

Spiritual Blessings

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John Hutton, Athol Walter and Dr. Robert Davidson at Bethshan 2001

Our basic text is 2 Tim. 2:15, and as we would expect, this is often attacked.

Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.

The objection raised goes something like this. "This verse does not mean that we must actually cut up or divide the Word of God. The better meaning is something like 'rightly handling the Word of Truth', and that is very different to what you Dispensationalists do when you chop the Bible to pieces."

This does seem to have some basis when modern versions are consulted, and we find 'rightly handling' (RSV), and 'correctly handling' (NIV). But what saith the Scriptures?

The Greek word that is translated 'rightly dividing' in the A.V. is ORTHOTOMEO. This word should not frighten us, as it is made up of two words that we use quite casually in English. Orthos means right, upright or straight, and we use it in orthodox, orthography, orthodontist. If you need to look any of those up, DO IT NOW. Temnos means to cut, and comes into many of our medical words describing surgical operations such as appendecTOMy. It is basically the word ATOM, which means the uncuttable or indivisible. A real misnomer now, of course.

Galatians 2:7-9 gives us another use of the word. Paul talks about circumcision, which from Latin, means 'to cut around'. The Greek word Paul used is PERI-TOME.

But when Timothy read the letter from Paul which contains our verse, he would have no trouble with

Dispensational Difficulties?

Anyone who tries to interest others in Dispensational Truth quickly finds out that not only is there a great wall of resistance, but that certain objections keep cropping up. I believe that there are a number of fairly common objections that can be expected and if they catch you unawares, you may find yourself in an awkward situation. And like many objections raised in debate, they can seem to carry a lot of weight. Sometimes, they can be quite hard to answer, especially for someone who has not been rightly dividing the Word for very long.

When I came up against some of these difficult verses or passages, I found answers, and believe it could be helpful to others to pass them on. I well realise that you may not have any problems with these passages, and that there could be others that present problems to you. These, however, are the ones that I have come up against the most often.

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The President's Word



Due to the intricacies of producing a magazine such as Spiritual Blessings, even though I am writing this well before Christmas, it will be the new year before you read it. So let me say that I hope you had a happy and safe holiday time, and are looking forward to this year of 2002 with great expectations.

The beginning of another year seems to carry a sense of hope for me, that perhaps I might do a little better in my work for the Lord than I did last year. I'm not one for New Year's Eve parties, or for New Year resolutions very much either. I think the best place to celebrate the arrival of the new year is sound asleep in bed. The new year will still be there in the morning.

I've not had much success with resolutions in the past. I have made them at various times, but it is not too many days into the new year, and I suddenly realise I've forgotten all about my good intentions. I suspect, however, that there is value in taking stock of our progress and achievements in each area of our lives, and then going forward determined to be and do better for our Master.

The one thing we must not do is to give up. We must, as Paul says, press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. The example of the Lord Himself is before us. When the time came, He set His face towards Jerusalem and allowed nothing to stop Him doing His work for the One who had sent Him. And when all had been carried out on the Cross, He was able to cry, "It is finished."

There is a prize for each of us, which may involve many things, but nothing, surely, will be better than hearing our Lord and Head say to us:
"Well done, good and faithful servant. Enter into the joy of your Lord."

"It's a Living Thing".

Australian television is running an environmental awareness campaign with the above catch phrase which also describes our magazine, Spiritual Blessings.

The initial changes to the magazine were rather obvious and brutal but there remain other more subtle changes made necessary because of changing circumstances and better understanding of electronic publishing.

If you are holding a paper version in your hands, you will know that there are possibly hundreds of readers who receive it via the internet, so great care is needed in selecting the type faces which are appropriate for both media. Current fonts (the type face, the characters used to make up the words you are reading) may not be the final fonts. Some type faces do not harmonise with others, some are very appropriate on the printed page but are difficult to read on a computer screen. The light grey horizontal dividers and grey borders appear in full colour in the electronic version so you may notice subtle changes in intensity while we settle on the best colour value for them.

There will be changes so we ask your patience. Spiritual Blessings—it's a living thing telling of a living Saviour.

Spiritual Blessings

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Articles which honour The Lord Christ Jesus, and acknowledge the principle of right division will be considered for publication. All articles are accepted on the basis that they may be used as the BBFA sees fit unless otherwise requested by the author.

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

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1. Full Inspiration of the Scriptures.
2. The Deity of Christ.
3. All sufficiency of Christ's One Sacrifice.
4. The Bible study principle of right division.

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**2002
Conference
27-29 Sept.
BETHSHAN
Wye**

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Alternate
Sundays
10:00AM

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2002. TBA

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June 2002
(07) 3297 1981

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3rd Sunday.
From 12:15.
Community Hall
104 Galston Rd
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(02) 4996 4455

Newcastle

Every Monday.
7:30PM
34 Aroona St
Edgeworth.
(02) 4950 6708

Dispensational Difficulties?

From Page 1.

the term 'rightly dividing', because he would be familiar with the term. We know he had been reared on the Hebrew Scriptures from childhood. We also know that the version he would have been taught to read was the Septuagint (LXX), the Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible for Greek-speaking Jews, and every time he read Proverbs 3:6, he would read this word, ortho-tomeo.

In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct (ORTHOTOMEO) thy paths.

Break the word di-rect up and you get the same thing - to apportion rightly. 'Di' is in our words meaning to divide in some way, and 'rect' is an old way of saying right. (Example: rectitude). I won't labour the point any more, but in spite of what opponents of Right Division may say, orthotomeo does mean to rightly cut. The A.V. translation of this word is an accurate one.

Even if someone insists on "rightly or correctly handling", it really doesn't change anything. If the Word is to be handled aright, then due attention must be paid to different dispensations and circumstances.

The second problem I want to deal with is the point made by some objectors who say, "your whole theory of dividing the Bible up as you do, is based on one lonely verse of Scripture. You haven't got anything else to buttress your fanciful ideas with, have you?"

Now this seems at first to be a serious objection. We would agree wholeheartedly that doctrines must not be built on solitary verses. Danger and error lie that way. The simple truth is, however, that we do not build our teaching on one verse, and this argument carries weight only with those who are intent on proving us wrong.

There are four points to be made in answering this charge:

1. There is another specific verse that states the same truth - and it occurs in the mystery epistles.
2. There are examples in Scripture of right division.
3. Most objectors themselves happily divide the Scriptures to the extent to which it suits them. They only object if they don't like the way or the extent to which other people divide the Word.
4. All believers practise right division in many ways, and are generally unaware of what they are doing.

I will take each of the above points in turn.

1. The other verse which is the "second witness" to the principle of right division is Phil. 1:10.

Please read at least verses 8-11 of that chapter. Verse 10 reads:

That ye may approve things that are excellent; that ye may be sincere and without offence till the day of Christ.

Any good Bible with marginal references will give an alternate rendering for "approve the things that are excellent". You should find something like "try the things that differ". Many of the words in these verses demand our attention, for they are saying more than we often understand them to say. For example, the word 'try' means to 'attempt' to our modern minds, yet when we hear of a case being tried in the courts, we automatically know what that means. The real meaning of try is to test, or to prove. (Prove is also misused nowadays. It really is a synonym for try or test.) So, we can insert the word 'test' for 'try'.

Did you notice the words knowledge and discernment when you read verse 9? We can let those two stand as they are. Sincere in v.10 is pure Latin, and comes from the pottery trade. It means to be pure, unmixed or unadulterated. It was the practice apparently, for less scrupulous potters to mix the best clays or glazes with something cheaper, and while it would look good when new, and could be sold as something very valuable, it would eventually show minute cracks and then the impurity would be revealed.

Let us put all this together and see what Paul is saying to us .

Philippians 1:9-10:

I pray that your love may continually grow in knowledge and discernment. This will enable you to test different doctrines and ideas, and so accept and approve only those things that are the best, in order that you may be without anything false or impure in the day of Christ.

To give approval to the most excellent thing, we must necessarily collate and compare the things of God, reject some as inapplicable and accept others as right for us. In other words, we must rightly divide.

2. Two examples from the words of the Lord Himself will be sufficient for this point. In Luke 4, the Lord reads from Isaiah 61. Have you ever compared the two passages? Remember, He was about to say to those in the synagogue at Nazareth, "This day is this Scripture fulfilled in your ears." He could say that of "the acceptable year of the Lord", but not of "the year of vengeance of our God",

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MICHAELMAS:

The Festival of S. Michael and All Angels.
R.G. Sobey.

A discussion showing its extraordinary hidden relationship to Christmas Day and the Jewish Feast of Tabernacles; which links the Jew and the Christian; and helps indirectly to prove that Messiah came IN CHRIST.

Not long ago, a Christian article in a daily newspaper quoted Prudentius's Hymn, *Corde Natus ex Parentis*, and gave the translation as "Of the Father's love begotten" (cf. Neale "sole begotten" and Davis "heart begotten", etc.). Attention is only drawn to these renderings, because translating *natus* (born) by "begotten" (which really means "conceived") brings out the point of this present article, which is that the distinction between these two phases of life's beginning, is so frequently lost sight of when we deal with that most important life of all, viz., that of our Lord and Saviour where we thus not only fail to clear up many apparent discrepancies both in prophecy and gospel story, but by such oversights inevitably create them.

At first the distinction appears trivial; but so did the fall of an apple till Newton came. It would seem that many sublime truths imitate the commonplace as a living insect may imitate a dead twig, and it is fatal both to "common sense" and to belief in God and His Word, to regard things as sufficiently identical if there is the slightest sign of some discrepancy. "Trying the things 'that differ'" as the marginal rendering of Romans 2:18 has it (and not by accepting them unapproved) is both good carpentry and good Biblical exegesis. Here is the case in point:

If a serious student accepts December 25 as the birthday of Christ, he is immediately and rightly confronted by "rationalists" and others with the fact that a midwinter dating (as of course it is in the northern hemisphere) will not square with the scene set forth in Luke 2:18, which depicts the shepherds with their flocks in the open fields and not in the winter folds. People do not crowd our beaches in the winter nights; but in the summer and autumn they are there in their thousands. All the world over we seek open spaces in great numbers to cool ourselves after the heat of the day. In short; heat drives people from their beds to the open fields or the beaches, cold drives them from the beaches and fields to their beds.

Let us say then that Luke 2:8 demands a pastoral scene after the heat of the day, i.e., in a summer or autumn eve or night. Here is a

discrepancy. Let us therefore apply our tri-squares like good carpenters (for was not our Lord a carpenter, aye, the master-builder Himself?): If December 25 will not square well as the birthday, let us see what taking it as His conception day will do (for His conception must at least be as vital as His birth—indeed let us not be perverse and prudishly (and quite unbiblically) ignore as Christendom has done down through the ages, the first and mightiest marvel for the second, for the cosmos shaking wonder of "The Word becoming Flesh" (incarnate) must precede the resultant wonder of that Word's being born.

Well, then, let us do this. Let us add 280 days (which is the normal interval between conception and birth). This gives us a birth date of September 29, of the following year (counting in leap-year reckoning for reasons which we will not go into now). Now this does two things:

1. It brings us to the middle of autumn, near the autumnal equinox where, following the summer solstice, the days and nights are still warm, and
2. It clears up a peculiar anomaly in the Calendar of the Christian Church—the anomaly of Michaelmas, which, when in turn examined, leads us back to that wonderful passage in St. Luke (the announcement of the birth of the Prince of Peace), and so closes the circle of our little enquiry.

Let us then examine this date. Is there anything extraordinary about September 29 (apart from the very peculiar feature just mentioned which relates it to Christmas Day)? The answer is an emphatic "Yes". It is a date which was originally considered so important as to be set apart for all time as a fixed festival by the Christian Church, undoubtedly because of something momentous which happened on that date. "Well," the reader may observe, "what is particularly peculiar about that"? Just this: that the world over, that same Church has long had to admit that it does not now really know why it was originally so important! One has heard of Pirandello's *Six Characters in Search of an Author*, but who ever heard of a most important festival date in search of a reason for its importance!! Yet Smith's Dictionary had to admit "it does not appear certain what was the original special idea of the commemoration of this day". Also it may be well to remember that September 29 is, in the Jewish Calendar, always closely associated with both the Jewish New Year and the great Feast of Tabernacles—and, as one more point, let us note particularly this word "tabernacle".

It is clear that something happened to this date in those dark centuries following the

destruction of Jerusalem, and on the facts given above (and for which one is heavily indebted to the Companion Bible), it is almost certain that the conception date of our Lord, being close to the pagan festival of Horus and Isis (a birth date) became converted and combined by the leavening power of tradition into the birthdate of Christ! Thus the day on which the Word became Flesh (i.e., was conceived—begotten) became confused with that day when He was fully furnished as to the Flesh, and being thus fully furnished, was born (Cf. S. John 1:14 R.V. Margin "and tabernacled among us", with A.V. "dwelt among us"). No one can be said to "dwell among us" until he has been born, "or brought into the world" as we say (and so Hebrews 1:6).

To summarize then:

- (i) This day, September 29, is known in our calendar as Michaelmas Day or The Day of Michael and All Angels.
- (ii) It is exactly 280 days (leap year) from the preceding Christmas Day.
- (iii) 280 days is the normal interval between conception and birth.
- (iv) If Christmas Day be taken as the conception day, i.e., the true Annunciation Day of Christ, He would have been born, and His birth heralded, on the Day of Michael and All Angels.

Finally, and very significantly, if the preceding Christmas Day be accepted even if only for argument (and there is more to it than that) as Tebeth 1, then Michael and All Angels falls on the evening of the 15th Ethanim (or Tishri) 4 B.C., which would be the very first day of the great eight-day Feast of Tabernacles; and (another coincidence?) the last day of those eight days, would correspond in interval with the Feast of the Circumcision. (Cp Lk. 2:21).

Now, is there anything to link the Festival of Michael and All Angels with the Gospel account of the announcement of the birth of the Prince of Peace? Again the answer is clearly "Yes", but let the reader judge. Take these verses of S. Luke 2:9-14, which speak of the Angel of the Lord as making known the birth of the Saviour, and which immediately add that "and suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying"—those verses which have been the theme of Christmas carols for nigh two thousand years in every tongue.

Now: assuming as we have done, that December 25 had already been reserved to the name of Christ, to mark the tremendous fact of the Incarnation, what more fitting than that the resultant natal date of September 29, coupled as it was with such angelic manifesta-

tion, should be named, were Michael that angel, The Day of Michael and All Angels? And how significant that name would be to the whole of believing Israel! Had not their fathers received the Law at Sinai by the mediation of angels? In the words of Deuteronomy 33:2: "The Lord came from Sinai, and He came with ten thousands of saints: from His right hand went a fiery law for them". We too often forget that when dealing with Israel we are dealing with a people under a manifest ministry of angels, and miracle everywhere abounds; and here we could quite naturally have Israel's great Archangel himself, "Michael—your prince" (as Daniel 10:21) and in Daniel 12:1. "At that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince which standeth for the children of thy people"—"and at that time thy people shall be delivered" (i.e., saved). How profoundly these angelic phenomena and utterances would stir all those awaiting "the salvation of Israel" and how almost uncontrollable would be their joy at the revelation that that long-awaited Saviour had been born to them that day! And how powerfully would their Septuagint speak to them when they read those words now quoted in Hebrews 1:6 "When he bringeth the first begotten into the world (i.e., to the birth) he saith: "Let all the Angels of God worship him". And how rightly this could be taken as including the great Archangel Michael, always so closely associated in the prophecies of their deliverance.

So, surely, all Christian people who read these lines can still commemorate Christmas Day with a glad heart, gladdened even more perhaps because they have understood a little more of the marvellous workings, the underlying exactitude, of the things of God. Such knowledge raises us above the perilous charms and fantasies of fable and tradition and tells us that over 2000 years ago, in the very beginnings of these hasting years of Grace, wonderful things really did occur and that wonderful things really were revealed, to certain watching shepherds in those Palestinian fields. It traverses events which beginning in S. Luke 1:19 with the Annunciation to the Virgin Mother ended in that other, the glorious birth announcement by Michael and the angelic host, recorded in S. Luke 2:9-14 tidings at once national, momentous, and tangible to expectant Israel, "the people" (R.V.)—tidings that the long awaited Saviour had been born into the world—had "tabernacled" with them, that very day (and behold! it is the first of Tabernacles!)—Tidings and coincidences which should have energized them to the end of the age.

But now, we, dwelling in the Mystery Dispensation of Ephesians, Philippians and

God has been **Rich** in His **Kindness**
toward us

We have been blessed by God.

“Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ.”

Ephesians 1:3.

To bless someone means to speak well of them. To say a kind word about them. God has already done this for us. God has spoken well of us but we can't touch or feel it but we can believe it because it is written in the Bible.

We have been chosen by God.

For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight.

Ephesians 1:4.

One day you will decide to give something to a friend or member of your family. It's your choice.



Before we were born, God decided to chose us to be set apart and without any blame in His sight. What a special place.

God has already done this. We can not touch or feel the blessings or see the place we will one day stand but we can believe it can't we?

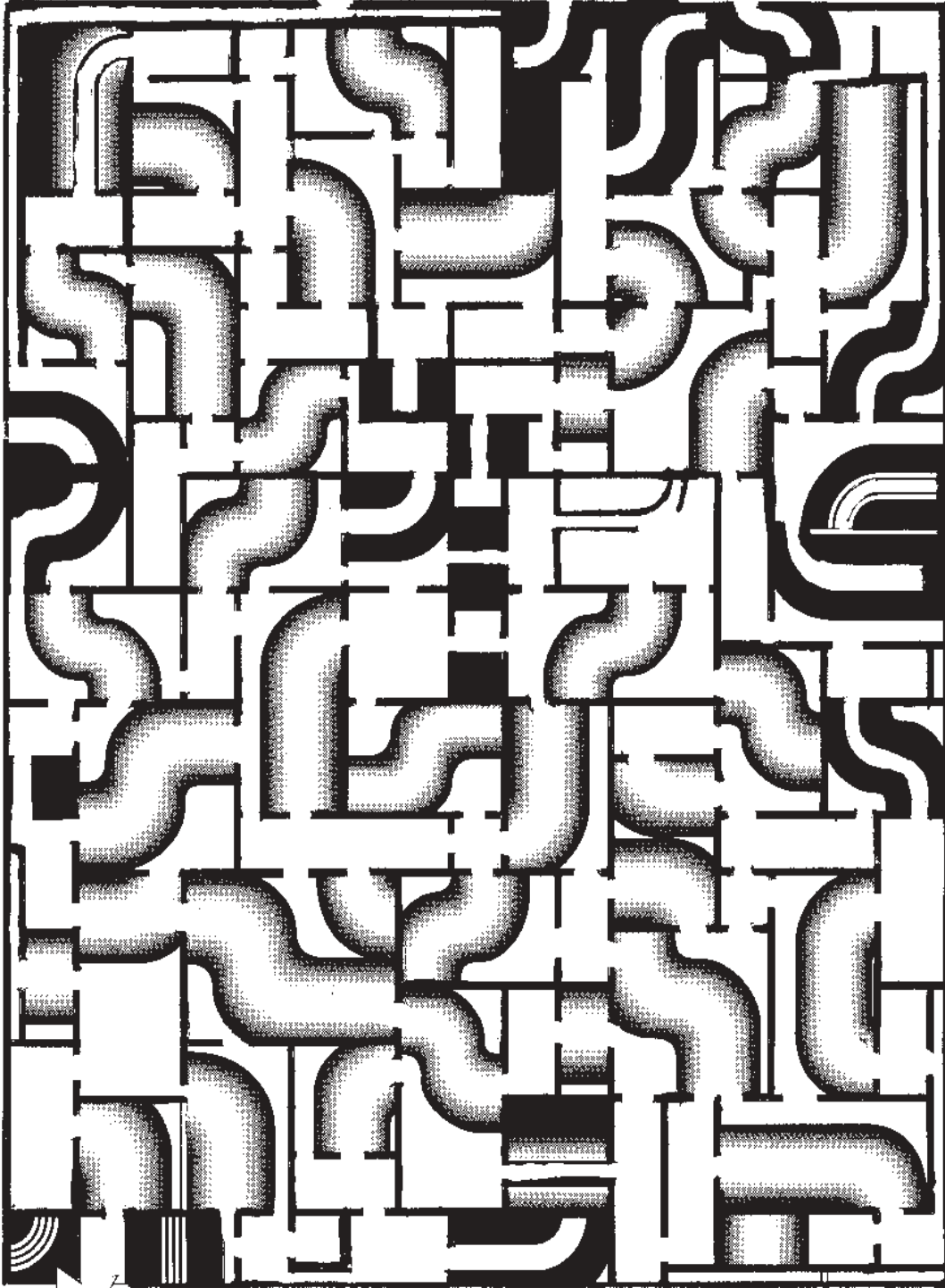
Think about this for treasure in Heaven.

In future ages God will show His kindness to us.

And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus.

Ephesians 2:6-7.

We have promises from God that money can not buy.



Our lives are amazing.

Look to The Lord Jesus and don't get side tracked trying to become rich with lots of possessions.

One Lord, Unity and Peace.

We turn our attention now to Eph. 4:3-7 which speaks of the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace. This is the first of three UNITIES mentioned in these verses, viz. 1-17. I trust that readers will remember the outline given in the last study.

For the sake of any who may not have seen it, however, let me briefly repeat the main points. I should say firstly, that we take vv. 1-17 as a section because it starts and finishes with references to Paul, the believer's walk and an attitude of mind. In vv. 1, 2 it is the prisoner of the Lord who pleads with us to walk worthy in all humility of mind. In v. 17 Paul exhorts us not to walk as other Gentiles do in the vanity of their minds.

In between those opening and closing points, we have three unities mentioned, accompanied in each case by seven points and a reference to a measure. Finally, each unity is said to have a goal in mind. It is my purpose now to discuss these items in some detail.

THE UNITY OF THE SPIRIT. (vv. 3-12)

The point was made in the last study that we are instructed to KEEP the unity of the Spirit. It really is simple logic, isn't it, to deduce that if we are to keep something then that something already exists. We are not instructed to MAKE the unity of the Spirit, but to KEEP it. Not only is it beyond our capabilities to make it, it has already been made by the only one who could make it, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Cast your mind back to ch. 2 where Paul reminds us of the position Gentiles had before the setting aside of Israel and the revelation of the Mystery and its associated company, the Church which is His Body. Without going into every detail, words such as aliens, strangers, without Christ, no covenants, no hope, without God and far off, show how desolate the position of Gentiles was.

Then vv. 13 and 14 tell us, "But now in Christ Jesus ye ... are made nigh by the blood of Christ, for He is our peace ..." And in v. 16, " ... having slain the enmity thereby."

It is true that peace is more than just the absence of enmity, but it is also true that while there is any enmity present, there can be no peace. We will come back to these verses shortly. Returning now to ch. 4, I hope you can see the genesis of this unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

The term "of the Spirit" can be taken two ways, and I think it is right to do so. Firstly, it was and is undoubtedly the work of the Holy Spirit to establish this unity and peace in our hearts and the Church which is His Body. And secondly, it is in the spiritual sphere where this unity exists. I

think each reader will understand me when I say that we do not have this unity with the world at large. It is when we come, in spirit, into the company of fellow-believers that we feel at one and at peace.

Am I naive enough to think that this unity and peace amongst believers cannot be disturbed or even broken? No, I am not. I know that it can be disrupted, and I have no doubt that Satan works hard to do just that. But we are redeemed not only from the consequences of our sins, but also from the power of the sinful nature. We no longer must serve sin. We now have the choice and can say no. So it seems to me to make a lot of sense that Paul pleads with us to keep, to guard jealously, this unity in the bond of peace, for it is possible for us to do so.

Let me remind you that the word Paul used for 'keep' here, means to keep safe as one would a treasure. How well, then, do we guard it? We are called into a company (church) where all types and shadows have fallen away in the reality that we have in Christ Jesus. The distinctions that once caused contentions amongst believers have been completely cancelled out. Surely, then, if I allow any of the types and practices that were important in previous dispensations to intrude, I am allowing this precious unity to be disrupted. Well, this is a matter for the individual's conscience. We just need to make sure our consciences are instructed by the Word of God.

Verses 4 - 6 tell us of the seven items connected with this unity. They are: one Body, one Spirit, one hope of our calling, One Lord, one faith, one baptism and one God and Father. Notice that the central item of the seven is ONE LORD. He it is alone who makes each of these items real and possible and indeed holds them all together. It is but another reminder to us that our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ, is central to all we have and are, and without Him we are nothing.

SEVEN UNITIES

We will not get through them in this study, but we come now to the first one.

ONE BODY.

We need to be a little careful here, because of the traditional tendency to read truth from previous dispensations into this one, and conversely, to read the truth concerning the Body of Christ which is unique to the Dispensation of the Mystery, back into the administration of the Acts years.

To be specific, the "body" of 1 Cor. 12 is not the same as the "one body" of Eph. 4. What Paul is speaking of in Eph. 4 relates to Eph. 2, not 1 Cor. 12. I want to quote Eph. 2:14 - 17 from the Amplified Version because this

Ephesians

N^o 34



**Athol
Walter**

And ye are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power:

In whom also ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ:

Buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead. And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses;

Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross;

And having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them in it. Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holyday, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath days: Which are a shadow of things to come; but the body is of Christ.

Col. 2:10-17

translation includes many of the shades of meaning in the Greek, that do not make it over into most English translations. While I could argue over a few little points in the translation, I nevertheless give it in its entirety so you can see the full colour of the passage. The brackets indicate the insertions made by the translators to show the other meanings present.

"For He is [Himself] our peace - our bond of unity and harmony. He has made us both [Jew and Gentile] one (body), and has broken down the (destroyed, abolished) hostile dividing wall between us, by abolishing in His [own crucified] flesh the enmity [caused by] the Law with its decrees and ordinances - which He annulled; that He from the two might create in Himself one new man - one new quality of humanity out of the two - so making peace.

And [He designed] to reconcile to God both [Jew and Gentile, united] in a single body by means of His cross; thereby killing the mutual enmity and bringing the feud to an end.

And He came and preached the glad tidings of peace to you who were far off and (peace) to those who were near. [Is. 57:19.]"

I urge you to take the time to go over that passage a number of times, compare it with your own version, and seriously consider the points made.

So here is the ONE BODY of Eph. 4. It is a Christ-made union of Jewish and Gentile BELIEVERS in which all distinctions are wiped out. Not only has the Gentile believer lost all disadvantages, but the Jewish believers have lost all the advantages that were once theirs right up to the end of the Acts period.

I emphasise the point that the unity has been made between Jewish and Gentile believers in particular, not between Gentiles and Jews in general. To illustrate my meaning, some years ago we had a visit from an American couple who had seen the truth of the Mystery of Ephesians. The husband was a Jew who, in his younger days, had been trained as a Rabbi in a strict Jewish sect. He had become a Christian, and then later brought to an understanding of the Ephesians position. When they came amongst us, there was an immediate bond and the fellowship was deep and rich.

On the other hand, I have at times had contact with Jewish folk, including Rabbis, who do not accept that Jesus of Nazareth is their Messiah. While these contacts have been friendly, there nevertheless has been a barrier between us, and in the true sense of the word, there was no fellowship.

ONE SPIRIT.

The second point of the seven associated with

the unity of the spirit is the ONE SPIRIT. Again we find that ch. 2 has prepared the ground before us, for in v. 18 we read: "For through Him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father."

This is another point that shows how great the change of the Gentile and Jewish relative positions has been since the ending of the Acts administration. As Paul shows very clearly in Rom. 9-11 (written towards the end of the Acts period, of course) that the position of the Gentile believer AT THAT TIME was that of a wild branch grafted into Israel's olive tree. In the matter of life in Christ, there was no difference between them, for all had sinned, but in many dispensational matters there were great differences. Just to name one, no Gentile believer could go into the Temple in Jerusalem to worship.

But Paul dismissed Israel in Acts 28 during the day long conference with the Jewish leaders of Rome, then the new dispensation relating to the Secret hidden in God before the foundation of the world was revealed, and in this new era, the Jew had no more advantages over the Gentile. As far as the Temple was concerned, it was destroyed a few short years later and has not existed to this very day.

So it is the one and self-same Holy Spirit, who once worked in a special way showing wonderful evidential signs during the time of Israel's second chance, who now works in a different way, particularly as far as our present point is concerned, providing access to the Father for the both groups, without any favour for either.

I must conclude for the present. We will continue in the next study, the Lord willing. In the meantime, may we each one look to the Lord for guidance and courage to keep, as we would our life's treasure, the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. **S**

The Words of Scripture.

In his book "The Seed of the Woman", Arthur C. Custance often devotes space to studying the actual words that are used in various passages of Scripture. He takes pains to look behind the English translation, trying to discover just what the Holy Spirit caused to be written. And after one such section he writes:

"If it matters not what the precise words are, then clearly this method of studying is a waste of time. But surely we are right to adopt the Lord's own attitude towards the very minute details of the Word of God. He said that even the jot (its smallest letter) and tittle (the smallest distinguishing mark) are worthy of scrutiny because they will not be lost until they have fulfilled their role as necessary to revelation.

In that case, the words we have examined are not being excessively scrutinized. We are not worshipping the letter and neglecting the spirit. The tense IS important; the gender DOES matter; the meaning IS crucial. Attention to small cues in the Word of God IS fundamental to understanding its message."

We couldn't put it better ourselves.

Oscar Baker was an important American Bible student and teacher who, in July 1948, made some observations which are as helpful now as then. We offer these as food for thought being in the spirit of Please Explain.

PLEASE EXPLAIN



Oscar Baker

"Nobody wishes to miss a good thing. Many regrets are because of missed opportunities. Untold treasures are being missed and lost today because of a closed Bible. It is just ignorant neglect. Many good Christians are choosing lesser blessings when they

might just as well have the greater. They are poor spiritually by choice.

Take, for example, Col. 3:4. Have you taken that for your hope? Some day the Lord will appear. But where? In Glory. The word for "appear" is PHANEROO. According to the Lexicon it means, "to make manifest, make apparent, show forth." The Lord Jesus Christ is sharing His Father's throne now. Some day He will receive many crowns and will reign over the heavens and the earth. This appearing in glory is the great coronation. But notice the verse again. "Then shall ye also appear with Him in glory." What a wonderful time that will be! Will you be there?

I was a Christian for a long time before I came to know that my address, my place of citizenship, was in heaven (Phil. 3:20). I did not know, either, that I was a saint. In fact, I had a very different opinion of myself when I looked into the Word and found how short I came of what constituted a real Christian. But I found that in Christ Jesus I was a saint, just as are all believers.

As I studied the Bible, I became aware of the fact that I was in some degree puzzled by many questions which I could not answer. I wondered why the church during the period covered by the book of Acts was so different from the church today. Why did we no longer have gifts of tongues and healing? Why couldn't we raise people from the dead? Why do we no longer observe the Passover as they did? Why do Gentiles now take part in the church services and not then? Why were folks stricken dead when they lied in the assembly, and now even the preachers can get by with it and not be struck down? There are others too numerous to mention here. Can you think of any?

But when I finally realized that that church was to go thru the great tribulation and be caught up at the last trump, I saw that I had to find an answer. For how could the church of today be

caught up at the last trump when the coronation spoken of above was to take place some time before? We couldn't be caught up when we had already been caught up some time before. But, as is the rule in the Word, the key hung at the door. The key was Acts 28:28. My trouble was that I just didn't realize that I was not a Jew. I was trying to steal the blessings of the Jews and was ignoring the wonderful truths that were written for us Gentiles by the Holy Spirit thru the apostle Paul. I had not been rightly dividing the Word of Truth and surely was a workman that needed to be ashamed. I only wish that there was some way by which I might correct some of the Bible teaching I did in those early years. May the Lord grant that I will not be disapproved as was Moses. He led Israel in the wilderness for forty years and yet did not get to enter the land. (No, he was not lost).

Now being a Christian is a whole lot more than just believing that there is a God in heaven and going to church once in a while. It is said in the Word that Abraham believed God and it was counted unto him as righteousness. But how can a person believe God if he does not know what God has said? It does not say that Abraham believed the preacher or the Bible teacher or some books somebody peddled to him, but he believed God. Do you know what God has said and believe Him?

There is just one way to find what God has said. That is to read and study His Word the Holy Scriptures. The apostle Paul, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, said that he completed the Scriptures. I am not looking then for any other revelations of any kind written since Paul wrote his last epistle to Timothy. The Bible is all we need to find out what God has said. I hasten to add that it cannot be fully understood except by the teaching of the Holy Spirit.

To the real Christian the study of the Bible is a great joy. For it is the record that God has given of His dear Son. From the beginning to the end we find the Christ, sometimes hidden as in Esther, sometimes more clearly as in Isaiah. Matthew presents Him as the king of Israel, Mark presents Him as the servant of Jehovah, Luke presents Him as the Son of man, and John presents Him as the Son of God.

But the apostle Paul shows Him as the great Reconciliator of the nations which had been given up. So we then, who had been aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise,

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MICHAELMAS From page 5

Colossians—in the "How long?" of Isaiah 6:11 (whose fateful words closed Acts, and sounded the destruction of Jerusalem)—we should not limit that holy gestation to Christmas Day, but should proclaim its significant relationship also to September 29; thus linking Jew and Christian with a chain of 280 links (a link for a day)—a chain as strong and as extraordinary as the facts of life itself—a chain which no argument to the contrary, so far put forward can sever. Surely this is one of those unconscious corroborations of Scripture, those "undesigned coincidences", and one which would have rejoiced the heart of Dr. Paley! for such it would seem is the true significance of that great fixed festival of forgotten origin, which, unwittingly almost, is still acknowledged by three great branches of the Church of God as "The Day of Michael and All Angels". **S**

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have access thru Him to God. In this dispensation, we, on an equality with the Jew, make up the body of Christ (See Ephesians).

I have only hinted at some of the great truths that make our hearts rejoice. If you would like to study some of these things and have some of the great questions that have troubled you answered, we *...have arranged...* Bible classes to help you....(See page 2).

Oscar M. Baker

P.S. I am not connected with any church or organization of any kind. I do not question your race, political views or church membership. The body of Christ is not divided.

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Dispensational Difficulties? From page 3

so He tried the differing things, and did something that was unheard of in the synagogue. He not only cut the appointed reading short, but he stopped halfway through a sentence, and shut the book. No wonder every eye in the place was fixed on Him.

The second instance is in Matthew 15:21-29. Here a Gentile woman calls on the Lord as the Son of David for healing:

Matt. 15:23 But he answered her not a word. And his disciples came and besought him, saying, Send her away; for she crieth after us.

"But He answered her not a word."

Note well the Lord's words in this verse:

Matt. 15:24 But he answered and said, I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel.

The woman, however, was not to be denied and she apparently understood what many Christians today do not, viz., that as a Gentile she was outside the pale. She changes the title she uses and calls Him "Lord." Even then, she had to acknowledge that what she received was but a crumb from Israel's table.

We can deal with points 3 and 4 together.

All Christians, even those who emphasise the Law of Moses, accept the division of the Old and New Testaments. Many Christians readily agree with us that there is a difference between Kingdom and Church. Many fine Christian people ignore the rules of Jehovah concerning the Sabbath (Saturday) without any pangs of conscience, and without any of the punishments demanded in the O.T. Even those who do observe Saturday as the Sabbath still practise right division in a very important way. They bring none of the sacrifices demanded by the Law of Moses, because they acknowledge that since the Cross, things have been different! In my 45 years as a Christian, I have yet to find anyone who puts every precept of the Sermon on the Mount into practice, and they don't even feel condemned. So even though many SAY they do not accept the principle of right division, what they DO shows that they do accept it, yet often unawares.

Several other passages will be dealt with in future articles. **S**

Athol Walter.

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I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom;

Preach the word;

2Tim.4:1-2a.

Clothing for Malawi.

Samson put forth a riddle to the Philistines and offered a prize of thirty changes of garments. Details can be found in Judges 14.

I do not have thirty changes of garments. I have certainly changed sets of clothes at least thirty times being one of those with no need of fashion, nor do I discard comfortable attire because it shows a little wear.

If, however I was a believer in Malawi, more likely I would have one set of clothes only. One set of garments for working, the same for sleeping, the same for the weekly meetings. If my shirt was torn, then I would have to cover the tear because there would be little chance of finding a needle and thread for the repairs needed.

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2 Timothy 2:15 2 Timothy 3:16