

Spiritual Blessings

Vol. 16 N°3

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The Near Return of The Lord.

There are many verses in the New Testament which indicate very strongly that The Lord would come again not long after His death and resurrection.

First century Christians who anticipated this glorious event were later perplexed. As time passed without the glory being realised they wondered why the Scriptures indicated that The Lord would come back "quickly" when in fact, He had not. Eventually many Christians began to abandon the literal interpretation of the Scriptures but there is a reason why The Lord did not return back as expected and once this reason is clear we can return to a confidence in God's Word.

Here are some passages which indicate that the New Testament did support this blessed expectation. We have the very words of our Lord and quite a cross section of writers.

Imagine being the original listener or reader.

Matt. 3:11 "I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance, but He who is coming after me is mightier than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.

Matt. 3:12 "His winnowing fan is in His hand, and He will thoroughly clean out His threshing floor, and gather His wheat into the barn; but He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire."

First up John warns his listeners of the coming judgment. What? 2000 plus years away? Hardly motivation for his listeners to repent. Note John said "he will baptize you", "He will burn up the chaff"; again, unlikely to be directed at those living in the very distant future.

Consider these verses:

Matt. 10:22 "And you will be hated by all for My name's sake. But he who endures to the end will be saved.

Matt. 10:23 "When they persecute you in this city, flee to another. For assuredly, I say to you, you will not have gone through the cities of Israel before the Son of Man comes.

The witness in Israel during Acts was terminated with the stoning of Stephen (Acts 7) but had there been a wave of repentance then, just maybe, The Lord would have returned before the conversion of Paul.

Consider these verses:

Matt. 16:27 "For the Son of Man will come in the glory of His Father with His angels, and then He will reward each according to his works.

Matt. 16:28 "Assuredly, I say to you, there are some standing here who shall not taste death till they see the Son of Man coming in His kingdom."

Matt. 23:39 For I say unto you, Ye shall not see me henceforth, till ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord.

Matt. 24:32 " Now learn this parable from the fig tree: When its branch has already become tender and puts forth leaves, you know that summer is near.

Matt. 24:33 "So you also, when you see all these things, know that it is near — at the doors!

Matt. 24:34 "Assuredly, I say to you, this generation will by no means pass away till all these things take place.

Luke 9:27 "But I tell you truly, there are some standing here who shall not taste death till they see the kingdom of God."

There is a conditional particle in these verses above which leaves the result uncertain. In other words, if a certain condition was met, then the near return of The Lord would have taken place and they would not have tasted of death till they saw the kingdom of heaven. But if the condition was not realised then they would not live until the kingdom. So, while the possibility of living till His return was true for those listening to Him, it depended on a particular condition which could have been met at that time.

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We have no right to take these words to ourselves. The condition back then

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The Berean
Bible Fellowship of
AUSTRALIA Incorporated

2 Timothy 2:15 2 Timothy 3:16

Should Christians eat meat?

Some Christians do not like meat. For some the thought of eating one of God's creatures is repugnant, while a few Christians might believe it is the will of God for them not to eat meat.



I will eat anything except turnip.

But what does God's Word say regarding our diet?

Disregarding pre-flood conditions, we know Israel were given very clear instructions about their fare and I believe these were in the mind of Daniel and his friends when they refused to eat the King's food. See Daniel 1:1-16.

We note in verse eight that Daniel did not want to "defile" himself.

I believe "defile" suggests the following Scriptures were foremost in his mind:

1. Leviticus 11 and 20:22-26.
As a captive, Daniel could not be sure if the "meat" was of "clean" animals. See Acts 10.

2. Exodus 34:11-17.
Daniel could not be sure if the meat had been offered to an idol, and there was a good chance it had been.

3. Leviticus 3:17 and 17:10-14.
Daniel could not be sure if the meat had been slaughtered and dressed properly for consumption. See also Acts 15:20, 29.

So what about our diet today?
Please read 1 Timothy 4:1-5.

We are all free to enjoy a vegetarian diet for personal reasons. Indeed, we are all Scripturally free to eat as we please, I believe.

Brian Kelson.

Notices - please note

Brisbane Weekend

June 8-9-10

Location:

The Construction Training Centre,
AXIS Training entry, QMBA Room.
460 Beaudesert Road,
Salisbury,

For a program contact:

haggler@bigpond.com
or (07) 3297 1981

Sydney Mini Conference

May 19

10:00 AM-3:00PM

Location:

Community Hall	BYO Lunch
104 Galston Rd	Studies at
Hornsby Hts.	10, 11:30, 1:15
Phone: 4996 4455	

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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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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
Wyee**

Brisbane

Alternate
Sundays
10:00AM

Long Weekend
June 8-10, 2002
(07) 3297 1981

Sydney

3rd Sunday
of each month.
From 12:15.
Community Hall
104 Galston Rd
Hornsby Hts.
(02) 4996 4455

Mini conference.
See this page
for details.

Newcastle

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

Near Return of The Lord.

From Page 1

is not in view now, so it is unprofitable to use these verses to create an expectation in the hearts of believers, in spite of the fact there will be those who live unto His Coming.

So what was the trigger? What condition would bring about this great and wonderful return of The Lord to the earth in the life of those to whom He spoke? What did God need to see?

The condition becomes very clear in the second chapter of Acts.

Peter addresses Israel at great length reminding them of Joel and his cry to "call upon the name of The Lord" for salvation:

Acts 2:20 The sun shall be turned into darkness, And the moon into blood, Before the coming of the great and awesome day of the LORD.

Acts 2:21 And it shall come to pass That whoever calls on the name of the LORD Shall be saved.'

Peter leaves them in no doubt as to who "The Lord" is:

Acts 2:22 "Men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a Man attested by God to you by miracles, wonders, and signs which God did through Him in your midst, as you yourselves also know —

Acts 2:23 "Him, being delivered by the determined purpose and foreknowledge of God, you have taken by lawless hands, have crucified, and put to death;

Acts 2:24 "whom God raised up, having loosed the pains of death, because it was not possible that He should be held by it.

Peter turns to the words of King David:

Acts 2:30 "Therefore, being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him that of the fruit of his body, according to the flesh, He would raise up the Christ to sit on his throne,

Acts 2:31 "he, foreseeing this, spoke concerning the resurrection of the Christ, that His soul was not left in Hades, nor did His flesh see corruption.

King David was promised a son to reign over the house of Israel. God said to David, "thy throne shall be established for ever". 2 Samuel 7:16.

Peter makes it clear to his brethren (Israelites) that the very one they had crucified was indeed the promised seed of David:

Acts 2:34 "For David did not ascend into the heavens, but he says himself: 'The LORD said to my Lord, "Sit at My right hand,

Acts 2:35 Till I make Your enemies Your footstool.'"'

Acts 2:36 "Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ."

Some of the Jews, realising the terrible atrocity committed against the anointed, responded thus:

Acts 2:37 Now when they heard this, they were cut to

the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?"

Peter gave a very simple reply:

Acts 2:38 Then Peter said to them, "**Repent**,

The call for Israel to repent was not first heard by John the Baptist and The Lord (Matt.3:2, 4:17), we can go to the prophets and perhaps even further back. When Solomon prayed, he remembered Deut 30:

1Kings 8:47 "yet when they come to themselves in the land where they were carried captive, and repent, and make supplication to You in the land of those who took them captive, saying, 'We have sinned and done wrong, we have committed wickedness';

1Kings 8:48 "and when they return to You with all their heart and with all their soul...."

Israel were called to rethink and turn back to God who would then turn back to them.

Jer. 3:14 "Return, O backsliding children," says the LORD; "for I am married to you. I will take you, one from a city and two from a family, and I will bring you to Zion.

Ezek. 18:30 "Therefore I will judge you, O house of Israel, every one according to his ways," says the Lord GOD. "Repent, and turn from all your transgressions, so that iniquity will not be your ruin.

Lam. 5:21 Turn us back to You, O LORD, and we will be restored; Renew our days as of old,

Zech. 1:4 "Do not be like your fathers, to whom the former prophets preached, saying, 'Thus says the LORD of hosts: "Turn now from your evil ways and your evil deeds.'" But they did not hear nor heed Me," says the LORD.

Zech. 1:3 "Therefore say thou unto them, Thus saith the LORD of hosts; Turn ye unto me, saith the LORD of hosts, and I will turn unto you, saith the LORD of hosts."

This is the condition needed for those to live until they saw the kingdom, Israel's repentance. The nation had to repent and turn back to their God with all their hearts, then God would turn back to them and The Lord would return. Perhaps you might like to go back and read Deut.30:1-4.

Peter referred to Joel 2:28-32a (see all of verse 32) as we have seen. This earlier section of Joel 2 would have been brought to mind as well:

Joel 2:12 "Now, therefore," says the LORD, "Turn to Me with all your heart, With fasting, with weeping, and with mourning."

Joel 2:13 So rend your heart, and not your garments; Return to the LORD your God, For He is gracious and merciful, Slow to anger, and of great kindness; And He relents from doing harm.

Joel 2:14 Who knows if He will turn and relent, And leave a blessing behind Him — A grain offering and a drink offering For the LORD your God?

The call to repent in Acts 3 is also very plain to see. The parallel is that as "The Holy One and the Just"... "The Prince of Life" restored the lame man (a picture of Jacob, Gen. 32:24-32), so the nation would be healed (saved) by the same Holy One, the Holy One they had crucified.

Repent and The Lord your God will come and bless you as promised. This is Peter's message to Israel.

Acts 3:19 "Repent therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord,

Acts 3:20 "and that He may send Jesus Christ, who was preached to you before,

Continued Page 8

GOD ALL IN ALL

We continue our consideration of Ephesians chapter 4, and have still to look at the last of the seven items that are part of the unity of the Spirit - One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all (v.6).

Ephesians

Nº 36



**Athol
Walter**

The first thing I want to say about this verse is that it does not teach the universal fatherhood of God. It is one of the fallacies abroad in the world, and alas, held by many believers as well, that God is the father of all human beings. That it is not true can be shown by such references as John 8:30 - 44. The passage is really longer than those verses, but they contain my point. The Jews who were contending with the Lord claimed Abraham as their father. The Lord replied that they would have heeded His words if they were indeed true children of Abraham. In v. 38, He tells them that they do what they have seen with their father, and in v. 44 He says quite bluntly "Ye are of your father the devil ... " This is a terrible thing to say if it is not true, but it must be true as it is the Lord who is speaking.

"After a long time the lord of those servants came and settled accounts with them. "So he who had received five talents came and brought five other talents, saying, 'Lord, you delivered to me five talents; look, I have gained five more talents besides them.' "His lord said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful servant; you were faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord.' "He also who had received two talents came and said, 'Lord, you delivered to me two talents; look, I have gained two more talents besides them.' "His lord said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful servant; you have been faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord.' "Then he who had received the one talent came and said, 'Lord, I knew you to be a hard man, reaping where you have not sown, and gathering where you have not scattered seed. 'And I was afraid, and went and hid your talent in the ground. Look, there you have what is yours.' "But his lord answered and said to him, 'You wicked and lazy servant,...Matt. 25:19 -26

There are also the wonderful verses that open John's Gospel. Sublime truth is presented here, but there is also the record of tragic failure. Verses 10 & 11 say: "He was in the world and the world was made by Him, and the world knew Him not. He came unto His own, and His own received Him not." Tragedy indeed! Then, however, comes the wonderful word "but" in v. 12. "But as many as received Him, to them gave He power (the authority or the right) to become children (not "sons" here) of God, even to them that believe on His name."

Surely the logic is inescapable. If a person becomes a child of God by believing on the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, it follows that those who have not believed are not children of God. It may well be true that all humans are children of Adam, but that does not mean they are automatically all children of God.

I think we will begin to come to a right understanding of the phrase "one God and Father of all" and the words which follow, when we remember what is written in 1 Cor. 15:28: "And when all things shall be subdued unto Him, then shall the Son also Himself be subject unto Him... THAT GOD MAY BE ALL IN ALL." Is not this the goal of the ages? Is not this the objective of God's plan and purpose? I think so, and I also think

that this is what underlies this last of the seven items connected with the Unity of the Spirit. Verse 6 can be translated like this: "One God and Father, who is over all, and through all, and in all TO YOU." That, I think, brings out the Apostle's intent.

God is over all, through all and in all to the Church, but He is not yet over all, through all and in all universally. The time is coming, however, when through the work of His beloved Son, He will be.

We have another example of a present situation anticipating a future one in the Headship of Christ. At present, the Lord Jesus is the Head over all things to the Church, His Body, but not Head over all things universally. But the day will come when He is acknowledged as Head universally. Note Eph. 1:10: "That in the dispensation of the fulness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in Him". The words "gather together in Him" are, in the Greek, head up.

The climax of the great work of God throughout the ages is not the universal headship of the Lord Jesus Christ, as glorious as that will be, but that subsequently to the Lord being acknowledged and worshipped as King of Kings and Lord of Lords by every creature in the universe, He will hand the Kingdom up to the Father, that GOD may be all in all.

The Measure Of The Gift Of Christ.

At v. 7 of ch. 4, Paul turns from the Unity of the Spirit in the Body to the diversity not only of the members, but also of the gifts that have been given to those members. These gifts, I hasten to add, are not to be confused with the gifts of the Spirit that were operating during the Acts administration. The two sets of gifts should be carefully compared, and then the contrasts will be evident.

Vv. 8-10 are a parenthesis, and if we leave it out we will see more clearly the flow of thought from 7 to 11: "But unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ ... and He gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers," I found myself wanting to leave the commas out when typing v. 11, and indeed you will find the newer translations do just that. The gifts the ascended Christ gave were apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers. But it could also mean that He gave some to be apostles, and some to be prophets etc., in which case, the commas would be correct.

Again a note of warning. It is apostles that were given, not apostolic gifts. Prophets, not

the gift of prophecy. As Charles Welch puts it, "Gifts OF persons, rather than gifts TO persons seems to express the difference." It is true to say, of course, that these gifts of persons with special ministries were given to the Church.

I think it is also true to say that since the events recorded in the last half of Acts 28 took place, the Christian community has not seen the operation of the miracles, signs and wonders as they operated during the Acts years. But look around you, brethren. We do see evangelists, pastors and teachers.

So what happened to the apostles and prophets? When God changed the administration at the end of the Book of Acts, the canon of Scripture was not complete. More accurately, all the books that were to make up the full complement of Scripture had not been written. And secondly, the new revelation of the Mystery and the Church which is His Body contained truth not found anywhere else in Scripture. Both of these conditions necessitated apostles and prophets.

The second set of seven epistles of Paul, all written after the events recorded in Acts 28, bring the Word of God to its conclusion. As the steward of the Dispensation of the Mystery, Paul in particular, was the apostle who carried out this task. "Whereof I (Paul) am made a minister, according to the dispensation of God which is given to me for you, to fulfil (the Greek word translated "fulfil" means to fill up or complete) the Word of God." Col. 1:25.

Once the required Scriptures had been written, however, and the new revelation imparted to the various groups of believers, the need for apostles and prophets passed. Evangelists, pastors and teachers on the other hand, were still needed, meeting an ongoing need for the witness to an unbelieving world and the edifying of the Body.

We need to remember that v. 7 told us that the grace given to us is according to the MEASURE of the gift of Christ. I confess I find it a little difficult to understand and explain just what is meant by the words "according to the measure of the gift of Christ". But before coming to that, please notice that the literal translation of the phrase "But unto every one of us is given grace ..." is more accurately translated as "But unto EACH ONE OF US is given grace ...". That is slightly different, emphasising that the gift of grace is given to each one individually. And the gift given to each one was measured according (or proportional) to the gift of Christ. Whether the gift of Christ means a gift given by Christ, or that Christ is the gift given I must leave for the time being.

But the grace being given to each of us touches, I think, on a principle that governs God's gifts to His people, no matter what the dispensation might be.

In the parable of the talents in Matt. 25, the departing king gave his servants different sums of money to work with according to their abilities. To use the language of Eph. 4:7, the king's gifts to each servant were measured (out).

Then as far as the return on the gifts that were given, the King would have been as happy with the one talent servant if that servant had gained another talent, as he was with the servants who gained the five and two talents respectively. I believe there is something of this in the grace given to each of us by our ascended Lord. We are given grace proportionate to our abilities and the tasks the Lord requires of us individually. We are not all expected to serve in the same capacity, and our Master is well aware of our differing capabilities.

Surely this should relieve us of any anxiety we may have about our ability to do what He asks of us. His gifts to us for service, and the resulting return that He expects are according to our capabilities. I am certainly not Paul. I am not Tom, Dick or Harry either. I am Athol, who is fully known and understood, and Athol will not be required to do Tom, Dick or Harry's task. But when the Lord calls Athol to a task, not only is the task within Athol's capacity, but Athol will be fitted for his work. From there on, Athol is simply expected to do the best of which he is capable.

We must take note of vv. 8 - 10 as we conclude this study. Paul's mention of the gift of Christ causes him to turn aside from his main thoughts, and he quotes from Psalm 68:18 "Thou hast ascended on high, thou hast led captivity captive: thou hast received gifts for men ..." This is one of the very few quotes from the Old Testament in the epistles written after the end of Acts, and Paul, under the inspiration of the Spirit, uses it to show the cause behind the special gifts given by the Lord to the Church which is His Body. Paul then gives his own little commentary on it, saying that to say the

Paul a Pattern

Have we not met those who are constantly changing their beliefs?

They may profess to have been "led" into them, to have received "new light", but these never square with the unchanging foundation of a rightly divided Word (2Tim.2:15). We say "rightly divided" advisedly, for Satan does not hesitate to quote Scripture if it suits his purpose, just as he did to our Saviour in the wilderness (Matt.4:1-11).

Merely quoting Scripture proves nothing. It must be interpreted and that with the nearer and remote context in view.....

God has given us a pattern or standard of Truth in this present Gentile age, and it is found in the epistles of Paul the Apostle of the Gentiles, which make known the "form of sound words" (2Tim.1:13) committed to him by the ascended Lord Jesus...."

"Letters From Prison"
Stuart Allen

Continued Page 11

Let's look at more of GOD'S WORD,

the Bible !



The Bible is organised into two parts

- the **Old** Testament, and ...
- the **New** Testament.

As we found out last time, the Old Testament has **66** books.

It is also divided into **5** sections.

Write these down

1. The **5** books of the **LAW**

.....
.....

2. The **12** **HISTORY** books

.....
.....
.....

3. The **5** books containing **POETRY, MUSIC,** and **WISDOM**

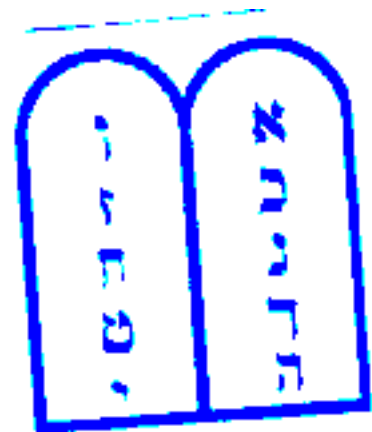
.....

4. The **5** books written by the **MAJOR PROPHETS**

.....

5. The **12** books written by the **MINOR PROPHETS**

.....
.....





Something
to think
about

The Bible Always Right!

Why? because it is God's Word.

Name the *first* book in the *Old Testament*? _____

The **Law Books** were written nearly 4,000 years ago by Moses. They talk about the creation of the world, as we know it today, Adam and Eve, Noah and the Flood, Abraham and the calling by God of the nation of Israel. They include the very well known laws, the Ten Commandments.

The **Law Books** are written by a **Jew**, for **Jewish people** and are about the **Jewish nation**.

When we read the Bible, we must always read the "address on the envelope". Then we will know **to whom** the book is written.

Paul describes this, in the New Testament, as "rightly dividing the Word of God".

Look up 2 Timothy, Chapter 2, Verse 15.

Can you add the *missing* words ?

In the God created the
and the
.....

Look up Genesis Chapter 1, Verse 1

(Hint: The first verse in the Bible).



(Thanks to: M. Penny, Carol Brown, Lyn Mrotek - 'Introducing God's Word' & MBM October 1997)

Near Return of The Lord. From Page 3

Please note the glorious consequence of this national repentance:

Acts 3:20 "and that He may send Jesus Christ, who was preached to you before,

This is the trigger, this is the condition required for The Lord's return at that time, Israel's repentance and all in harmony with the Law and the Prophets. They knew what was required.

There were 8000 Israelites who repented on that Feast of Weeks fulfilment but how many Israelites would God need to see repent to represent the entire nation is beyond this writer's knowledge. A careful reading of Acts shows that the "missionary journeys" were to Israel first, and the call to repent is unchanged. Indeed, Gentiles were being saved "to provoke them (Israel) to jealousy,..." Roms. 11:11. How God wanted them to repent. (2 Peter 3:9).

Stephen saw The Lord standing at the right hand of God (Acts 7:56), as if ready to return should the nation repent but it did not and the patience of The Lord was running out for them. I believe we can see this in Romans 10 written late in the Acts period:

Rom. 10:21 But to Israel he says: "All day long I have stretched out My hands To a disobedient and contrary people."



Alas, while a remnant believed, the majority remain unmoved even in the light of some incredible supernatural signs and wonders which confirmed the word preached to them.

In Hebrews, the writer is pleading with Israel:

Heb. 3:7 Wherefore (as the Holy Ghost saith, To day if ye will hear his voice,

Heb. 3:8 Harden not your hearts, as in the provocation, in the day of temptation in the wilderness:

Heb. 3:19 "So we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief.

Heb. 4:1 Therefore, since a promise remains of entering His rest, let us fear lest any of you seem to have come short of it."

Heb. 4:7 "Again, he limiteth a certain day, saying in David, To day, after so long a time; as it is said, To day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts."

What a parallel! After typical redemption, Israel could have entered their inheritance almost immediately, but they wandered for 40 years. Had they learnt anything? Now after the true Lamb had been slain for them and the true Joshua was ready to bring them into the kingdom would they have the faith to believe the word and repent?

No! They did not believe the word. Israel did not repent.

The day of opportunity passed and the return of The Lord was postponed. At the end of the book of Acts the final appeal to the Jews was again met with indecision, Acts 28:25-28. Paul quotes Isaiah 6 and the nation went out into their lo-ammi condition, (lo-ammi means "not my people").

The trigger, the condition which could have seen some live until the kingdom was not met. They did not live until the kingdom, The Lord did not return as was expected. Those times which were upon them were closed before the final events took place. The clock of Israel's history was stopped.

So as we read those verses above which speak of the near return of The Lord, and those to follow, we realise these were written before the end of the book of Acts. When they were written, the condition could have been met, Israel could have repented and The Lord would have returned to bless them. But the condition was not met, Israel as a whole did not repent and judgment fell upon them. The centre of their religious life, the Temple, was destroyed and they were scattered among the nations yet again according to the Old Covenant.

Today Israel are set aside, so the condition can not be met. While we believe we are fast approaching those later days, I do not feel the Lord's return is imminent. I doubt I will live to see Israel's kingdom coming on the earth.

So here are other verses in the New Testament which speak of the near return of The Lord. The High Priest at the time could have seen a phenomenal event and I don't believe resurrection is implied:

Matt. 26:63 But Jesus kept silent. And the high priest answered and said to Him, "I put You under oath by the living God: Tell us if You are the Christ, the Son of God!" Matt. 26:64 Jesus said to him, "It is as you said.

Nevertheless, I say to you, hereafter you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Power, and coming on the clouds of heaven."

Paul and all Israel expected their hope to be realised in the near future, they waited day and night, not millennium after millennium:

Acts 26:6 "And now I stand and am judged for the hope of the promise made by God to our fathers.

Acts 26:7 "To this promise our twelve tribes, earnestly serving God night and day, hope to attain. For this hope's sake, King Agrippa, I am accused by the Jews.

The night had advanced, the day was far spent when Paul wrote the following words. "Far spent", leaves little room for a 2000 year delay.

Rom. 13:11 "And do this, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep; for now our salvation is nearer than when we first believed.

Rom. 13:12 The night is far spent, the day is at hand."

"Shortly" was another time phrase he used in Romans. Remember, this was before the end of Acts.

Rom. 16:20 "And the God of peace will crush Satan under your feet shortly. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. Amen."

Back in Matthew 28, The Lord said he would be with them "to the end of the age". In the following, Paul sees them "eagerly waiting" as "the end" was upon them:

1Cor. 1:7 "so that you come short in no gift, eagerly waiting for the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ,

1Cor. 1:8 who will also confirm you to the end, that you may be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ....

1Cor. 10:11 Now all these things happened to them as examples, and they were written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the ages have come."

The words "have come" are translated by Nestle in his interlinear as "have arrived". "Have arrived" leaves no room for 2000 years.

Back in Matthew 24, the Lord gave a warning to pregnant women:

Matt. 24:19 "But woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing babies in those days!"

Perhaps this was in the mind of Paul when he wrote this:

1Cor. 7:28 But even if you do marry, you have not sinned; and if a virgin marries, she has not sinned. Nevertheless such will have trouble in the flesh, but I would spare you.

1Cor. 7:29 But this I say, brethren, the time is short, so that from now on even those who have wives should be as though they had none,

1Cor. 7:30 those who weep as though they did not weep, those who rejoice as though they did not rejoice, those who buy as though they did not possess, 1Cor. 7:31 and those who use this world as not misusing it. For the form of this world is passing away.

The time is short? "Those who have wives should be as though they had none". Hardly appropriate for today but when it was written, the return of The Lord was a very real and present possibility, and to take the attitude Paul recommended was in harmony with The Lord's own warning and in anticipation of their new bodies and the heavenly condition as described by The Lord in Luke 20:35.

When Paul addressed the gentiles on Mars Hill he did not say that The Lord was going to judge the world in a few thousand years. The phrase "will judge" could be "is about to judge":

Acts 17:31 "because He has appointed a day on which He will judge the world in righteousness by the Man whom He has ordained. He has given assurance of this to all by raising Him from the dead."

During the Acts period Paul did not expect to die before The Lord returned:

1Cor. 15:51 Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed —

1Cor. 15:52 in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.

So Paul, included himself as part of the "we" who listened for the last trump. "We" are reminded of another trumpet passage in which he included himself:

1Th. 4:13 But I do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning those who have fallen asleep, lest you sorrow as others who have no hope.

1Th. 4:14 For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who sleep in Jesus.

1Th. 4:15 For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep.....

1Th. 4:17 Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord.

No wonder Paul strongly desired for "a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens", for he expected The Lord to return and in this way he would be "absent from the body and to be present with the Lord" in his new body. (2Cor.5:1,8).

If Paul wrote Hebrews, then he remains convinced the time is short:

Heb. 10:35 Therefore do not cast away your confidence, which has great reward.

Heb. 10:36 For you have need of endurance, so that after you have done the will of God, you may receive the promise:

Heb. 10:37 "For yet a little while, And He who is coming will come and will not tarry.

Yet a little while? Nestle translates this phrase literally as "for yet a little, a very".

I know the Bible says this:

2Pet. 3:8 But, beloved, do not forget this one thing, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.

However, the language used in our verses so far discounts this as meaning a 200 year delay when Israel's repentance could have triggered the Lord's return back then.

What about James? Did he feel the harvest was near?

James 5:8 You also be patient. Establish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand.

James 5:9 Do not grumble against one another, brethren, lest you be condemned. Behold, the Judge is standing at the door!

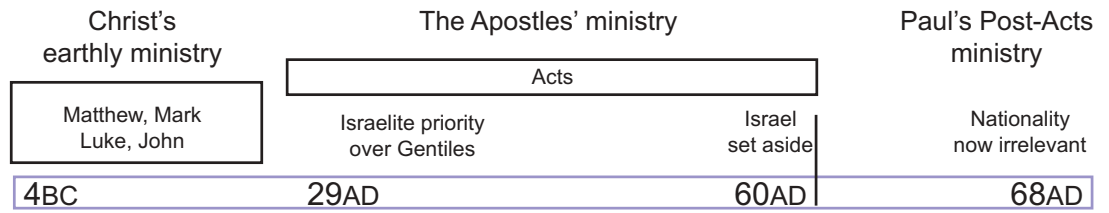
"The coming of The Lord is at hand", "the judge is standing at the door". This is not language used by one who felt another 2000 odd years were to pass. Would you feel really challenged by anything 2000 years in the future?

It must also be observed that if all these authors knew that two millennia were to pass before the return of The Lord, then surely integrity demands they would have made it very clear so as not to overthrow the faith of some. No sincere teacher of The Lord would build any false hope by using language loosely: neither would the Holy Spirit. It seems also unreasonable to write in such a

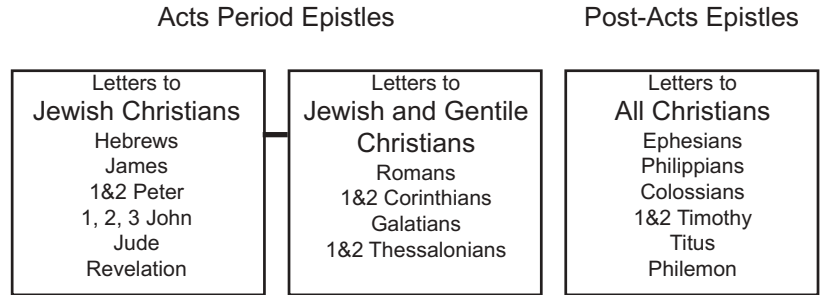
Continued Page 11

The New Testament

Events:



Letters:



**PLEASE
EXPLAIN**



**David
Tavender**

Books of The New Testament

The chart above is a general outline of the New Testament books, and their relation to events at the time. Some of the dates on the chart may be questioned, but they are probably accurate to within 2 or 3 years either way.

Events

The top half of the chart shows the historical books of the N.T. These are Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, which cover the events of Christ's earthly ministry (approx 4BC - 29 AD). This is followed by the book of Acts which, after Christ's ascension into heaven, speaks of the activities of the apostles (approx 29 AD - 60 AD). After the events of the Acts period, there are no books of the Bible dedicated to historical events, though we do get a few snippets of events which took place after 60 AD in Paul's Post-Acts epistles, the last of which was probably 2 Timothy (approx 68 AD).

It should be noted that during the period covered by the book of Acts, Israel was still the prior nation in God's dealings with mankind.

Though there were Gentiles coming into blessing after Acts 10, they were still partaking of the plans which God had laid out for Israel. Romans 11 gives us an idea of this relationship in the picture of an olive tree (Israel), and branches which had been graft in to partake of her blessings (Gentiles). In the final chapter of the book of Acts, Acts 28, we read how Israel was set aside in God's plans.

Letters

It is important to read any book of the Scriptures in the context of conditions in force at the time. The letters of the New Testament speak of the conditions in force at the time they were written. Many epistles were written during the Acts period, whilst Israel was still God's chosen nation, and had not been set aside. However, the later epistles reflect the character of the post-Acts period, in which nationality does not play any role in God's dealings with mankind.

Any Questions for David Tavender?
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Near Return of The Lord From Page 9

way to those early Christians simply to address those living when the time was right.

Peter was expecting "salvation ready to be revealed":

1Pet. 1:3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,

1Pet. 1:4 to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you,

1Pet. 1:5 who are kept by the power of God through faith for salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

1Pet. 1:13 Therefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and rest your hope fully upon the grace that is to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ:

Peter was rather insistent:

1Pet. 4:7 But the end of all things is at hand; therefore be serious and watchful in your prayers.

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Ephesians 36. From page 5.
Lord ascended means that He first descended to the lower parts of the earth. I think that means the lower parts, even the earth, rather than into the lower parts of the earth such as the grave or hell. More to the point, Paul goes on, in v. 10, to say that the One who descended also ascended up far above all heavens, THAT HE MIGHT FILL ALL THINGS.

I think I can't do better than to quote some words of Charles Welch on this point, taken from p. 113 of His book "The Testimony of The Lord's Prisoner".

"The fulness ... sums up the purpose of the ages and completely restores the perfectness and the amity of the universe, once ruined, as recorded in Gen. 1:2. While the redeemed of all times and dispensations will be apportioned different spheres according to the sovereign will of God, and while each company cannot be blessed "in the earth", "in the heavenly city" and "far above all principality" at the same time, it is necessary that Christ, who is to head up in Himself all things in heaven and earth, should fill ALL things. Consequently He descended to the lower parts, that is to say, the earth ... He also ascended up far above all heavens, and so unites the whole fulness in Himself."

In our next study, as the Lord gives grace, we will look at the other two unities, the other two measures and the other two ministries that await us further down in the chapter. **S**

1Pet. 4:17 For the time has come for judgment to begin at the house of God; and if it begins with us first, what will be the end of those who do not obey the gospel of God?

Peter's second letter was a refutation of the scoffers who asked "where is the promise of his coming?" He told his flock to ignore these and:

2Pet. 3:10-12 looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be dissolved, being on fire, and the elements will melt with fervent heat?

John was also very sure of the season in which they lived, he did not bother to speak of the last days, it was closer than that and the Antichrist was coming:

1John 2:18 ¶ Little children, it is the last hour; and as you have heard that the Antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have come, by which we know that it is the last hour.

Jude was another who, likewise, thought the end was near because the signs were there:

Jude 1:17 But you, beloved, remember the words which were spoken before by the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ:

Jude 1:18 how they told you that there would be mockers in the last time.....

"The last time" or "the last of the time" should be explained if his readers were not indeed living in it. Likewise Jude's wonderful benediction is as wonderful today as then, but it had real weight for those believers at what could have been "the last time":

Jude 1:24 Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling, And to present you faultless Before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy,

Finally we turn to John and the revelation given to him. We remind ourselves that it is The Lord himself who is giving these details to the apostle:

Rev. 1:1 The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave Him to show His servants — things which must shortly take place. And He sent and signified it by His angel to His servant John,

What an opening to the details concerning the return of The Lord. The phrase "shortly take place" is like this in the original, "occur with speed". Now we must remember that this revelation was written from the viewpoint of "The Day of The Lord" and being in that day "in spirit", John saw such events from the future, in which time they will indeed be speedily accomplished by our God who for the elect's sake "shortened" some of those days. Those last 7 years of Israel's history will flash by, yet in the light of our Scripture review, it can also be said that the events of Revelation were to occur speedily back then had the condition materialised.

Rev. 3:11 "Behold, I am coming quickly! Hold fast what you have, that no one may take your crown.

Rev. 22:7 "Behold, I am coming quickly!

Rev. 22:12 " And behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to give to every one according to his work.

Rev. 22:20 He who testifies to these things says, "Surely I am coming quickly." Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus!

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Continued Page 12



**Therefore take up the whole armor of God,
that you may be able to withstand in the evil
day, and having done all, to stand. Eph. 6:13**

Near Return of The Lord. From pg. 11.

I am sure those living in that future "Day of The Lord" and experiencing the terrible events of it, will pray as did John, "Amen. Even so, come Lord Jesus!"

However, it must also be noted that during the Acts period the stage was well set for those final "revelation" scenes to unfold and the coming of The Lord was a real and very near expectation. That is, a very real and near expectation up until the end of the book of Acts where the final appeal was made to the scattered Jews in Rome. When they reacted in much the same way as their brethren in all other parts of the dispersion and in the land itself; when they did not believe the message and repent, then God cast Israel aside for a time.

Israel are not God's people today, they have no prior place over the other nations as it was in Romans 3. God's army came and destroyed the temple and the near return of the Lord was postponed.

But the Lord did come again.

After Israel were set aside The Lord descended, not as King of Kings and Lord of Lords, not with trumpet blast and angels accompanying but as The Head of the Church which is His Body.

He descended quietly, unobtrusively to one man, our apostle Paul, and revealed to Him the dispensation of The Mystery, the present set of conditions in which there is no near expectation of The Lord's return.

Brian Kelson.



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