

The SCRIPTURE STANDARD

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

Vol. 65 No. 4

APRIL, 1998

THE THIEF ON THE CROSS

In last month's article I mentioned the different perceptions in the religious world of the term "Christian" but closed the article with a reference to the steps set out in the N.T. as to how people become Christians. I quoted every example of conversion in the Acts of the Apostles, and showed that penitents in every single case were required not only to believe in Christ, but to repent as alien sinners, and to be baptised (immersed) for the remission of their sins. I had hoped in that article to have dealt with the case of "the thief on the cross" but was prevented through lack of space. I now take the opportunity to offer a few remarks on the subject, for what they are worth, and as always, I urge readers to take issue with what is said, if thought to be contrary to God's inspired word. I shall be happy to print any contrary view. The reason for devoting this attention to "the thief on the cross" is, of course, because, in discussing the procedures of becoming Christians with enquirers and others, we find that, sooner or later, someone will insist on being saved like the thief on the cross. Usually they will say something along the following lines: i.e. I know that the conversions in the Acts involved belief, repentance and baptism, but the thief on the cross was never baptised and yet he was taken into heaven. I, therefore, want to be saved without baptism; just like the thief on the cross." How realistic is the wish?

THE CIRCUMSTANCES

And just how was the thief saved? Jesus, as we know, was crucified between two thieves. At first both thieves railed against Jesus for His apparent ineptitude, but later, one of the thieves repented of his action and rebuked the other thief; saying to Jesus, "Lord, remember me when thou comest into Thy kingdom." Jesus said to the thief, "Verily I say unto you, today thou shalt be with Me in paradise." (Luke 23:23). Where did they both go *that day*? To the "man in the street" the term "paradise" means heaven, but we know Jesus did not go to heaven that day, or for about forty days thereafter. His body was, of course, placed in the tomb, but His soul was taken to *Hades*. Peter, on Pentecost (Acts 2:31) quoted the psalmist in averring that "His (Christ's) soul was not left in hell (Hades) neither did His flesh see corruption." And so, *that day*, Jesus and the thief went not to heaven, but to the "unseen world" of the dead, and this seems to be confirmed by Jesus saying to Mary at His resurrection, "Touch Me not for I am not yet ascended to My Father" (John 20:17). It would appear that Hades, (the waiting place of the dead), had two very different compartments; one restful and the other quite the opposite, illustrated, perhaps, in Luke 16. When the beggar died he was carried by the angels into the Bosom of Abraham, whereas the rich man was separated from the beggar by "a great gulf fixed" and

suffered torment. "Abraham's Bosom" may well be the "paradise" to which the thief was taken.

INTELLIGENT USE OF THE SCRIPTURES

Ignorance is bliss sometimes, but while God smiles on innocence He doesn't necessarily smile on ignorance. Not only does God want us to know the scriptures, but He also wants us to apply them carefully and intelligently. Jesus chided the Sadducees on their ignorance of scripture and said, "**Ye do err, not knowing the scriptures, or the power of God**" (Matt. 22:29). On the other hand, Paul urged Timothy to "**Study (agonize) to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.**" (2 Tim. 2:15). Here Paul shows the need for Bible students to be able to rightly divide, or rightly handle. God's word of truth; and not to be as workmen that need to be ashamed. Peter went a bit farther and envisaged a situation where our misapplication of scripture could have extremely serious consequences and not just be regarded as a harmless foible. He was speaking of Paul's writings and said, "**As also in all his (Paul's) epistles, speaking in them of these things; in which are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction.**" Thus Peter classifies Paul's writings as "scripture" standing alongside "the other scriptures" (the O.T.) and refers to the vulnerability of both, to the danger of being misapplied: i.e. wrested from their intended application by persons, either unstable or unlearned, to their own destruction. This statement from the apostle will hopefully give us the required sobriety of attitude towards our application of God's word, and induce us to tread carefully and respectfully lest we join the ranks of the unstable and unlearned, and wrest God's sacred truth. With this preamble let us look at the dispensational divisions of God's word.

BROADLY, THREE DISPENSATIONS

It is, I suppose, a basic rule of Bible study that we must, in any quotation of scripture, closely observe the identity of the speaker; the identity of the hearers and the historical dispensation in which the speech took place. For instance, if the speaker is Moses and the hearers are Israelites, we can be sure that words spoken were not for the consumption of Gentiles. This includes even "The Ten Commandments" and we obey nine of the ten today, not because they were in the Decalogue but because Christ brought improved versions of them over into the N.T. The dispensation of **the PATRIARCHS** lasted from the time of Adam until the **Mosaic Law** was promulgated on Mount Sinai. Obviously Moses' law never applied to Gentiles and Gentiles neither shared in the immediate blessings conferred on Israel, nor were they ever required to observe the obligations of Moses' law. The **Mosaic Dispensation** was in turn, abrogated, quite literally, on the Cross at Calvary, and superseded by the "**Christian Age**" and the New Covenant with God. This last "age" will last to the end of time. Thus the Bible is divided into only three great dispensations: Adam to Moses: Moses to Christ's death; and Calvary to the end of time. Although this would seem to be fairly straight forward, there are some who confuse the Jewish and the Christian dispensations and, to take a very simple example, we often see on some Church Notice Board details of the "Christian Sabbath" services. As children, many of us were reprimanded for even whistling on the "Sabbath" (Sunday), or engaging in any activity whatsoever, when, in fact, Gentiles were not only never *required* to observe the Sabbath, but would never have been *allowed* to keep it. It was argued that "Christian Sabbath" was not a contradiction in terms because the Sabbath Day rules had been transferred to the "Lord's Day." Some years ago I wrote on two separate occasions to "The Lord's Day Observance Society" asking for any evidence in the N.T. of any such transference but never ever received a reply.

Thus we must make due recognition of the different *ages* or *dispensations* in the Bible and *interpret scripture accordingly*. John the Baptist appeared near the end of the Mosaic dispensation to prepare the Jews for their coming Messiah, and to the Jews he *confined* his activities. Likewise Christ's ministry was *confined* to the last three years of the Mosaic dispensation, and His call was also confined to "**the lost sheep of the House of Israel.**" Even when approached in a good cause by the Syrophenician woman, Jesus said, "**I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the House of Israel**" and when pressed, said, "**It is not meet to take the children's bread, and cast it to dogs**" (Matt. 15:24). However, after His death, and just prior to His ascension to God, Jesus sent His apostles into ALL THE WORLD (not just the lost sheep of Israel) to preach His gospel to EVERY CREATURE. In short, Christ's ministry, like John's, was during the Mosaic Dispensation, and, as we shall see, Jesus did things in that dispensation which we can't expect to be done today.

CHRIST'S MINISTRY TO THE LOST SHEEP OF ISRAEL

During Christ's three-year-long ministry, He mingled with the crowds, healed the sick and performed many miracles. In His various confrontations and conversations with His fellow Jews, He saw fit, in appropriate cases, to forgive sins **on whatever terms He pleased**, or indeed, **upon no terms whatsoever**. We are not to imagine that His words of pardon were confined only to the thief on the cross: other examples of His magnanimity are recorded and they, perhaps, represent only the tip of the proverbial iceberg. For instance, He forgave the palsied man, saying "**Son, thy sins be forgiven thee**" and there was no mention whatever about faith, repentance (or baptism), or indeed whether the man actually believed in Jesus. It was the man's friends who seemed to have the faith. Likewise (in Luke 7:47) Jesus forgave the sins of the penitent woman who washed His feet with her tears and dried them with her hair. Similarly Jesus brought salvation to the house of Zacchaeus (a son of Abraham) after spotting him up a tree. To the woman taken in adultery Jesus said, "**Neither do I condemn thee, go and sin no more.**" In the case of the rich young ruler who wanted to know how to enter the kingdom (Luke 18:18) Jesus said, "**Sell all thou hast and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, follow Me.**"

When Jesus was relating to the people in all of these incidents He was operating under the Mosaic Dispensation, and was, in reality, dealing with erring Jews. It should be obvious that Gentiles at that time could never have been saved like the thief on the cross, or, for that matter, forgiven like the palsied man, Zacchaeus, or the rich young ruler, and if Gentiles couldn't be saved in that way *then*, they would certainly have less chance *now*: now that we are in the Christian dispensation. And all penitents today understand quite readily that they are not required , like the rich young man, to sell all they have and give it to the poor. Indeed we all realise that the rich young man's case was a "one off": as was the palsied man; as was the penitent woman; as was Zacchaeus: as was the woman taken in adultery: **AS WAS THE THIEF ON THE CROSS**. Not only are those cases incapable of being replicated, *they were never meant to be*. In any case, Jesus is no longer here to personally forgive sins, or to promise entry into His kingdom, but has *made other arrangements* for those great blessings to be enjoyed.

Indeed He made all the arrangements before He died, in His last will and testament.

THE CHRISTIAN DISPENSATION

Obviously Christ's death on the cross accomplished many grand objects, ranging from the remission of sins to the demise of the Mosaic law (Col. 2:14). However, in the context of our present subject, one other all-important matter achieved on the cross was the coming into force of the last will and testament of Jesus. The writer of Hebrews (5:17) says, "**And for this cause He is the Mediator of the new testament, that by**

means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first testament, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance. For where a testament is there must also be the death of the testator. For a testament is of force after men are dead, otherwise it is of no strength at all while the testator liveth." And so the new testament (or new will and covenant) of Jesus asserted its full force in the world at His death on the cross.

Anyone with any property must indicate, before they die, how they wish that property to be dealt with after death. It is true that Jesus owned nothing whatsoever, and even at His death they cast lots for His very garments, yet He did have a marvellous legacy of blessings to leave and made a will accordingly. Like any other will-maker, He stated what was bequeathed (pardon for sins and life everlasting): He stipulated the beneficiaries (Jews, yes, but also Gentiles): He set down the conditions attached to these benefits (love and obedience) and He specified the names of His executors: i.e. those who would carry out His last wishes - the apostles. Thus at His death the Mosaic Dispensation ended; the Christian age began and the apostles girded their loins for the work ahead. No longer are we dealing with "one off" cases of the Lord's forbearance of Jews, but with a gospel which the apostles were soon to take into ALL THE WORLD. Indeed, as we recall, Christ's final instructions to His apostles were, "Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to EVERY CREATURE. He that believeth and is baptised shall be saved." As the apostles went out with this message they would be very unlikely to encounter anyone who insisted on being saved like the thief on the cross.

Anyone, prior to death, can do as they wish with their own property; spend it; give it to charity or lend it: it is entirely at their own disposal. However, once they die the situation changes dramatically and their property only can then be employed in strict accordance with their last will and testament. In roughly a similar manner, Christ, *prior* to His death, could forgive sins and impart blessings to the errant sons of Abraham as He saw fit at the time; but, *after* His death, His last will and testament becomes effective, and His blessings are for all the world, on the terms and conditions enshrined in His gospel, and the N.T. scriptures.

SUMMARY

As stated at the outset, we live this side of the cross, in the Christian era, and if we are to be saved it will only be by our obedience to the gospel as promulgated by the apostles. Of the three historical dispensations we obviously live in the final one, and as such, can not expect favours from God unique to the two previous dispensations. Thus we must interpret scriptures intelligently and differentiate between things applicable to the Mosaic era and the things subsequent to the death of Christ. Clearly we cannot be saved like the thief on the cross in the Christian age, nor, by the same token, could we be saved like the rich young man by selling all we have and giving it to the poor. These were, *and were meant to be*, "one off" cases; incapable now of repetition. Paul was not saved like the thief, nor indeed were any of the others in the conversions in Acts. Such an idea never occurred to any of them, and if it had it would never have been countenanced.

Some readers may feel that this has been a fairly trivial subject but if we remember that when "Joe Bloggs" looks at what Jesus did for the thief on the cross, he will say to himself, "That was very nice indeed, and when my time comes, I'm sure Jesus will be nice to me as well." The case of "the thief on the cross" is precisely what gave rise to people pinning their hopes of heaven on a last minute "death-bed conversion" and surely this, alone, must make the subject far from trivial.

WISDOM

"If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God who gives to all men generously and without reproaching, and it will be given him" (James 1:5). I have read that verse many times. I do not consider myself a wise man. I always wanted to be a little wiser than what I am. I kind of believe that no matter how wise I become there will always be room for that prayer in my life.

I read James 1:5 with a great deal of fear, though, for several years. *It's a great promise!* One would be a fool not take advantage of it. Yet, every time I kneel to pray there is in the back of my mind the thought - "Can this really be true?" After all, it's so easy. Ask God and he'll give it to you. Because of my doubts my prayers for wisdom have not been very effective. James warned of this: **"But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for he who doubts is like a wave of the sea that is driven by the wind. For that person must not suppose that a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways, will receive anything from the Lord"** (James 1:6-8). In spite of my difficulties of truly grasping verse 5, I can identify well with these verses.

Recently, I discovered a new insight in studying which has made James 1:5 so much more meaningful to me. I always suspected that part of my problem was that I didn't understand what "wisdom" was as James uses it in his book. Wisdom brings to my mind an old man who through the years has accumulated a wealth of knowledge. Experiences of life had seasoned that knowledge so that he had a true grasp of life's situations. He is able to see with a great deal more insight all the angles of life's problems. That's what wisdom is to the world, but it's not the wisdom James invites us to pray for.

WHAT IS WISDOM?

What is the wisdom James speaks of in verse 5? The book of James is a book that goes in cycles. A subject is introduced, dropped, and then picked up again later in the book. James touches some subjects several different times. He returns to wisdom in chapter 3, verses 13-18. In these verses he defines what wisdom is. What is wisdom?

James begins in verse 13. He says wisdom is first of all not something that exists in the mind alone. Rather, it is a *way of life*. **"Who is the wise and understanding among you? By his good life let him show his works in the meekness of wisdom."** Wisdom is a "good life" that "shows" itself in "works."

In verses 14-16 James does what we often do. He explains what wisdom is by telling us what it is not. In verse 15 James admits there are two kinds of wisdom: wisdom from above and earthly, unspiritual, devilish wisdom. This verse is important as it shows the wisdom James has in mind is not "earthly" wisdom. It is not wisdom in the sense one normally thinks of it. He goes on to explain that "wisdom from above" is not jealous or selfish. Where disorder and every vile practice exist instead of a good life manifested by works, there is a lack of heavenly wisdom.

Finally, in verses 17-18 James defines what wisdom is. *Wisdom from above* is **"First pure, then peaceable, gentle, open to reason, full of mercy and good fruits, without uncertainty or insincerity."** It's not really a fantastic definition. I've read it many times and know it by heart. It is a beautiful thought that we need to meditate on and grasp more fully that which makes up wisdom from above.

MORE MEANINGFUL

But, James' definition took on special meaning to me as I suddenly realised that *if this is what wisdom is, then this is what I need to be praying for as he indicates in 1:5*. In fact, I should be able to substitute James' definition of wisdom for the word "wisdom" in James 1:5. I tried this and James 1:5 became a much more meaningful

verse. For the first time I knew what to pray for. Here is how James 1:5 really reads:

- 1) If any of you lacks *purity*, let him ask God who gives to all men generously and without reproaching, and *purity* will be given him.
- 2) If any of you lacks *gentleness*, let him ask God who gives to all men generously and without reproaching, and *gentleness* will be given him.
- 3) If any of you lacks *peace* (is having trouble getting along with his brother) . . . and *peace* will be given him.
- 4) If any of you lacks an *open mind*, . . . and an *open mind* will be given him.
- 5) If any of you lacks *mercy* and the *fruits of mercy*, . . . and *mercy* and *its fruits* will be given him.
- 6) If any of you lacks *sincerity* (genuineness), . . . and *sincerity* will be given him.
- 7) If any of you lacks *certainty*, . . . and *certainty* will be given him.

Knowing what wisdom is makes it much easier to pray for it. My prayers for wisdom have become more meaningful. The doubts I had are disappearing. *The promise of James 1:5 is great!* I still do not think it is as easy as the verse may sound, but I know with God's help wisdom can and will be *given by God*. It involves work on my part because wisdom is a way of life (3:13). Through prayer, work, and God's help I can become purer, more at peace, more gentle, etc. God truly can grant wisdom from above. It is ours for the asking.

C. YOUNG.

“PILGRIM” FOR A LIFETIME

Just when I first felt it I cannot recall. Felt what? That "pilgrim" feeling about the nature of my life as a human. Everyone notices that there comes the time when we look back on childhood, or the teen years, or young adulthood, and sense with certainty the fact that we are on a journey, in fact going somewhere. In a real sense each day's footsteps are a fresh imprinting on desert sands that the winds of the night have wiped clean. Some men spend their years studying man's history in a search for a key to his roots, as well as to unlock the meaning and purpose of his life today with a look at the final ultimate question - what is man's future? Years ago David admitted he was a "passing guest," a sojourner on earth (Ps. 39:12).

Our homes are very special to us. They speak of permanence, our own meaningful place where we plant our feet and build our lives and the lives of our families. We work meaningfully there. Who is not proud of his hometown or his adopted city; his dwelling place? Even those who travel long periods of their lives often have deep in their breasts the desire for that place to call home, from which they shall not have to be uprooted. Adventure gives way to the search for permanence, security, rest. It happens to the best of us, and then, of course, to the rest of us.

When did you first realise, in a somewhat disturbing moment the reality that there is no place on earth that is *really* home? When did you sense that you are indeed on a journey *through* with no real stopping place that meets the qualifications of "home?" Every house we build and use, we ultimately leave. If the history of man tells us anything, it underscores that we are *pilgrims*. The quicker we realise it and decide to stop trying to feel at home in this world, the quicker we can order our values upon what the style and purpose of this pilgrimage should be.

STRANGERS HERE

All who have followed God have had a common understanding: (1) They "acknowledged that they were strangers and exiles on the earth" (Heb. 11:13). (2)

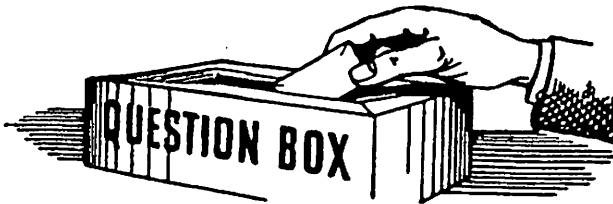
They "make it clear that they are seeking a homeland." (3) "They desire a better country, that is, a heavenly one" (4) Their acknowledgements of common quest pleased God such that scripture says, "Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for He has prepared for them a city." Each one had the will to place their future in the hands of God, had eyes to see the unseen and joy to greet in prospect what was not yet given to them. They all loved in faith and died in faith, and for this they had divine approval.

The idea of *pilgrimage*, or of "sojourning" in a land, was commonly understood and accepted by the Israelites as the nature of their life but never were they contented with it. The search for permanence unfolds for them as God's promises through the Messiah unfolds. But they, in the main did not see in Him the permanence, safety, and rest for which they had long struggled.

Peter, in encouraging dispersed Christians in 1 Peter 2:11, addressed them as aliens and exiles, who after they "have suffered a little while" will be called to their real home, "His eternal glory." Later writers followed the theme. Tertullian said, "Christians know that on earth we have a pilgrimage but our dignity is in heaven." Clement of Alexandria said, "Christians have no fatherland on earth."

What are the values of casting our walk as a Christian as a "pilgrimage." Aren't there several? Would it not benefit us to view our daily decisions in terms of our purposeful detachment or temporary sojourning in this world? This doesn't deny that our task as God's people is to glorify Him on each day's journey among men; therefore, it is foolish to say we don't care about "what goes on down here"; we do. Rather it speaks of the longing within our hearts to place our activities and priorities firmly within the framework of the reality that we do not seek our "home" here for we know that God is our home; he has our home prepared - we are His people going to be with Him.

R. BEATON.



Conducted by
Frank Worgan

"Would it be wrong to use ordinary (i.e. alcoholic) wine at the Lord's Table?"

An article sent to me by a brother in the Church poses a question concerning the use of the ordinary wine at the Lord's Table. I have read through the article a couple of times to make sure that I understand what is being expressed and it seems quite clear that the writer is arguing for the use of alcoholic wine at the Supper. I use the term "alcoholic wine" to distinguish it from "unfermented grape juice," which is generally used among the Lord's people; certainly in the seventeen or more countries where I have had the privilege of worshipping.

The only occasion on which I was served alcoholic wine at the Lord's Supper was in Athens, Greece, and when, at the close of the service, I gently asked the brethren about it - (because I did not recognise the taste) - I was informed that they had held a meeting and had decided that, should American brethren cease to provide the cans of unfermented grape-juice, they would have a problem since, they said, unfermented

grape-juice is not available in Greece. For that reason they had made a "policy decision" - their own term - to use the wine which was available. Of course, I cannot say whether grape juice is or is not obtainable in Athens. I can only report what they told me.

First, let me say that I am sorry that, the writer of the article falls into the error of drawing conclusions which are not warranted by the scriptures; in other words, of speaking where the scriptures do not speak. For example, he calls the Lord's Supper 'spiritual food', but I know of nothing in the New Testament scriptures which says that the Lord's Supper is meant to be seen as "spiritual food." The Lord Jesus said, "Do this in remembrance of Me" and Paul tells us that we "*show forth* (proclaim or tell again) *the Lord's death until He comes.*" (1 Cor. 11:26).

Thus whilst it is true that we are encouraged and blessed as the result of our regular act of worship, the Lord's Supper is never represented in the Word of God as a "means of grace" imparting either forgiveness or spiritual strength. It is essentially a communal act of worship and witness.

Again; the writer also appears to think that the Lord's Supper was a part of the Jewish Passover feast, but he surely cannot really believe this, because, frankly, it is not true! We all know that no-one ever celebrated the Lord's Supper before that night in the Upper Room.

I am sorry to have to say that there are other places in the article where the author finds spiritual meaning where scripture assigns none; and that is always a highly dangerous course to take.

Furthermore, whilst the article contains a great deal of interesting material relative to the Jewish Seder (Passover) celebration, most of it has no bearing on the subject being discussed. For instance, he refers to something written by our very highly esteemed and scholarly brother, Everett Ferguson and tells us he found it interesting that throughout his book, Br. Ferguson "referred only to 'wine' and never to 'grape juice.'"

Well even scholarly brethren are sometimes imprecise in that way, and, knowing both the book to which reference is made and the the author himself, I think I can say that brother Ferguson would tell us that the matter of 'wine' v. 'grape juice' was not foremost in his mind that time.

Surely it is far more significant that, in instituting the Supper, the Lord Jesus Himself used only the term 'the fruit of the vine', and never once used the word 'wine.' He could very easily have used the word 'wine,' if He had so desired. He could have said, "I will not drink henceforth of the WINE until I drink it new with you in My Father's kingdom" (Matt. 26:29). Had He done so there would have been no argument. But He did not, and we should bear this fact in mind.

Emmet Russell makes this observation:

"At the Last Supper Jesus spoke of 'the fruit of the vine,' as in the Passover liturgy; it may be a studied avoidance of the term 'wine,' indicating that the drink was unfermented, as the bread was unleavened." As a matter of fact, the prayer of thanks used at the Passover celebration, to which Russell refers, translates something like this; "We thank Thee, Lord, Maker of Heaven and Earth, who has caused the Vine to grow in the earth."

Let me, therefore, make a few observations of this matter of the "Wine."

1. It is important to remember that **wine did not form a part of the original Passover meal, as commanded by God, and was never commanded by the Mosaic Law.** It was a later addition, coming after the Babylonian Captivity along with other

items, such as the '*charoseth*,' which was a dish consisting of raisins, bruised dates and other kinds of fruit, spiced with vinegar. (It is therefore interesting, to say the least, that the Lord Jesus accepted the practices of the time).

2. I notice also, that the article makes a great deal of wine as 'a symbol of joyous life,' but this has no relevancy in the present discussion. What is truly relevant, if we recognise that the fruit of the vine represents the blood of Christ, is the fact that the Hebrew word for "blood" - "*dam*" occurs 362 times in the O.T., whilst in the N.T., the Greek word, '*aima*' - or - '*haima*' occurs 98 times; **and their overwhelming usage throughout the Bible relates to violent death - not to life.**

3. As for wine being used as a *joyous* symbol, no one reading the account of the institution of the Supper can possibly suggest that there was any sense of joy present that night. On the contrary, Luke reports that Jesus earnestly desired to eat the Passover with the disciples before he *suffered*. And both Matthew and Mark report that, when He spoke about his betrayal, there was a **real atmosphere of sorrow in the Upper Room.**

4. There can be no doubt that the fruit of the vine, the juice of the grape, with its redness and its appearance of blood, represents our Lord's death as the Sin-bearer; as the sacrificial Lamb of God. The article rightly says that the blood of Christ is represented by the 'blood of grapes.' Well, no-one can deny that what our congregations use is 'the blood of grapes, or the fruit of the vine.'

5. You will recall that Paul tells us that "Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us, **and it is significant that Jesus chose to die at the time of the Passover, and not, for instance, on the Day of Atonement.**

The significance lies in the fact that whilst the Day of Atonement was a recurring event - for Israel an annual necessity - the Passover occurred only once. It was never to be repeated. In this way our Lord revealed that He is the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world, and, as the Passover-lamb, His death once for all, was the anti-type of the ancient, one-time-only deliverance of Israel from Egypt.

6. I certainly agree with the writer of the article that there can be absolutely no question as to the nature of the bread which Jesus used at the institution of the Supper. It was undoubtedly unleavened, because it would have been impossible for Him to have used anything other than unleavened bread. **The strict command of the Law prohibited the eating of anything containing leaven during the time of the Passover.** The teaching in Exodus 12:17-20 is so plain as to be unmistakable.

a) The Passover Feast itself was called the 'feast of unleavened bread.'

b) This prohibition on the use of anything leavened lasted for seven days.

c) Anyone violating this law was excommunicated.

Because of this law, in the evening prior to the onset of the Passover, which commenced on 15th Nisan, the Jews must search their homes for anything '*hametz*,' or leavened.

In defining "*hametz*" Hertzberg, the Jewish author of the work "Judaism," in the series "Great Religions of Modern Man," tells us that; it is anything at all, whether edible or not, made from grain, barley, oats, flour or wheat bran, which, due to contact with water, or any other liquid containing water, could ferment, or was in process of fermentation, or had fermented.

And, if anything "*hametz*" was found, it had to be burned or otherwise cleared out of their dwellings. The Passover could not be celebrated where there was anything which had fermented.

This prohibition of all things fermented seems to me to cover both the bread and whatever was drunk when the Supper was instituted.

After all, just as it is impossible to make bread without the use of water, it is impossible to deny the water-content of ordinary wine, which is, of course, grape-juice which has been allowed to ferment.

7. Remember that even before New Testament times they knew how to prevent grape-juice from fermenting.

Cato wrote *"If you wish to have "must" - (i.e., 'unfermented grape-juice') all year, put grape-juice in an amphora and seal the cork with pitch and sink it in a fish-pond. After 30 days take it out. It will be grape-juice (i.e. non-alcoholic) for a whole year."* ("De Agri Cultura CSX"). Just how effective this was I cannot say, but it is clear that Cato believed it worked!

A final word, then, about this matter of fermentation.

There is no question that consistently in the New Testament, leaven is used as a symbol of sin and evil; as a disintegrating destructive force. For example:-

Matt. 16:6 *"Beware of the leaven of the scribes and Pharisees."*

1 Cor. 5:8 *"Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump? Cleanse out the old leaven that you may be a new lump, AS YOU REALLY ARE UNLEAVENED. For Christ our paschal lamb has been sacrificed. Let us therefore celebrate the festival, not with old leaven, the leaven of malice and evil, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth."*

Remember that the symbols and figures used in the scriptures are consistent in their meaning. A symbol cannot represent good in one place and evil in another.

The bread of the Supper is unleavened because it represents the purity of the life of the Lord Jesus. The unfermented fruit of the vine represents the purity of His sinless sacrifice.

When people use alcoholic wine at the Feast it can only be because they have failed to understand that nothing fermented can properly represent the perfection of either the life or the death of the Lord Jesus.

(All questions, please, to Frank Worgan, 5 Gryfbank Way, Houston, Renfrewshire. PA6 7NZ)

IS THE BIBLE OUTDATED?

The penmen who translated the Bible in the reign of King James (1611), were merely the instruments of God to proclaim His word. The Bible makes the unique claim that it is God's revelation to men, and that claim has never been successfully denied. Surely the fact that it has survived until now is ample proof of God's protection of His word. Every generation (for 2000 years) of men have tested and examined the Scriptures and had to agree that the Bible is the infallible word of God. Critics would have been pleased to have found an error.

(I would advise every one to search through their *Scripture Standards* for the month of October, 1994, issue with the heading *Whence Came The Bible*, and read it again. This editorial is a wonderful exposition of the proof of God's word. It is a great help for babes in Christ Jesus.)

Recently, members of the Church are being put in doubt and upset, by the introduction of new versions of the Bible. Is there any need for these books? The K.J.V. has already been tested and tried. Psalm 12:6,7 tells us **"The words of the Lord are pure words, as silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times. Thou shalt keep them O Lord, thou shalt preserve them from this generation for ever."** In the apostle John's first epistle, chapter 2 verses 20, 27, we find the consolation of this word

from God, "But ye have an unction from the Holy One and ye know all things. But the anointing which ye have received of Him, abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you: but as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in Him." The hundreds of other proofs will have to be left for one's own study. We know of Satan's hatred of God. Rev. 20:7 tells us "And when the thousand years are expired, Satan shall be loosed out of his prison."

COULD THIS PREDICTION HAVE STARTED?

We know of Satan's utter collapse of his power over God at the resurrection of Jesus Christ, and we know that Satan's main goal is to destroy the Church of God. By what better way than by sowing seeds of doubt? His wily tactics can be recognised, having been warned of God that Satan can transform himself as an angel of light, and his ministers as ministers of righteousness. The question of "Whence came the Bible?" could also be asked by "Whence came the denial of the Bible?"

"Thus saith the Lord," (Jer. 6:16). "Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the Old Paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls."

Sister Bethia Davidson.

(I am sure our sister will not mind me mentioning that she is 86 years of age and ever a keen and earnest student of God's word. Clearly she attaches undue importance to the KJV, for it is but one version of the scriptures, albeit one, which, in my opinion, has not been replaced by anything substantially better. Our sister does have a point, I think, in her concern for all the new "much improved" versions which have all followed hard upon the heels of one another, and many of which seem to be paraphrases of the other versions and none of which seem to be definitive: leaving us all waiting for the next one just around the corner. On the justification that each new version is "more accurate" than the previous ones, one wonders how long it will be before we actually get an "accurate" one. Certainly very few of these many versions seem accurate enough to replace "baptism" with "immersion". It would be most interesting to know just how many versions have come on the market (a good money-spinner for publishers) since the Revised Version of 1881 and if I had time I would enjoy the research, but if any interested reader could undertake such a task and make a list, I should be most happy to print it. The result might surprise us. - Ed.)

GOD'S ANSWER TO THE DOUBTER

To a man immersed in his own troubles the eyes turn inward more often than outward. Very rarely do they turn upward. After all, he reasons, what can God do? Even if he could help, why would he? My troubles are my own, and I must endure them alone.

That is what Job must have concluded after weeks and weeks of crying out to the Almighty and receiving not a whisper of an answer. Job's faith was great when he started through the valley of tribulation, but it began to crumble away in the face of the attacks of Job's so-called friends. Finally, there is a pitiful doubter of God where the great man of faith once stood. Job foolishly accuses God of evil.

God answers such a man, whether during the man's lifetime or at the great day of reckoning. He explains his actions and displays his justice. In answering Job, God calls on him to revive his dead faith and renew his commitment to his unimpeachable

goodness and justice. In Job 38-41, God has these three messages for Job: his power his love, and his justice.

GOD HAS ENOUGH POWER (Job. 38:4-38)

God reveals himself to the mortal in all his omnipotent power, quickly dispelling Job's doubts that God is unable to help him. God rehearses the events of creation (38:4-7, 17), and points out that day follows night only at his discretion (38:12-15, 19-21). He proclaims himself as Ruler of the oceans (38:8-11, 16), Sovereign of the weather (38:22-30, 34-38), and Master of the stars (38:31-33). God is not impotent. He has enough power to help the sufferer. The problem does not lie in his inability to succour.

GOD HAS ENOUGH LOVE (Job 38:39-39:30)

God next encounters Job's doubts of his love. "Does God really care about me?" Job must have thought "Perhaps he has enough power, but why should He bother with such a little speck of dust as I?" God takes Job through the animal world, showing His care for even the lowly creatures. God oversees the lion and the raven as they gather food (38:39-41). God is there when the mountain goat and the deer bring forth their young (39:1-4). He finds a place for the wild donkey to live (39:5-8). He gives physical abilities to the wild ox, ostrich, horse, hawk, and eagle (39:9-30). God has love enough for the wild, unintelligent animals. Could He possibly overlook His own image? His message to Job is, "Are you not much more valuable than they?" (Matt. 7:26). God has enough love to help the sufferer. That is not the problem either.

GOD IS IN CONTROL OF EVIL (Job 40:15-41:34)

God's injustice might be the cause of Job's suffering. That is the next doubt that God confronts. He points out the great power of Behemoth (hippopotamus or elephant), an animal beyond the power of man to tame, with great strength and fury (40:15-23). But God controls its every movement. He turns to Leviathan (crocodile), describing his remarkable power. God says, "If you lay your hand on him, you will remember the struggle and never do it again!" These two monstrous animals symbolise the forces of evil throughout the world, and God views them, like evil, as a mere toy to be manipulated.

JOB'S RESPONSES

God has taught Job many things. He has opened his eyes to glorious mysteries. God is not powerless. He is not uncaring. He is not unjust. Job's first response to this revelation is one of silence (40:4,5). This response God will not accept. The accuser once answered, is obliged to recant. Job's final response is repentance, confession of sin, and renewed faith. This is the response God wants, and He blesses Job for it.

CONCLUSION

When we are in affliction, we need not doubt God. We need not worry that God will not be able to deliver us. Can the Master of the universe be too weak to sustain a mortal in time of need? The little finger of His working will more than suffice. Need we fret that a God big enough to control the universe will overlook little matters? His care for the affairs of animals proves His concern for the tiny and the insignificant.

But supernatural powers have been unleashed in the world of men. What can God do against the mighty rages of Satan? Our hope need not go begging here either. For the God who controls Behemoth and Leviathan controls also "that ancient serpent." He has already conquered the enemies of man, death and devil alike, through the life, death, and resurrection of Christ.

Doubters believe! Sufferers take hope! A powerful, loving, and just God is in control of the universe. Therefore, lift your feeble arms, and strengthen your weak knees!

SCRIPTURE READINGS

May 3	Ezekiel 37:15-28	2 Cor. 6: to 7:1
May 10	Jonah 3	2 Cor. 7:2-16
May 17	Exodus 16:1-18	2 Cor. 8:1-15
May 24	Exodus 36:1-13	2 Cor. 8:16 to 9:5
May 31	Psalms 112	2 Cor. 9:6-15

TITUS

Titus was an important figure in the Pauline circle. Paul, of course, later wrote a letter to this Gentile Christian, which is part of the canon of Scripture. He was probably one of Paul's converts as he once described him as **"mine own son after the common faith"** (Titus 1:4). Titus was certainly a man of the utmost integrity. Strangely, he is never mentioned in the book of Acts. Why? we do not know.

The relationship between Paul and the Corinthian church was strained at times. This led to a letter rather than a visit, which he wrote with tears (2 Cor. 2:4). Paul was deeply anxious about their reaction to it. So from Asia he sent Titus across the Aegean to Corinth to find out their feelings and to come back and report as soon as possible. Paul knew that Troas would be the port of call if Titus returned by sea. An unsettled Paul waited there, but it soon became clear that Titus could not undertake this sea voyage so late in the season. Paul, therefore, set out by road and took the Egnatian Way into Macedonia with the hope of meeting Titus as he travelled north (2 Cor. 1:23 - 2:13).

"His hope was realised: the news was good. His letter had been completely effective . . . There had been a wholesale revulsion of feeling in Paul's favour. The church was thoroughly ashamed of its treatment of him and had disciplined an unnamed member who had apparently taken the lead in opposition to him. So severe was the discipline

that Paul wrote to tell them they had gone far enough: He cherished no personal resentment against the man and begged the church to forgive him as he himself did" (Bruce). Titus's mission had been successful and he got on well with his Corinthian brethren. In fact he had been overjoyed by his reception (2 Cor. 7:6-16).

Paul was involved with a relief fund for the needy saints in Judea. He planned to visit Jerusalem soon along with delegates of the Gentile churches to complete this important undertaking. The Corinthian church had expressed an interest in this matter (1 Cor. 16:1-4). However, the interest had to be rekindled. Who better to encourage the Corinthians and act for Paul than Titus himself? So he sent Titus back in the hope that this second mission would be as successful as the first. Monetary matters can be difficult matters and so Paul appointed two other brothers to go with him. Both are unnamed. One is described as **"the brother, whose praise is in the gospel throughout all the churches; and not that only, but who was also chosen of the churches to travel with us with this grace (generous gift) . . ."** (8:18,19). The other brother was equally trustworthy and had proved himself in other commissions (8:22). Paul hoped these men would make their mark and help the Corinthians complete their contribution to **"the collection for the saints"** (1 Cor. 16:1). The outcome was not altogether a happy one, as we shall see from the chapters that follow. Titus would leave the Corinthians a sadder, but wiser, man.

DO NOT BE YOKED WITH UNBELIEVERS

It is difficult for us to appreciate fully the world in which the early Christian lived. Roman society was, of course, a pagan society and, in many ways, it was uncivilised. "Civilisation is not, therefore, merely intellectual cul-

ture, refinement of taste, high advances in criticism, eloquence, philosophy; nor is it eminence in the fine arts of poetry, music, painting, sculpture, architecture. The Greeks and the Romans equalled, if not excelled us far, in most of these attainments; yet, compared with many of this community, they were an uncivilised and barbarous people. They lived and died under the tyranny of selfishness and terror. Their amusements, their exhibitions, their amphitheatres, their gladiator feats and pastimes were cruel, inhuman - full of lusts, hatred and revenge" (Campbell). Jesus and the apostles spoke of the "world". For example, **"Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him"** (1 John 2:15). The "world", basically, is pagan society with its false values, its false standards and false gods. This is what the early saints were up against. And, brethren, in many ways we are up against it too. How silly then to equate "unbelievers" with "brethren in error."

Christians, of course, are in the world, but must not be off the world. The ship is all right on the ocean so long as the ocean is not in the ship. The Christian is all right in the world so long as the world is not in the Christian. Brethren and sisters in Christ, we are a people of different values and different standards because we serve the true and living God. We are altogether different and, incidentally, this is how we get our words "holy" and "saint." To be holy simply means to be different. And the difference lies in the fact that we belong to Christ Jesus. As one writer put it: "To be holy is not to be equated with being and odd-ball, a screwball, or an eccentric. There is nothing anaemic or washed-out about a follower of the Lamb . . . One is not especially holy because he does not watch television, play croquet, or wear fancy ties. Indeed some of the worst criminals that ever

lived dressed pretty conservatively. One who is holy is different because he marches to the sound of another trumpet, He is God's man."

THE COLLECTION

The collection for the poor saints in Jerusalem was an undertaking close to Paul's heart. Here was an opportunity for the Gentile believers to support Jewish believers. It was a demonstration of the unity of all believers in Christ. It was also a practical application of ministry.

Paul uses nine different words to describe this collection: *logia* (an extra collection); *charis* (a free gift freely given); *koinonia* (fellowship); *diakonia* (practical service); *hadrotos* (abundance); *eulogia* (bounty); *leitourgia* (service voluntarily accepted); *eleemosune* (alms); *prospora* (an offering and a sacrifice). An interesting study could result from an analysis of all these Greek words and their context. Let us take the first three as an example. *Logia* (1 Cor. 16:1,2) was the opposite of a tax man had to pay. It was an extra piece of giving. A Christian has a deep sense of obligation. However, there should be more to the disciple than discharging obligations. The Christian should always be giving more than is expected. *Charis* (1 Cor. 16:3; 2 Cor. 8:4) speaks of that which is given from a loving heart. It is not something extracted from an individual. How much should a Christian give? Ten per cent? **"Every man according as he purposes in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loves a cheerful giver"** (2 Cor. 9:7). Is that more than ten per cent, or less than ten per cent? *Koinonia* (2 Cor. 8:4; 9:13; Rom. 15:26) means fellowship and the essence of fellowship is sharing. William Barclay once wrote: "Christian fellowship is based on the spirit which cannot hug to itself that which it has, but regards all its possessions as things to be shared with others. Its dominating question is not, 'What can I keep?' but, 'What can I

give?' I remember what someone once said to me: "I admire the followers of Jesus in this world because they are givers and not takers." I think of Jesus Himself: He gave us everything, including His very own life. He is an example to everyone. There is no greater example than personal example and Christ Jesus is our example in all things. Truly, He gave until it hurt.

IAN S. DAVIDSON,
Motherwell.

TEST YOUR BIBLICAL KNOWLEDGE

1. Name Abraham's native place.
2. Name Joseph's two sons.
3. Who was the herdsman of Tekoa.
4. Gideon pursued and took these two kings.
5. Name a great prophet who reassured Hezekiah.
6. This book is called after a Moabitess.
7. Name the blind man of Jericho in Jesus' day.
8. Name a famous hill in Athens.
9. Who succeeded Felix as Roman governor.
10. This child's father was dumb until he was born.

GHANA APPEAL

We have tried, ever since this appeal began, to leave a little in the Bank for emergencies and this has proven to be a good practice.

There was an emergency requirement last month which has exhausted the funds. In the past two, years we have supplied each family in the churches we help with a copy of 'Where there is no Doctor.'

During our visit in November we made a point of finding out if there was a

shortage of these books as the Church is growing. We found that there is a present need for an additional 74 copies required which will cost £300 plus postage which will be surface mail. We still continue to receive requests for glasses and second hand clothes (summer wear please - a little help with the postage would also be appreciated). We thank God that the readership have not grown weary of well doing and give very generously without these appeals. I simply request that the present level of help continue so that this work may continue. Ghana may be materially poor, but they are rich in spirit and your donations greatly encourage the brethren. Please make cheques payable to "Graeme Pearson (Ghana Appeal)" and send to Graeme Pearson, 13 Fairways, Dunfermline, Fife. KY12 ODU. Tel. (01383) 728624.

NEWS FROM THE CHURCHES

Slamannan District: The Quarterly Mutual Benefit Meeting of the District took place at Haddington Meetinghouse on Saturday, 7th March, 1998, when the following questions (from Ghana) were discussed:- (1) How should the Church deal with a member who has two wives? Should he be allowed to attend the Lord's Table? and (2) How should the Church deal with a woman who becomes a Christian and is the first of two wives? Should she be allowed communion? The speakers were Graeme Pearson, Dunfermline and John Colgan, Tranent, and the meeting was Chaired by brother Jimmy Grant, Wallacestone. Obviously this question was away from the usual and proved to be very interesting, with much discussion at the discussion period. Our next meeting, God willing, will be at Dennyloanhead, when the question will be "Does the end always justify the means?" (1 Cor. 9:22)

and when the speakers will be John Kneller, Tranent, and Jim McGinn, New Cumnock, and when the Chairman will be brother Niall Scobbie, Dennyloanhead. Once again grateful thanks are due to the sisters at Haddington for the excellent refreshments.

Harry McGinn (Secy).

COMING EVENTS

**KIRKCALDY
LADIES DAY**

on Saturday, 18th April, 1998

BUCKIE SOCIAL
Saturday, 2nd May, 1998
at 3.30 p.m.

Speaker: Bro. J. Nisbet
All Welcome

TRANENT SOCIAL
Saturday, 16th May, 1998

A SMILE

Just like a sunbeam brightens the sky,
A smile on the face of a passer-by,
Can make a drab and crowded street,
A pleasant place where two smiles meet.
P.I.H. Aberdeen Area.

TEST OF SPIRITUALITY

1. Do you enjoy praying, or do you merely "say prayers?" Praying is talking to God. We tell God our needs, our sorrows, our joys. We enjoy this if God is real to us.
2. Do you enjoy doing what is right? Sin has never lost its hold upon us until we hate sinning.
3. Are you becoming less critical of other honest people? We are surrounded by those of different opinions. Most of these are honest people. We should give them credit for being honest. We must have convictions and stand for them; in matters of faith we must teach others. But we should do so in a spirit of meekness and be willing to learn from them.

-
10. John the Baptist (Luke 1:20 & 64).
 9. Porcius Festus (Acts 24:27).
 8. Mars Hill (Acts 17:22).
 7. Bartimaeus (Mark 10:46).
 6. Ruth.
 5. Isaiah (2 Kings 19:1-17).
 4. Zebah and Zalmunna (Judges 8:21).
 3. Amos (1:1).
 - 41:5; 1:52).
 2. Manasseh and Ephraim (Gen. 11:28).
 1. Ur of the Chaldees (Gen. 11:28).

ANSWERS

THE SCRIPTURE STANDARD is published monthly.

PRICE PER COPY— POST PAID FOR ONE YEAR

UNITED KINGDOM.....	£9.00	
OVERSEAS BY SURFACE MAIL	£10.00	(\$16.00US or \$20.00Can)
OVERSEAS BY AIR MAIL	£14.00	(\$22.00US or \$28.00Can)

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