

# Spiritual Blessings

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Nov./Dec. 2002

## The New Testament and its Progression

For many of us there is a concept that the New Testament and especially the Acts, took place in a fairly short period of time.

This is, of course, understandable as there is no mention of when the events took place, simply that they did. Also, Acts is a fairly short book with a lot packed into it and this can add to that perception. But there is a period of forty years during which Acts occurs and the Gospels cover a period of thirty-three years although not much of the Lord's life is covered between His birth and death.

The Companion Bible (see appendix 180) places the birth of Christ at 4BC whereas Dr Peter John-Charles, in his excellent book Biblical Chronology has Him being born in 1BC. "Which to believe?" that is the question. I have decided on 3BC for the sake of argument, not that it really matters in the context of this article; as it is about the length of the period and not the exact dates involved.

One thing we can be sure about though is that Herod Agrippa 1 died in AD44 (Acts 12:20-24, Josephus and just about any book on history you please will confirm) and so we can work backwards from that event and forward after it.

- BC3 .... Christ was born. (Luke 2:7).
- AD9 .... Christ in the temple dialoguing with the doctors ..... (Luke 2:41-49).
- AD24 .. The temple would have been finished in AD24 ..... and John the Baptist would have started his ..... ministry as well.
- AD27 .. Christ begins His ministry with a 40-day fast, He ..... was exactly 30 years old (Luke 3:23).
- AD30 .. Christ is crucified, risen and ascended, and the ..... Holy Spirit is given to the disciples and others for ..... witnessing in power. (Luke 22:1-Acts 2:13).
- AD32 .. Stephen is martyred. (Acts 6:8-7:60).
- AD34 .. Saul is converted. (Acts 9:1-19). Some say this ..... is when the new dispensation began, but Paul ..... didn't write Romans until AD55 (21 years later) ..... so please note Romans 11:1-5 in relation to this.
- AD42 .. James is killed and Peter is imprisoned. (Acts ..... 12:1-19). Paul's 1st tour began (Acts 13:1-15:35) ..... and in 13:46 Paul 'turns to the Gentiles.' Some ..... place the beginning of the present dispensation ..... here, but see the note above and the times that ..... Paul went back to the synagogues (14:1, 17:1, ..... 10, 17, 18:4, 6&7, 19).
- AD46 .. Jewish believers trouble Gentile believers (Acts ..... 15:1), with the result being given in verses ..... 19&20. Was this a Gentile church? If it was, why ..... did the Gentiles need this judgment from the ..... Jews, this being 16 years after Pentecost, the ..... accepted 'birthday' of the church?
- AD59 .. Paul's arrival in Rome. (Acts 28:16). He gathers

the Jews from that region to hear him and when they were divided (v24) in their opinion Paul dismissed them (v25) after quoting from Isaiah 6:9-10. In verse 28 we are told that the Gentiles would hear the words that the Jews rejected.

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# The President's Word



**Athol  
Walter**

The expression "and a great time was had by all" may be a little trite, but nevertheless it is true of our recent annual conference at the Bethshan Conference Centre. The attendances were a little better than expected, and right from the first meeting on the Friday morning, a wonderful spirit was evidenced. The studies were as varied as usual, and the style of the different speakers catered for all tastes.

It was a delight to welcome two new visitors, one from Victoria and the other from the Port Stephens area. Both these folk said they had a wonderful time with us, and their presence certainly added to whole weekend. We were sorry that two families from Queensland were unable to attend, one because of the drought which necessitated their presence on the property, and the other because of illness. We trust that all these problems are well on the way to satisfactory resolutions, although it seems that the drought still has a long way to go.

The BBFA committee has recently proposed to our brethren in the Philippines that we work together to bring out some of their up-and-coming teachers to a future annual conference. Planning is in the early stages, but I am sure, having met these men, that their presence with us will be a wonderful stimulus to our Fellowship. It will cost us a bit to get them here, so please pray that the Lord will meet the need.

While speaking of the Philippines, we have received a number of letters and e-mails from believers there who are now receiving Spiritual Blessings. They speak of getting much help and blessing from our magazine, and we are grateful to the Lord that our efforts are being used by Him in this way.

# The New Testament and its Progression From page 1.

So the record comes to an abrupt end except that Paul wrote books from prison. In them he reveals the 'mystery', the new dispensation that had been 'hid in God' (Ephesians 3:9). And so we say that this is when the new dispensation began, after Israel had been set aside 'until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled' (Luke 21:24).

AD70 . Forty years after the Acts ..... began Jerusalem was finally ..... sacked and the temple was ..... destroyed. God gave the ..... pronouncement through Paul ..... some nine or ten years ..... before but now it becomes a ..... terrible reality.

Of course many other things happened, too many to place in a short article. How long after Pentecost did they occur?

Frank Haegler



## Meetings

**Sept. 26-28  
2003  
Conference  
BETHSHAN  
Wyee**

### **Brisbane**

Alternate  
Sundays  
10:00AM

Long Weekend  
7-9 June 2003  
(07) 3297 1981

### **Sydney**

3rd Sunday  
of each month.  
Lunch 12:45.  
Study 1:30PM.  
Community Hall  
104 Galston Rd  
Hornsby Hts.  
(02) 4996 4455

### **Newcastle**

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

## Spiritual Blessings

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**Berean Bible Fellowship of Australia Inc.**

Visit our Web Site: [www.bbfa.org.au](http://www.bbfa.org.au)

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.

### **BBFA Postal Address:**

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### **The BBFA Tenets.**

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.

### **The BBFA Committee.**

President: Athol Walter.  
V-President: Anne Ward.  
Treasurer: Sue Hall.  
Secretary: Margaret Abbott.  
Committee members:  
Bob Davidson, David Tavender.



## The Berean Bible Fellowship of Australia

held its annual conference at Bethshan, Wyee, NSW (September 27, 28, 29, 2002).



As always, it was a chance to get away from the regular routine and focus our thoughts on the things of God and His Word for a whole weekend.

# Bethshan Report

The weekend was well attended (pictured are some of the friendly faces), though one or two of our regulars were not able to attend for one reason or another. On the other hand, we were very pleased to have a number of first time visitors join us, such as Peter (all the way from Victoria), Jocelyn, Brendan, Russell, and others new to our annual conference - we certainly hope you will become second time visitors and join us again next year.

We enjoyed the great fellowship and singing with gusto, but the emphasis at our meetings is on studying the Scriptures, and the



riches contained therein; so, most of the programme time was allocated for Bible study sessions, led by several speakers who presented a variety of subjects for our consideration and edification.

Athol Walter gave a short series of four talks on the subject of "The Two Seeds", highlighting the conflict between God and Satan, and the people used by each throughout Scripture. Other speakers spoke on a wide variety of topics: Rom Harper "Arab States in Prophecy"; Bob Davidson "Resurrection"; John Hutton "Gentiles During the Gospels and Acts"; Frank Haegler "Attitudes Towards God and Man";

Continued Page 8

## Walking Worthy

We now start to consider chapter 5 of Ephesians, and from here to the end of the epistle we find some very challenging instructions about living a life that is worthy of our Lord and Head and the high calling to which we have been elected.

It is a foundation plank in the platform of our faith that we could not, cannot, and never will be able to do anything to gain our salvation. That is the free gift of our gracious God, based on the sinless life and offering of His only begotten Son. As 2 Tim. 2:11-13 assures us, once we have been brought to life through and in Him, even if we fall and say that we no longer believe, He remains faithful, for He cannot deny Himself. The other side to this, however, is that out of that free gift, or perhaps I should say, out of that new life that is based on His faithfulness and His righteousness, there should issue the good works that God has pre-ordained we should walk in. (Eph. 2:10).

Let me remind you of something that has been said many times before. Do not let the chapter break break Paul's line of thought. He said, back in 4:1, as he commenced what we call the practical half of the epistle, that we should walk worthily of our calling, and that is still his overall theme as we move into ch. 5. Notice the "therefore" in the first verse. It connects what he says now to what was said before, which, as we saw in the previous studies, was quite a lot. But it is summed up for our purposes now in the last verse (4:32) which is worth quoting: "And be ye kind one to another, tender hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you." Then comes 5:1: "Be ye therefore followers of God as dear children."

### The Threefold Walk 5:1-6:9

Before we go any further, I want to remind you of the themes of this section, taken from the outline of the epistle I gave when we started these studies. The section as indicated above, goes through to 6:9, once again overriding the chapter break. In the structure of the epistle as a whole, this section balances that of 2:8-10, where we have three works. Now we have a threefold walk, which we can summarize as (a) walk in love, (b) walk as light, (c) walk circum-spectly. This is the longest practical section in the epistle, applying the doctrine taught in the first 3 chapters to every department of our lives.

It seems to me that we should take note of a number of statements that Paul makes throughout these verses. They set the tone

for what follows. There are the three statements about our walk that we have already noted, but there are a couple of others that are worthy of attention.

Firstly, we have in vv. 1, 2 "Be ye therefore followers of God AS DEAR CHILDREN, AND WALK IN LOVE." It certainly is true that we have been freed from slavery to sin, which once was our condition. We should never forget that we now have been freed to be the slave of Christ. Our service as His bondslaves, however, is not odious or onerous, but a joyous thing, and indeed, our relationship to God as that of a child to its father is a far cry from that of a slave to his master. Certainly, the child must obey and respect, but the desire to please and serve comes from the heart-felt love for the Father. The Lord Jesus Himself is our example here. He loved us and gave Himself for us, a giving that involved complete and dreadful obedience to His Father's will. While God's will for us does not call for such sacrifices as only the Son could make, nevertheless our service and obedience should be as willingly and happily rendered.

The other statement which I want you to notice is in v. 21. "Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God." Before Paul says one word about the role of husband, wife, child, parent, master or worker, he instructs us to submit to one another. That, I think, is the environment in which we should read and apply the instructions about family and work relationships. But more on that eventually.

In v. 1, the word translated "followers" also gives us "mimic" in English. The word mimic can have some negative overtones, but if we put those aside, we are not far from the mark if we understand Paul to be telling us to "mimic" Christ. How do we do that? By walking in love, in the same way that Christ has loved us. How did He love us? He laid aside many of His attributes as God, and gave Himself for us, clothing Himself in the likeness of sinful flesh that one day, we, with all those who are the children of God, may be clothed in His righteousness. And Paul is on the same theme in Phil. 2, where he says, "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus."

The reference in v. 2 to Christ's sacrifice being a sweet-smelling savour to God sends us back to the Old Testament, of course. Not all the sacrifices and offerings outlined by Moses to the People of Israel were blood offerings. There were offerings that accompanied some of the others, and some of them, at least, were voluntary.

In Phil. 2:17 Paul uses a similar analogy which the AV obscures a little. It reads, "Yea, and if I be offered upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I joy, and rejoice with you all." The Greek reads, "But if indeed I am poured out

# Ephesians

Nº 39



**Athol  
Walter**

I say then: Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh.  
For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish.  
But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law. Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness, idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like; of which I tell you beforehand, just as I also told you in time past, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.  
But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law. And those who are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit. Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another.  
Gal. 5:16-26

(offered) on the sacrifice and service of your faith ..." It is a reference to an offering in the Old Testament that was something extra added on top of a mandatory offering. This, it seems to me, should be the spirit of our obedience and service. Yes, we MUST serve our Lord and Head, but how pleasing it must be to the One who gave Himself for us, when we serve Him with joy and gladness.

VV. 3-7 list many things that, while prevalent enough in our society, should not figure at all in the lives of the Lord's people. May we each heed the warning in v. 6. If we allow any of these things in our lives, there will be a reckoning. We cannot presume on the love and kindness of God. He is also the God of holiness and righteousness. Paul's unambiguous word on the matter is simple. "Don't be partakers with those who do such things." These are the practical results of putting off the old man, putting on the new and not giving place to the Devil in any way whatsoever.

V. 8 brings in the contrast between darkness and light. We are light in the Lord, therefore walk as children of the light. The Scriptures often use the analogy of darkness and light for sin and death on the one hand, and salvation and life on the other. We have it presented to us in the first three verses of the Bible. Darkness covered the world which had become ruined and desolate. And as God moves to prepare the world for Adam, the first thing He does is to say, "Let there be light, and there was light".

We also have it again in John 1:4,5. "... and the life was the light of men. And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not (or, the darkness did not overcome it)".

This theme of light versus darkness is continued in the next couple of verses, until in v. 14, Paul says, "Wherefore he saith, Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light." While this is not an exact quote from Isa. 60:1,2, Paul is nevertheless paraphrasing those two verses and applying them to his argument. It is just as applicable to our walk for our Master today. We are children of light. We have been brought out of the darkness into the light of life in Christ, what place is there in our lives for any of the unfruitful works of darkness?

V. 15 gives us the next step. "See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise." Is there any of us that can say we have never walked foolishly in the shadows? The answer is painfully obvious. It is no use blaming God, or even Satan, for the responsibility to walk worthily is squarely placed on our shoulders. God has broken the power of sin in our lives, and we no longer have to serve sin. If we do, it is a matter of choice, not necessity. So let us each one decide to have done with the works

of darkness, and walk as children of light, and also circumspectly.

The word "circumspectly" carries the thoughts of being wary and taking everything into account, and while that is certainly part of what Paul was saying, there is more to it than that. The Amplified Version has it like this: "Look carefully then how you walk! Live purposefully and worthily and accurately, but as wise - sensible, intelligent people:" (and we should continue on) "making the most of the time - buying up each opportunity - because the days are evil. Therefore do not be vague and thoughtless and foolish, but understanding and firmly grasping what the will of the Lord is."

The word "akribos" - translated circumspectly - carries a strong sense of accurately, straitly, exactly, which thoughts we do not get from our understanding of circumspectly. We must ever remember that the grace shown to us by God does not allow for laxity or carelessness in our service. The pathway of our walk for God sometimes leads through dark and slippery places. Defilement and uncleanness surround us in society, and this calls for a careful and exact walk to avoid the contamination of sin. "Don't be fools", says Paul, "walk wisely and accurately."

The word "walk" occurs seven times in Ephesians. The first in the practical section (4:1) says "walk worthy". The last (5:15) says "walk accurately". The first says "with all lowliness"; the last says "with wisdom".

A few comments on vv. 18-20 will conclude our study for this issue. Paul makes a contrast between being drunk or filled with wine and being filled with the Spirit. Many of the evils mentioned earlier in the chapter were probably associated with heavy drinking although it is not specified, but be that as it may, Paul warns against drunkenness. It is the Spirit we are to be filled with. But what does it mean to be filled with the Spirit? The meaning is a little unclear, although only in the English translation. Greek is more specific than English in this instance.

## The Fruit Tree

God's salvation is like a fruit tree. The *root* is entirely in what Christ has done. The *fruit* of Christian character and living is the natural consequence that should follow, and if it does not, then one has every right to doubt whether there is a healthy root at all, that is whether the reality is really there. The nine-fold fruit of the Spirit (Gal.5:22,23) must be in evidence in every true Christian life, "Herein is My Father glorified, that ye bear *much fruit*; so shall ye be my disciples" declared the Saviour (John 15:8), and one should look to this context to find the secret of abundant fruit bearing.

In this way we "*adorn* the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things" (Titus 2:10). The Greek word for "*adorn*" means to make beautiful or "*attractive*". God's doctrine and His truth is of course always beautiful but we can either make it attractive to others in the way we speak and act, or we can do the reverse. Do our lives make Christ attractive to others? Do we reflect Him in the darkness all around us?

Stuart Allen. "On Reading the Bible".

(Continued Page 12)



Continuing our look at .....

# the Bible!

..... and some of the prophecies (predictions) that came true concerning .....

# Christmas



The **Bible** predicted many events BEFORE they happened !  
That is because the **Bible** is God's words and thoughts.  
**God knows** what is going to happen BEFORE it takes place.

*Use your Bible to find some of the predictions in the Old Testament which came true in the New Testament.*

They are all about the **Lord Jesus** ..... but were written long before **He** was born.

**Predicted** (Old Testament - 720BC):  
*He will be born in ..... (Micah 5:2)*

**Came true** (New Testament - 4BC):  
*..... (Matthew 2:1)*

**Predicted** (Old Testament - 1000BC):  
*He will be betrayed by a  
..... (Psalm 41:9)*

**Came true** (New Testament - 29AD):  
*.....(Matthew 26:49,50)*

**Predicted** (Old Testament - 1000BC):  
*His hands and feet will  
..... (Psalm 22:16)*

**Came true** (New Testament - 29AD):  
*..... (John 19:37)*

**Predicted** (Old Testament - 700BC):  
*He will be buried in the grave of  
..... man (Isaiah 53:9)*

**Came true** (New Testament - 29AD):  
*..... (Matthew 27:57- 60)*



**Remember!**

The Bible

Something to think about

Right!

*The Bible is Always Right!  
Because it is God's Word.*

**So** the Lord Jesus was born in a stable in Bethlehem (Luke 1:46 - 2:20) just as it was **predicted** in the Old Testament (Isaiah 9:6, Isaiah 7:14).

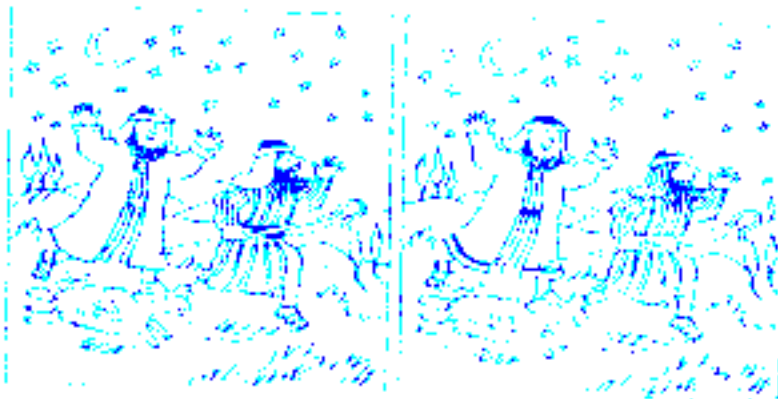
**Also** the wise men followed the star from the east (Matthew 2:2-10) just as it was **predicted** in the Old Testament (Numb 24:17, Ps 72:10, Is 60:3, Jer 23:5,6).

**And** the shepherds visited the baby Jesus and worshipped Him as the King of the Jews (Luke 1:46-2:20) just as it was **predicted** in the Old Testament (Isaiah 9:6,7, 52:7, 53:5).



### SPOT THE DIFFERENCE

The two shepherds are watching to Bethlehem there are twelve differences between the two pictures. Find them!



**Just as we put name tags on our presents at Christmas so people know who each present is for, .....**

**God** has put name tags on different parts of the Bible so people know who each part of His Word is for.

**While the Bible is important for us, .....**

**different parts are written to different people. We must look at the name on the tag for each part to see if it is written to us.**

**This is called 'rightly dividing God's Word' (2 Timothy 2:15 KJV).**

**This helps us understand the Bible better, .....**

**and helps us to understand whether prophecies (or predictions) are for us to do something about.**



(Thanks to MBM Oct. 1997 and Uniting Church Kid's Club)



# Bethshan Report



David Tavender "Dwelling With God" and "The Postponed Near Return of Christ". We thank each of the speakers for their time and effort, and for opening up the Word of God a little more to us all.



A new feature this year was the Question and Answer session on Saturday afternoon. This gave attendees the chance to ask "the panel", comprised of some of the weekend's speakers, a few curly questions. These were submitted during the weekend via the "Q & A" box, as well as questions from the floor.



The Annual General Meeting was held later on Saturday afternoon, and while some discussed the direction and administrative side of our fellowship, others took the opportunity to relax, or make use of the centre's facilities. Thanks to Athol Walter, Sue Hall, Margaret Abbott and Anne Ward for their efforts in ensuring things ran smoothly for this meeting.



Saturday evening was less formal, with some beautiful musical items being presented by Elise Haegler, Kate Harper, Gabby Harper, and including the inaugural performance of The Two Tenors (well, one tenor and one baritone anyway) Peter Ward and Athol Walter. Any future performances, gentlemen?



Back to more serious matters, Anne Ward and Bob Davidson both shared their testimonies with us during the weekend. Both emphasised the importance of studying the Scriptures rightly divided, and how this approach had been a blessing to them each personally. This is really what our fellowship is about-glorifying the Lord through His rightly divided Word, and making a difference to our Christian walk.



If you've never attended one of our Bible study weekends or meetings, why not check the "Meetings" details on page 2 and plan to come along? We'd love to have you to join us next year in 2003, or at any of our other gatherings, where you would be most welcome.





*Mark the details for next year's annual conference in your diary and plan to join us next time:*

**Venue:** Bethshan Conference Centre, Wyee, NSW.

**Dates:** 26, 27, 28 Sept. 2003.

**Cost:** To be finalised mid next year. This year's rates are available as a rough guide, upon enquiry.

**For more details, contact:**

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## The Acts Period and Now

One of our readers has asked the following question:

“Do you really think that taking the Acts and the epistles as belonging to the church [is] a mistake? How do you explain that from Scripture?”

Firstly, it is important to note that all Scripture is for our benefit, so we are not at liberty to dismiss any of God’s Word as being irrelevant.

Although not all of the Bible is addressed to you and me, it has all been preserved for our benefit and is “profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in

righteousness” (2 Timothy 3:16). The sacrificial laws detailed in Leviticus are a good example of this. They were addressed to the children of Israel (Leviticus 1:2, etc), but we may benefit from the pictures of Christ’s sacrifice presented for us there.

Therefore, I do not think that “taking the Acts and the epistles as belonging to the church” is a mistake. Rather, I think we would do well to note the similarities and differences of the conditions in force during and after the Acts period. Having done that, we should then observe the differences in the epistles during and after that period, because they reflect the conditions of the respective periods in question.

### **Similarities and Differences**

It is often said or implied that the church of the Acts period is the same as the church today. In terms of faith in Christ as our

Saviour, there is no difference between then and now. The world needs the Saviour today as much as it did back then, and God showed His grace similarly to Jews and Gentiles alike then (Acts 15:7-9; Galatians 3:28) as He did after the Acts period (Colossians 3:11), and continues to do today.

However, in some important ways, the “church” of the Acts period is not identical with the church today, and we would do well to distinguish the differences. Many Bible readers often dismiss the context in which a verse appears as being irrelevant.

Sometimes the context of the surrounding verses is considered, but less considered is the context in which the entire letter was written. Noting this is important, because the “church” of the Acts period had a Jewish emphasis - not only because there were many Jews amongst the congregations, but because of the still active role of Israel in God’s plans at that time.

The following verses are from letters written during the Acts period, when God was still dealing with Israel as the nation to be His channel of blessing to the whole world. They had a special role in God’s plans at that time, so we should expect to see the epistles of that era reflect that role, and this we do see.

### **Romans**

Romans contains some of the fundamental statements of the Christian faith. For example: “all have sinned and come short of the glory of God” (3:23); “the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord” (6:23); and so on. Statements such as these are as true now as they were then. However, Romans was written during the Acts period when Israel still had a role to play as a nation in God’s plans and we should not be surprised to read statements like the following:

“Hath God cast away His people? God forbid [may it not be!]. For I also am an Israelite...” (11:1); A number of other aspects of God’s dealings are said to be to “the Jew first, and also to the Gentile” (1:16; 2:9,10); “What advantage then hath the Jew? ... Much every way...(3:1,2).

Letters written during the Acts period.  
Approx. 45-62 AD

Romans  
1&2 Corinthians  
Galatians  
1&2 Thessalonians  
Hebrews  
James  
1&2 Peter  
1,2&3 John  
Jude  
Revelation

Letters written after the Acts period.  
Approx. 62-68 AD

Ephesians  
Philippians  
Colossians  
1&2 Timothy  
Titus  
Philemon

# PLEASE EXPLAIN



**David Tavender**

## **Search and The Berean Expositor.**

Two great Bible study magazines you should also receive.

David accepts subscriptions for *The Berean Expositor*. Cost: \$13 p/a surface mail for 6 study booklets. \$26 p/a air mail. You can write to him using the address on the back page.

Ruth Andrew is the agent for *Search* and her address is: 4/15 Calypta Rd. UMINA NSW 2257. Cost: \$25 p/a, for 6 magazines and 6 booklets

Are these statements currently true? In the Acts period they were "current", because, at the time, Israel had not yet been set aside. However, it can not be said of the circumstances today. Are those Scriptures wrong or irrelevant now? No. Just as the sacrificial laws of Leviticus do not apply to us today, we must consider that there was a different dispensation in force during Acts, and that the writings of that time reflect those conditions. As with all Scripture, we can benefit from it, but not all of it is about us, or about today's circumstances.

### Addresses

Concerning the address on some of the New Testament epistles, consider the following, also all written during the Acts period.

James' epistle is addressed to "the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad" (i.e., Israelites who were not living in Israel). Peter's first epistle is addressed to those who had been "scattered", often called the diaspora, who were Israelites abroad, similar to the recipients of James' epistle. And no prizes for guessing which group of people the epistle to the "Hebrews" is addressed to!

Of course, many NT epistles were indeed written to groups which were not exclusively Jewish, but at that time, Gentiles were grafted onto the olive tree of Israel (Rom 11:11-25), and associated with her – quite unlike the situation today, in which the body of Christ is comprised of believing Jews and Gentiles, regardless of nationality. We should not take these Acts period epistles and say, "these letters are in the Bible, everything in them must be about me". Israel played a particular role during the Acts period, and the letters written during that time reflect that role.

### Other Differences

Space here does not permit too many more elaborations, but consider one or two other conditions in force reflected in the Acts period epistles.

Regarding the Lord's "soon" coming, many Acts period epistles speak of the Lord's return being imminent, that is, during the lifetime of those who lived then (see Hebrews 10:37; James 5:8; 1 Thess 4:15,17). The Lord's "soon" return has been

put on hold until God takes up Israel as His people again, and the prophecies related to that return shall be fulfilled. Hence we find that there are no phrases indicating a "near" return of the Lord in the epistles after Acts 28.

Regarding miracles, before Acts 28, belief in Christ was confirmed by visible, miraculous signs which accompanied this belief. This was true of every Christian at the time (Mark 16:16-18; Hebrews 2:3,4; Romans 15:18,19). Paul could heal by his word, his touch, and even a handkerchief (Acts 19:11,12; 28:8,9). However, in the epistles written after Acts 28, Paul could no longer heal (1 Timothy 5:23; 2 Timothy 4:20) and there are no references to any miraculous signs in those epistles written after Acts.

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We would suggest that, since God was dealing with Israel as a nation up until Acts 28, we need to consider the writings of the Acts period and take care to distinguish them from the later epistles after Acts. During Acts, Israel was still being used as God's

channel of blessing to the rest of the world. After Acts they no longer held that position, and the later epistles reflect that change.

For a more extensive list of differences before and after Acts 28, visit our web site and click on the "Articles" link. The address is [www.bbfa.org.au](http://www.bbfa.org.au)

**Any Questions for David Tavender?**  
You can write direct using the address on the back page or email him:

[tavender@ozemail.com.au](mailto:tavender@ozemail.com.au)

## Use or Lose

"Mother, I've found an old dusty thing  
High on the shelf - just look ..."

"Why, that's a Bible, Tommy dear,  
Be careful - that's God's Book."

"God's Book," the child exclaimed,  
"Then, mother, before we lose it,  
We'd better send it back to God,  
For you know WE never use it..."

(Author unknown - reprinted from "Venture",  
Vol 1. No.9)

Psalm 119:105 - "Thy Word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path."

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**And so all Israel shall be saved: as it is written, There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob: .....For the gifts and calling of God are without repentance.** Rom. 11:26,29

## Walking Worthy From page 5.

By way of illustration, I could say, "The bucket was filled with the pump." I could also say, "The bucket was filled with water." There is no English speaker who would expect to see the bucket with the pump standing in it.

Without going into the Greek grammar, the meaning of the sentence is that the Holy Spirit will fill us. That is, He is the One who does the filling. But what are we to be filled with? Colossians 3:16 supplies the answer. 'Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.'

Wait a moment, you might be thinking. Is this in the same context as Ephesians 5:18? Good question. Let's make sure. In the Ephesians passage we have psalms, hymns and spiritual songs; melody in your hearts; giving thanks

always. In the Colossians passage we have psalms, hymns and spiritual songs; grace in your hearts; giving thanks to God and the Father by Him. Then both passages move on to "Wives submit yourselves unto your own husbands." It seems close enough to me.

Charles Welch has a very well-expressed paragraph which provides a fitting conclusion to this study. I quote: "The parallel is so complete that we cannot avoid the inference that 'to be filled with the Spirit' will be to be filled BY the Spirit WITH the Word of Christ. The Spirit everywhere takes of the things of Christ and applies them to the heart of the believer. That constitutes the inspiration of his renewed conversation, 'speaking to yourselves', and will prevent any corrupt communication from proceeding out of his mouth, for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh, and a heart filled by the Spirit with the word of Christ will speak accordingly." I pray it shall be so with each of us **S**

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2 Timothy 2:15 2 Timothy 3:16

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