

Spiritual Blessings

Vol. 17 N°2

March/April 2003

Gentiles & The Law in the Old Testament

David Tavender

In the Old Testament, those Gentiles who wished to have some part in God's blessings had to associate themselves with Israel and do as the Israelites did. This included observing the following rites and ceremonies from the law of Moses:

Keeping the Sabbath

This included observing the 7th year Sabbath of the land. See Ex. 20:10, 23:12, Deut. 5:14, Lev. 25:6.

Compulsory attendance of three feasts

See. Ex. 23:14-17, Deut. 16:16,17.
The Feast of Unleavened bread/
Passover. Ex. 12:19,20,43-50.
The Feast of Weeks. Deut. 16:10-12.
The Feast of Tabernacles. Deut.
16:13-15, 31:12.

Gentiles had to abstain from work on the day of Atonement (Lev 16:9) and during feast of trumpets (Lev 23:25).

Offerings

Offerings for "Ignorant" sins, (Num. 15:26) covered the strangers dwelling within Israel as well as the nation and Gentiles who wished to bring certain offerings to The Lord had to observe the same procedures as Israel. It was important that all sacrifices were offered correctly (Lev. 17:8,9, 22:18, Num. 15:14).



Dwight Chua.

Meet him at the Australian conference this September. 26-28.

Miscellaneous Laws

The Gentile living amongst Israel had to observe the following:

- * be circumcised (Ex. 12:44,48).
- * do not eat blood (Lev. 17:12).
- * do not give children to Molech (Lev. 20:2).
- * do not blaspheme (Lev. 24:16).
- * abstain from sexual immorality (Lev. 18:26,27).

Generally speaking, in order to partake of God's blessings, a Gentile in the Old Testament had

to become an Israelite—not only by living amongst Israelites, but by observing the ceremonies that set them apart as God's people. In doing so, they effectively renounced their previous citizenship of other nations and became "naturalised". In other words, the Gentile, in observing the law, was becoming an Israelite, and not considered to be a part of their former nation any longer.

Ruth (a Moabite) and Rahab (a Canaanite) are examples of two such people who did this. They both announced their intention to worship the one true God of the Israelites, and in doing so, effectively became Israelites themselves.

The above laws may be summarised by the instructions to Israel (and the "stranger", or foreigner). "Keep therefore the words of this covenant ... that thou shouldest enter into covenant with the Lord Thy God ... that He may establish thee today for a People unto Himself". (Deut. 29:9-13).

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Today, there is currently no Jew or Gentile in God's dealings with mankind, and these laws, specifically given to Israel, are not currently part of the dispensation of God's grace. **S**



The Berean
Bible Fellowship of
AUSTRALIA Incorporated
2 Timothy 2:15 2 Timothy 3:16

All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable....

The President's Word



**Athol
Walter**

By the time you read this report, a Bible Study Weekend in Brisbane planned for early March will have already taken place. Eveline and I will take part, and it is exciting to hear of some new folk attending their meetings. The Brisbane group will hold another conference over the long weekend in June. What about going to join with them? David Tavender and John Hutton will be on the panel of speakers for that weekend.

Our committee's plans to bring some speakers from the Philippines Open Bible Fellowship to our annual conference in late September this year are coming along nicely. Four men have agreed to come, and I am told they are getting excited. So am I, for I know these men will challenge, enthuse and encourage us as well as bring fresh insights into God's wonderful Word. The names of the four are Albert Sison, Ramon Perez, Dwight Chua and Michael Paz.

It never ceases to amaze me that so many difficulties crop up to hinder folk from attending the conference meetings. I believe that it is up to us each to make sure we give no room to the enemy who will do his utmost to stop us from gathering with like-minded believers so that we may lift up the Lord Jesus Christ as the Head of the Body. So, please, PRAY, PLAN, AND PREPARE now to be part of this year's Bethshan experience.

We are asking for your help towards these projects at the moment. Firstly, the cost of the airfares for our visitors from the Philippines. This will be something in the order of \$2,000. Secondly, we are responding to the ongoing need for Bibles for believers in Malawi. We know from first-hand reports that these folk are doing it tough with a very severe drought at the moment, and they are also hungry for God's Word. We also know that the Bibles we send get to the people who need them, and to say they are greatly appreciated is something of an understatement. We ask you to prayerfully consider these projects before the Lord, and act accordingly. Send donations to: The Treasurer, BBFA, PO BOX 3141, GLENDALE, NSW, AUSTRALIA. 2285, and don't forget to state how you want your money disbursed. Several donations have already been received.

I trust that you are aware of the enveloping presence of our wonderful Saviour in these days when so many problems seem to be crowding in. I think that Phil. 4:4-7 are very relevant verses for us each.

Athol Walter.

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

Meetings

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

Bible Study and Fellowship Day

Sydney-May 18
see notice on
this page.

Newcastle

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

Spiritual Blessings

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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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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.



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 (Part 2)

Brian Kelson

Last time we looked at the Old Testament to understand what John the Baptist and his listeners understood by the term, the Kingdom of Heaven.

It is important for us to note that John did not call Israel to repentance suggesting that the Kingdom was in Heaven or that any of his listeners would be going there. No! The Kingdom will be on the earth but heavenly in origin and character.

In Psalm 72:1-9, we read these words;

Give the king thy judgments, O God, and thy righteousness unto the king's son.

He shall judge thy people with righteousness, and thy poor with judgment.

The mountains shall bring peace to the people, and the little hills, by righteousness.

He shall judge the poor of the people, he shall save the children of the needy, and shall break in pieces the oppressor.

They shall fear thee as long as the sun and moon endure, throughout all generations. He shall come down like rain upon the mown grass: as showers that water the earth.

In his days shall the righteous flourish; and abundance of peace so long as the moon endureth.

He shall have dominion also from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth.

They that dwell in the wilderness shall bow before him; and his enemies shall lick the dust.

David, who wrote this Psalm, most likely offered this as a prayer for his son Solomon, but while Solomon reigned in peace, he did not reign over all the Land promised to Abraham and these words of David will only be fulfilled in Christ, the Son promised to David in 2 Sam. 7:8-13.

The land where David's greater Son will reign was promised to Abraham many years ago and we read about this in Genesis 15:18 and 17:8.

There are two portions of land promised. The outer or larger portion as described in Genesis 15 was promised to Abraham's seed;

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:

The river of Egypt is the Nile and in my opinion, the border is where the most eastern branch of the Nile delta enters the Mediterranean and this land includes the Sinai peninsula. From this point across to the Euphrates, is the land given to Abraham's seed by covenant. And friends, when God makes a covenant, He keeps it. This land will be heavenly one day, but it is not heaven.

Now, Abraham had many seeds, there were his descendants through Ishmael, but Paul reminds us in Hebrews;

Heb. 11:18 Of whom (Abraham) it was said, That in Isaac shall thy seed be called:

Paul also further defines Abraham's seed in Galatians;

Gal. 3:16 Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ.

And in Hebrews Paul writes of Christ like this;

Heb. 2:16 For verily he took not on him the nature of angels; but he took on him the seed of Abraham.

The Lord Christ is The Seed of Abraham and in fact we could say that when God made that covenant in Genesis 15 with Abraham, He was in fact, looking forward to Christ.

But wait, there's more!!!!

Bethshan 2003

Come and meet 4 men from the Philippines Open Bible Fellowship who will speak in these meetings.

They will challenge our commitment to the Lord and His rightly divided Word.

They, in turn, would love to meet and fellowship with you.

Sept. 26 - 28 2003.

Decide now to be there.

Continued page 8

The Whole Armour of God

We come now to the conclusion of this wonderful epistle of Ephesians. This last section starts at 6:10 and goes through to the final Amen.

Ephesians

N° 41



**Athol
Walter**

As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him:

Rooted and built up in him, and stablished in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving.

Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ.

For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily.

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

.....
Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holyday, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath days:

Which are a shadow of things to come; but the body is of Christ.

Let no man beguile you of your reward in a voluntary humility and worshipping of angels, intruding into those things which he hath not seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind,

And not holding the Head, from which all the body by joints and bands having nourishment ministered, and knit together, increaseth with the increase of God.
Col.2:6-10,16-19.

Paul starts this part with the word "Finally". I could not use that word as the heading for this study because it will take us one more study after this one to get through the material that is in these 15 verses.

This section contains the best known passage in all Ephesians, that is, as far as the majority of Christians are concerned. It also has a difficult verse to translate properly, and some very practical advice to the Christian pilgrim. And, there are several very homely references that remind us once again that Paul and his fellow believers were ordinary people just like ourselves.

One other point I would remind you of is that this section has references and parallels to some of the great doctrinal statements Paul made in the opening chapters. I think it is important that we do not miss these connections, for if we do, we will miss some of the truth that the Lord would have us know.

So, what is the first thing our Apostle says to us when he gets to "finally"? Fortunately it is very clear and straightforward, which is not to say that it is shallow. Far from it.

His instruction is, "Finally, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might".

Be Strong

I am sure we will have all heard of the power of positive thinking. Philosophers have told us to be strong. Psychologists tell us to tell ourselves to be strong. But the Holy Spirit tells us, through Paul, to be strong in the Lord.

In Phil. 4:13 Paul writes "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me". Here is the secret of our success in service for our Master. Those of us who are impulsive in nature are very quick to rush off to what we think is the battle, engaging enemies on all sides willy-nilly, forgetting that the battle is the Lord's, and we can only succeed if we go in His will and in His strength. Oh, what a hard lesson for some of us to learn, myself included!

I must point out here that the command to be strong is linked with resurrection. It is interesting to note that Paul is the only writer, apart from Luke, in the N.T. to use this word "Be strong" (it is one word in the Greek). Luke uses it of Paul himself in Acts 9:22, so the exception is almost not an exception. Be that as it may, let's look at the first time Paul uses it.

Romans 4:19 - 21: "And being not weak in faith, he (Abraham) considered not his own body now dead, when he was about an hundred years old, neither yet the deadness of Sarah's womb, he staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was STRONG in faith, giving glory to God; and being fully persuaded that what he had promised, he was able also to perform."

Both Abraham and Sarah were as good as dead as far as having children were concerned, but the power of the Lord is greater than the power of death, and Abraham was strong in faith, not staggering at the promise of God through unbelief. In case any have missed the point, resurrection power is the theme here. See also vv. 24 & 25.

Next is our present text, Eph. 6:10: "BE STRONG in the Lord ..." This looks back to ch. 1 where, starting in v. 19, we are told that the power Paul prays we shall know is the self-same mighty power that raised Christ from the dead, and seated Him at the right hand of God far above all principalities and powers etc. Again, resurrection.

The other occurrences of the word strong or strength, are Phil. 4:13; 1 Tim. 1:12; 2 Tim. 2:1; 2 Tim 4:17 and Heb. 11:34.

Before moving on to Eph. 6:11, I would have you notice how a number of words from ch. 1 are repeated here. I know some readers find our references to Greek words a little tiring, but I must give them here because the translators are not always consistent. In 6:10 we have *endunamoo* - be strong, *kratos* - power, and *ischus* - might. In 1:19 we have *dunamis* - power, (*dunamis* is the same word as *endunamoo*, only a different part of speech), *ischus* - might, and *kratos* - power. These words convey to us something of the power of the Lord in which we are to be strong.

Next comes the passage, starting in 6:11, that tells us of the armour which will protect us. As I said earlier, this is the only theme from Ephesians that many believers know about. That was true of myself as a young believer well into my twenties. I was very earnest back then, but not very well instructed.

Before we turn our attention to the whole armour of God, let's consider several things about the power or strength of the Lord. Notice that being strong in the Lord is mentioned BEFORE there is any talk of armour. The strength must come first, because without it the armour may be more than can be borne. David provides an illustration of this in 1 Sam. 17. Saul put his own armour upon David when he was going out to fight Goliath, but David was not at ease in this unfamiliar and unproven attire. Nor could he use Saul's sword. He put all those things aside and went with what he knew and had proved, his sling and five smooth stones from the brook. And, of course, above that, he went in the power of the Lord God of Israel. And perhaps there is a lesson for us in the fact that later, when David was more experienced in war, then he undoubtedly used armour in battle. I think we have to admit the possibility that we can impulsively get ourselves in over our heads, but on the other hand, if we follow the lead of our Captain closely, He will not allow us into situations that are beyond our present capacities.

More than Conquerors

Underlying this subject of being strong in the Lord, is the foundational truth outlined in Rom. 5 - 8. Those four chapters deal with two laws: the first, the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus, and the second, the law of sin and death. Consider Rom. 8:37-39:

"In all these things we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us. For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor Principalities, nor powers .. nor any other (thing) .. can separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

Here, I think, is the basis of Eph. 6:10. The wonderful truths Paul teaches in Rom. 8 are only possible because, not only did Christ die for us, but also God raised Him from the dead. The Lord's death paid the price of sin, but it was His resurrection that vindicated that sacrificial death, and proved that He was indeed sinless, which made it possible for His death to be on behalf of us, the sinful ones. We must never under-estimate the place of Christ's resurrection in the plan of redemption.

So, in Christ, through His death and resurrection, we are "MORE THAN CONQUERORS". Notice also the reference to PRINCIPALITIES AND POWERS in Rom. 8:38. These somewhat enigmatic personages figure in both Ephesians and Colossians, and indeed, they seem to have a particular connection with the Church

which is His Body and its sphere of blessing in the Heavenly places at the right hand of God.

Eph. 1:21, 22 tells us that the Lord was raised FAR ABOVE ALL PRINCIPALITY AND POWER, and taking it a wonderful step further, Col. 2:15 says this: "Having SPOILED PRINCIPALITIES AND POWERS, he made a shew of them openly, TRIUMPHING OVER THEM in it (that is, in the Cross)."

The words of Charles Welch on this are worth quoting, I think, for they make the point very well.

"To attempt the conflict of Ephesians 6 in any other power than that of the risen Christ is to seek defeat. To attempt it in that power is to make EXPERIMENTAL PROOF of the fact that in Him we are "more than conquerors". (In Heavenly Places, p. 405)

We must also consider what our role is in this warfare, and just what it is we may lose if we are defeated. Also, we must give some attention to the various items of the armour. I do not however, have enough space left in this study for those things, so they will have to wait for the next issue.

Let me conclude, then, with this thought. Eph. 6:11 tells us that we must put on the whole armour of God so that we may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. Here is the first point. Our fighting involves standing against the cunning craftiness of Satan. Standing is a little different to the idea of rushing around attacking the strongholds of Satan. Linked with this is v. 13 where Paul tells us that the armour will enable us to withstand, and when the attacks are all over, to be still standing.

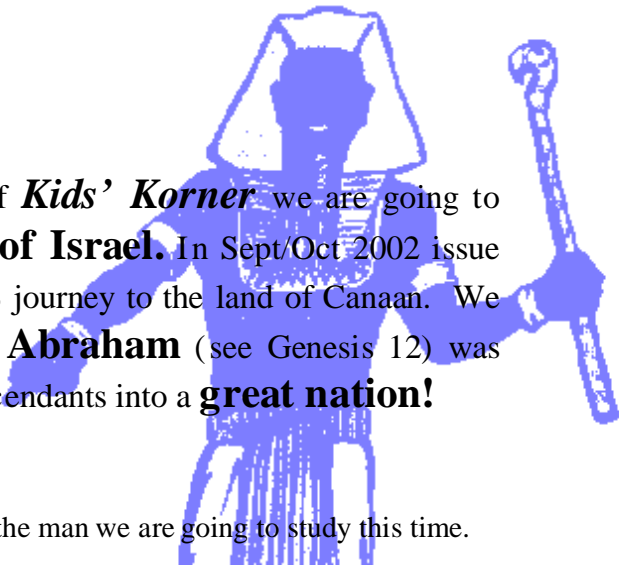
We will pick up these themes in the next study, as the Lord enables. **S**

God is Able

Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, Unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen. Eph. 3:20-21.

"Here is One that *is able*. This is no idol of sticks and stones or some man's idea of a deity with all the weaknesses and frailties of human flesh. He is One who *is able to do* or to act. The gods which the heathen worshipped could not do or act. They could not even move but had to be carried about. Even today men do not have a much higher concept of God. He is One who *is able to do abundantly*. This begins to take our notice. Here is One able to take care of our needs. But we left something out. It is *exceeding abundantly* that He is able to do.....here is One who can do exceeding abundantly *above all that we ask or think*. His treasures are absolutely inexhaustible. His power cannot be limited by any description man can make."

Oscar Baker.
"Truth for Today". Vol.10. N°12.



In this **issue** of *Kids' Korner* we are going to look at the **new nation of Israel**. In Sept/Oct 2002 issue we followed **Abraham's** journey to the land of Canaan. We saw that God's promise to **Abraham** (see Genesis 12) was that He would make his descendants into a **great nation!**



JOSEPH is the man we are going to study this time.

To find out more about Joseph's background, open your Bible at Genesis and look up the answers.

- 1. What were the names of **Isaac's** two sons? **Genesis 25**
.....
.....
- 2. Why did one of **Isaac's** sons have his name changed to **Israel**?
Genesis 32
.....
.....
- 3. What were the names of **Israel's** twelve sons? **Genesis 35**
.....
.....
.....
- 4. What did these names become?
.....
.....
- 3. Who then was **Joseph's** father? **Genesis 35**
.....
.....

When there was a famine (drought) in Canaan, **Israel**, (or Jacob as he used to be called), **Joseph's** father, sent his sons to Egypt to buy some corn. The sons bowed down to **Joseph** without recognising who he was.. His dream had come true!



WHILE **JOSEPH** WAS IN **EGYPT**, HE HAD SOME VERY DIFFICULT TIMES AND HE ALSO BECAME A GREAT LEADER. BUT HE CONTINUED TO BE FAITHFUL TO **GOD**.

Remember :

*God is always in control!
In spite of all that happened to Joseph,
God's plans would be fulfilled.*



The Egyptian Pharaoh gave **Joseph** the name (*Genesis 41:45*), **Zaphenathpaaneah**, which means, **“the bread of life”**.

Why do you think Pharaoh gave **Joseph** this name?

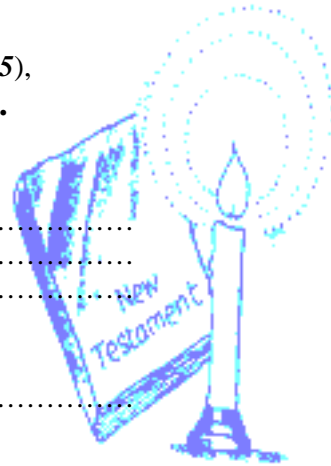
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Who else, in the Bible, is called **“the bread of life”**?

.....
.....

Why is this other person called **“the bread of life”**?

.....
.....



FIND A WORD!



I	E	D	P	H	A	R	A	O	H	S	T	O	L
H	A	M	L	E	C	F	P	G	N	I	M	B	N
A	O	S	A	T	A	B	C	R	E	L	R	E	B
D	A	F	E	N	N	I	O	A	M	S	E	N	U
U	W	O	V	Z	A	T	L	I	D	P	H	J	H
J	P	O	E	A	A	S	D	N	N	I	T	A	B
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- PHAROAH
- MANNASSEH
- BENJAMIN
- GRAIN
- SPIES
- PYRAMID
- JOSEPH
- PLENTIOUS
- EPHRAIM
- EGYPT
- FOOD
- BROTHERS
- SACK
- CUP
- CANAAN
- MONEY
- FATHER
- JUDAH
- FAMINE
- SIMEON
- CORN
- BOND MEN
- AFRAID

(Thanks to: M. Penny, Carol Brown, Lyn Mrotek - "Introducing God's Word" & MBM No.16 1991)

The Kingdom of Heaven (Part 2)

From page 3

We notice also that when The Lord God gave Abraham the inner portion of Land it was given at the same time to Abraham's seed;

Gen. 17:8 And I will give unto thee, and to thy seed after thee, the land wherein thou art a stranger, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession; and I will be their God.

So The Lord Christ is the rightful heir to both portions of land extending from the Euphrates to the Eastern branch of the Nile. The northern border runs from Sidon/Damascus across to the Euphrates and the southern across from the Nile including the Sinai peninsula to the mouth of the Euphrates at the Persian gulf. Personally, I think it might include all the Saudi Arabian Peninsula. My personal view aside, this is a huge portion of the fertile crescent and there will be some surprised folk when the Lord returns.

Now Abraham's descendants demanded a King and the Lord God knew about this beforehand:

Deut. 17:14 When thou art come unto the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee, and shalt possess it, and shalt dwell therein, and shalt say, I will set a king over me, like as all the nations that are about me;

Deut. 17:15 Thou shalt in any wise set him king over thee, whom the LORD thy God shall choose: one from among thy brethren shalt thou set king over thee: thou mayest not set a stranger over thee, which is not thy brother.

Notice a Gentile could not reign over Israel and God would choose their King. You might like to look at 1Sam. 12:12.

Eventually David the shepherd boy was appointed and God made this

promise to him;

2 Sam. 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.

2 Sam. 7:13 He shall build an house for my name, and I will stablish the throne of his kingdom for ever.

To this the Psalmist gives voice:

Psa. 2:1 Why do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing?

Psa. 2:2 The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the LORD, and against his anointed, saying,

Psa. 2:3 Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us.

Psa. 2:4 He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh: the Lord shall have them in derision.

Psa. 2:5 Then shall he speak unto them in his wrath, and vex them in his sore displeasure.

Psa. 2:6 Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion.

The Kingdom of Heaven

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.

The Church which is His Body does not replace the Kingdom of Heaven just as it does not replace Israel or exist as "spiritual Israel".



Mount Zion from the east. A Dormitian Abbey is situated on top. With permission. bibleplaces.com

Please note that in the Septuagint version of this Psalm we have two very important words. The first is "anointed" in verse 2. The Jews, who translated this verse from Hebrew to Greek used the word "christos" which is directly brought across into our English as "Christ". Now in verse 6, this "anointed" one is the King set upon (God's) holy hill of Zion. The "holy hill of Zion" is not heaven, nor

the heart of any believer, it is in fact within the boundaries of the promised inner portion of land. Neither is this a choice made by man, as God had said to David in 2Sam. 7 "I will set up thy seed after thee,...and I will establish his kingdom..and I will stablish the throne of his kingdom for ever." It was God Himself or "heaven" who authorised this rule. "Heaven" establishes the throne. God told Israel, "Thou shalt in any wise set him king over thee, whom the LORD thy God shall choose:". God made the choice and His choice was The Lord Christ as King over Israel, ruling from Zion. This will be the Kingdom of or from Heaven and it was to this great rule of God's anointed, that John the Baptist pointed his listeners. This kingdom of heaven was at hand he assured them. What a great motivation to repent.

The Prophets wrote of these



Here is the Temple Mount as seen from the East. The Gate Beautiful faces the Mount of Olives. See Zech.14;4. This photo from templamount.org with permission.

"kingdom" days and you might like to look at these references; Isaiah 32:1-4. Jer. 23:1-6. What fabulous passages are these for the children of Israel. It is impossible to transfer them to "the church" or indeed have visions of anyone's heart or heaven as being the place of the kingdom. No, the prophets are very specific. The Good Shepherd will gather His flock and care for them in the promised land. You might also like to read Ezekiel 34. In this passage, the Lord God declares that He will be The Shepherd to seek out His flock and bring them safely to the mountains of Israel.

Which brings us back to the ministry of John the Baptist.

We know that John came baptising with water for repentance and the remission of sins and his ministry was to Israel and Israel alone;

Luke 3:3 And he came into all the country about Jordan, preaching the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins;

But there was another reason John came baptising with water: John 1:31 And I knew him not: but that he should be made manifest to Israel, therefore am I come baptizing with water.

Water baptism is totally inappropriate for today. We do not baptise in water for repentance, the remission of sins, nor to manifest Christ the King to Israel.

Some denominations practise water baptism for entry into their circles, however one wonders why, since water baptism has no spiritual significance in today's dispensation of the grace of God.

Continued back page

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

Be Ye Angry and Sin Not Eph. 4:26

One of our readers notes Paul's words of Ephesians 4:26 "Be ye angry and sin not", which seems to contradict the words found just a few verses later, "Let all.. anger.. be put away from you" (Ephesians 4:31), and asks for an explanation.

As always, it should help us to observe the whole context. Note that the whole verse in question says, "Be ye angry and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath". This alone should tell us that any anger we might have is not to linger on and on. Ignorance of this advice has led to much heartbreak and bitterness among people, and sadly, Christians are not excluded.

Let us now notice a few other verses which Paul wrote about anger, sometimes called "wrath", and see if we can build up a bigger picture. He also wrote:

"Let all..wrath and anger..be put away from you". (Ephesians 4:31).

"Put off all these: anger, wrath". (Colossians 3:8).

"The works of the flesh are manifest, which are these: ..wrath" (Galatians 5:19,20).

Likewise, James writes; "Let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath: for the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God". (James 1:19,20).

It seems strange that Paul would write so many times that we should put off anger, and yet seem to tolerate it in one phrase.

Anger vs. Love

All of the verses quoted above urge the Christian to put away anger, an emotion of hate. In each instance, there is a verse following which talks about putting on, love. Compare these verses with those we just read:

Ephesians 5:2:
"walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us"

Colossians 3:12-14:
"Put on..longsuffering, forbearing one another above all these things, put on charity (love)"

Galatians 5:22:
"But the fruit of the Spirit is love".

James 2:8:
"Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself".

Taken in conjunction with the great love chapter of 1 Corinthians 13, and the practical applications found therein (such as love not being easily provoked to anger, v.5), do the Scriptures paint an overall picture that Christians should be angry, or be loving? I think the answer is obvious.

Translation

From a linguistic viewpoint, the Greek grammar of the phrase translated, "Be ye angry and sin not" is somewhat ambiguous for a few reasons. It may be a command, as here in the KJV; on the other hand perhaps it is a question. The original Greek texts had no punctuation, and questions were usually written as sentences, with the reader having to supply the question mark. The context would usually determine whether it was in fact a sentence or a question.

It may well be that a more accurate translation of "Be ye angry and sin not" is the question, "You are angry and you sin not?", with the implied answer - "it is doubtful".

PLEASE EXPLAIN



**David
Tavender**

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Another possible alternative is, "Are you angry and you sin not?"

The Greek grammar allows all three translations, but reading the phrase as a question eliminates any apparent contradiction in the Scriptures on this issue, and I would suggest this is a more accurate rendering of the phrase.

What I am suggesting here is that the phrase we are considering is actually a question implying the difficulty of being angry without sinning. Anger is rarely portrayed in the Scriptures as an appropriate action among God's people; when we exhibit signs of anger, we almost always are in error to do so if we are honest with ourselves.

However, even if I am wrong, and "Be ye angry and sin not" is indeed the intended translation, our anger is not to last, for what possible benefit is there to it? It will help us to remember that this verse is in the overall scriptural context of putting OFF anger, and putting ON love which is patient and etc. etc.

Righteous Anger

One may object to this idea by bringing to mind the righteous anger displayed by God in the OT (e.g. Numbers 11:1) and the Lord Jesus Christ in the NT (e.g. Mark 3:5), but how many of us would dare to say we are in the position they were in to exhibit such "holy wrath". We are in an even less sound position when we carry out our "judgement" in any number of ways—violent or non-violent—upon those we might be angry with. Shouldn't we leave these sorts of responses to the righteous Judge?

When we look at the evils of the world around us, there is much that can make us angry, such as wrongs against the human race, as well as those wrongs against God. And yet shouldn't our appropriate response be to address those situations in which we find ourselves with love and patience, even those we are not happy about. After all, that phrase about being angry and not sinning, regardless of whether it's a question or a command, is addressed to US, not to the Lord.

I am certainly not advocating some sort of flowery "smile-at-everything" attitude. Some things will upset us and frustrate us, and we will have wrongs done against us and it will hurt. On this subject, Oscar Baker (in Truth for Today, Vol 13, p. 9) writes: "You may think you have to stand up for your rights.

But as a Christian under grace, what rights do you have that must be defended in the flesh? The warfare we have is not with flesh and blood in this world, but with spiritual powers of wickedness in the heavenlies. [Ephesians 6:12].

Carnal attitudes and carnal weapons have no place in our warfare. Let us take time to stop and think it through.

What have we to gain by being angry?
Will it help our testimony?
Will it honour the Father and the Son?"

I hope you will contemplate these thoughts carefully.

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

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And his feet shall stand in that day upon the mount of Olives, which is before Jerusalem on the east, and the mount of Olives shall cleave in the midst thereof toward the east and toward the west, and there shall be a very great valley; and half of the mountain shall remove toward the north, and half of it toward the south. — Zech. 14:4

The Kingdom of Heaven (Part 2) From page 9

John's witness had great impact on the nation of Israel. Many came to hear and respond to his message, which message inspired that nation to expect the great reign of the Anointed, The Christ, The Son of Abraham, the Son of David, under whose care Israel would at last live in peace within that land promised to their fathers.

God does not make light promises nor light of any promises as we are

assured by Paul in Romans 11 thus: Rom. 11:26 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:

Rom. 11:27 For this is my covenant unto them, when I shall take away their sins.

Rom. 11:28 As concerning the gospel, they are enemies for your sakes: but as touching the election, they are beloved for the fathers' sakes.

Rom. 11:29 For the gifts and calling of God are without repentance.

The Kingdom of Heaven was "at hand" through the Gospels and Acts but is currently in abeyance after Israel were set aside for a time at Acts 28. **S**

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