff form. The African evangelist prayed and then preached. The coffin was sealed off into the recess by plastered mud and then the stones were placed in the grave, lumps of mud were thrown in next and the grave was filled up with earth after the funeral.

The funeral was over at 3.30 p.m., but then we had to wait until the Christians had eaten the food prepared by the women. We were ready to start the meeting at 4.45 p.m. The men sat on one side and the women on the other. We sang two hymns and Bro. Higginbottom preached on the resources of the Christian life. We sang another hymn and I presided over the Lord's Supper. We broke bread after reading 2 Cor. 5:14-15: "For the love of Christ controls us, because we are convinced that one has died for all; therefore, all have died. And he died for all, that those who live might live no longer for themselves but for him who for their sakes died and was raised."

We set off back for Lilongwe at sunset and we sang on the way home too. We can all look forward to the dawning of the great Resurrection day, when we meet the Firstborn from the dead and there with all the redeemed will be this young African woman, who died in giving birth to her firstborn.

## *'Come over . . . and help us'*

THE above words are recorded in Acts 16:9. They refer to a vision which Paul had at Troas, in which he saw a man over the sea in Macedonia, appealing "Come over into Macedonia and help us."

Like many other words of scripture they are alive with meaning for today. The immediate occasion for quoting them is the experiences my family and I had in meeting during our holidays in June with the small assembly at Devonport, Plymouth.

These experiences we shall long remember for the rich fellowship and pure joy they afforded us. We had sent word to the secretary of the church of our proposed holiday at Torquay, some 32 miles away. He replied giving us exact directions how to find our way to the meeting-place, and to say that the church had deputed a sister, Sister Brown, to look after our welfare during the two Lord's Days we were to worship with the church. The church undertook all financial responsibilities for our hospitality.

We had greatly looked forward to meeting with the saints in Devonport, having heard something of their love and hospitality to the brethren, and their gratitude for any help given to them in the Lord's service. They are an isolated assembly, being about 130 miles from the nearest sister church—Bristol. But the realisation of the fellowship exceeded our anticipations.

On the first Lord's Day about 12 of us broke the bread together, and on the second about 10. But the divine quorum ("where two or three...") had been reached, and we proved the truth of Christ's other words—"there am I in the midst." Sometimes we have found that the smaller the meeting the more real and powerful seems the blessing of God's Spirit. Certainly we were wonderfully blessed by God's presence.

The church at Devonport continues faithful under great difficulties. They meet in an Oddfellows' Hall in a part of the city being largely rebuilt (another demonstration that we are "a peculiar people"?). They rarely see a fresh face other than their own small membership. Yet in their isolation they are forward to help with gifts those churches which have from time to time made appeals for financial help for various purposes. And thus they have practical fellowship with "those of like precious faith." Only some four brothers—Peter Lakeman, Kirkwood, Vosper and Fox—remain to carry on the work and to give the teaching. Hence, they are most grateful for any such help given by brethren who visit them from time to time.

And hence the appropriateness of the quotation above. This is my own appeal to brethren who spend a holiday anywhere in the vicinity to join with our brethren at Devonport in worship and breaking of bread. Any help that can be given in exhorting and teaching the church will also be most warmly appreciated. Will anyone intending to spend a holiday thereabouts write to Peter Lakeman, 598 Budshhead Road, Whitleigh, Plymouth, Devon?

This appeal to "Come over and help us" applies also, of course, to brethren taking holidays anywhere near meeting-places of assemblies. Any such churches will welcome wholeheartedly brethren from near or far who can meet with them. And such fellowship and services add that to the holiday which makes it complete—the blessing of God.

C. MELLING.

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**Let us go on unto perfection. (Heb. 6, 1).**

DO not let your life be a constant subtraction, a continuous depletion, a steady draining away of spiritual vitality; but let it be an uninterrupted growth, a steady enrichment. Go from good to better and from better to best. It is impossible to give what you haven't got. You cannot lift others above your own level. Grow therefore in grace and in gladness. Add, day by day, to your soul's rich store.

—Dr. F. W. Boreham.

**My times are in Thy hand (Psalm 31, 15).**

SAMUEL RUTHERFORD said "Expose yourself to the circumstances of His choice." That means that when you and I present ourselves to God in the morning and present the day to Him, nothing can come into that day that is not allowed by the permissive will of God. Everything has its place and everything has its purpose.—John L. Bird.

## God, Time, and a Discovery

THERE is a saying, not to be heard nowadays, perhaps, but may sometimes be found in recordings of history, that "man's extremity of need is God's opportunity for service." To the believer in God that may seem a true and worthwhile saying, but to the man who says "there is no God"—and we fear there are many who both think and say that, such a saying will be just a jumble of words without meaning and worthless.

The writer of this article has been reminded of that old saying by a recent discovery in the scriptures of an instance (there may be others) where an extremity of need was not human but of God. This, to our readers, may seem a strange thing to say, but it is true.

To begin at the beginning—and that is where it did begin—with words spoken by God in the garden of Eden. Three culprits stood before Him awaiting judgment to be passed upon them. To the tempter, God said: I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel. A cryptic saying, and a judgment, which took a long time to reach fulfillment.

This matter of God and time is worth a little study. The poet who wrote "The mills of God grind slowly, but they grind exceeding small," may have been thinking in terms of time, having these early and long-spaced periods in his mind. Peter, who wrote of events much nearer to our time, likened a day with God to a thousand years, and a thousand years to one day, as though, for Peter, God and time were irreconcilable.

God, however, in His dealings with man, has shown Himself to be not indifferent to time. Indeed, if we may be forgiven for saying it, through all the years of history, God seems to have had his eyes fixed on the "clock" very closely.

The story of Jonah and the big fish is an instance in proof, for it is a masterpiece of timing. The ship, the crew, the fish, the stormy seas—tossed about though they might be—were all instruments in God's hands, to be used, not only to save the prophet whose life He was in danger of losing, but to build up also a picture for Christ to use in the coming age of the length of time He would be incarcerated before His resurrection. A story that not only shows the power of God, but helps to prove the inspiration of scripture as God's word.

This matter of time is important. It was in the fullness of time that Christ came, and once the decision was made, time entered into every incident that ensued. It was to Zachariah, the father of John the Baptist, that the Messenger of God first approached (before John was born) and Gabriel, while bringing good news, treated Zachariah with some harshness, as though to impose upon his mind what was taking place before his eyes. But it was with no sign of authority that Gabriel later appeared before Mary. Here his manner is different, for it is here that God is seen to be in that extremity of need to which reference has been made. God's need is of a woman—a virgin. She had been chosen by observation, doubtless by God Himself, but has no knowledge of it, and so Gabriel is sent to her, both to inform and explain to her—which would be necessary—and to appeal to her for assistance, which was also necessary. There would be much to explain.

Her response to this first approach showed the quickness of mind of an intelligent woman. "I!—bear a child!—I have no husband." She would need to know a great deal more than this story reveals, as told by Luke. The decision, when arrived at, would need to be of her own making for none but she herself could decide a matter of this kind. It could not be decided for her. God is just in all His ways, and justice to Mary demanded that she should be told everything that was necessary for her to know. To Mary a child must have had a father, but this child that Mary would bear would have no father. We of this age, who read this story and understand it—instructed by scripture—may know about that. The Immortal Word was to become mortal, and she, by doing what was desired of her, would be the person through whom the change would be brought about. There would be no conception in the natural sense of the word, because the life (the child) she would bear was already in being. Conception would therefore consist of her understanding and acceptance of what was being told to her, and would be purely of the mind. Let those who wonder about this and doubt its truth note what Mary herself said in accepting Gabriel's explanation: "I am the Lord's servant. As you have spoken to me, So be it." Mary's conception lay in her acceptance of the words spoken to her: a conception of the mind.

A closing remark. How up-to-date the Word of God is! When men are denying the existence of God on every hand, as it were—there is in the Book itself, the Bible, an account which fully establishes the reality of God, for no man that ever lived could propound so remarkable a series of events as it contains, unless God was with him.

W. BARKER.

## Three Covenants (Isaiah 24, verse 5)

"THE earth also is defiled under the inhabitants thereof; because they have transgressed the laws, changed the ordinance, broken the everlasting covenant."

The proposition here made is that the above scripture is a prophecy made by Isaiah concerning the near end of the gospel age.

Many misquote this verse. They read it as: "Transgress the law, changed the ordinances, broken the everlasting covenant."

Peter tells us in his first epistle chapter 1, verses 10 to 12, "Of which salvation the prophets have inquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you: searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow. Unto whom it was revealed that not unto themselves, but unto us they did minister the things, which are now reported unto you by them that have preached the gospel unto you with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven; which things the angels desire to look into." Also in Psalm 102:18, we read, "This shall be written for the generation to come. And the people which shall be created shall praise the Lord."

These texts from Peter and the Psalmist indicate that the prophet Isaiah was not writing to the people of his own day and generation, nor for the dispensation under which he lived. This should become clear when the particulars of other everlasting covenants are carefully studied.

### Three Covenants

We note that before the instituting of the gospel dispensation, God had made three covenants referred to as everlasting. These covenants had an ordinance of so intimate a character that they were indissoluble from the covenant.

The first everlasting covenant, in Genesis 9:16, is the one God made with Noah and his posterity, when He made an ordinance. We read that He set His bow in the heavens, which forever has assured the inhabitants of the earth that never again would the Lord destroy the earth with a flood of waters. To this present day the Lord has been faithful to that covenant. This ordinance cannot be changed by any man. "It is the Lord's doing and it is marvellous in our eyes."

The second everlasting covenant mentioned is that which God made with Abraham. (Genesis 17:10). "This is my covenant, which ye shall keep between me and you and thy seed after thee; Every man child among you shall be circumcised." It was possible for Abraham's descendants to vary or change the ordinance given, but we have no record anywhere in the Old Testament of his seed doing so. Indeed, we find that the Israelites gloried in and boasted of their fidelity in keeping the ordinance as given. The ordinance of circumcision was incorporated in the law given at Mount Sinai.

It is true that this ordinance of circumcision was abrogated with the entire law given to the Israelites through Moses, when the Lord Jesus Christ died on the cross.

The third everlasting covenant was the one God made with the children of Israel at Sinai. The word everlasting is not used in the text; Exodus 31:16, 17 uses the term "perpetual" and "for ever." The words "for ever" and "perpetual" are understood to mean as long as a thing, considering the surrounding circumstances, can exist.

We notice in the Mosaic covenant that God made an ordinance—the keeping of the Sabbath. So long as the covenant was in force, the Sabbath was observed. This is plainly seen from the gospels, Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. The children of Israel were blamed for neglecting to keep the Sabbath, but never for changing it. They did not change it to the first day or any other day of the week, it was always the seventh day.

From the foregoing we can be certain that the prophet in verse 5 is not referring to any of these three covenants, but rather is foretelling of another everlasting covenant with its accompanying ordinance. The only everlasting covenant of which we have knowledge is that referred to in Hebrews, chapter 13, verse 20: "Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant . . ." This covenant is also referred to as the new covenant (see Matt. 26:28-29; Mark 14:23 and 24; Luke 22:20; and Hebrews, chapters 8:9 and 10, R.V.)

When God makes any covenant with His people, He determines the conditions to be observed. If His people vary or change His conditions in any particular they break that covenant.

In anticipation of the near sacrifice of Himself on the cross, He instituted a feast to be observed by His disciples in remembrance of Himself as the mediator of the new and everlasting covenant. We note in particular that when the Lord gave the cup to His disciples, He declared the cup to be "the blood of the new covenant." Of this cup, after giving thanks, Matthew tells us, "He gave it to His disciples saying, 'Drink ye all of it.'" Mark tells us in his gospel that they (His disciples) "all drank of it." From these two accounts it is certain that the disciples all drank from a common cup. Luke expresses it, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood." This statement by Luke further emphasises the fact that the Lord ordained a common cup.

To substitute individual cups in place of a common cup is to change the ordinance of the everlasting covenant.

I am asked by some holding to individual cup practice, "What laws have we transgressed?" I reply, the laws of faith and love. These laws embrace the whole teaching of the New Testament.

Paul exhorts Timothy (2 Tim. 1:13) "Hold fast the form of sound words which thou hast heard of me, in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus."

"So then, faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." (Romans 10:17).

We can only have faith insofar as the word of God teaches; and the Lord tells us, "... If a man love me, he will keep my words" (John 14:23. See also Romans 16:26). With reference to the gospel, the Apostle declares, "For the grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant with faith and love which is in Christ Jesus." (1 Tim. 1:14).

Let us hear Paul's concluding exhortation to the Church at Ephesus: "Peace be to the brethren, and love with faith from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Grace be with all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in uncorruptness" (Ephesians 6:23, 24 R.V.).

SAM WILSON.

## *Good Man or Saved Man*

UNTIL near the beginning of the fifteenth Century few people believed the earth to be round. In 1492 Columbus and his men arrived east by sailing west and thus proved the spherical character of the earth. Columbus did not make the earth round: he only proved a fact which had been true from the creation. The multitude's denial of it did not change things one whit.

There are little-recognised truths in the spiritual universe also. Whether or not men accept them does not change the nature of spiritual truths any more than it affects matters in the kingdom of nature.

As an example of the things we have in mind, the Bible teaches that Jesus established only one church—that he gave his blood for only one, and now recognises only one as his. A simple but effective way of proving this to yourself is to recall the words of Jesus about the church the first time it was mentioned in the New Testament. "Upon this rock I will build my church: and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it" (Matt. 16:18). The Lord said my "church"—singular, not "churches"—plural. A simple argument? Yes, but it is powerful. Inspiration differentiated between singular and plural forms (see Gal. 3:16). The Lord knew how to say "churches" if that is what he had meant.

The above conclusion is in agreement with the other inspired statements on the subject. In Eph. 4:4 Paul said, "There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling." What is that one body? The same writer, in the same book, declares it to be the church (Eph. 1:22). And to the Corinthian church Paul said, "Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular."

"But," says one, "these verses did not say there is only one body or church." Now really! How plain can the Bible be? One always means one not two or a dozen. However, if you wish it to say only one, we will oblige by furnishing the reference which does just that. First Cor. 12:20 states, "But now are they many members, yet but one body." The Amplified Version says there is "but a single body."

When a Christian presents these truths he will sometimes receive this reply: "But don't you agree there are good people in all denominations?" The Christian is then made to feel (and I think that is the design of the query) that he must either give up the Bible's teaching on unity or else alienate himself from all those

who are not members of the church by saying none of them are good. He need not feel that way, however; for the above question is mis-directed. And he should merely point this out to his questioner. In it, one is asking about one thing, but implying another. A good man and a saved man are not necessarily the same.

Of course, there are good moral men in all churches. But is that equivalent to being saved? Cornelius was a good man; who would doubt it? Read his moral qualifications in Acts chapter ten. However, for salvation he was told to send for Peter and he would be told what he "ought to do." We do not earn our membership in the family of God by being good, any more than we earned membership in our father's family that way. We became members of our earthly family by being born into it. In the same way, but by a different kind of birth, we become members of God's family, the church. Jesus said, "Except a man be born of the water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God" (Jno. 3:5). There is little doubt that the birth of the water mentioned here is baptism. It must be preceded, of course, by faith in Christ (Heb. 11:6), and repentance of one's sins (Lk. 13:3). After one is born into God's family his good moral works and faithful worship of God serve to keep him in good standing with his Father.

Our conclusion then is this: It is fine to be a good man, but it is infinitely better to be a saved man. A good man may be just that, and no more. A saved man is one who has experienced the new birth, is a faithful worshipper of God, and besides all this, a good moral man too.

JAMES ORTEN,

## SCRIPTURE READINGS

AUGUST, 1965

1—Isaiah 38	Luke 8:40-56
8—Exodus 16:9-36	Luke 9:1-27
15—Ex. 33:17 to 34:8	Luke 9:28-50
22—2 Kings 1	Luke 9:51 to 10:16
29—Deut. 6:1-15	Luke 10:17-37

### THE GOOD SAMARITAN

THIS, like other stories which Jesus told, has become part of the warp and woof of society. Regardless of any sort of religious feelings the term "Samaritan" has become a synonym for a kind and generous character. The fact that Jesus, to teach a very important lesson, used the name of a people hated by the Jews of His time, has so to speak put a halo of goodness around them. It would be a mistake to think this is justified by the facts. Hatred is never right, of course, but there was good reason why the Jews should hate the Samaritans, and the feeling was mutual. The woman at the well referred to the basic cause. The Samaritans claimed that Mount Gerizim with its temple was the true centre of the worship of Jehovah—and Jesus made it quite clear that this was ignorance (John 4, 22). We read in 1 Kings 17 of the very doubtful character of their worship, as it originated and continued.

Survivors of the cult base their beliefs on the Pentateuch, particularly on Deut. 27:4 where they read Gerizim for

Ebal! Their present High Priests claim descent from Uzziel (Exodus 6:18). Very few now remain, probably about 200 living in Nablous and Tel Aviv, and still observing the Passover, and exhibiting a copy of the Pentateuch to visitors, claiming it to be very ancient. The text differs only minutely from our present version.

Many of the Jews avoided passing through Samaria even when this greatly lengthened their journey from the northern province by making them cross the Jordan twice and travel many miles more. The Samaritans on their part were as unfriendly as they could be to pilgrims and others passing through. Historically Jews and Samaritans did sometimes combine against common enemies, but generally they lived in continuous hostility from their beginning onwards, and the animosity was intense in the Saviour's time.

We know that Jesus never showed prejudice against these people, who did at least believe in One God, Jehovah, as revealed in the books of Moses, and observed in great measure the laws, including circumcision and the sabbath. He had experienced their hostility when journeying with His disciples towards Jerusalem (Luke 9:51-56). How could Samaritans feel kindly towards a Messiah going to Jerusalem? He should have been going to Gerizim! Besides a large number of people journeying through their territory might be an embarrassment. Thomson in "The Land and the Book" writes of the inhabitants of the neighbourhood, "they are fanatical, rude and rebellious."



It is Luke who reports the grateful Samaritan—the one leper out of ten who returned to say “Thank you!” (17:15-19). He also “glorified God.” The others were presumably Jews. What a reflection lies in Jesus’s sad words, “but where are the nine?” Surely the Saviour must have felt deeply this base ingratitude—but what of mankind today?

With this background to the story, we think over the details. The way was indeed downhill—600 feet descent from Jerusalem to the Jordan valley. It was a desolate road infested with robbers. All who travelled it did so with some risk. The priest saw the prostrate victim and avoided him. Doubtless he had been in Jerusalem for his priestly duties, or was going there for that purpose. The law of God was his constant interest and instruction. If he must restore his brother’s sheep (Deut. 22:1-4), what about the brother himself? The Levite with special duties also in the worship and service, came along, got nearer, but failed to help. We wonder if his conscience troubled him as the picture of the wounded man came to mind—or was he too hardened to bother?

Now comes the Samaritan, the alien, the stranger, “the worshipper of the pigeon” (a term applied to them by the Jews in derision). His heart warms with compassion. He forgets his own danger—made doubly obvious by the sight of the injured man. He opens up his baggage, takes out the healing and cleansing elements, and providing the necessary bandages, binds up the wounds. He then lifts the helpless man on his beast, and walks beside them. Finally having reached the nearest available refuge, he exercises his thoughtful care and generously not only leaves money for immediate needs but undertakes to bear any further expense. Here there is no thought of payment—“Lend, never despairing.”

The contrast drawn between those who knew the law of God and were His servants and the one whose religion and race were regarded by the lawyer with hostility and suspicion, must have “struck home.” The questioner, as always with the Lord’s handling, became the one questioned. He was put to the test (read verse 25 again.) He had reservations (as most of us have, consciously or unconsciously about obedience to Christ’s requirements and example)—and they would apply to the kindness required by loving his neighbour as himself. The story is from the Master Mind. Its lesson was so clear to the lawyer that his answer, avoiding the name Samaritan, must have revealed his defective spiritual condition to himself. Who is my neighbour? Who is yours and what are we doing about it?

R. B. SCOTT.

## Parables of Jesus

### 2: The Lost Sheep

(Suggested passages of Scripture for study: Matt. 18:12-14; Luke 15:3-7; John 10:1-16).

WE first of all remind our readers of the definition of a parable—“An earthly story with a heavenly meaning.” Our previous parable was of the inanimate object of a coin, an article without feeling, life or any power of its own. But in this one we have an animal, a creature with a will of its own, that can be led but not driven, and with an infinite capacity for going astray. Sheep are timid, easily led, often wilful, love to be in a crowd, have very little sense of direction. Their capacity for going astray is at its best a nuisance, and at its worst a positive danger to the sheep, and a serious loss to its owner.

Yet, are we humans any different? We think our Lord was very wise when he likened us to sheep, as the prophet Isaiah did in Chap. 53, v. 6. “All we like sheep have gone astray, we have turned everyone to his own way.” Is it not true we are wilful, disobedient, like to be in a crowd, and so easily led astray; and that, also like sheep, we know how to bleat when things go wrong.

Let us take a look at an eastern sheepfold with its sheep and shepherds. These are usually square pens, varying according to the size of the flock.

At the entrance is a gate at which the shepherd lies down to sleep when he has gathered his flock into the fold for the night. Hence the Lord speaks of His being the “door of the sheepfold.” We can visualise the shepherd counting his sheep to make sure they are all there, and his consternation when he finds one missing; we can picture him counting them a second time to make sure. Yet still one missing. This means making secure the sheepfold and going out into the night to seek the one that has got lost. Only a shepherd who has tended sheep in wild desolate country can know the anxiety of searching at dead of night for that wilful sheep that has got itself lost.

In John 10 Jesus draws a vivid picture of the difference between shepherds, the owner and the hireling; the latter runs away at the sign of danger and leaves the sheep to take care of themselves; but the one to whom the sheep belong searches diligently till he finds them, defying danger to do so, with his light searching among the crags and rocks of the hillside, calling for his sheep, until he hears that plaintive bleat that tells him where his lost sheep is; and with what joy, that only a shepherd knows,

he takes that lost one on his shoulder and bears it home to the safety of the sheepfold.

In Luke 15: v. 7 is recorded that lovely picture of "joy in the presence of the angels of God over the one sinner repenting more than over the ninety and nine that never went astray"—such is the value in God's sight of a human soul.

What are the lessons we can learn from this story? One, it was a sheep that went astray; not a lamb, but a sheep that ought to have known better, but evidently didn't. In my journey to my daily work, I see sheep and lambs feeding in the fields. What has impressed me in noting their feeding habits is their tendency to try the grass at the other side of the hedge; here is a field full of rich nutritious grass with hay and similar foodstuffs available. Yet we have noticed the sheep stretching their necks to reach grass in the next field, and, if they can find a way through the hedge, they are through, evidently, though unconsciously acting on the old proverb, "The grass is always greener on the other side of the hedge."

We can thus visualise how the sheep of our parable come to get lost, sampling a bit of grass here and a bit there, ignoring that which is at hand and following its nose so to speak. All very well in daylight, but night comes on and wandering down the hillside in the dark the sheep slips on the steep mountain-side and down he falls. We can imagine the terrified cries that would go up on the night air. This call the shepherd would hear, and to it would joyfully respond. Remember what our Lord said about His sheep knowing His voice. No sweeter sound ever fell on that sheep's ears than the sound of his master's voice that night; we can but imagine the comfort and security the sheep would find in his master's arms.

Yes; it was a sheep belonging to the fold that went astray, that caused its master all that anxiety and careful searching. And we submit that this and at least two other of our parables, the previous one and the next one, illustrate church members: not so much sinners who have never known the grace of God, but members of the household of faith who have strayed from their first love. No wonder there was rejoicing more over the return of the lost one than of the ninety and nine that went not astray.

The Scripture teaches us that there is one fold, one door, and one shepherd. As sheep in the sheepfold it behoves us to take a lesson from the sheep: don't be too engrossed in the "grass at the other side of the hedge." Know the Master's voice; heed it; learn to turn the way that voice wants you to go and to keep in the fold. Far too many

of the Lord's people find excuses to depart from the fold and get lost; then when hardship and difficulty come into their lives, they start to bleat like lost sheep, "Why should this happen to me?" Yet often it is their own foolish actions that have helped to precipitate the crisis in their lives.

If by any chance any of our readers are in that unhappy position of having strayed from the fold, don't hesitate to come back. Remember, not only do the members of the church rejoice, but as the Bible says, "there is more joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth more than over ninety and nine just persons that need no repentance."

One always feels when hearing of some members of the church staying away from meetings needlessly, that they have forgotten the price paid for their ransom, the sins they have committed that Christ had to pay the price for. They have lost sight of the suffering the Lord endured to bring about their pardon, not realising the heartache their actions cause. The writer has been hurt and discouraged many times by fickle brethren who for the most paltry reasons have deserted the church. If we can be hurt by these things, what does our Lord feel about them? If we could only try and visualise our Lord's sufferings more, and what caused them, we should not be so easily led astray like wilful sheep. Well does the hymn say,

"None of the ransomed ever knew,  
How deep were the waters crossed,  
Nor how dark the night the Lord went  
through  
Ere he found the sheep that was  
lost."

H. BAINES.

## NEWS FROM THE CHURCHES

Aylesbury. From June 20th to 27th, a special series of meetings was held, on the theme "Christianity in a Scientific Age", presented by Bro. Virgil R. Trout, of the Sunset church, Lubbock, Texas, who came over from the U.S. specially for this series. It had been well advertised by leaflet, poster and in the local Press, and a good number of visitors were present each evening. We were also well supported by brethren from other churches. Bro. Trout is an expert on Christian Evidences. He knows how to present his material effectively and brought out some masterly lessons. The general theme of the campaign and the form of the lessons, as lectures rather than as normal gospel addresses, were by way of an experiment. We were

not necessarily looking for immediate so much as for long-term results, and we feel that these will be achieved. We thank Bro. Trout for his readiness to help us, even to the extent of raising his own travel fund, and our thanks are for those who had this fellowship with him in the gospel. We also appreciate the willing co-operation of the Sunset church, at Lubbock.

**Blackburn, New Wellington Street, Mill Hill.**—To mark the opening of the assembly in this area of Blackburn, a series of four gospel addresses were delivered from Saturday, May 1st to Wednesday, May 5th, 1965.

Bro. Leonard Morgan from the church at Hindley served us well in the preaching of the gospel on each occasion, making plain the Lord's way of salvation to those still outside the Kingdom. A number of non-members attended each evening, especially on the Saturday and Lord's Day, when the church here was greatly encouraged by both the presence of friends and the unflinching support of Christians from the Wigan district.

It will be remembered that this congregation formerly met in hired rooms at Park Road, Blackburn from September, 1961, until early in this present year. Owing to the town's redevelopment scheme affecting the district in and around Park Road, new premises had to be found. At times it seemed that this task would be impossible, but by God's help and earnest prayer, the difficulties, though many, were overcome, to enable us to bear witness to the truth in this district. Bro. Morgan willingly availed himself to serve at the formal opening of the new premises, so that with the help of local newspaper articles and many weeks of preparation, both inside and outside the building, by every available member of this assembly, the real work of the church began in her new home. The assistance given by brethren of other churches has also been a source of encouragement, particularly the financial help as indicated in the following report submitted by the treasurer.

To the present time, we have spent £1,075 on the purchase and renovation. Gifts received from sister churches and individuals have amounted to £144. The debt now stands at £500. A new toilet has still to be paid for, and a baptistry to be installed in addition to the work of preaching the gospel. Should any of our sister churches feel they can help to lessen our debt we shall be extremely grateful.

Please remember us in your prayers, that we might be an effective witness in our new venture. To God be the glory.  
R.R.

**Peterhead.**—At the close of a month's mission conducted by Bro. David Dougall we had the joy of witnessing the immersion of Isabel Strachan. Bro. Dougall's ministry confirmed the saints and presented a Saviour "whom to know is life eternal." The seed has been faithfully sowed and in due time, if the ground is fertile, will produce a harvest. To God be the glory.

James Buchan.

**Scholes, Wigan.** With great joy we report the immersion into Christ of William Bishop on May 30th. Aged 62, and with many years in the Methodist Church. Through personal contact and study of the Word with our Bro. H. Kearsley, he began to attend the gospel meetings; seeing the light of the glorious gospel, he expressed the desire to follow his Saviour.  
J. MELLING.

## OBITUARY

**Ilkeston.** We are sorry to announce the death of Bro. Leonard Booth, eldest son of Sister Nellie Booth, on Monday, June 21st, at the age of 38. Ill-health and misfortune have been the lot of Bro. Leonard for a long time.

Our sympathy goes out to his father and mother, brothers and sister, who are left to mourn his loss. We pray that they will find comfort and consolation by placing their trust in our gracious heavenly Father. May they find that underneath are the everlasting arms.  
F.G.

**Pittenweem.** We record with deep sorrow the passing of Sis. Margaret Watson, on Lord's Day, April 4th, at the age of 78 years. Our sister had been a member of the church from the period immediately following the first world war, and was noted for her devotion and steadfastness in a church which has been steadily declining over the years, and which has finally had to discontinue meeting by reason of lack of numbers and age of members. In an age of almost complete indifference to what the word of God requires of us, she was constant in her attendance, quick to serve where she could, and earnest in her adherence to the faith which was once delivered to the saints, often under the most trying and adverse of conditions.

Jesus said, "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. And I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand."

We commit her to the eternal care of the Good Shepherd whom she so loved.

Bro. John Mayes officiated at the funeral.  
John M. Wood.

## COMING EVENTS

**Birmingham: Summer Lane.** Hundredth anniversary and mission, Saturday, August 28th, 1965. Tea at 4 p.m.; meeting at 5.30. Speaker: Bro. Albert Winstanley.

A very cordial invitation to rejoice with us on this auspicious occasion.

Lord's Day, 10.30 a.m. and 6.30 p.m. Monday (Bank Holiday): Outing, if fine; social in schoolroom if wet. (Ring BIR 5559). Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday, meetings at 7.30 p.m. Saturday, September 4th: Meeting at 6 p.m.

We shall be greatly helped by the support of our brethren at any or all of these meetings. If any would like to stay over for any part of this period we would be pleased to find accommodation. Please write Mr. E. Hardy, 67 Broomhill Road, Birmingham, 23.



**WHOSEVER will come after Me, let him deny himself.** (Mark 8:34.)

THE road to self-discovery is self-denial. Lose yourself, give yourself away to the will of God and the work of God; then you will find yourself. It is the only way to self-fulfilment.—Dr. A. Skevington Wood.

**THE fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness.** (Ephesians 5:9.)

IF you look after your relationship with the Lord Jesus, He will look after your fruitfulness. If you keep close to Him there will be fruit from your life, even if you don't always see it.—Leith Samuel.

## CHANGE OF ADDRESS

Brother and Sister A. E. Winstanley. After August 12th, 1965, all correspondence should be sent to: 59 Frederick Street, Loughborough, Leicestershire. (Telephone, Loughborough 3978).

John Garnett, 55 Chestnut Avenue, Wheatley Hills, Doncaster, Yorkshire. (Tel.: Doncaster 3746.

## CHANGE OF SECRETARY

Tunbridge Wells (corner of Cambrian Road and Upper Grosvenor Road). From August 1st, 1965, all correspondence will be dealt with by Derek L. Daniell, 38 Hopwood Gardens, Tunbridge Wells, Kent. (Telephone, Tunbridge Wells 23864).

Kirkcaldy, Rose Street. All communications should be sent to: A. Roberts, Senr., 98 Kennedy Crescent, Kirkcaldy, Fife.

**Dennyloanhead.**—Please note the following change of secretary: Letters for the church at Dennyloanhead should be addressed to: Andrew Scobbie, Bank Cottage, 186 Kilsyth Road, Hags, Nr. Bonnybridge. Stirlingshire. Phone: Banknock 329.



**IN My Father's house are many mansions.** (John 14:2.)

## OUR ASSURANCE

EVEN if God, for our eternal good, does deny us some green pastures while we walk this earth, the assurance that Christ is preparing for us a place in the "many mansions" yonder, and that He will welcome us personally, should fill our hearts with joy and our lips with song.—K. C. Master.

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**THE SCRIPTURE STANDARD** is published monthly. Prices: Home, one copy for one year, 12/-; two copies 20/6; three copies 28/6 post free. Canada and U.S.A.: one copy, one dollar 80 cents. All orders and payments to the 'S.S.' Agent and Treasurer: PAUL JONES, 41 Pendragon Road, Birmingham 22B. Tel. Birchfield 5559.

All correspondence, including articles, news items, coming events, etc., to be sent, before the 10th of the month to the Editor, C. MELLING, 133 Long Lane, Hindley, Lancs. Payments to PAUL JONES, address as above.

**NOTICES.** Scale of charges: 3/- for first 3 lines or less; 8d. each subsequent line. Repeats (if notified when sending copy) half original charge. Payments to PAUL JONES, address as above.

**EVANGELIST FUND:** Contributions to R. McDONALD, who is also Secretary of Conference Committee, "Aldersyde," 10 Mardale Road, Bennett Lane, Dewsbury, York.

**NYASALAND Mission:** Contributions to W. STEELE, 31 Niddrie Road, Portobello, Edinburgh, Mid Lothian.

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