

# Spiritual Blessings



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## Biblical Basics

# The Bible: Section by Section

## Part 2 - Old Testament History Books

**T**he first 17 books of the Bible are all history books - that is, they are largely narratives which tell a story. Except for the first 11 chapters of Genesis, this story revolves mainly around the nation of Israel.

As suggested in Part 1, it is my conviction that many poor interpretations of Scripture passages have come about chiefly because of a failure to consider the setting of the passage. This series of articles is about reading the Bible and being aware of the context of its contents.

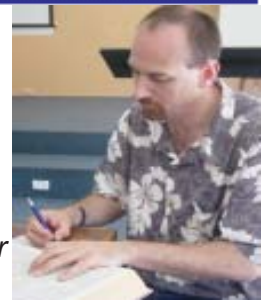
**Every word in the Bible is part of a verse. Every verse is part of a paragraph. Every paragraph is part of a chapter. Every chapter is part of a Bible book. And every Bible book fits somewhere into God's plans for mankind.**

When we come across a verse we should try to have some understanding of what the book it came from is about. Consider what sort of book it is, who it was written for, and the place that book plays in the Bible, and in God's plans.

### The Books in General

There is a stark contrast between the first few chapters of Genesis, and the remaining chapters which make up the rest of the OT historical narrative. For a start, it only takes 11 chapters to cover the first 2000 years of human history, whilst the next 1600 years take about 425 chapters. To illustrate what a difference this is, pick up your Bible and try this easy exercise. Hold the first 11 chapters of Genesis in your left hand, and then hold the rest of the OT history books up to the end of Esther in your right hand. It's hard to believe, but the few pages in your left hand cover a much longer portion of time than the wad of pages in your right hand.

In the first 11 chapters of the Old Testament we read about some important, world-changing, historical events: the creation of the heavens and earth, the introduction of sin, the great flood, the scattering of mankind across the earth and the division of language (Genesis 1-11). The rest of the history section of the Old Testament then concentrates solely on the one family which became the nation of Israel. We are given over 420 chapters of events about them alone, compared with just 11 chapters about what most of us would call "major" events.



by  
David  
Tavender

Why is this the case? Wouldn't we all like a few more specific details on how God created the universe; or read more of Adam and Eve's conversations with God in the garden before the fall, or perhaps find out what happened to the other nations after they were scattered? Apparently, God felt He had revealed enough about these things. However, it was obviously important for us to read in more detail about how He dealt with Israel, thus the greater amount of historical narrative is given to that subject instead of to the rest of the nations.

Don't miss the significance of this important fact. When we read anything in the Old Testament after those first 11 chapters, we should keep in mind that God was dealing with Israel as His special nation first, and all others second - "the

*continued Pg.3.....*

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**Athol Walter**

# The President's Word

might want to add. I hope we will have received something from him before we go to print.

why we recommend that you come for the whole weekend.

Our annual conference is drawing near once again, and we would urge readers, and not only those in Australia, to give serious thought to attending. What better excuse for those of you who live in other countries, for a holiday in the land of Oz, than to make our conference weekend the key point of your visit here. The teaching is always rich and Christ-glorifying, and the fellowship warm and uplifting. We hope you will join us. Dates are on the back page. Because insurance costs have increased so much for the venue owners, it is not easy for day-trippers to be fitted in, which is

We are planning some day conferences in different areas to cater for folk who are unable to come to our weekend conference, and we ask for your prayers as we seek the Lord's guidance. We are also faced with falling attendance at our Sydney meeting, and are looking for ways to reach a wider circle in that city. Any ideas will be welcome and considered.

I hope that you not only enjoy this issue of Spiritual Blessings, but that you also find help and inspiration for your daily walk and witness for the Lord.

Athol Walter.

Once again, it is pleasing to report a positive response to the last issue of Spiritual Blessings. The discussion about the keeping of the Sabbath and its effect on our witness generated quite a deal of comment, and we have received an email from a reader in Moscow, Russia. You can read his comments elsewhere in the magazine. Duncan McGregor has been away on holidays and is giving thought to anything further he

## The Sabbath

### *A letter from Michael Penny*

With respect to the Gentiles and the Sabbath: for the Jews who wished to proselytise two things were crucial: the Gentiles had to be circumcised and keep the Sabbath. This is epitomised in Isaiah 56:4-7:

“For this is what the LORD says: “To the eunuchs who keep my Sabbaths, who choose what pleases me and hold fast to my covenant - to them I will give within my temple and its walls a memorial and a name better than sons and daughters; I will give them an everlasting name that will not be cut off. And foreigners who bind themselves to the LORD to serve him, to love the name of the LORD, and to worship him, all who keep the Sabbath without desecrating it and who hold fast to my covenant - these I will bring to my holy mountain and give them joy in my house of prayer. Their burnt offerings and sacrifices will be accepted on my altar; for my house will be called a house of prayer for all nations.”

The covenant referred to here is that of circumcision.

Now the interesting thing is that the Judaisers, those Christian Jews who wanted Gentiles circumcised, did not make the Sabbath an issue, and I have often wondered why not. Certainly some of the Christian Pharisees wanted Gentile Christians to keep the whole Law of Moses (Acts 15:5) but by and large the issue was circumcision. The Jerusalem Council met to discuss this matter and their ruling stated that the Gentiles need not be circumcised but that they had to obey four rules (Acts 15:20,29) which had the sanction of the Holy Spirit (v 28). It is interesting to note that keeping the Sabbath was not one of those four rules.

Thus if the Gentile Christians of the Acts period did not have to keep the Sabbath, and if we are told in Ephesians and Colossians that the Law with its commandments and ordinances had been done away with (Ephesians 2:14-15; Colossians 2:13-14), including the Sabbaths (Colossians 2:16), why should I be concerned about keeping the Sabbath today? In fact,

I cannot keep the Sabbath, for to ‘keep’ the Sabbath means doing what the Law of Moses says has to be done from sunset Friday to sunset Saturday, and not doing what the Law of Moses says must not be done on that seventh day - that included not lighting fires. However, what I do, is to follow the Sabbath principle.

In 2 Timothy 3:16-17 we are told that “All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.” Thus on one day a week I should rest and worship God, but this is not “keeping the Sabbath” and I cannot pretend, or delude myself, that it is.

We live in a society which works far less hours than its parents and grand-parents but is far more stressed. I wonder why? Could it be that they do not take a day of rest each week? Possibly, but it is more likely that they do not worship God each week.

See booklet review on Pg. 11.

# The Bible: Section by Section

cont from Pg. 1

LORD thy God hath chosen thee [i.e. Israel] to be a special people unto himself, above all people that are upon the face of the earth.” (Deuteronomy 7:6)

From Genesis 12 until the end of the Old Testament, and well into the New Testament, we read about the twists and turns of Israel’s path, including the struggles they had in their walk with God. Significantly, we do not read about any other nation in those pages, unless they come in contact with Israel. This is because God called Abram out from among the nations, to father a nation through which He would deal with mankind. He told Abram, “I will make of thee a great nation ... in thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed” (Genesis 12:2,3). God then proceeded to deal with the human race through Israel for the next 2000 years or so, until the end of the book of Acts in New Testament times.

The natural tendency for many Christians is to read the Old Testament and apply many of the blessings and instructions given to Israel to themselves instead. Another oversight is to read the

stories of Moses, Joshua, King David, etc and forget that the events in their lives all played a part in God’s plans dealing specifically with Israel.

When we read any verse or event from an OT history book, we should bear in mind that it probably had a very Israel-specific meaning. In other words, it may well have had a specific meaning to the Israelite who was in a special relationship with God - a relationship which is not in force today because God is not dealing with Israel differently to the Gentiles at this time. We would do well to find out what it meant to the people of OT times first, before trying to apply it to the Christian of today. It may well be that some of those instructions or blessings cannot be applied at present.

For instance, we read above that God had chosen Israel to be a special people above all peoples on earth (Deuteronomy 7:6). This statement was true during the time covered by the OT history books, but is not the case at present, since they forfeited this position after Acts 28, and are now being dealt with as every other nation - “where there is

neither Greek nor Jew” (Colossians 3:11). On the “Major Sections” chart, Deuteronomy is an OT History book, and Colossians is one of the letters written after Acts 28, after Israel was set aside. There are many other examples, but perhaps this will suffice for now.

In the next issue, we will look at the Poetry books of the Old Testament.

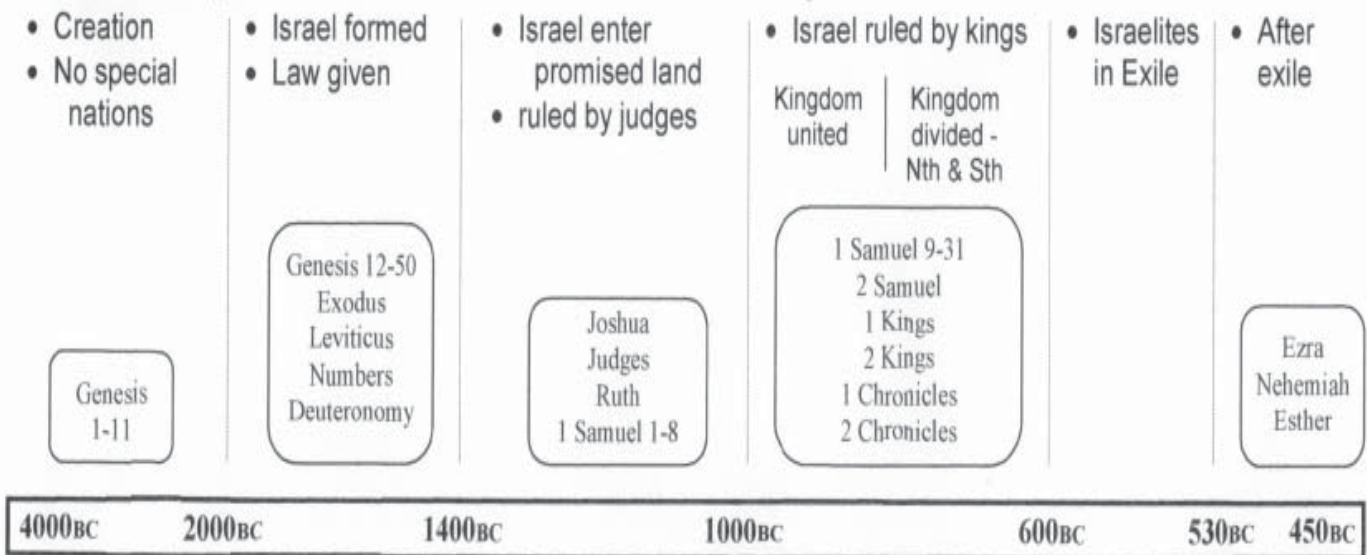
## At a glance ...

This is a regular feature of the series summing up in brief what some of the books are about.

Genesis 1-11: Creation, the fall of man, the great flood, the scattering of the nations across the earth.

The rest of the OT history books cover Israel’s history: Abram’s family, which became Israel, migrated to Egypt, where they grew in numbers and became captives. Once freed, God established a covenant with them and they were brought into the promised land of Canaan, where they settled. At first, Israel were governed by judges, then later by kings. The first few ruled over a united nation, but the nation soon divided into a northern kingdom (Israel) and a southern

## History:



# The Bible: Section by Section

kingdom (Judah). Constant problems with disobedience and idolatry led to each kingdom's eventual exile to other lands. After 70 years of captivity in Babylon, those from Judah, by this time known as Jews, began to return to their own land. Book by book we may break this down into:

Genesis 12-50: The formation of Israel, commencing with Abram being called out from among the other nations, and then focussing on his descendants Isaac, Jacob and Joseph.

Exodus: Redemption of Israel from Egypt, laws concerning God's covenant with Israel (including the "10 commandments"), instructions about the tabernacle.

Leviticus: Laws for Israel, covering offerings, the priesthood, annual feasts, and more.

Numbers: Laws given at Sinai near the beginning of the wilderness journey, the journey itself, and laws given at Moab near the end of the wilderness journey.

Deuteronomy: Mostly laws given to Israel before entering the promised land.

Joshua: Israel's conquest of Canaan under their leader Joshua, division of the land among the tribes.

Judges: Historical narrative concerning Israel in their land, being ruled over by judges (deliverers / overseers).

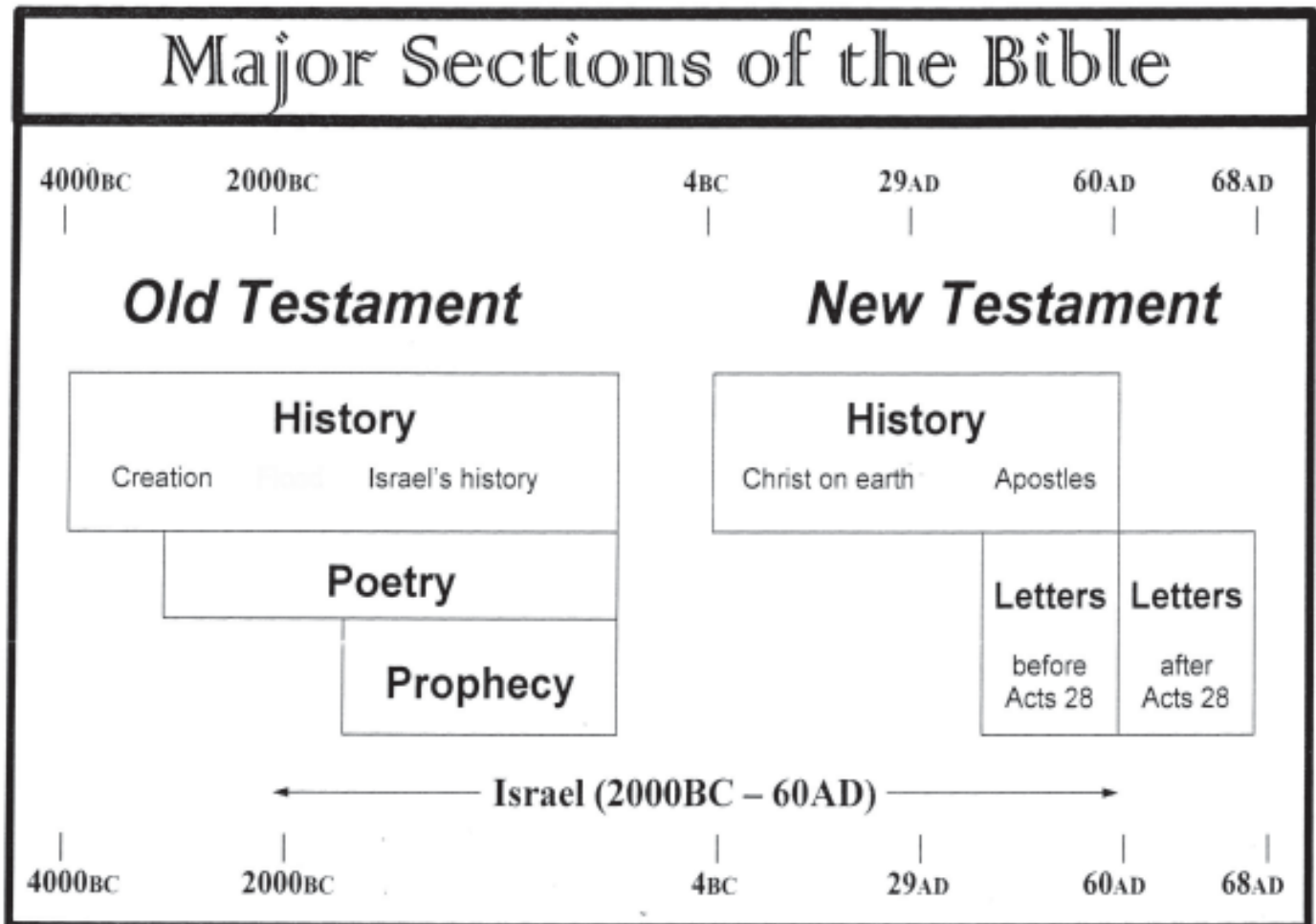
Ruth: The story of Ruth, an ancestor of King David, which takes place during the time of the judges.

1 & 2 Samuel, 1 & 2 Kings, 1 & 2 Chronicles: Israel ruled over firstly by kings Saul, David and Solomon, and then as the divided kingdoms of Israel and Judah. Their separate downfalls and exiles are also recorded.

Ezra: The temple in Jerusalem is rebuilt after the Jewish return from exile.

Nehemiah: The wall of Jerusalem is rebuilt after the Jewish return from exile.

Esther: How God preserved the Jews via the actions of Queen Esther, who was married to a Persian king.



OT History books reflect the fact that God was dealing with Israel after Genesis 11

# Prophecy in a Parable

## Matt 22

### Part 2

In the previous article, we looked at the parable of the marriage of the King's son in Mat. 22, and saw how the first invitation corresponded with the ministry of John the Baptist, the Lord and various groups of disciples before the crucifixion. The second invitation, with its added message, "everything is now ready", is the ministry of the apostles and others, recorded in the Book of Acts. The third invitation looks forward to a future time of evangelization by Jewish believers to furnish the wedding with guests.

I also said previously that the Book of Acts is the crossroads of the New Testament. Take the wrong turn in Acts, and you will be wrong in your interpretation of the rest of the New Testament. I also stated that the **theme** of Acts was the second offer of the Kingdom to Israel – the same Kingdom that John the Baptist and the Lord had spoken about in the earlier ministry – and that the **purpose** of Acts was to show why Israel passed off the scene.

In the parable, the Lord clearly states that the first two invitations to come to the marriage feast were refused by "them that were bidden" - the people of Israel, in other words. The corresponding realities to those two refusals are not difficult to find. The first, of course, is when that generation of Israel crucified their Messiah, saying in effect, in the words of another parable, "We will not have this man to reign over us" (Luke 19:14). The second refusal is actually in two parts. At the time of the Lord's earthly ministry, many Jews lived outside the land of Palestine. They were known as the Diaspora or the Dispersion. These

two parts of the nation were given a chance to accept Jesus of Nazareth as their Messiah during the years covered by Acts.

The first part of Acts (chs. 1-12) records the offer to the Jews of the homeland, and their refusal of this second offer came to a head with the murder of Stephen (Acts 7). It is at that point in the record, that we first read of Saul, who later is called Paul. Peter is the central figure in the first part of Acts, but as the focus changes from Jerusalem to Antioch and the Dispersion, he disappears from centre stage and Paul comes to the fore.

The sad story of the first part of Acts is repeated in the second part (ch. 13 onwards), for nearly everywhere that Paul and his co-workers went, the Jews turned on them and persecuted them. It is important to notice that Paul and his co-workers always went to the Jews first, right up to the very last chapter of the book.

The rejection by the Dispersion of the second offer comes to its climax when Paul arrived in Rome, called the Jewish elders to confer with him and preached Jesus out of the Law and the Prophets in a day-long session. The majority would not listen, and so, under the influence of the Holy Spirit, Paul quoted Isa. 6:9,10 to them, and brought the curtain down on Israel. That is the point at which God set Israel aside, not after the crucifixion. And it was after that rejection by God of the chosen nation that the Lord revealed through Paul a Secret that God had kept hidden in Himself from before the foundation of the world.

Here is the crucial point that seems to have been missed by Christendom at large. Paul claims, in both Ephesians and Colossians, that the Secret had never been revealed in any way

before he revealed it at that point in time following the day-long conference in Rome. To state the obvious, this means that there is no reference to the Church which is His Body in Old Testament type, prophecy or statement, neither in the Gospel records or the Acts of the Apostles, NOR IN THE EPISTLES WRITTEN DURING THE TIME OF THE BOOK OF ACTS. The believers' hope in the Acts epistles is the hope of the Kingdom, not the later hope connected with the Church which is His Body.

But back to the Acts period. You may say that quite a few Jews did believe. Was that not good enough? No, unfortunately it wasn't. We must remember that the NATION of Israel held a special relationship to God. He had chosen them to be His people, His nation, and the Lord offered Himself to that nation as their King, not just to individuals. A kingdom is an entity, and while made up of individuals, it stands or falls as an entity. A king cannot reign if only a few of the population support him. So the response of Israel to both invitations had to be a national one. That is why Peter was back in front of the Jewish ruling body less than 3 months after the crucifixion, offering them restitution, forgiveness and salvation if they would repent of their rejection of their Messiah. The whole nation, from the leaders downwards, had to accept Jesus of Nazareth as their Messiah and Saviour.

The New Covenant, spoken of by Jeremiah in ch. 31, must also be looked at in the same way. God will, at that future time, write His Law not on tablets of stone as with the Old Covenant, but on the fleshy tablets of their hearts. Whose

# Prophecy in a Parable *Matt 22 Part 2*

hearts? Not the hearts of individuals who make up a church, but the hearts of the people of Israel, God's chosen people, His kingdom people. Then they will accept their Messiah when He comes to them the second time.

It is obvious that we could range far and wide over many subjects, but my intention in these articles is to focus on the special position of the Book of Acts, and with that in mind, please turn with me to Luke 19. As David Tavender rightly stresses in his 'Overview Of The Bible' series, the context is very important. We must keep the context in mind with the parable that starts at v. 12. If we don't read v. 11, we will miss the reason why this parable was told. It reads: "And as they heard these things, he added and spake a parable, because he was nigh to Jerusalem, AND BECAUSE THEY THOUGHT THAT THE KINGDOM OF GOD SHOULD IMMEDIATELY APPEAR". Here we are told the reason for the parable of the talents, as it is sometimes called.

I am not here concerned with the money that was given to the servants and how they handled it, although of course that is important in the parable. Our concern is with the fact that the nobleman went away into a far country to receive a kingdom, after which he would return. (Notice how there is a break in continuity, or a gap, either stated or implied in many of these parables.) Now v. 14. "But his citizens hated him, (Compare: He came unto His own, and His own received Him not) and sent a message after him, saying, We will not have this man to reign over us". In fulfillment of this, the Jewish leaders stood in front of Pilate, and said, "We have no king but Caesar." But they got a second

chance as a result of the Lord's prayer for their forgiveness, and true to the parable, in the Acts period they sent a message after their King who had gone away, saying in effect that they still would not have this man Jesus to rule over them.

Please read Stephen's address to the Sanhedrin (Acts 7). It is all about Israel's kingdom and Israel's Messiah. It has nothing to do with the Church of this Dispensation. And the same sad tale of opposition and rejection by Israel that we find in the early section of Acts continues right through to the last chapter. So, once more the period of the second offer is inferred in this parable. The nobleman is the Lord, of course, and it is while He is absent that they refuse His rule. The outcome of their refusal is in v. 27.

I want to go to another parable now to emphasize a pertinent point. This one is in Matt. 21, starting at v. 33. It is about the owner of a vineyard, who leased it out to husbandmen while he went away. They, however, would not pay what they owed the owner, beat up his servants and finally killed his son whom he sent to them. Please note the context of the parable again. The Lord is talking to Pharisees, religious leaders of Israel. In v. 40, the Lord actually breaks His story and asks His listeners a question. "When the Lord therefore of the vineyard cometh, what will he do to those husbandmen? They say unto him, He will miserably destroy those wicked men, and will let out his vineyard unto other husbandmen, which shall render him the fruits in their seasons."

We read over and over in the Gospels that the Pharisees were trying to trap the Lord, so they could discredit Him, eventually plotting to kill Him. But He turned

the tables on them. They pronounced their own sentence without realizing what they were doing. If we link this with a verse in the next chapter, a verse I have quoted more than once in these articles, it completes the detail for us.

Matt. 22:7, "But when the king heard thereof (that is, of the brutal treatment meted out to his servants) he was wroth: and he sent forth his armies and destroyed those murderers, and burned up their city." The Pharisees' judgement of the husbandmen who acted so wickedly, was that they should be executed, and the Lord foretold that not only would many of that generation meet their deaths, but that their city and their Temple would be destroyed.

I think that many believers have not faced the question of why Jerusalem was destroyed forty years later in AD 70 and not immediately after the crucifixion. The answer we give to that question determines which turning we take at the crossroad of Acts. More on that next time, D.V.

But you may be thinking that to base our interpretation on details in parables could be building on shaky ground, so let me take you to several passages of Scripture that say the same things in a direct way. Come with me to the letter to the Hebrews.

Firstly, note the address on this letter – To The Hebrews. I hope you won't re-translate that in your mind to something like: To Spiritual Israel, meaning the Church. Notice also that this epistle was written during the Acts period. Let's look at the opening verses of chapter two. I will intersperse my comments in the verses, enclosing them in brackets.

(1) "Therefore, we (*i.e. the current generation of Hebrews at*

# Prophecy in a Parable *Matt 22 Part 2*

*the time the epistle was written*) ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip. (2) For if the word spoken by angels was steadfast (*this refers to the giving of the Mosaic Law*), and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward (*the word 'reward' originally included punishment as well as what we understand as reward*); (3) How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation; which at first began to be spoken by the Lord (*the first invitation of the Parable, or in other words, the ministry of John the Baptist and the Lord Jesus in the Gospels*), and was confirmed unto us (*that generation of Israel*) by them that heard him (*i.e. the apostles and others during Acts, the second invitation of the parable*); (4) God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will?"

We could not get a better description of the witness during Acts than that, could we? Here we have a clear statement as to the reason for the "Pentecostal miracles". They were confirmatory signs to unbelieving Israel of the authenticity of the message preached during Acts, and of the authority of the apostles and others, such as Phillip and Stephen.

I want to really spell it out, because I know that I, for one, completely missed the significance of these four verses for a long time. Paul is saying here that if any disobedience under the Law of Moses received swift punishment, how could the Hebrews think that they could escape swift punishment if they neglected this offer of the Kingdom through firstly the Messiah Himself, and then through those He sent with a

second offer, an offer that was confirmed by signs, wonders, many miracles and gifts from the Holy Spirit? The answer is obvious. There would be no escape.

Now we must look at Heb. 6. Please read vv. 4-6. Who are those referred to in 4 and 5? Surely they are Jewish believers who had responded in repentance and faith to the ministry recorded in the early chapters of Acts. They had tasted of the heavenly gift – the power from on high – and were partakers of the gifts poured out by the Holy Spirit. In v. 5 the good word of God is linked with the powers of the world to come, so don't make it too general. Again, the miraculous signs and wonders recorded in Acts are the powers of the world (or age) to come. That, I believe, refers to the time of God's future Kingdom on earth, when the wonderful things of Acts will be commonplace.

V. 6 is important, and I know that I will be misunderstood by some, but I must tell it as I believe it is. If any of those who had responded to the Acts ministry turned back, there would be no further chances for them, because they would, in effect, be crucifying the Son of God a second time. I have known Christians who think this means that if any believers today turn away from Christ, then there is no way back for them. Rest assured, these verses are not referring to believers today at all. They were addressed to, and apply strictly to, that generation of Israel who had crucified their Messiah. Here is where I could be misunderstood: the Lord certainly died for me, but it was that generation of Israel, whom the Lord said did not know the hour of their visitation, who crucified Him. So they, and only they, could put Him on the Cross again, by turning their backs on all the wonderful things that God had

sent to them as a result of Christ's sacrifice on the Cross.

Maybe someone is wondering why the Lord was not explicit about what would happen if Israel rejected this second offer of the Kingdom? For instance, take the disciples' pointed, and I believe very relevant, question in Acts 1:6, "Wilt Thou restore the kingdom to Israel at this time?" Did the Lord know what was going to happen? Of course He did. But He could not reveal it at that time for at least two reasons.

Firstly, and most importantly, the people of Israel had to be given a genuine chance to accept the second invitation. If the Lord had given any hint that the second offer would be refused, it could have been said later that it was not really a genuine chance for them, and therefore they could not be held responsible.

The second reason, I think, had to do with the apostles themselves. All of them were going to be asked to suffer persecution, and some would give their lives. How would they have felt, do you think, if the Lord had said something like this in answer to their question, "Well, no, the Kingdom will not be restored now, because Israel will reject it for the second time. But we have to go through the motions. James, you are going to be executed. Peter, you will end up being crucified. The rest of you will be hounded from pillar to post, but cheer up, I will be with you and it will work out alright in the long run." I can well imagine that some of them might have felt like going home at that point if that had been the Lord's response. No, He could not tell them what was going to happen. So He simply told them that the timing of it was not their concern. Their task was to go and

# Will The Real Pentecostal Miracle Please Stand Up?

By Athol Walter

As I stated in the first study of the Prophecy in a Parable series, not only are there many different interpretations of the Book of Acts, but these differences have far-reaching effects. One of the most obvious and important of these differences is in what could be termed the charismatic experience. The charismatic phenomenon has grown from being something of a side issue among Christian denominations when I was a boy sixty years ago, to being a major force in Christian circles these days. This phenomenon comes as no surprise to Dispensational students of prophecy.

Many denominations have succumbed to the pressures of 'Charismatics' in their midst, even though they instinctively feel that the charismatic approach is unscriptural. The bottom line is, however, that if there is no recognition of the dispensational boundary at Acts 28, then there is no answer to the claims of the charismatics. If the Church did begin at Acts 2, or even at Acts 9 or 13, then the charismatics are right – we should all have a gift of some sort, like healing or speaking in tongues, as the believers did in the Acts period. The claims of charismatics about miraculous healings is the area I want to examine, for not only is this one of the most controversial areas, but I think it can be shown clearly from the Word that their approach is unscriptural. If that is true of the gift of healing, then it is also true of the parallel gifts which were the common experience of believers in the Acts period.

Some years ago now, a charismatic healer came to my town and held a number of healing meetings. It caused a great stir, with even much favourable coverage in the local newspaper. I went to one of the meetings with a friend to see for myself whether or not the Holy Spirit was working, as He had in the Acts period. The speaker claimed, as he got to the healing part of the meeting, that we were seeing the Acts miracles in operation that very night. Then he said that not everyone would be healed, because not everyone would have enough faith. I immediately said to my friend that, in that case, it was not the same as what was happening in Acts, because we are distinctly told there that the apostles healed EVERYONE who came to them. (Acts 5:16). The claim, by those who say they have the gift of healing today, that the one seeking healing has to have enough faith, is not only a cop-out, but also it is not the way things were in the Book of Acts. So let's examine a real Pentecostal miracle and see what actually happened.

In Acts 3:1-11, we have the account of Peter's first miracle of healing after being endued with power from on high – the healing of the man born lame, at the Temple Gate Beautiful. Charismatics today would have us believe that the recipient must have sufficient faith. Is that what happened in this case? Please read the verses.

Peter and John came to the Temple for the 3 pm prayers. Sitting at one of the entrances to the Temple was the man born lame. Don't miss the significance here. Everyone would have seen this lame man sitting in this spot for years, begging for alms. The rulers of Israel would not have been able to deny that this man really was a cripple. They all knew

he had been a cripple from birth. I wonder how many times the Sanhedrin members had passed this poor wretch and not put anything into his begging bowl? In any case, the Lord could not have picked a more public and well-attested case of physical handicap to demonstrate His challenge to Israel.

The inspired record tells us that as Peter and John approached him, the lame man asked for a donation. He had no idea who these two men were, nor what they could do for him. Peter and John both looked intently at the lame man, and Peter said, "Look at us". Please notice v. 5 carefully. "And he (the lame man) gave heed unto them, expecting to receive something of them." We are told exactly what his faith was. Actually, hope would be a better word than faith here – he hoped that they might give him a few coins. Now note carefully what Peter said to him. Let me paraphrase it.

"I haven't got any silver or gold, as you are asking for, **but I will give you what I have got.** In the name of Jesus of Nazareth, rise up and walk."

No, Peter, you've got it wrong. What you should say to this fellow is that if he has enough faith you will be able to heal him. That is what the modern charismatics think you should have said. So, who is right, Peter or the so-called healers of our day? Well, look and see what happened.

v. 7. "And he (Peter) took him (the lame man) by the right hand, and lifted him up; and immediately his feet and ankle bones received strength." And the man, who had never walked in his life, straight away began to walk and leap around and praise God. There were no tentative steps, or limping around getting used to this new thing. Not at all. Straight away it

# Will The Real Pentecostal Miracle Please

## Stand Up?

was as if he had never been a cripple. AND THE MAN WHO HAD BEEN LAME HAD NO IDEA THAT PETER COULD GIVE HIM SUCH A GIFT.

Let me spell it out, as so many seem to have missed it completely. The miracle did not depend in any way on the lame man having faith, for he had no idea who Peter was, or that he had any miraculous gift. The whole thing depended on what Peter had—the gift of healing. Peter, and other apostles, could and did exercise their gift regardless of the amount of faith the recipient had. “What I have, that I give to you. Rise up and walk” were Peter’s words. I have yet to see any of the modern-day faith healers speak or act like that. This is a real Pentecostal miracle.

I would like to give you two other examples. Acts 9:36-43 gives us the account of Peter bringing Dorcas back to life. How much faith did Dorcas have? Think about it, the poor woman was dead! But again, Peter exercised the power given to him by the Holy Spirit and brought her back to life and health.

In Acts 20:6-11, Paul is the central figure. He preached for many

hours, and a young man named Eutychus, sitting in a window of the upper floor room, went to sleep and fell to his death. Paul immediately went down, restored Eutychus to life, and then went back upstairs, and continued preaching till dawn, as if nothing untoward had happened. They might even have admonished Eutychus about sitting in windows! Again, as he was dead, how much faith could Eutychus have had?

So here again we have a real Pentecostal miracle. We could multiply examples, but I think the point has been made. Perhaps the only other thing to be said is that after the end of Acts, Paul and his fellow-workers were unable to heal in this way, and had to do what we must do, which is to rely on prayer and medical help.

Which brings me to my last point. Do dispensationalists believe that God can heal today? Yes, indeed we do, but in answer to prayer, not by the exercise of the special gift of healing as it operated during the Acts period. In our own fellowship groups, we have wonderful answers to prayer in many ways, but we recognize that sometimes, for His own reasons, the Lord’s answer to a prayer is no. So many believers are like little children in

this respect. They think that if they do not get a yes in answer to their request, God hasn’t answered them. Not so, for a no is just as much an answer as yes.

When the Book of Acts is seen and understood in its true light as the second offer of the Kingdom of Heaven to Israel, and the reason for the sign-gifts of that period is understood, then this issue of whether the gifts and signs of the Acts church are for today will be seen clearly, and we will not be led away by the specious claims of the modern charismatics. Perhaps the final verses from Mark’s Gospel make a fitting, closing quote:

“And He (the Lord) said unto them (the apostles), Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature. ... and these signs shall follow them that believe ... So then after the Lord had spoken unto them, He was received up into heaven, and sat on the right hand of God. And they (the apostles) went forth, and preached everywhere, THE LORD WORKING WITH THEM, AND CONFIRMING THE WORD WITH SIGNS FOLLOWING. AMEN.”  
Mark 16:15 – 20.

## Prophecy in a Parable *Matt 22 Part 2* .....cont from Pg. 7

make the offer to Israel, and they would be given power from on high to enable them to do it.

They waited in Jerusalem for that power to come. While waiting, they appointed Matthias as a replacement for Judas Iscariot, because there had to be twelve apostles to sit on the twelve thrones of Israel when the Kingdom came. Some expositors teach that the apostles made a mistake here. They should, they say, have waited for Paul. Not so. They did not make a mistake, as

was shown when the Holy Spirit’s power fell on Matthias as on the rest of them. That took place on the day of the Feast of Pentecost, and thus strengthened, they went out and faithfully carried out the task given them by their Lord.

Much more could be said, and will be said as the Lord enables, but I pray that these things will help you to see something of the purposes of God through the Gospels and Acts, and with that correct understanding, you will then go on to see the wonderful riches in

God’s Word as the principle of Right Division is applied.





# Letters to the Editor

## More on the 4<sup>th</sup>. Commandment.

From Vladimir Loria, Moscow, Russia.

Dear Athol, Greetings in our Lord and Head Christ Jesus. Thank you so much for your so good and useful issue Spiritual Blessings. It is so interesting your discussion with Duncan McGregor (UK) in Vol. 18 #5.

I'd like to note some small your passage 'I am not under the Law, and as gentile, I have never been under the Law' ... So, it seems, you, Athol, and me too couldn't be and cannot be Gentile ... or Jewish (if only as a nationality similar Chinese or Russian...) NOW. Gentiles can be in relation to Jewish, but if Jewish as God's people is not present... Maybe I am no right...

In His Grace with all of you,  
Vladimir Loria (Moscow, Russia)  
P.S. I am sorry for my not perfect English.

**Editor's comments:** *I was delighted to receive the above email, but as I was not quite sure what Vladimir was saying, I asked him the following questions.*

1. Are you saying that because God has set Israel aside, we can no longer be Gentiles?
2. Or do you mean that as members of the Church which is His Body in which there is neither Jew nor Gentile, we are no longer Gentiles?

Vladimir replied:

1. Yes. I think that someone can be a Gentile only in relation to

Israel. If Israel was set aside all people (nations) not Gentiles. There is no Israel either. Maybe there are simply people, not Gentiles and not Israel.

2. No, we cannot be Gentiles any LONGER because we not Gentiles earlier.

*I also asked Vladimir if his conclusion was that, given the above, I cannot claim to be a Gentile and not under the Law of Moses. His reply was "Yes. That is what I tried to explain above".*

*I asked Vladimir to give some details of himself and was there a group of Acts 28 believers in Moscow, as we would be very interested in hearing about these things. He replied: "It is very pleasant that your readers are interested about members of the Church which is His Body in Russia. Certainly, I will try to prepare some material about us for Spiritual Blessings as soon as possible. Now I'll write just a little about myself. I have learned about the Mystery and accepted it in 1995. Before this I was in the Fellowship of the Plymouth Brothers. I am single, 45 years old, and am a University professor. I will send you my photo. We have a dispensational website in Russian (www.mgoll.narod.ru) on which many articles are placed. Some of them are Russian translations from your magazine. We have a small fellowship in Moscow, which gives to all Australia members our love."*

**Editor's reply:** *Vladimir, thank you very much for writing. You raise a number of interesting issues. It is certainly true that since the end of the Acts period, when God set Israel aside, He has not been dealing with the world on the basis of Israel first, and then the other nations. Now we are all simply descendants of Adam with no*

*distinctions at all. Salvation, purchased by Christ's substitutionary sacrifice, is offered to all, and in this the Jew has no special place or the Gentile an inferior one. You are correct when you say that our nationality, or ethnic background, plays no part.*

*It seems to me, however, that those things do not change the point under discussion, which is whether the 4<sup>th</sup> commandment, and the punishment for breaking it, applies to believers today. There are two ways of looking at the question. If the Law did ever apply to Gentiles, then the Scripture teaches us that Christ fulfilled the Law. He was the end of the Law, and the Law now has no hold on us, especially seeing that we died with Christ. The Law has no application to a corpse.*

*Secondly, if the Mosaic Law was never given to Gentiles, as I believe to be the case, then it cannot be binding on me in any way. It seems to me that Paul's words in Eph. 2:11-13 have some application here: "Wherefore, remember that, ye being in times past Gentiles in the flesh ... without Christ ... aliens ... strangers ... having no hope ... without God in the world .. now in Christ Jesus ye who were sometimes far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ ..." The question is, probably, how much we should apply that passage about being Gentiles in times past to ourselves in 2005.*

*All this, of course, does not mean that we are lawless. "There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death." Rom. 8:1, 2. We have been transferred to a higher law.*

# Saturday, Sunday and

## the Sabbath.

Readers who would like to go further into the question of Sabbath keeping, will find help in Michael Penny's booklet "Saturday, Sunday and the Sabbath."

As the correspondence on this subject shows, there are different ideas about it, to say the least. The laws in various countries concerning what is permitted on a Sunday and what is not are something of a chaos. Efforts by some governments to change the status of Sunday have brought an outcry from various sections of Christendom. "It's the day of rest!" yell some. "There is to be no buying or selling!" shout others. According to a third section, the majority have it wrong for the Sabbath should be the seventh day, Saturday. "Not so!" states the defence. It was changed from the seventh day of the week to the first.

Mike's booklet considers every Scriptural reference to the Sabbath, but not in a haphazard fashion. Recognising that revelation is progressive, Mike follows the teaching on the Sabbath as it unfolds on the pages of the Bible, and the conclusion he reaches will be of interest and help to all who wish to serve Christ according to the Scriptures.

Australian and New Zealand readers can order this booklet from our Book Agent. Details are on the back page. The UK address is The Open Bible Trust, Bethany, Tresta, Shetland, ZE2 9LT, G. B. The U. S. address is Bible Search Publications Inc., W 8269 County Road Y, Oakfield, WI 53065-9801, USA. Or order from the website: [www.obt.org.uk](http://www.obt.org.uk)



## Tribute

Colossians 3:15 Philippians 4:4



We are sad to announce the death of a fellow Berean in South Africa. Amor Kloppers died on the 05/05/2005 at the age of 87. He was an inspiration and his faith in Jesus Christ, our Lord and Saviour, was an example to many.

### AMOR KLOPPERS

1917-2005

He always said that the day he was introduced to the works of C.H. Welch, explaining the dispensational truth, his life changed for ever. His mother found a book by Welch in a little bookshop that was trading from a donkey car – she read it and gave it to his father, who was at that time a minister in the Dutch Reformed church. Once he grasped the wonder of the dispensational truth, he started preaching it from the pulpit... and was left without an income when he was asked to leave the church. The nine children were raised without worldly wealth, but were left with a greater treasure than money can buy! Amor studied the Bible diligently in true Berean style. His letters to and from Welch, discussing important issues, will be cherished. He spread the Word,

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because he couldn't help himself. God truly worked through him to reach so many people. His lectures on the Bible will stay with us and inspire us to learn more. We rejoice in his life and mourn the passing of this great man, but are never without hope. We thank and praise God that Amor could be part of our lives for so long. He was a wonderful husband to Trien and an incredible father to Johan, Anton and Linda. He was our friend, a leader, a true man of God – and we will miss him dearly. *Thanks to Amor's daughter, Linda Neuhoff, for these words. The thoughts and prayers of the Berean Bible Fellowship of Australia go out to the Kloppers family and South African Bereans at this time.*

## The Early Centuries and the Truth

Stuart Allen

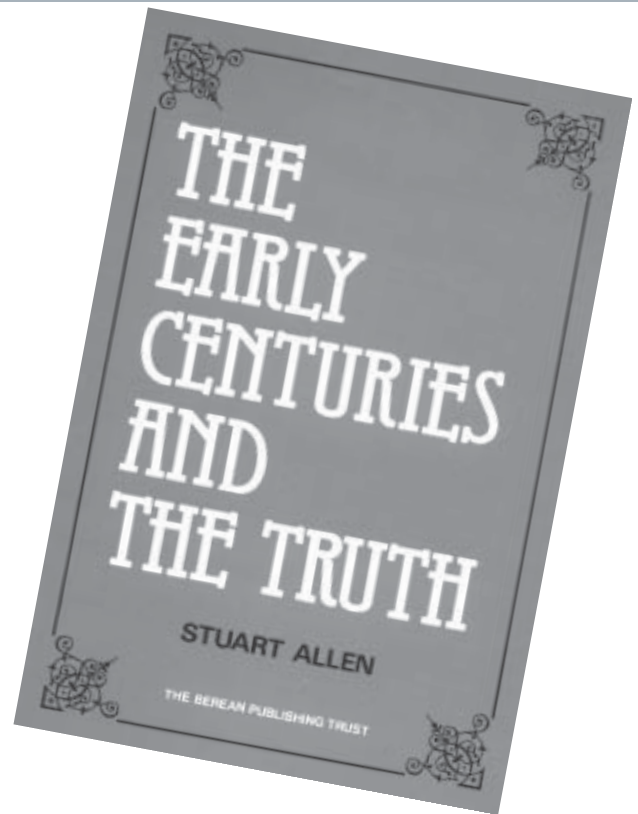
An interesting examination of the teaching of the "Church Fathers" during the first three or four centuries, showing how quickly they had departed from the doctrine of the Apostle Paul.

The author writes: "Sometimes we see it argued, that the nearer one gets to New Testament times, the nearer one is to the primitive truth of the Scriptures. An examination of this early literature shows, alas, such an idea to be false". (p.4)

The Reformation and the partial discovery of the truth by those nearer our day such as J.N.Darby is also touched upon. Paperback 42 pages.

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