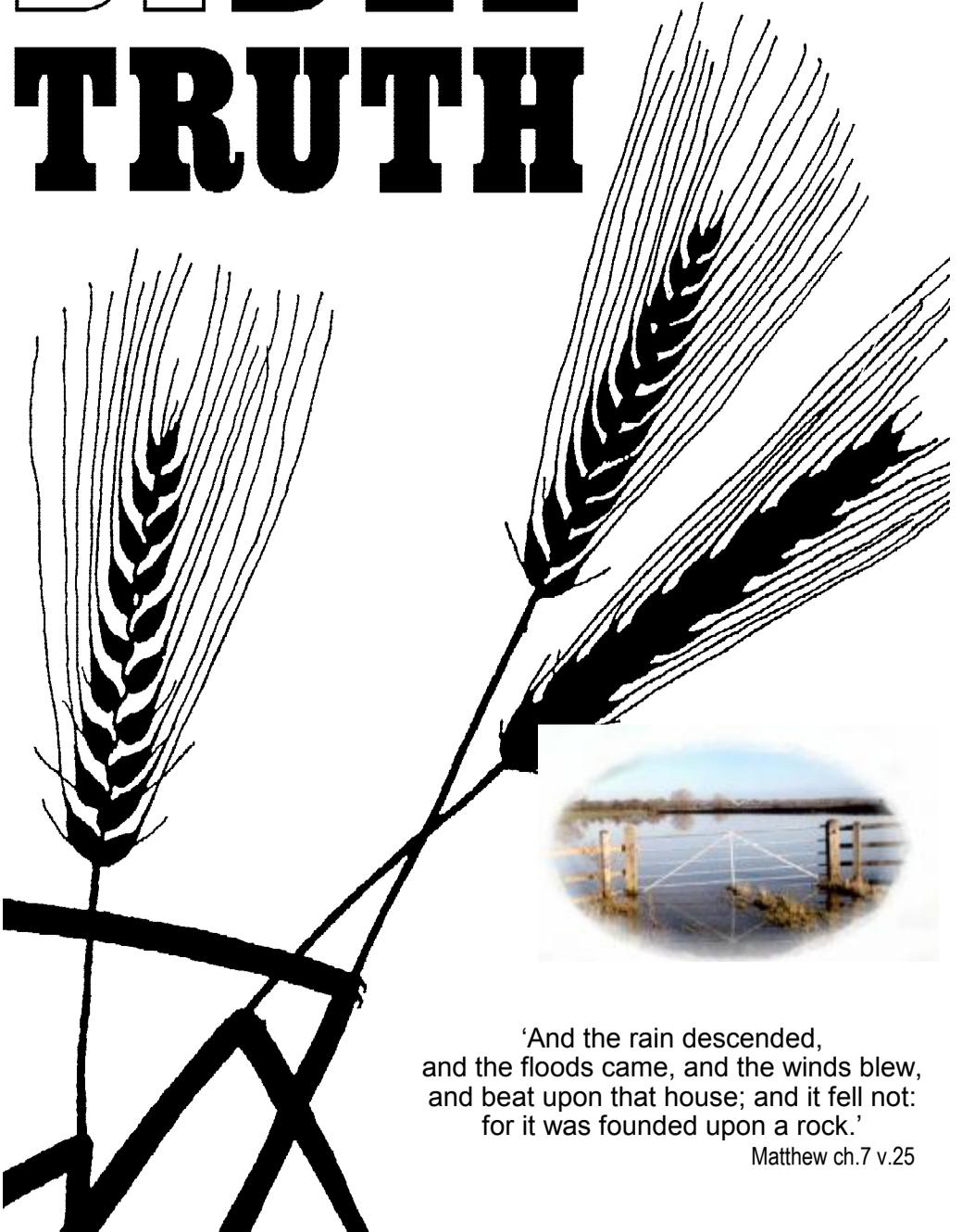


# BIBLE TRUTH

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'And the rain descended,  
and the floods came, and the winds blew,  
and beat upon that house; and it fell not:  
for it was founded upon a rock.'

Matthew ch.7 v.25

## ***– Holidaying in Devon?***

This is an historic place with a Christian history that is worth a visit particularly if you enjoy moorland walking.



## **Buckland-in-the-Moor, its Beacon, & the Commandment Stones**

The importance of this place lies in the fact that two giant tables of stone inscribed with the ten Commandments can be found just below the tor.

The following extract from Clive Gunnell's *My Dartmoor*, Bossiney Books 1977 gives a good description of how the stones came into being.

'Such a worker is W. Arthur Clement who lives in Exmouth: his work on Dartmoor will outlast time. He turned an isolated location which for centuries rarely saw a visitor into a place almost of pilgrimage. Now, many journey on the road from Ashburton to Buckland-in-the-Moor and leave their cars on the road verges by Wellstor Common and make the easy climb up Buckland Beacon. Their reasons are twofold. This one thousand three hundred foot landmark rewards the climber with one of the most magnificent views found anywhere. The Dart valley twists and turns its way beneath; through Holne Chase and away to the almost too perfect landscape of the South Hams. On a warm, mist free day the Channel can be seen shimmering in the distance and northwards are the dominating heights of Rippon, Saddle and Haytor. Late evening is the best time with the setting sun thrusting up blood red tentacles that cling to the granite outcrops, resisting extinction to the last dying second.

But most visitors, are not aware of the view that Arthur Clement saw every day. They discover it by accident. It is Arthur's work they have come to see: The Ten Commandments carved into two slabs of granite. The reasons for this extraordinary feat of craftsmanship are best told as Arthur told them to me.



The Commandment stones lying at the base of Buckland Tor and overlooking the village of the same name in the background.

It was the summer of 1928. Mr Whitley, who lived at Wellstor close by the beacon, informed me it was his intention to have me carve the Ten Commandments to commemorate the defeat in Parliament of the Revised Prayer Book and to record the dates of the readings of the bill: December 15th 1927, June 14th 1928. He had selected two granite rocks lying at the base of the Tor, these seeming to him similar in the position they lay, to the two tablets mentioned in the Book of Exodus.

A colleague and I set to work to dress the stone down to a workable face, which proved quite a task as the granite had become surprisingly tough through long exposure. Upon completion, my companion left me, and with the aid of a Prayer Book I proceeded to mark out all the Commandments.

During this operation Mr Whitley paid several visits to the Beacon, usually on horseback, accompanied by several dogs, and it was during one of these visits he decided to call me "Moses". To which I remarked, "It is rather inappropriate, sir, as Moses carried the tablets of stone down to the children of Israel, and I have no intention of doing that".

After setting out the 10th Commandment there was a considerable space left and I suggested he might like the 11th Commandment in the New Testament book of John, chapter 13 verse 34 and also the third verse from the hymn "O God our help in ages past". He readily agreed and I commenced engraving the letters into the rock.

Day after day I was on my knees chipping away, as though in an attitude of prayer. I wonder if the originator of the Commandments suffered from aching back or sore knees as I did?

The work commenced on July 23rd 1928 and was completed on August 31st 1928. My place of abode during this work was situated in the woods beneath the Beacon, being more or less a cattle shed, with a hayloft over. My bed was rudely fashioned with wire netting for a mattress and blankets I had brought with me, as the nights were rather cold. Strange as it seems I did not feel lonely. With a candle for illumination I would retire about 9 p.m. and read a bit before settling down. The screeching of owls and barking of foxes kept me awake the first night, but afterwards I was soon asleep. After a good wash in the stream close by and preparing a very varied breakfast and packing up some food I journeyed once more to the Beacon.

At last after several weeks stay the task was completed and approved by Mr Whitley. Having survived the elements (which at times were vicious) and "roughing it", it was with mixed feelings that I gathered up my tools to leave the beautiful spot, feeling that I had done a good job and it was with reluctance that I shaved off my beard before returning to civilisation, having by this time the appearance of a true "moorman".



Few people have more right to that title than Arthur Clement. Every time I visit the Beacon now I think of him working away in isolation in this setting. Perhaps walking to church on a Sunday morning down the Tor path towards farm gates, taking the one on the left past Wellstor, continuing down the hill to the land leading to Haytor and after about a mile, running left to find the church of Buckland-in-the-Moor facing him, with its clock without numbers, instead the words, MY DEAR MOTHER spelled out around the face.'

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To find the Commandment stones - Take the road from Ashburton to Buckland. After about 2 1/2 miles, at Auswell Cross turn right towards Haytor. After about 1 mile go over the cattle grid and park on the right. Cross the road and follow the wall stretching to the south-west for nearly a mile. After a while a high rock outcrop becomes visible. Upon reaching this there is a tremendous view across the valley towards Buckland and at the base of the outcrop can be found the two Commandment stones [Dartmoor Map Ref. 735732].

The beautifully kept church is also well worth a visit and has wall plaques inscribed with *The Lord's Prayer*, *The Apostles' Creed* and *The Ten Commandments*. Return down the road to Auswell Cross and turn right. Continue for about 1 mile, passing through the hamlet and the church will be found on the left towards the top of the hill.

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