

Spiritual Blessings

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Inheritance.



Bob Davidson

Inheritance and the related topic of being an heir are important subjects in Scripture.

A number of different people are said to have an inheritance or to be heirs to something. In the Old Testament the word 'inheritance' occurs more than two hundred times, and it concerns

three main areas, the Lord's inheritance, Israel's inheritance and the Levites' inheritance.

The Lord's inheritance.

The Bible clearly teaches that—"they [Israel] are thy people and thine inheritance." Deut. 9:29. Israel are the Lord's inheritance.

At the dedication of the temple Solomon said 'For thou didst separate them from among all the people of the earth, to be thine inheritance.' 1Kings 8:53. The psalmist makes it clear what a blessing it was to be the Lord's inheritance. 'Blessed is the nation whose God is the LORD; and the people whom he hath chosen for his own inheritance.' Psa. 33:12. There is no doubt that the Lord recognized Israel as His inheritance.

Their position as the Lord's inheritance was secure. 'For the LORD will not cast off his people, neither will he forsake his inheritance.' Psa. 94:14.

Israel's inheritance.

The nation of Israel also had an inheritance, involving the land which the Lord gave them. In Num. 26:2 the Lord told Moses to take a census of the people. The next forty-nine verses of this chapter detail the results of the census, then in verse 53 the Lord said 'Unto these the land shall be divided for an inheritance according to the number of names.' So every man of Israel who was twenty years old or more, with one important exception, the Levites, was to have an inheritance in the land.

This inheritance was meant to be long-term. The Lord gave specific rules for the passing on of the inheritance after a man died. These rules are listed in Num. 27:8-10. 'If a man die, and have no son, then ye shall cause his inheritance to pass unto his daughter. —if he have no daughter, then ye shall give his inheritance unto his brethren—if he have no brethren, then ye shall give his inheritance unto his father's brethren—if his father have no brethren, then ye shall give his inheritance unto his kinsman that is next to him of his family, and he shall possess it.' The inheritance was to be kept in the family. That the Lord considered these rules of inheritance important is made clear in verse 11. 'And it shall be unto the children of Israel a statute of judgment, as the LORD commanded Moses.'

Ezekiel added more to the concept of inheritance. He

said that if a prince gave a gift from his inheritance to a servant then it would belong to the servant only until the year of liberty or jubilee, when it

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Notice: Triennial General Meeting

The Berean Bible Fellowship of Australia hereby gives notice that during the October conference from the 5th to the 7th, a TGM will be held. Please prayerfully consider this important meeting.

Inheritance. From page 1.

would return to the prince and become the inheritance of his sons. Ezek 46:17. The inheritance was meant to remain in the family.

Considering how seriously the inheritance was regarded, it is little wonder that Naboth refused to give or sell his plot of land to King Ahab. When the offer was made Naboth said to Ahab 'The LORD forbid it me, that I should give the inheritance of my fathers unto thee.' 1Kings 21:3.

The Levite's Inheritance.

The tribe of Levi did not inherit part of the land as the other eleven tribes did. They were a special case, set aside to serve the Lord. 'And the LORD spake unto Aaron, Thou shalt have no inheritance in their land, neither shalt thou have any part among them.' Num. 18:20. While the rest of Israel was to tend the land and watch over their flocks, the Levites were to serve the Lord in the tabernacle.

But if the Levites had no inheritance in the land, how were they to tend crops or raise animals? How would they eat? The Lord had this under control. 'But the tithes of the children of Israel, which they offer as an heave offering unto the LORD, I have given to the Levites to inherit.' So their physical needs were taken care of. Several of the offerings made to the Lord were for the Levites' sustenance.

But did the Levites have an inheritance? Yes! 'I am thy part and thine inheritance among the children of Israel.' Num. 18:24. Their inheritance was the Lord!

The Inheritance of Jehovah's Son.

There is one other inheritance mentioned in the Old Testament. It is found in Psalm 2. "I will declare the decree: the LORD hath said unto me, Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee. Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession." Psa. 2:7-8. This deals with the Lord taking vengeance against those who are enemies, and has yet to take place.

Inheritance in the N. Testament

The Gospels

The word 'inheritance' occurs only four times in the gospels and on each occasion it refers to inheritance as described above concerning Israel.

The word 'inherit' occurs six times. In Matt. 5:5 'the meek shall inherit the earth'. In Mark 10:17, Luke 10:25 and Luke 18:18 different people ask how they can inherit eternal life. Matt. 19:29

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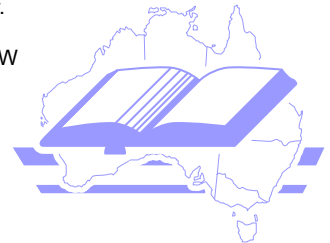
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Producer is Brian Kelson
POB 109 Boolaroo NSW 2284
email: charis@idl.net.au

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The interpretation of Scripture by various authors is not necessarily the one held by the majority of the Fellowship.

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3. All sufficiency of Christ's One Sacrifice.
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speaks of people inheriting everlasting life, and Matt. 25:34 says 'Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world'. It is necessary to have eternal life to participate in an everlasting kingdom.

The concept of inheriting eternal life does not appear in this form in the Old Testament, but inheriting the earth and inheriting the kingdom do.

Acts and the Acts Epistles.

In Acts 7:5 Stephen speaks of inheritance, and he is referring to Abraham's inheritance, so there is nothing new here. The word 'inheritance' occurs only twice more in Acts. These occurrences are 20:32 and 26:18 and refer to inheritance among them which are sanctified. And who are the sanctified? "..... but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God." 1Cor. 6:11. In Hebrews the relationship which allows inheritance is made clearer.

"For both he that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one: for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren." Heb. 2:11.

Paul, in Romans 8:14 -17 explains how those in the Acts period become heirs. "For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.....ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: and if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ".

The same truths are revealed in Galatians 4:4-7. "But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons. And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father. Wherefore

thou art no more a servant, but a son; and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ."

God's Son was made of woman, made under law, to redeem them that were under the law, and Gal.3:29 says "if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise." Those who were under the law were those who were heirs according to the promise, "Israelites; to whom pertaineth the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises." Rom. 9:4.

Post-Acts Epistles.

In the post-Acts epistles which refer to the present period, quite a different picture emerges. Paul says of gentiles that previously "ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world." Eph. 2:12. The gentiles had no access to the promises made to Israel, except to be grafted into Israel during the Acts period, as is described in Romans.

But Paul points out that this situation has changed. "But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ. For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us; Having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; for to make in himself of twain one new man, so making peace." Eph. 2:13-15.

However in the present period the gentiles have a hope, but it is not according to the promise, but according to the good pleasure of his will. "Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good

continued Page 7

DOCTRINE and WALK in BALANCE.

As we start with Eph. 4:1, we commence the second half of this glorious epistle.

Ephesians

N^o 31



Athol Walter

I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called,

With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love; Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling;

One Lord, one faith, one baptism,

One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all. But unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ.

Wherefore he saith, When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men.

And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers;

For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ:

Eph. 4:1-8, 11-12.

Not all books in the Bible are arranged so neatly, but Ephesians simply divides into two equal parts. To repeat what has been said in earlier studies, the first half deals with

DOCTRINE (i.e. teaching), while the second half outlines for us the PRACTICE (i.e. the application in our daily lives of the teaching given in the first three chapters).

There is an important principle about doctrine and practice here which we must understand and embrace, and I can do no better than to quote the words of Charles Welch, for they express the point far better than I could:

“There is scarcely anything more important and in need of more emphasis and repetition than that doctrine must ever be accompanied by practice, that walk must correspond with calling, that visible fruit must manifest the hidden root. This correspondence of doctrine and practice is most happily displayed in the Epistle to the Ephesians. It naturally divides into its two main sections - the first three chapters containing the great revelation, the second three chapters the resulting exhortation. ... it is not enough that we should learn the doctrine of the New Creation and the New Man; it must have some result. The old man with his "former conversation" (4:22) and with his deeds (Col. 3:9) must be put off, otherwise the glorious doctrine remains without life.” (In Heavenly Places, pp. 326/7.)

We may well struggle with the profound and sometimes difficult truths that Paul teaches in the first half of this letter, but I think each reader will understand me when I say that I have more difficulty applying these truths to my life and daily walk than I do in understanding them. I sometimes think that there is a more difficult standard of behaviour outlined in this practical section of Ephesians than that given to the nation of Israel at Mount Sinai.

Those of us associated with this witness who try to get others to see the riches of the Dispensation of the Mystery, have been accused once or twice of having “head knowledge” but no “heart knowledge”. Further discussion at those times revealed that what we were being accused of was not having a corresponding walk to match the doctrine. I

am sure that each of us so accused would acknowledge at least some truth in the charge, but we would also say that we are trying to achieve a balance.

So, while it means that we are falling short of God's standard if our walk does not balance the doctrine we believe, on the other side it is equally true that if we ignore God's revealed truth for our day and age, and try to walk according to truth that belongs to a previous dispensation, our walk and work for Him can also be falling short. It seems to me that it is not a case of either doctrine or practice. One should not exclude the other, and either without the other leads to a distorted walk and witness for our Lord who loved us and gave Himself for us.

There must always be the balance between the doctrine and the application of that doctrine in our lives. And, as a famous playwright once said, “Ah, there's the rub.”

Before we dive into the detail of ch. 4, I want to present an overview of the last three chapters. I would refer readers back to the outline of the epistle given in the first study in Spiritual Blessings Vol. 9 No. 2. If any reader does not have it and would like to see it, please right to our Book Agent, David Tavender, and he will send you a copy. His address is on the back cover of this magazine.

I shall, however, take a slightly different approach here. Also, I will give the corresponding, or balancing, sections from the first three chapters. I cannot urge you too strongly to spend sufficient time to come to an appreciation of this outline.

WALK WORTHY

The first verse in ch. 4 immediately introduces to us the change of outlook, i.e. from doctrine to practice. We get this in the different title that Paul uses for the Lord Jesus. In 3:1, Paul states that he is the prisoner of Christ Jesus for you Gentiles. In 4:1 he calls himself the prisoner of the Lord. Rather than this being simply the casual use of a parallel term, I suggest to you that the use of the title “Lord” instead of “Christ Jesus” denotes the change of emphasis that the Holy Spirit through Paul wishes to make. By the way, in 3:1, it is Christ Jesus in the Greek, and not Jesus Christ as in the AV.

The title “Christ Jesus” denotes the ascended and risen Saviour in whom and through whom we find our acceptance, our ground of blessing and our hope of glory. Of course, it is in Him and by Him that every blessing we have has been won. The title “Lord” on the other hand, speaks of our relationship with our Head in the practical sphere.

THE BALANCE BETWEEN
and

DOCTRINE

PRACTICE

IN EPHESIANS

CHS. 1-3.

1:1 - 2:7.

Opening salutations
All spiritual blessings
Paul's prayer
The mighty power inworked

2:8-10

The New Creation. Its walk.

2:11-19

The New Man. Once aliens
from Commonwealth

2:19-22

Temple fitly framed together
Apostles and prophets

Foundation ministry

3:1-13

Prisoner of Christ Jesus
three fold unity (v.6)

CHS. 4-6.

6:10-24.

Closing salutations
All spiritual armour
Prayer for Paul
The mighty power
outworked

5:1-6:9

The New Creation. Its walk.

4:20-32

The New Man. Once
alienated from Life of God

4:7-19

Body fitly joined together
Apostles prophets
evangelists pastors and
teachers
Adjusting ministry

4:1-6

Prisoner in the Lord
Sevenfold unity (vv. 3-6)

3:14-21.

The Central Prayer.

The Love of Christ The Fulness of God.

Some vv. from John 13:13-16 throw light on this point.

"Ye call Me Master and Lord: and ye say well, for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed you feet; ye also ought to wash one another's feet ... the servant is not greater than His Lord".

There is only one use of the title Lord in the first half of Ephesians (2:21). The remaining 15 occurrences are all in the practical section.

Let me remind you, seeing that we have touched on Paul the prisoner, that in contrast to being the prisoner of Christ Jesus for you Gentiles (3:1), when he called the Jewish leaders in Rome to a conference, he told them he was bound in his chains for the hope of Israel. (Acts 28:20).

It could be said that he was suiting his terms to his different audiences. Maybe, but I think we have to take into account that between Acts 28:20 and Eph. 3:1 there comes the climactic quotation of Isa. 6:9,10, and Paul's dismissal of the Jews. To the best of our

knowledge, Ephesians was the first epistle that Paul wrote after being imprisoned in Rome, and to my mind, the fact that he now becomes the prisoner ... for you Gentiles is another indication of the change of dispensation that took place at Acts 28:28.

Perhaps I have said enough for this time. We will look forward to beginning our consideration of the walk that is worthy in our next study. **S**

"Now we can expect some to say all....we want is *practical* Christianity. But it must be stressed that until we have received God's doctrine which is His truth, how do we know what to practise? If we are not first of all instructed into the truth of God, we shall only be putting into practice what we consider to be right, In other words we shall be making our own standards for ourselves and others, and *these falling far short of God's requirements* will be fruitless and unacceptable to Him."

"On Reading the Bible". Stuart Allen.

God's One Plan?

A reader has written to us, making the point that, **“Our God is ONE God, He has always had ONE plan, and dealt with us according to His ONE plan”**.

In a very real sense, I heartily agree with this sentence. The story of redemption is the underlying theme of the Bible, and indeed, of God's plans for mankind—Jew or Gentile. Sin separates us from Him, and it is only through God's love and grace that anyone at all can be reconciled to Him.

Concerning the dispensational approach which we advocate, the same reader also writes, **“One of the problems that I see in this whole method of interpretation, it would seem [God] did not really have a fixed and firm plan ... He didn't quite get it right the first time so He had to change tack, thus another dispensation, and another, and another”**.

Despite the unchanging fact that the Lord's love and grace has abounded to mankind since the days of Adam, I believe it is evident that God did actually institute a number of changes in His dealings with people in the process of carrying out His will.

From Genesis 3 to 11, there were no “nations” as such—just families of people—and God dealt with them in that way. In Genesis 12, Abram (later known as Abraham) was called out of Ur to father a nation—“I will make of thee a great nation” (Genesis 12:2)—which would become Israel. The Lord then said, “(through Abram) shall all families of the earth be blessed” (Genesis 12:3). Here, the Lord placed a distinction between Abram's descendants (more specifically, Israel) and the other nations. In other words He began dealing with mankind differently to how He had previously done. In addition, in the Old Testament, Israel are specifically shown to be, and instructed to keep, separate from the other nations ...

Leviticus 20:2,24,26—“thou shalt say to the children of Israel ... I am the LORD your God, which have separated you from other people ... And ye shall be holy unto me: for I the LORD am holy, and have severed you from other people, that ye should be mine.”

Deuteronomy 14:2—“For thou art a holy people unto the LORD thy God, and the LORD hath chosen thee to be a peculiar people unto himself, above all the nations that are upon the earth.”

Deuteronomy 28:1—“And it shall come to pass, if thou shalt hearken diligently unto the voice of the LORD thy God, to observe and to do all his commandments which I command thee this day, that the LORD thy God will set thee on high above all nations of the earth.”

Despite the fact that God instituted these laws separating Israel above the other nations, there has been a change in His dealings with mankind since those laws were put in place, for there is now “neither Greek nor Jew” (Colossians 3:11). God instituted that “law” as well, even though it goes against what He declared to be law previously. There is no contradiction or indecisiveness on God's part here, for the situation of “neither Greek nor Jew” was in God's mind well before Israel came into existence; even, in fact, “before the foundation of the world” (Ephesians 1:4)! Yet it clearly suited Him to carry out His will via such methods—at one point, dealing via Israel; at another point, dealing with mankind regardless of nationality, as is the case today.

Furthermore, consider Leviticus 1, where God instructed His people concerning burnt offerings, and the method of bringing such offerings. Of course, such offerings are inappropriate today because the conditions God has placed in force have changed—“Christ was sacrificed once to take away the sins of many people” (Hebrews 9:28). This is not to say that God made a mistake the first time

PLEASE EXPLAIN



David Tavender

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around, or couldn't foresee that His Son would do away with the need for such sacrifices, but that this was how He chose to carry out His will. It did not affect God's grace, yet the methods of dealing were different. It is obviously within His will to have instituted such a change, along with the other changes in His dealings with mankind.

It is clear that each of these changes in the conditions were set in force by the one God. And yet, the particular ways in which He has dealt with people throughout the ages differ. Let us not be fooled, however, into thinking that God was caught by surprise when Adam and Eve sinned (Genesis 3) or when Israel refused repeatedly to accept the Lord Jesus Christ as the promised Messiah (Matthew 13:57,58; Luke 23:20-23; Acts 4:16-18; Acts 28:23-28). Despite the unchanging nature of His grace, it is evident that the Lord alters some of the particular conditions, laws and practices in His dealings with people as He sees fit to fulfil His purposes throughout the ages.

Any Questions for David?

**You can write direct using the address on the back page or email him:
tavender@ozemail.com.au**

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Inheritance. From Page 3.

pleasure of his will." Eph. 1:5, and "we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will." Eph. 1:11.

The present hope has nothing to do with the promises of the Old Testament. It has a lot to do with the good pleasure of God's will. The gentile does have an inheritance. "Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light." Col.1:12 and "Knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance: for ye serve the Lord Christ." Col. 3:24.

The present hope is not on earth, but in heaven. Paul says "If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth." Col. 3:1-2 and "When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory." Col. 3:4

So there are a number of groups which have an inheritance, and each inheritance is different.

The Lord's inheritance is Israel.

Israel's inheritance is the land.

Levi's inheritance is the Lord.

The Acts period inheritance is in the kingdom of God.

The present period's inheritance is with Christ, far above all. **S**

Bob Davidson.



How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace; that bringeth good tidings of good, that publisheth salvation; that saith unto Zion, Thy God reigneth!

Is. 52:7

Bibles for Malawi. HELP PLEASE!

By the time you're reading this, David & Janelle Tavender will probably be in Malawi (mid-July 2001).



Many of the church leaders there have only recently been given a Bible through the donations to the BBFA (so far we have donated about 1600 OT & NT Bibles, 1000 gospel portions, and countless pamphlets all the Chichewa language). So, for one week, David will be giving some talks to church leaders, helping them to understand what's in their new Bible, and how to use it.

But in Malawi, many church leaders, let alone their congregations, still don't own a Bible.



In English we say, "Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" (Romans 10:17). In the Chichewa language they would say "Comweco cikhulupiro cidza ndi mbiri, ndi mbiri idza mwa mau a Kristu" - except that most people who speak that language don't have a Bible in which to read it.

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Our Malawian friends will say "Zukomo" (Thanks!).

David & Janelle Tavender visit Malawi.

One of the aims of the Berean Bible Fellowship of Australia (BBFA) is to promote a general interest in the Bible, and to encourage Bible study.

That's a rather difficult aim to achieve in Malawi, for how can a person study the Scriptures without access to them?



The Berean Bible Fellowship of AUSTRALIA Incorporated

2 Timothy 2:15 2 Timothy 3:16