

Spiritual Blessings

Vol. 17 N°1
Jan./Feb. 2003



Our friend David Fryer has found that no matter what the setting, the study of God's Word brings light and peace.

The Importance of Accuracy in the study of Holy Scripture.

"All Scripture is given by inspiration of God." The last five words of this declaration are represented by only one word in the Greek... (theopneustos) which means literally, "God breathed". All Scripture is God-breathed—God-inspired.

Inspiration must be regarded by us as a fact, a great, grand and blessed fact to be believed and received, and not as a system to be constructed or described..... Some deny that there is any such thing at all, some deny that the whole of Scripture is inspired, admitting only to certain parts so to be; while others, granting that the whole is inspired, deny that it is fully so, admitting it as regards the sense, but not the words. With these I do not propose to deal. I am addressing those who, I trust, are depending on the faithfulness of God's word of promise for their salvation, and who extend the same confidence to all the other "words which the Holy Ghost teacheth". In fact we may divide people into two great classes with regard to their treatment of the Bible:

- Those who put the Bible above everything.
- Those who put something above the Bible.

From "Selected Writings" by EW Bullinger DD. Lamp Press London.

Dispensational Difficulties

Part 2.

(A short series looking at various verses that may appear, at first sight, to present problems for the Acts 28 position, but which, on further examination, are not problems at all.)

One verse that is sometimes held up as a difficulty is found in Eph. 5:25;

"Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it."

Critics of Dispensational Truth who know their Bibles well, have pointed out to me that, in the Greek, this verse reads, "... and gave himself for HER." This, they say, destroys our argument that the Church which is His Body is a new calling, distinct from the church being built up in Acts. And as far as the Church in Ephesians being a man, if the Lord gave Himself for HER, then surely Paul is not talking about something new in Ephesians, but the same church as in Acts, the Bride of Christ. I have even heard it said once or twice that the church is "the Body and Bride of Christ".

Let's clear up that last point first. There is no such term in Scripture as the Bride of Christ. The Scriptural term is the Bride of the Lamb, and while I am well aware that the Lord Jesus Christ is the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world, I also believe that it does not help our understanding or exposition of Scripture to be inaccurate in the terms and figures of speech from the Bible.

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It certainly is true that the Greek of Eph. 5:25 does say that the Lord gave Himself for HER, the church, but this certainly does not mean that the Church which is His Body in Ephesians is a female, even as a figure of speech. The difficulty is of

Continued page 3

The President's Word



**Athol
Walter**

Another year has come and gone. As with each year before it, it held challenges, opportunities and difficulties. I don't do well with New Year resolutions, but it is a good chance to reflect on what was achieved, the mistakes made, how we can learn from those mistakes and so do better in our service for the Lord Jesus Christ.

We are grateful to God for growth in our personal lives, as well as in the work of the Berean Bible Fellowship of Australia. We have had stimulating and blessed conferences in New South Wales and in Queensland, and it is exciting to see new folk and younger folk becoming enthused by the things the Holy Spirit is teaching from the Scriptures. And what is even better, we can see changes in the lives of those concerned.

Please pray for this work. We have regular meetings in Newcastle, Sydney and Brisbane, and we want only that the Lord Jesus Christ will be honoured and lifted up by all that occurs in these meetings. We are also planning to bring a small group of young men to our annual conference here in NSW from the Philippines. Please pray that the necessary finance for the fares will be forthcoming. Our treasurer is ready to receive donations that the Lord prompts you to make.

The Committee has also responded to a request for more Bibles for Malawi, an African country that is in dire straits because of drought. We are giving \$500 this year, and our readers and members can make donations to this fund as well (see back page). We do not stress our financial needs, believing that the Lord will provide, but we think that these two projects are worthy of mention so that those who will, may share in them.

I pray that in this new year, you will be more conscious than ever of the Lord's love and presence with you, and that you, with me, will be used by Him to witness to others as He leads and provides.

Sydney Bible Study and Fellowship Day

We invite you to come along and join us for a day of study and fellowship - everybody is welcome. Studies will be presented by speakers from the Berean Bible Fellowship of Australia, all of whom contribute articles to Spiritual Blessings magazine.

When: Sunday May 18th, 2003.
10.00 am - 3.30 pm
Where: Community Hall
104 Galston Rd,
Hornsby Heights
Cost: Free

BYO lunch. There are kitchen facilities, including a microwave, and shops are close by. The hall area has an enclosed play-ground area for children. Books and tapes will be available for purchase.

For details: Athol Walter (02) 4996-4455

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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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.

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



Meetings

Bible Study and Fellowship Day

**Sydney-May 18
see this page.**

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

Dispensational Difficulties

From page 1.

the critic's own making, and the answer lies in the peculiar little twists of language. Any reader who has studied some language other than English will not need a detailed explanation, but if English is your only language, the point may seem a little strange at first.

Let's take the French language as an example. The French words for the table are *la table*. But the book is *le livre*. Those little words "la" and "le" both mean "the", so why are they different? Simple. Unlike most English nouns, French nouns have gender. They are either feminine or masculine. There is also the neuter gender, but that does not affect us at the moment. "La" is the feminine definite article which must be used with a feminine noun, and "le" is the masculine definite article which must be used with masculine nouns. This means that the two words I used above as examples, table and book, have to be accompanied by the correct forms of the definite article. That is "la" in the case a table, a feminine noun, and "le" in the case of book, a masculine word.

Now we come to the part that makes learning any of these languages difficult for English speakers. The rule is that pronouns, adjectives and adverbs must agree in form, that is, in gender, with their noun, which means that a feminine word must have a feminine pronoun. Likewise with a masculine word. So a Frenchman would refer to a table as "her" and a book as "him". Do not imagine, however, that a Frenchman would mistake a table for a woman. The gender refers to the word, not the object.

To translate a French sentence into English correctly, however, a table must be called "it", because in English table is a neuter word. This is exactly what must be done in Eph. 5:25, and, of course, in many other places in the Scriptures. "Church" in Greek is a feminine word, and rightly has the feminine pronoun "her". But remember, the gender applies to the word, not the object. When, however, we translate from Greek into English, "church" is a neuter word so must be called it, not her.

As I said, this so-called difficulty rests with the critics, and we must remember that Paul definitely tells us that this new Church called the Church which is His Body, is a new man (Eph. 2:15), and its goal is to grow up into a perfect (that is, complete or mature) man (Eph. 4:13). These phrases and words, including the Bride of the Lamb, while being titles, are also figures of speech, and as I said earlier, if God does not mix His metaphors, neither should we.

One further comment on this. If the critic's point is right, i.e. that the word "her" for church in the Greek means that the Church of Ephesians is the Bride, then it proves too much. For example, in Eph.1:22, we read that Christ is the Head. Head, in Greek is a feminine word, and if we apply the critic's rule, this would mean that Christ is woman! Absurd, of course. The same applies to other titles or figures that the Lord used of Himself. The words VINE and DOOR are both feminine words in Greek. Just as it is silly to say that this proves that Christ as the Head, Door or Vine is a female, it is as silly to say that the Greek pronoun "her" in Eph. 5.25 proves that the Church which is His Body is a female.

Athol Walter

More to come later.



The President celebrated his 70th birthday last year and is seen here with his wife Eveline and a rather appropriate poultry present.

Reflecting Christ in Daily Life.

Walk worthy, the Apostle says in Eph. 4:1. Walk circumspectly, he says in 5:15. Walk with all lowliness and meekness, 4:2, and walk wisely, redeeming the time because the days are evil, 5:15, 16. There is so

Ephesians

N° 40



**Athol
Walter**

much emphasis on our walk in this practical part of the Epistle, and we don't need it explained to us that our walk is but another way of speaking about our manner of living.

We looked at these and other important points in previous studies, but perhaps we should not move on without reminding ourselves of 5:1 and 2: "Be ye therefore followers of God, as dear children; and walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweetsmelling savour."

The thought comes to mind that if we keep those words before us as we get into the verses that speak about husbands, wives, parents, children and servants, it may not be so difficult to fulfil the various roles we play in the manner that the Lord asks of us. What He requires is so little in comparison with what He gave for us.

We concluded our last study in vv.18 to 20 of ch. 5, noting that rather than being filled with strong drink, we should be filled by the Holy Spirit with the Word of Christ. By comparing Col. 3:16, which is parallel to these verses, we are kept on the right track.

Now we come to 5:21, "Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God.

I know I have said it before, but I think it is important enough to repeat more than once. Before ever Paul talks about wives submitting to their own husbands, and husbands loving their wives as themselves, and children obeying their parents, he says that we must submit one to another in the fear of the Lord.

I have heard quite a few discussions about what wives submitting etc. might mean, and I have to admit that I have taken part in some of those discussions, but I do not recall anyone in any of those discussions mentioning v. 21. It seems to get overlooked completely. Yet, surely, it must be the over-riding principle that governs all that follows. I think it will help to keep the discussion on

an even keel if we consider what is said to wives and husbands together.

Wives are told to submit to their own husbands, v. 22. The word "submit" occurs first in Luke 2:51, where we read of the young lad, Jesus, "and He went down with them (His parents), and came to Nazareth, and was SUBJECT UNTO them ...".

Paul's instruction to husbands is that they are to love their wives. Note that he does not say that husbands are to rule their wives. There is no licence in Paul's words for any man to be overbearing with his wife.

Notice that in the case of both wife and husband, Paul stresses that each position gives opportunity to display an aspect of the Lord's love and provision for the Church.

The wife is to be subject to her husband as unto the Lord. Why? Because the husband portrays the Lord in His position as the Head of the Church, His Body. And the Church is subject to its Lord and Head.

Conversely, the husband is to love his wife. How? By giving himself for her, in the same way that Christ gave Himself for the Church to sanctify and cleanse it. This is in order that He might present the Church to Himself a glorious church, holy, without blemish, no spots or wrinkles.

Notice the word "So" in v. 28. This little word can be used in a number of different ways, but here it means "thus" or "In this way". What Paul is saying, I believe, is this. The Lord Jesus loved the Church by the giving of Himself for it, doing all that was necessary not only to redeem the Church, but to make it pure and holy, a thing of beauty and glory. This, husbands, is the way you are to love your wives.

The wife's submission shows to the world the submission of the Church to its Lord. The husband's love shows to the world the self-sacrificing care and provision that the Lord gave, and continually gives, for His Body, the Church.

Still in v. 28, we read that men should love their wives as their own bodies. He that loves his wife loves himself because no man ever yet hated his own flesh. We take care of our own bodies, so we should love and care for our wives in the same way. Why? Because in the sight of God, husband and wife are one flesh. Notice too that in v. 29, Paul says that we naturally love and cherish our own bodies, just like the Lord does the Church. And the reason for that is that we are members of His body, His flesh, His bones.

But speak thou the things which become sound doctrine: That the aged men be sober, grave, temperate, sound in faith, in charity, in patience. The aged women likewise, that they be in behaviour as becometh holiness, not false accusers, not given to much wine, teachers of good things; That they may teach the young women to be sober, to love their husbands, to love their children, To be discreet, chaste, keepers at home, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God be not blasphemed. Young men likewise exhort to be sober minded. In all things shewing thyself a pattern of good works: in doctrine shewing uncorruptness, gravity, sincerity, Sound speech, that cannot be condemned; that he that is of the contrary part may be ashamed, having no evil thing to say of you. Exhort servants to be obedient unto their own masters, and to please them well in all things; not answering again; Not purloining, but shewing all good fidelity; that they may adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things. Titus 2:1-10.

V. 31 takes us right back to Eden, when God instituted marriage. God initiated marriage, in which a man and a woman would leave their birth families and join together, becoming one flesh, and starting a family of their own. I find myself at a loss for words, but I hope you can see the connection between husbands and wives, one flesh, and the believer being part of the Lord's body, of His flesh, of His bones.

It is quite common in Christian circles for these verses about husbands and wives and the Church to be taken as meaning that the Church is the Bride of Christ. I believe that view can only be arrived at by not rightly dividing the Word of Truth. The Church of Ephesians is clearly said to be the Body of Christ and the New Man. By no stretch of imagination can a man ever be said to be a Bride. The bridal relationship belongs to another dispensation, not this one, and while Paul is reminded of the close union between the Church and its Head by the close union of the marriage bond, he is not here teaching that the Church is the Bride.

Again I quote a paragraph from Charles Welch's book "In Heavenly Places". The quote is from page 398.

"That there is a mystery in marriage let anyone decide after reading Matthew 19:5, 6 "And they twain shall be one flesh". Such is the quotation from Genesis two.

"Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh", is the comment of the Lord Himself. But, says the Apostle, granting the sanctity and the mystery of marriage under the thought of "one flesh", the mystery I have in mind is that union with the Lord which makes "one spirit". Nevertheless, turning back to the typical union of man and wife he continues:

"Nevertheless let each one of you individually so love his wife as himself: and the wife see that she reverence her husband" (Eph. 5:33)."

(Any reader who wishes to go deeper into the reasons for differentiating between the Bride and the Body should write to our Book Agent for "The Bride and The Body" by Charles Welch, \$4:50 incl.postage.)

Children, Fathers, Servants, Masters.

Moving into ch. 6, Paul deals with other relationships or roles that the believer may be involved in. Covering, as he does, such important areas as marital and parental responsibilities, and the duties of children, servants and masters, I think we can say that he has hardly left anything important

out. We must be careful that we do not get so caught up in arguments about these issues that we forget the main point here. That is, that our behaviour in each of these roles is part of our worthy (or unworthy) walk, by which we will either bring honour or dishonour to our Lord and Head.

Paul's instruction to children in 6:1 is simply to obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. Unlike his words to husbands and wives, he makes no appeal to any parallels to the Lord's position as Head or obedient subject. With children, it is just a plain "do this for it is right". He then makes one of the few references to the Law that we find in these epistles written after the close of his Acts ministry. He quotes from the fifth commandment, which is the only commandment with a promise.

Does this mean that a child who obeys its parents can expect a long life as the commandment promises? Not necessarily, for the commandment and its promise related to children of Israel and the land toward which they were headed, and that is not my land. Rather, I think that Paul's use of the commandment shows that the obedience of any child in whatever dispensation is a pleasing thing to the Lord.

I think it can also be said however, that if a child learns obedience in early life, and with this learns self-control or self-discipline, these attributes will stand them in good stead throughout their lives.

Paul, then turns to fathers and warns them against provoking their children to wrath. Rather, he says, "rear them tenderly in the training and discipline and the counsel and admonition of the Lord", as the Amplified Version has it. The parallel verse in Col. 3:21 has it like this. "Fathers provoke not your children, lest they be discouraged." (Greek Interlinear Text.) I think all of us know how discouraging harsh and unfair discipline can be, but we knew when we

Walk in Love

"Christ *loved*; and we are to imitate His love. He loved and *gave*; and that kind of love should be ours. He loved and gave *Himself*; which is the essence of both loving and giving.

And this they did,..but first gave their own selves to the Lord, and unto us by the will of God. 2Cor. 8:5;

The love that we are to imitate is the fulfilling of the law; it is toward God and our neighbour.

He gave Himself "for us..to God". Not "for us" only, not "to God" only; but "for us..to God." Many of us who attempt to walk in love limp and halt.

Some interpret love as Christian charity and philanthropy, and forget the aspect that is "to God". Others, with disdain for all things human, seek to walk exclusively "to God." God has no pleasure in monasteries or nunneries; neither is He satisfied with mere "charity." The two-sidedness of love will alone suffice. It must be the essence of the milk of human kindness; and it must be in the full blaze of the claims of God's holiness. There is only one way to walk in such love; and that is "as Christ also hath loved us."

Charles H. Welch. "The Testimony of The Lord's Prisoner".

Kids' Korner

Let's Learn More from God's Word!



It is a New Year, 2003, so to begin with, we are going to have a **Review Quiz** about what we have been studying over the past 12 months.

(You will have to look through last year's issues of **Kids Korner** and your **Bible** to find the answers)

1. The Bible is a library of different books, written by a least 39 authors, inspired by God, over a period of 1500 years.
2. It has two sections, the Testament and the Testament.
3. All the was written before Jesus was born. All the was written after Jesus was born.
4. The first book in the Bible is called and the last is.....
5. How many poetry books are there
6. Name the largest poetry book in the Bible.
7. There are 12books.
8. At the end of the Old Testament there are 17 books recording the messages of the
10. One of the books which lists God's laws is called
11. How many books in the Old Testament and the New Testament.....?

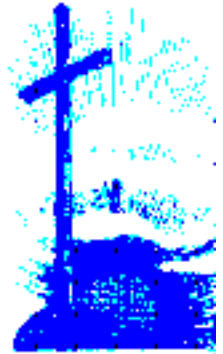
We have seen that

“All the Bible is for us
but not all the Bible is
about us”





The **Old Testament** and up until the end of Acts, in the **New Testament**, about the nation of **Israel**. God's chosen people to bring **God's Word** to the rest of the world. But after being given a number of opportunities by God to do so, Israel failed. They disobeyed God, crucified His Son, the Saviour of the world, and went their own way.



So God had another **plan**, a **mystery**, hidden before the world began.



Look up Ephesians 3:6 to see what this mystery is.

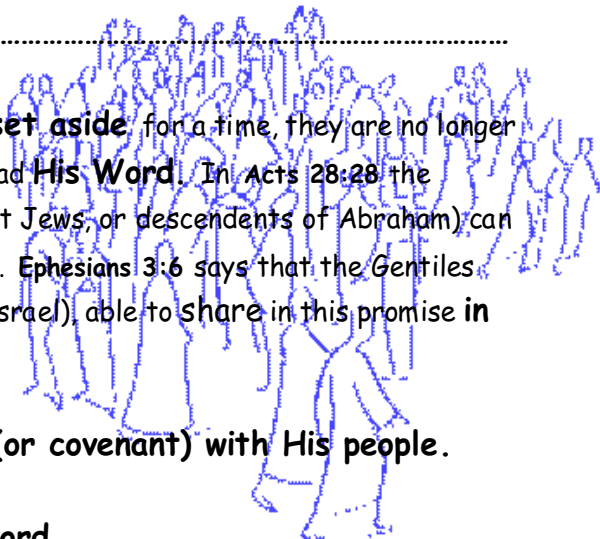
Now compare, **Acts 28:26-28** and **Isaiah 6:9 & 10**.



Write down what it says:

.....

So the nation of **Israel** has been **set aside** for a time, they are no longer God's special people chosen to spread **His Word**. In **Acts 28:28** the **Gentiles** (those people who are not Jews, or descendents of Abraham) can now know **God's salvation**, as well. **Ephesians 3:6** says that the Gentiles are now, together with the Jews (Israel), able to share in this promise in **Christ Jesus**. However.....,



God never breaks a promise (or covenant) with His people.

God is always faithful to His Word.

What did God promise to Abraham, the father of the nation of Israel? (see Kids Korner Sept/Oct 2002 issue or look up **Genesis 12:2&3**).



Write down this verse:

Remember:

.....

This prophecy, **God's Word**, still has to be fulfilled.

Matt. 6:9 After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name.
Matt. 6:10 Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven.

The Kingdom of Heaven.

When John the Baptist appeared his gospel was very simple indeed;

Matt. 3:1 In those days came John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judaea,
Matt. 3:2 And saying, Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.

The effect of this message was immediate and widespread, for we are told;

Matt. 3:5 Then went out to him Jerusalem, and all Judaea, and all the region round about Jordan,
Matt. 3:6 And were baptized of him in Jordan, confessing their sins.

John's call to repent was based upon the fact that The Kingdom of Heaven was at hand, or as we would say today, very near, or about to come into being.

Whatever we or anyone else thinks the Kingdom of Heaven means is totally irrelevant because we need to know what John and his audience understood by the term, for it was indeed a powerful concept, moving many to repentance.

There have been some very forgettable definitions over the years but to be honest with Scripture, we must, by examination, determine exactly what the Kingdom of Heaven meant at that time and for those people. If we can know what they knew, then we are very well placed.

The first very helpful step is to remind ourselves that when these events took place the New Testament had not been written. Sorry to be so base about this but if we really want to know what they knew, there is only one place to which we can turn; the Old Testament.

Before turning back however, why don't we note one or two of the incredibly obvious;

1. John the Baptist was an Israelite.
2. John's audience were all Israelites.
3. The setting was the inner portion of the promised land of Israel.

Is it reasonable to think then, that the Kingdom of Heaven might have something to do with Israelites and the promised land?

So, back to the Old Testament we go.

What is the promised land?
It was a land promised to Abraham, the father of Israel;

Gen. 15:18 In the same day the LORD made a covenant with Abram, saying, Unto thy seed have I given this land, from the river of Egypt unto the great river, the river Euphrates:
Notice God said "I have given".

Like all good kingdoms, the border is now defined but defined by God, it is His Kingdom remember.

So what else did God promise Abraham?

Gen. 12:1 Now the LORD had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will shew thee:
Gen. 12:2 And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing:
Gen. 12:3 And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed.

So The Lord said I will make of thee a great nation. Notice please God said, "I WILL".

So we have a promised "great nation" in a promised "great land", and it is God who WILL bring these things to pass, not the United Nations.

So now we have God's people and God's land but a Kingdom needs a King. Right?

2Sam. 7:8 Now therefore so shalt thou say unto my servant David, Thus saith the LORD of hosts, I took thee from the sheepcote, from following the sheep, to be ruler over my people, over Israel:
2Sam. 7:9 And I was with thee whithersoever thou wentest, and have cut off all thine enemies out of thy sight, and have made thee a great name, like unto the name of the great men that are in the earth.
2Sam. 7:10 Moreover I will appoint a place for my people Israel, and will plant them, that they may dwell in a place of their own, and move no more; neither shall the children of wickedness afflict them any more, as beforetime,
2Sam. 7:11 And as since the time that I commanded judges to be over my people Israel, and have caused thee to rest from all thine enemies. Also the LORD telleth thee that he will make thee an house.
2Sam. 7:12 And when thy days be fulfilled, and thou shalt sleep with thy fathers, I will set up thy seed after thee, which shall proceed out of thy bowels, and I will establish his kingdom.
2Sam. 7:13 He shall build an house for my name, and I will stablish the throne of his kingdom for ever.

Notice God said "I will establish the throne of his Kingdom forever". Hardly Solomon, more likely David's greater Son The Lord Christ Jesus. Count the "I wills" in the above passage. Will anyone or anything prevent God from keeping His promises? Would God transfer them to someone else? Could David's house be in someone's heart?

The Kingdom of Heaven

If ever there was a subject so simple but yet so confused in the minds of Christians, it is the Kingdom of God.

The Kingdom of God is very simply God's Kingdom. The kingdom God will set up on the earth. The Kingdom of, or having its origins in, Heaven.

God made another promise at about the same time when He was rebuking Eli:

1Sam. 2:35 And I will raise me up a faithful priest, that shall do according to that which is in mine heart and in my mind: and I will build him a sure house; and he shall walk before mine anointed for ever.

The Lord Christ will be a priest upon His throne says Zech.6:13.

This is too easy really. God said that He would make a great nation, God said He had given Israel the land, God said He would establish the throne of David's son forever, a house of David. God said He would raise up a faithful priest and give Him a house. God said that His people Israel will one day live in peace in their own land.

Is this is the Kingdom of Heaven John and his listeners knew about? Of course it is! This is the Kingdom God will establish and for which the Lord taught His disciples to pray.

Please read Psalm 72.

John's message had such impact on Abraham's descendants because this glorious earthly kingdom was "at hand".

Unfortunately, the majority did not repent and this kingdom was put in abeyance for a yet future day of glory for Israel. But this was not unexpected. Years before, God brought that nation out of Egypt and led them direct from Mt. Sinai to the promised land, but they lacked the faith to go in and possess it and wandered for forty years in the wilderness—a picture of the very sad and sorry condition of His people today. **S**

Brian Kelson.

Ephesians No 40. From pg. 5.

were being treated fairly, and took it as best we could.

Where the KJV has "servants" in Eph. 6:5, we should understand that the word is actually "slaves" in the original. Of course, we know nothing of slavery in our western cultures, although it still exists in some parts of the world. But this is no excuse for an employee who is a believer to say that the Apostle's direction does not apply now. It certainly does, and we should ever remember that slack work ethics reflect badly not only on ourselves, but also on the One whom we claim to love and serve. We are to give fair work for our wages, treating our work as service unto the Lord Himself.

Some have argued from v. 8 that it is only the good we do that the Lord will reward, the

bad things having been forgiven. Again, Colossians supplies the corrective to this wrong thought. Col. 3:23 - 25 tells us in effect that our work should be done heartily as unto the Lord, for He will reward both the good AND THE BAD that we do, and with Him there is no "partiality no matter what a person's position may be, whether he is the slave or the master." (Ampl. Version.)

Masters, or bosses, do not escape Paul's attention either. Bosses, treat your workers fairly and without threatenings or violence, "knowing that He who is both their Master and yours is in heaven, and there is no partiality with Him". (Ampl. Version.)

This brings us to the end of this particular section of the epistle. Surely, Paul has left us in no doubt that our daily conduct at home, in business or whatever our work might be, in fact in every relationship we find ourselves in, should be such that mirrors the love, grace and kindness, and also the obedience and faithfulness of the Lord Jesus Christ in every possible way. What a standard for us to aim at! It would be impossible for us, were it not for the power given to us that brought Christ from the grave and seated Him far above all, at the right hand of God. (Eph. 1:19 - 22.) Are we allowing this power full sway in our lives? **S**



Bible Study in a barn

Late last year a couple decided to gather some family and friends for a Bible study on their property. Here are some pictures.

Would you like to arrange something similar? Contact the committee. It could be the start of something exciting.



Don't forget the mini conference in Sydney, May 18th 2003

Babylon

One of our readers suggests that, “an article on Babylon, considering the recent developments in Iraq, would be most welcome”.

Babylon is a city which features prominently in the Bible. Before saying too much, it is helpful to realise that the city is known by several other titles in the Bible. For instance, what we call Babylon is first referred to as Babel (Genesis 10:10). Elsewhere we read of Shinar (Genesis 11:2), or Chaldea (Jeremiah 50:8-10) -

these were names for the region of which Babylon was the major city, and the Scripture

passages concerning the city often go by these other names. Today, Babylon's locality is in modern day Iraq, about 80 kms/50 miles south of Baghdad, near the modern day town of Al-Hillah.

Babylon is rarely presented in the Scriptures in a positive tone. First, we read of a mighty hunter called Nimrod, whose name means “to rebel”, who established the city of Babel, where Babylon later sprung up (Genesis 10:8-10). Then there is the rebellious sin of the Tower of Babel in Genesis 11.

Later on, most prophecies regarding Babylon, its sin and what it stands for are not pleasant - “Babylon, the glory of kingdoms, the beauty of the Chaldees' excellency shall be as when God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah” (Isaiah 13:19); “Behold, I will punish the king of Babylon and his land.. She hath been proud against the Lord..I will render unto Babylon and to all the inhabitants of Chaldea all their evil that they have done..” (Jer. 50:18,29; 51:24). etc.

Under the last few kings of the Southern

Kingdom, most Jews were exiled from their land to Babylon as a form of punishment (2 Chronicles 36:17-21). Overall, we could say that the city does not receive much good “press” in the Bible at all!

The fall of Babylon

Further to this, Babylon is spoken of in scathing language in Revelation chapters 17 & 18- “full of names of blasphemy... Babylon the Great, the mother of harlots and abominations of the earth” (17:3,5). However, its fall and destruction are prophesied in the next chapter – “Babylon the great is fallen ... death and mourning

and famine ... she shall be utterly burned with fire ... the kings of the earth.. shall bewail her and lament for her, when they shall see the smoke of her burning ... thus with violence shall that great city Babylon be thrown down, and shall be found no more at all” (18:1,8, 9, 21).

Interestingly, when Revelation was written in the first century A.D. Babylon was a far cry from being the “great city” described in these verses. It was actually a relatively small town by then, and, in time, ancient Babylon fell into gradual decline until uninhabited, and remained so for centuries. Note that it was not ever

destroyed suddenly. Yet the prophecies of its destruction speak of the haste in which it will happen:

“Therefore shall her plagues come in one day, (18:8); in one hour is thy judgment come” (18:10) ...in one hour so great riches is come to nought (18:17) ... “in one hour is she made desolate” (18:19)

Given that the Bible should be taken literally wherever possible, and rightly

divided, this leads us to the conclusion that a literal Babylon must come into existence again, become a great power, and be swiftly destroyed for these prophecies in Revelation to come to pass.



Ishtar Gate in modern day Babylon
(from "The New Atlas of the Bible" by John Rogerson)

PLEASE EXPLAIN



David Tavender

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Rome, or Literal Babylon?

On the subject of taking these passages literally, Stuart Allen has this to say: "Some will object and say that the harlot in the book of Revelation is the Roman Catholic Church. The Apostle John is given the symbol as the city which is "the mother of harlots and abominations of the earth", that is, the woman is the source and origin of these evils. However much one may dislike and reject Roman Catholicism, one cannot truthfully accuse it of being the origin of such evils, nor can we attribute this to pagan Rome. What about the abominations and idolatry found in the O.T. long before papal and pagan Rome came into being? For the origin of these things one must go back to Babel in the book of Genesis". (from "Joints and Bands", January 1987)

Incidentally, some of the less favourable attributes described in Revelation 17 & 18 may be found among the Protestant church too. Here we suggest that the term Babylon should be interpreted just as it says—the city of Babylon.

A significant indicator that the term "Babylon" should be taken literally in such passages may be found in Peter's first epistle. Babylon was still in existence when Peter wrote his epistle in the first century A.D., though its influence was not great by that time. Peter wrote, "By Silvanus ... I have written briefly ... The church that is at Babylon, elected together with you, saluteth you, and so doth Marcus my son" (1 Peter 5:12,13). Some versions read "She who is in Babylon...", because the word "church" does not appear in this portion of the Greek texts. Even so, the meaning of Babylon in this verse is not symbolic or figurative in any way, just as Peter's companions Marcus and Silvanus, mentioned in the same passage, are not symbolic of something else. The literal city of Babylon was being referred to in that epistle, and there is no reason to suggest we should treat it symbolically in any other passage either.

Babylon Rebuilt

In light of what is being suggested in this article, it should be of interest to us, then, when we learn that Babylon is in fact being rebuilt in our day. The picture of the Ishtar Gate appearing on page 10, is just a glimpse of the buildings currently in Babylon today. If you have

internet access, you can see more pictures of modern day Babylon at:

<http://www.zionministry.com/babylon.html>

As for whether Saddam Hussein, or the nation of Iraq in its current form feature in the prophecies of Scripture, I would not dare to say with any certainty at this stage. It seems likely, though, that they are at least playing their part in setting up the scenario for the dreadful times to come, spoken of in books such as Revelation. Just exactly what their roles will be, time will tell.

As always with prophecy, it pays first to understand the facts presented for us in the Bible, and the meanings of the words as they stand, before substituting them with the major players of current world events. Let Babylon mean "Babylon", and not "Catholic Church", or "America", or "New York", or any number of other meanings often ascribed to it, and not substantiated by the words of Scripture.



Artist's idea of New Year's Day parade in ancient Babylon
From The Bible Story-May 1964. Published by Fleetway Publications.

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

tavender@ozemail.com.au



Whereof I (Paul) am made a minister, according to the dispensation of God which is given to me for you, to fulfil the word of God; Even the mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to his saints: Col. 1:25-26

Bibles for Malawi. Please help again.

One of the aims of the Berean Bible Fellowship of Australia (BBFA) is to promote a general interest in the Bible, and to encourage Bible study. That's a rather difficult aim to achieve in Malawi, for how can a person study the Scriptures without access to them?



In Malawi, there is not only a need for the Scriptures, but a hunger for them also.

Many of the church leaders there have only recently been given a Bible. Through your kind donations in the past, the BBFA has been able to purchase about 700 complete Bibles. In addition, 1000 New Testaments and gospel portions, some children's books, as well as countless pamphlets - all in the local Chichewa language - have been donated by members and friends of the BBFA.

We'd like to say "Thank You" to many readers of Spiritual Blessings who generously donated to help purchase Bibles for the people of Malawi in 2001. Sadly, many church leaders (let alone their congregations) still do not own a Bible, and we are asking for your help once again.

The Bibles we purchase are in the local Chichewa language, contain both Old and New Testaments, and have a hard cover to handle the rigours of rural Malawian life. Each Bible costs about \$Aus 6.50, so a donation of \$65.00 will provide Bibles for 10 families. Of course, donations of any size will be greatly appreciated. We stress that 100% of all donations specifically designated for Malawian Bibles are used for exactly that purpose - there are no "middle men" or red tape costs eating away at those donations.

You can make a difference - can you help?

Please forward a cheque / money order to B.B.F.A., P.O. Box 3141, Glendale, 2285, NSW, Australia. (We ask that you make cheques payable to "BBFA", and specify that you'd like your donation to go towards Bibles for Malawi).



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2 Timothy 2:15 2 Timothy 3:16