

# Spiritual Blessings



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## Biblical Basics

# The Bible: Section by Section

## Part 5 - New Testament History Books

So far in this series, we have looked at the sections making up the Old Testament. I have tried to show that the first 17 books form the historical setting into which the other OT books, both Poetry and Prophecy, are written. It is imperative that, in order to understand the Poetry and Prophecy books, we must have some familiarity with the events discussed in the history books. Now that it's time to consider the New Testament, we will find it is laid out the same way. See the "Major Sections of the Bible" chart.

In the NT, the first five books are history books. All other NT writings fit into that historical setting somehow. In this article, we will concentrate on the Gospels - Matthew, Mark, Luke and John - as well as the Acts of the Apostles. These books form the historical setting into which the other NT writings fit. Perhaps I am repeating myself, but this is such an important fact that it should not be overlooked or downplayed in importance. Whether we are talking about the Old or the New Testament, if you familiarise yourself with the events narrated in the history books of Scripture, you will then be in a better position

to understand the other portions, such as the poetry, prophecy and epistle sections, because they were all written with the historical events of their time in mind.

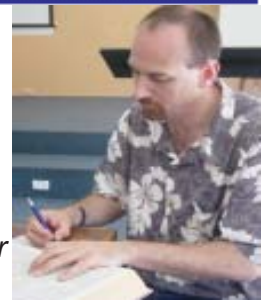
### The Four Gospels

The first four historical books of the NT are the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. Each of these is a narrative focusing on the life, death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. The word "gospel" means "good message", and the saving work of Christ is certainly a good message for mankind in need of a Saviour. Not every event of Christ's earthly life is recorded in each Gospel, but each account does go into some detail about the final events of His time on earth, including: the "last supper", His arrest, trial, crucifixion, and the appearances after His resurrection.

There are four different Gospel accounts in the Bible because each Gospel emphasises a particular aspect of Christ in His earthly life and ministry. We will look briefly at each one here.

Matthew was originally writing with Jewish readers in mind. Christ is presented as the King, the promised Messiah of Israel. For example, this Gospel commences with a genealogy going back as far as Abraham, the "father" of the Israelite nation (Matthew 1:1-16). Following the list of names, we can trace Christ's earthly heritage via

by  
David  
Tavender



the kings of Judah (1:7-11), and there is an emphasis on the links with Jewish history (1:17).

Mark was originally writing with Roman readers in mind. Mark is the shortest of the four accounts, and is very "matter of fact". He states names, times, numbers, locations, etc, plainly without too much embellishment. In contrast to Matthew's Gospel, Mark presents Christ as a servant. There is no genealogy, nor should we expect to see one of a servant. In regard to this aspect, there is no need to establish where a servant came from.

Luke was originally writing with Greek and Gentile readers in mind. Hence, some of the Jewish feasts and customs are explained here for the benefit of those not familiar with Jewish culture (Luke 1:9; 2:42). Christ is presented as a man, with

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# Editorial



Athol Walter

The year moves on at a swift pace, and here is our next issue of Spiritual Blessings. What have we got for you this time? David Tavender continues his excellent overview of the Bible. I can't stress how important it is to a proper understanding of the Bible to stand back and see the big picture. I trust that readers are putting the work into these articles that they deserve. Anyone who does so will be amply rewarded.

Anne Ward has provided an article examining the place of God's will in our lives. It is a thought-provoking

and challenging study. In my series on Dispensational Basics, I thought it fitting to do some reviewing of what we have covered, as there is so much evidence to be looked at that it is easy to lose sight of the destination. Again, as with the two previous articles, the time and effort spent in making sure the material is understood and has become your own, will be well repaid.

I must apologise for the poor quality of the printing in the last issue of Spiritual Blessings. Our printer had some trouble with his machines, which meant that some copies were not as good as they should have been. For various reasons, we decided that they were legible enough to be used, and I hope that no one was greatly inconvenienced.

Plans are well in hand for Mike and Sylvia Penny's visit to our shores in September/October this year. See the conference dates on the back page. As well as speaking in the Newcastle and Central Coast

areas of New South Wales, the Pennys will also visit our Queensland group in Brisbane. Then, when their time with us has finished, we send them on to brethren in New Zealand for meetings there. Please pray for safe travelling for all involved, as well as for the Lord's guidance in preparation, delivery and reception of Mike's studies. I include reception because it is just as necessary for the hearts and minds of those who hear the messages to be in a proper state as it is for Mike in the preparation and delivery of those messages. Also pray that many will be able to attend and benefit from the meetings.

Thank you to those who have written or otherwise expressed their appreciation of our magazine. Keep the letters coming. We like nothing better than to get sincere and informed questions about what we present.

Rejoice in the Lord always.  
Athol Walter.

## Quotes Worth The Quoting

(The following quotes are taken from a book called "Forgotten Truths", published by the Philadelphia Bible Testimony of Illinois, USA, about the middle of the last century. They use passages from the writing of eminent Bible scholars to help set forth Dispensational Teaching.)

Harold P. Morgan, one-time President of the Buffalo Bible Institute, in his introduction to the fourth edition, has this to say, among other things (p. 7 & 8):

"The key to the treasure house of Scripture is the correct partition of the Word which means 'distinguishing the things that differ' which leads to Dispensationalism. The importance attached to the knowledge of the existence of such a key is ably stressed by many men

of God skilled in the exposition of the Word.

The Biblical authority for recognising the Dispensation (of the Mystery) is found in such a passage as Philippians 1:9, 10. In the Authorised Version, this passage reads: 'And this I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more, in knowledge and in all judgment; that ye may approve things that are excellent; that ye may be sincere and without offence till the day of Christ.

This word 'judgment' is variously rendered by the authorities: sense, moral tact, moral discernment, and perceptiveness. But the most important and most definitely needed modification in the translation is in verse 10. Dean Alford renders the first part of this verse: 'With a view to your distinguishing things that are different'. Recognising these

alterations, we find our passage reads thus: 'I pray that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and perceptiveness with a view to your distinguishing the things that are different'. *And this is the thing which is so sorely needed in all Bible study; yes! and in all Christian living – sense enough to distinguish between the things that are different.*" (His italics.)

When we let our Lord give us sense enough to distinguish between the things that are different, all doubt and cavilling concerning the Dispensations will disappear."

From p. 9: "These 'Forgotten Truths' (i.e. relating to the different things in Scripture that must be distinguished) are not new and novel ideas or theories destined to bolster spirituality or to inaugurate a new deal in the field of faith, but are mighty eternal truths from the Word of the living God as attested  
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an emphasis on His human side. For example, the genealogy in chapter 3 goes all the way back to Adam. An interesting side point was that Luke was a physician, and he wrote more about the miraculous healings than both Matthew and Mark put together. A particularly sympathetic and compassionate side of Christ is revealed in this Gospel as well (7:13; 19:41; 23:28).

John was writing for all people everywhere. Some of the Jewish feasts and customs are explained here as well for those not familiar with Jewish culture (John 10:22,23; 11:55; 19:40). Christ is presented as the Son of God, emphasising His deity. A short genealogy of sorts commences with "in the beginning the Word was God", and then goes on to tell us that the Word became flesh (John 1:1-3,14).

This does not mean that one of

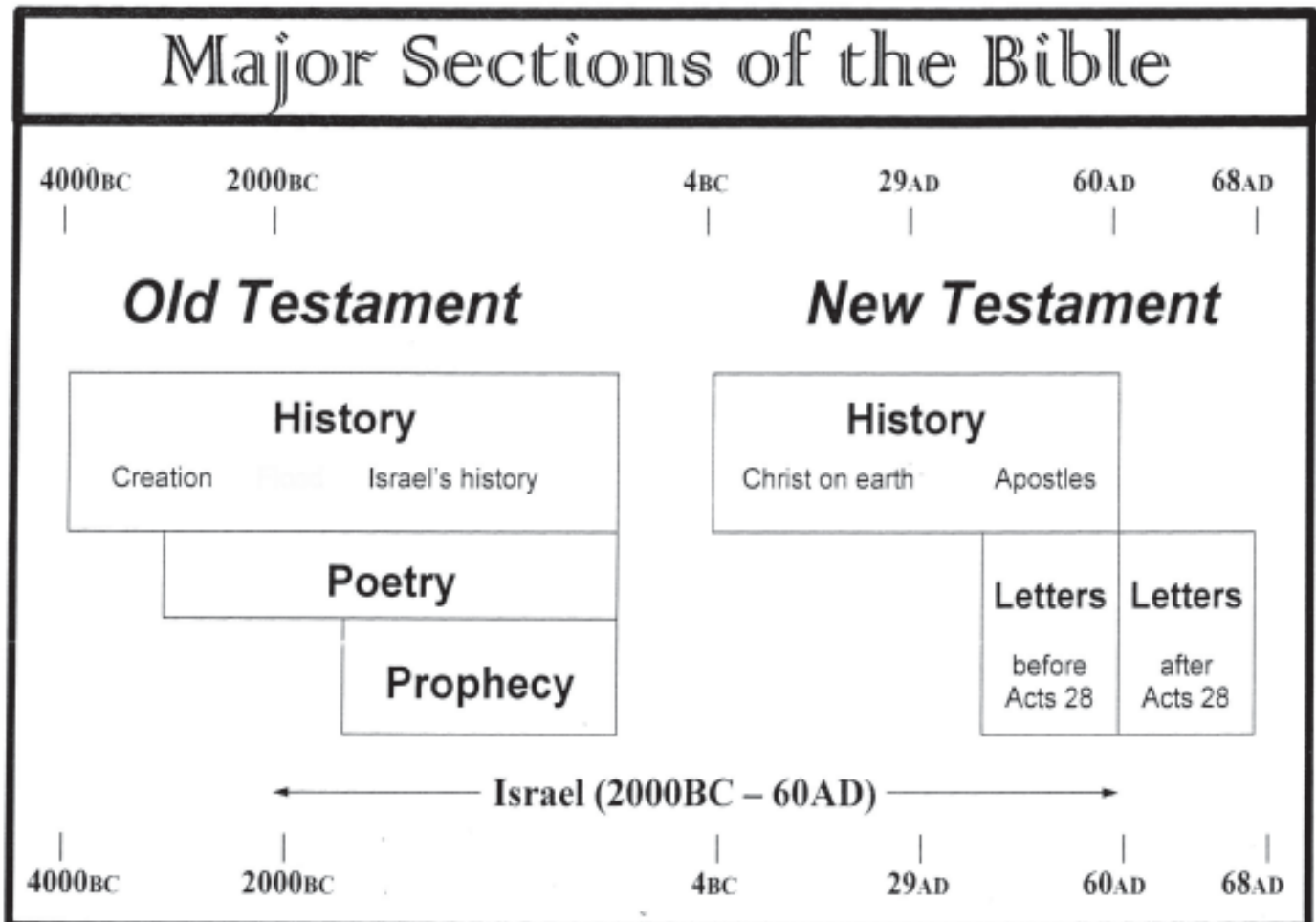
these aspects will be presented in one but not the other Gospels. So, whilst John emphasises Christ's deity, you will also read about this aspect in Mark's Gospel, even though the emphasis there is on Christ's servitude. Simply put, one of these facets is emphasised more so in each account. It is not really the focus of this article to go into any depth about Who Christ was, and why He did the things He did. However, these four presentations of Christ - King of Israel, Servant, Man, God - have a bearing upon almost everything else in the New Testament, and they are well worth us memorising them. Whatever other attributes we might correctly associate with Christ, it is these four aspects which are reinforced throughout Scripture, from Genesis to Revelation.

## Acts of the Apostles

After the Gospel accounts we come

to the Acts of the Apostles, which, despite the name, is really a continuation of the acts of the Lord Jesus, not the apostles. Acts 1:1 commences with the author stating that his earlier treatise, the Gospel of Luke, was concerning "all that Jesus began to do and teach" (Acts 1:1). The Acts, Luke's second writing, speaks of the continuing "doing and teaching" of the Lord. After all, it was Christ and the One sent by Him (John 16:7) who is the source of the many mighty deeds performed in the Acts (Acts 1:8; 2:4,15-18; etc).

The book of Acts is in two main sections - chapters 1 to 9, and chapters 10 to 28. Acts chapters 1 to 9 cover events involving Jews only. The Message preached was that "Jesus is the Christ", and this message was preached to the Jews exclusively. Peter is the main figure, although other apostles, such as James, John and Philip,



The NT historical books provide the setting into which the other NT writings fit.

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play important roles, too. Miraculous signs abound, verifying God's approval of those Jews who believed the message.

In the later section, Acts chapters 10 to 28 cover events in which Jews primarily, but then Gentiles are also involved. The Message preached was that salvation was through Christ. This message was preached to the Jews in each locality first, and then to the Gentiles of those same areas (Acts 13: 44-46; 14:1; 17:1,2,10). Paul is now the main figure of these chapters, with occasional appearances by Peter and James. Miraculous signs continued to abound, verifying God's approval of those who believed the message - this time including both Jew and Gentile.

An important point to understand is that in the early part of Acts, the Jews were the only nation really being dealt with. However, in the latter half of Acts, whilst the Jews were still prior in God's dealings, now Gentiles were accepted also. This was to provoke Israel, who were not readily believing the message about Christ, to jealousy. You can read more about this "jealousy" in Paul's letter to the Romans (chapter 11), a letter written during the latter half of Acts, and reflecting the conditions of the time.

At the end of Acts, in chapter 28, a significant event takes place, in which the Jewish nation is set aside from being God's special people (Acts 28:17-28). All through the Gospels and Acts, Israel had prior place amongst God's dealings with mankind. God was very patient and gave Israel plenty of opportunities to believe that "this Jesus, whom ye have crucified [is] both Lord and Christ" (Acts 2:36). However, all this changed when Paul declared that God's patience

with them had run out, and that they would not be able to believe (Acts 28:25-27). From that point, right up until today, God has been dealing with mankind regardless of nationality, not on the basis of whether one is a Jew or a Gentile. This includes both Jewish and Gentile believers, but their nationality presently has no bearing on how God deals with them.

One further point. A common misconception is that the Old Testament is about Israel, and that the New Testament is about the church today. In reality, the New Testament is a continuation of the Old Testament in many respects. For instance, at the close of the OT the setting is Palestine and the events are centred on the Jewish nation. When the NT opens, we find that the setting is still Palestine, and that the events are still centred on the Jewish nation. When we get to the Acts the setting is, yet again, Palestine (for the first nine chapters, and a further seven later on) and the events are still centred on the Jewish nation. The place of Israel in the Gospels and Acts cannot be ignored. God was still dealing with this nation in a special way then, and this is going to have a bearing on the letters written during those times.

We will discuss more about this final point in the next issue, which will also bring our series to an end.

## At a glance

### Matthew:

Christ is presented as the King, the promised Messiah of Israel. Originally written for Jewish readers.

### Mark:

Christ is presented as a servant. Originally written with Roman readers in mind.

### Luke:

Christ is presented as a man, with an emphasis on His human side.

Originally written with Greek and Gentile readers in mind.

### John:

Christ is presented as the Son of God, emphasising His deity. Written for all people everywhere.

### Acts of the Apostles:

The message of faith in Christ spreading first around Jerusalem, and then spreading further afield. The book is in two main sections. Chapters 1 to 9 cover events involving Jews only. Chapters 10 to 28 covers events which involve Jews primarily, but then Gentiles also, to provoke Jews to respond to God's message of salvation through Christ.

## Meetings

Come along and meet with us! All meetings (except annual conf.) are free. All welcome.

### Brisbane:

Alternate Sundays 10:00am  
Redbank Plains High School.  
(07) 3297 1981

### Sydney:

3rd Sunday of each month.  
Lunch 12:30pm.  
Study 1:30pm.  
Various Venues  
For details phone  
(02) 4996 4455

### Newcastle:

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

## BBFA Annual Conference 2006

23rd - 25th September 2006  
at Camp Toukley.

# Renewed In Knowledge by Anne Ward

One of the questions that I have pondered throughout my Christian life has been that of understanding God's purpose for my life. We read in the New Testament epistles of the outworking of the specific callings of Paul and others. I have met and read about people who have a very clear sense of their calling to undertake ministry or other services. And there are probably many others, like myself, who are committed Christians, who do not have a sense of a specific calling, and yet seek to walk worthy, as we are directed in Ephesians. Last year, my job was made redundant, and I determined at this time to seek out what the Lord would have me do next. Thus the question of God's purpose for me, once again, became significant. I didn't want to "lean on my own understanding", as prior experience had taught me that this can often lead to its own set of problems.

A related issue, and one that is contentious in some Christian circles, is the emphasis placed on Bible study and doctrinal issues compared to the Christian experience and practical walk. For example, some people regard in-depth Bible study as less relevant, and do not seek out study beyond the gospel message. Others place much importance on Bible study and achieving a balance between doctrine and practice.

In pondering these questions, I turned to the Scriptures to gain further insight, and share some of my findings in this article.

## The Will of God

In Ephesians 5:17, Paul exhorts us to understand what the will of the Lord is. He instructs us in Romans 12:1-2 to present our bodies....

" as a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, *which is your*

reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what *is* that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God".

The word conformed is the Greek word *suschematizo*. This comes from the root word "schema" which appears in our modern usage in the word "schematic". A schematic is a diagram or representation of something. In modern psychological usage a schema is a fixed or automatic pattern of thinking. Thus, conform in this verse means to fashion according to the same pattern (i.e. external appearance or condition). In the context of verse 2, Paul is saying that we should not fashion ourselves (implying thoughts, attitudes and behaviour) according to this world, i.e. how things appear on the outside.

The word transformed is the Greek word *metamorphoo* and means to change into another form. It is the same word as transfigure which is used to describe the transfiguration of Christ on the mountain (Matt. 17:2, Mark 9:2). These three verses are the only occurrences of this word in the Scriptures.

The word *metaschematizo* provides some insight into the essential difference between these two words conform and transform. *Metaschematizo* also means to transfigure, but in the sense of a disguise. This is the same word that is used in 2 Cor 11:14, where Satan and his angels are said to transform themselves into apostles of Christ.

Thus the word transformed denotes that a fundamental, inside-out change is to take place by the renewing of our mind. The word renewing is the Greek word *anakainosis*, which means to renovate; *ana* meaning piece by

piece, and *kainos* meaning freshness, or new. This word is used in Colossians 3:10, where the NIV reads:

"...since you have taken off your old self with its practices, and have put on the new self which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator".

In other words, the New Nature is a work in progress, and there is a process that we must engage in as Christians, if we are to put on the new self. Knowledge is the source of renewal, an active ingredient in the gradual renovation of our minds, and influencing, over time, our attitudes and behavior, i.e., our practical walk:

"And this I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment; That ye may approve things that are excellent; that ye may be sincere and without offence till the day of Christ; Being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God". (Philippians 1:9-11)

## The Mind and the New Nature

The word mind in Romans 12:2 is the Greek word *nous*, and means the intellect, the seat of reflective consciousness, comprising the faculties of perceiving and understanding, feeling, judging, determining. Thus, *nous* denotes our capacity to think critically, to reason and discern. In Romans 7:22-25 *nous* is used in reference to the New Nature: <sup>22</sup>For I delight in the law of God after the inward man: <sup>23</sup>But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind (*nous*), and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. <sup>24</sup>O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?

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<sup>25</sup>I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then with the mind (nous) I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin”.

The *nous* is the mind of the Spirit, whereas the carnal mind, or mind of the flesh, represents the old nature.

It is interesting to note that the first occurrence of the word *nous* is in Romans 1:28. It is used frequently in Romans and in subsequent epistles. In the OT, the words most frequently used for mind are the Hebrew words for heart (*leb*) or soul (*nephesh*, translated as *psuche* in the Gr. from which we get our word *psyche*). *Heart* and *soul* are also used throughout the New Testament. Thus it seems that the word *nous* is describing something much more specific to our calling. It is a very important word for us and conveys much about the nature of our calling and our walk. *Nous* emphasizes thinking and discernment. While our emotions (how we are feeling) can tell us a lot about our state of mind, our *nous* gives us the capacity to interpret the messages conveyed in our emotions, and act appropriately. Thus, we should not ignore our emotions, but use our capacity for judgment and reasoning to determine how we act.

## The Likeness of Christ

Whereas we are not to conform (*suschematizo*) to this world, Romans 8:29 tells us that God predestined us to be conformed (*sunapostello*) to the likeness of His Son, that He might be the first born among many brethren. *Sunapostello* means to despatch on an errand in company with; *sun* denoting: by association, companionship, resemblance.

The likeness of Christ is clearly set out for us, particularly in Paul's

writings (see, for example Phillipians 2:5).

Although it seems like an unattainable standard, God appears to be prompting us to aspire to this. The statement by God of the nature of our conformity in this way, suggests that this capability to conform does lie within our new nature. Whereas God required Israel to sacrifice dead animals, He requires us to present ourselves as living sacrifices and it is only through the redemptive, cleansing work of Christ that we are even acceptable in this way. Compare our circumstances to Israel, where, in Jeremiah 31:33, God says that at a future time He will put His law in Israel's minds and in that act they will seek to do His will. God has already planted His Spirit in us and expects us to use what He has given us to renew our minds and become what He sees us as capable of attaining – the likeness of Christ. I Corinthians 2:16 says:

“For who hath known the mind (nous) of the Lord, that he may instruct him? But we have the mind (nous) of Christ”.

Further, consider that in 1 Corinthians 15: 42-53, God tells us how we will be changed, exchanging our natural bodies for resurrection bodies. We are told that the resurrection body will be a spiritual body. The word for body is *soma*, and from this we get our word *somatic*, which the Oxford Dictionary defines as “of, or relating to the body, as distinct from the mind”. For example, the term *psychosomatic* refers to physical illness that has a psychological cause. It would seem, in the context of the passages in Romans, that God expects the change of mind will have already been underway (as in the new nature, since the old nature is the carnal mind and will be discarded with the old body). This conveys

a heavy responsibility – could it be that the stage of renewal/maturity that we attain will have a bearing on the level of responsibility given to us in the heavenly realm?

There is no room for pride here. The transformation of mind and body is made possible only through the work of Christ. The New Nature is a gift, and its development is required as an act of service or worship.

## Practical Outworking

Whereas *nous* refers to the faculty, or capability of the mind, related words *phroneo*, and *phronema* are used extensively when our practical walk is being discussed.

*Phroneo* means to exercise the mind, to be (mentally) disposed (more or less earnestly in a certain direction); to interest oneself in. *Phroneo* could also be considered as “practical intelligence”. *Phronema* is translated as (mental) inclination or purpose.

Rom 12:16 “Be of the same mind one toward another. Mind not high things, but condescend to men of low estate. Be not wise in your own conceits.”

Philippians 2:2: “Fulfil ye my joy, that ye be likeminded, having the same love, *being* of one accord, of one mind.”

Philippians 2:5: “Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus....”

Philippians 3:16 “Nevertheless, whereto we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same thing.”

In all of these verses, the reference to the mind is in an active sense, referring to our attitude and intent.

It seems that God is very concerned with the state of our mind and our attitude. These determine our behaviour, how we

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relate to other people and how we respond to life's circumstances. I believe that God's inspired Word is the source of knowledge that we are to draw on; it is God's provision for us in attaining towards the state that He has judged us as capable of reaching. God is interested in our spiritual growth. A practical walk, informed by understanding of Scripture and spiritual growth will be far more pleasing in God's sight than an abundance of activity, well intentioned, but not grounded in knowledge. Indeed, there may be a danger that such activity becomes driven by the old nature. It is usually only in hindsight that we learn this, and often the hard way.

There is an abundance of instruction in Scripture about how we should live our lives. Whether or not God has a specific task to be accomplished, priority must be given to Bible study. Not only is this necessary for spiritual growth, it also promotes mental resilience and emotional health. God wants us to exercise our mind. In Romans 12:2, the word prove is the Gr. word *dokimazo*, which means to examine and, by implication, approve or discern as genuine. Thus, study of God's word allows us to examine or discern God's will, and the verse implies that this is an ongoing process. Although beyond the scope of this article, mention of the importance of prayer should be

added to the context of this discussion.

## Conclusion

Christ's work on the Cross broke the power of sin in our lives and made possible the implanting of His Spirit, the creation of the New Nature. It is up to us to do the work that has been set out for us, to walk worthy of our calling. I am not aware of any way that this could be accomplished without reliance on Bible study. It is the source of the knowledge required for the renewing of our mind. It will shape our character and behavior. We are privileged to have such wonderful provision and further privileged if we are able to access it freely.

## Quotes Worth The Quoting

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to by many well-known and capable witnesses which enlighten the believer, free him from the traces of tradition and make the Word of God of much effect in his life. They enhance the glory of our Lord and Saviour by giving Him His rightful place as 'Head over all things'; they do not detract by making some religious ceremony the means of grace or blessing, but rather, give Him the preeminence by stressing the fact that the believer is complete in Him – receiving all necessary nourishment from Him, and needs Him only, and nothing else besides Him!"

**From "The Silence of God" by Sir Robert Anderson, on pp. 75, 77, 78:**

"The Jerusalem Church, then was Jewish. Their Bible was the Jewish Scriptures. The Jewish Temple was their house of prayer and common meeting place (Acts 2:46, 3:1, 5:43). Their beliefs and hopes and words and acts all

marked them out as Jews. Hence the amazing numbers of converts.

It is recorded that the number of disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly, and a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith (Acts 6:7). But what bearing has all this upon the question here? The Jews had crucified the Messiah. But now, when vengeance swift and terrible might have been expected to fall upon that guilty people, Divine mercy held back the judgment and called them once again to repentance. The testimony was full and clear, and it was confirmed by a signal display of miraculous power."

From pp. 49 & 50: "The Saviour's prayer upon the Cross (Luke 23:34) has secured for the favoured nation a respite from judgment. And the forgiveness asked for carried with it a right to priority in the proclamation of the great amnesty. When 'the apostle of the circumcision' by express revelation, brought the Gospel to the Gentiles, they were relegated to a position akin to that formerly held by the 'proselytes of the gate',

and even 'the apostle of the Gentiles' addressed himself first, in every place he visited, to the children of his own people. And this is not from prejudice, but by Divine appointment. "It was *necessary*," he declared at Pisidian Antioch, 'that the Word of God should be first spoken to you.' (Acts 13:46; (R. V.) Cf. 17:2, 10; 18:1-4)

Even at Rome, deeply though he longed to visit the Christians there, his first care was to summon the chief of the Jews, and to them 'he testified the Kingdom of God'. And not until the testimony had been rejected by the favoured people did the word go forth, 'The salvation of God is sent unto the Gentiles, and they will hear it'." (Acts 28:17, 23, 28)



## **Review: What We've Done So Far** *By Athol Walter*

In the last few issues of *Spiritual Blessings*, I have put forward a number of basic points relating to the Dispensational interpretation of Scripture known as the Acts 28 position. I thought it might be helpful if, before pressing on, I reviewed the ground that we have covered, so that we have a clear picture of our direction.

I started by saying that the Book of Acts is the part of Scripture where, perhaps, most care is needed, as it is our understanding of the events recorded in Acts that either points us in the right direction, or sends us off on a fork in the road that may look attractive but which takes us to the wrong destination.

There are various interpretations of Acts current among believers. The usual view is that God finished with Israel as a result of their rejection and crucifixion of the Messiah, and that the "Christian Church" was started by Peter and the other apostles in Acts 2.

Then there is a group of "variations on a theme", each of which say that a second offer of the Messiah to Israel was made following Pentecost in Acts 2, but they differ as to where that offer finishes, some saying that the birth of the Body of Christ is the conversion of Paul, others saying it was not until Paul first turned to Gentiles that the Body of Christ was commenced.

The view-point of those publishing this magazine is similar in some respects to the last group above, in that we see Acts as the second offer of the Messiah to Israel, but we differ on where the cut-off point is found. We believe it is in the last chapter of Acts. Obviously, this is why we are called Acts 28 believers.

The Acts 28 position is sometimes referred to by those who oppose it, as "ultra-dispensationalism". Indeed, we take the Lord's command through Paul to rightly divide the Word of Truth (2 Tim. 2:14) further than the other groups so in that sense we are "ultra", but it seems to us to be nothing less than the logical conclusion to which the Scriptures lead.

The Acts 28 position states that the WHOLE of the Book of Acts, with the exception of the last two verses, is about Israel, recording the second offer of Jesus as Israel's Messiah and Saviour, and that it is not until Paul pronounces Isa. 6:9 and 10 to the Jewish leaders in Rome that God sets Israel aside. It is following that event that God introduces a new calling, the Church which is His Body. The early church seems to have missed what Paul had to say when God revealed this new dispensation through him after the end of Acts. I intend to touch on that in a later article.

It is important to note at this point that the Book of Acts is in two main sections. The first twelve chapters deal with the second offer of the Kingdom and its King to the Jews who were living in the homeland. Peter is the central character in this section. This offer was rejected, culminating in the murder of Stephen.

The scene changes after the conversion of Cornelius and Paul takes over from Peter as the central figure. Paul and his various helpers then move out into the Mediterranean world on "missionary journeys", but they are specialized missionary journeys in that the Jews are always visited first with the witness. It is only after repeated and persistent opposition and persecution by the Jews at large, that Paul turns to Gentiles. Please note that these Gentiles

were to be found in the synagogues at first. The only exception to the "Jew first" policy throughout Acts was in one or two places where there were no Jewish communities.

The rejection by the Jews of the Dispensation reaches its climax at Rome, where the leaders of the Jewish community there do not agree about Paul's witness, and they are dismissed by Paul. Thus the record of the second offer of Jesus to Israel as their Messiah and Saviour comes to a rather abrupt close.

If one reads Church history carefully, it becomes obvious that within a few short years of the death of Paul, the church had turned back into Judaism, and tried to "christianize" things that belonged to Israel and the Old Covenant dispensation.

In my earlier articles, I used some of the Lord's parables to show how, even before the Crucifixion, He taught that there would be a second offer of Himself as Israel's Messiah. (If any reader has missed those articles, please write and we will gladly send you back copies.) What the Saviour did not reveal was what God would do if Israel rejected the second time. That had to wait until Israel had been given their second chance and, to use the language of Hebrews 6, crucified their Messiah the second time.

The other subject touched on that should be mentioned, is the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple by the Romans in AD 70. The climax of Acts 28 took place seven or eight years earlier, and the Lord had warned Israel, (Matt. 23:37-39 and Matt. 24:1,2) that their house was to be left desolate, and not one stone of the Temple left standing on another. The destruction of the Temple, especially, was the result of

# Review: What We've Done So Far

Israel's rejection, and was a very visible sign that Israel had already entered her "LO-AMMI" state (see Hosea's prophecy for the meaning of "LO-AMMI). As we are all well aware, there has been no temple in Jerusalem since that time nearly 2000 years ago.

## "Father, Forgive Them".

It is difficult to say what might be the most important point out of those mentioned so far, but the Saviour's prayer as He was being placed on the Cross must surely be up at the top of the list. That prayer underlies everything that transpired from the crucifixion on for the next forty years. We find the prayer only in Luke 23:34. "Father, forgive them for they know not what they do". It seems to be the usual thought that the Lord was referring to sinful humanity in general, and that thought is expressed very well by Charles Wesley in one of his wonderful hymns, the first line of which says, "Arise, my soul, arise, shake off thy guilty fears". In the third verse, where Wesley speaks of the wounds the Saviour bore on the cross, he has these lines, "Forgive him, O forgive, they cry, Nor let that ransomed sinner die." I love Wesley's hymns for they contain much Scriptural truth, but I believe he got this point wrong.

We only have to ask a few simple questions to get the right answer. Who put the Lord on the Cross?

## Exposition

# Clean Every

**Whit** *By Charles Welch.*  
*(Taken from The Berean*  
*Expositor, Vol. 1, p. 35.)*

"He who is bathed needs only to wash his feet" (John 13:10. NKJV)

**T**he thirteenth chapter of John's Gospel marks an important division. The first twelve chapters deal with the

Who instituted the arrest? Who sat in judgement on Him throughout the night? Who took Him to Pilate because they were determined to put Him to death but did not have the authority to do so? Who said, when Pilate wanted to release the Lord, "We have no king but Caesar"? The leaders of the nation of Israel!

Peter was in no doubt about who was responsible. On the Day of Pentecost, when he gives his first address under the power of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2), he tells the assembled crowd whom he has addressed as "Men of Judea" (v. 14) and "Men of Israel" (v. 22), "Therefore let all the House of Israel know assuredly that God has made this Jesus WHOM YOU CRUCIFIED, both Lord and Christ." (v. 36). It comes again in Acts 3, where, after healing the lame man at the Beautiful Gate of the Temple, Peter tells the assembled crowd of Jews "But you denied the Holy One and the Just ... and killed the Prince of Life ..." (vv. 14, 15).

As a result of the turmoil in the Temple precincts following the healing of the lame man, Peter and John are put in jail overnight, and in the morning brought before the Sanhedrin, who challenge them about the miracle they have performed. Don't overlook that it was this very same Sanhedrin who had condemned the Lord only a

couple of months or so before this. And what is Peter's message to them? Note v. 10: "Let it be known to you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, WHOM YOU CRUCIFIED, whom God raised from the dead, by Him this man stands here before you whole." It is interesting to note that the members of the Sanhedrin did not deny that they had indeed killed Jesus of Nazareth. What they were concerned about was preventing the spread of the witness to His resurrection.

It seems to me that words cannot be clearer. "Father, forgive them, for they don't know what they do" must refer to that generation of Israel, who did not know the hour of their visitation, and spurned the wonderful love and grace of God.

The question that each of us must answer personally is this. Did the Father answer the Lord's prayer? Did He forgive them for their terrible sin? I believe He did, and the Book of Acts gives us the record of the gracious second chance God gave that perverse generation who were favoured beyond any previous generation of their nation in that the Word made flesh walked and taught in their midst.

In future articles, we will look, as the Lord enables, at significant signposts along the road throughout Acts.

Lord's public witness, with its reception on the part of the few, and its rejection on the part of the many. Chapter 1:11 says, "He came unto His own and His own received Him not." Chapter 13:1 says, ".... having loved His own which were in the world, He loved them unto the end." These "His own", differ from those in 1:11, for these had received Him, whilst His closing words in chapter 12:48-50 are concerning those who had rejected Him.

The incident that occupies the opening verses of chapter 13 is well known to most of us, and we particularly wish to draw attention to two of the impetuous remarks of Peter and the Lord's answer to them, for our own edification. The Lord, by girding Himself with a towel, took the lowest place of all, that of the menial slave, Truly "He came not to be ministered unto,

.....continued over

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# Clean Every Whit

but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many”.

It will be remembered that Luke 22:24 records that at the supper “there was also a strife among them, which of them should be accounted the greatest”. Possibly, the fact that upon taking their places for the Passover some must necessarily have been found nearer, and some further, from the Lord’s person than others, may have caused this argument to have arisen. The Lord Jesus listened to their words, and in His marvellous love and condescension gave them an impressive rebuke by His lowly action. Think for a moment of the utter depths brought out by reading verses three and four together. Though

“Jesus knew that the Father had given all things into His hands, and that He was come from God (the Apostle), and went to God (and Great High Priest of our profession), yet He riseth from supper, and laid aside His garments, and took a towel and girded Himself.”

“(He) Who, being in the form of God, thought it not a thing to be grasped at to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Himself the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: and being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross”. (Phil. 2:6-8)

It seems that no one had volunteered to do the lowly office of washing the feet, and so the Lord Himself stoops down and girds Himself; what a picture of His wonderful grace in our salvation. Not a sound is heard until He reaches Peter. He could not keep silent, “Lord, dost Thou wash my feet? ... Thou shalt never wash my

feet.”

The difference between the unworthy Peter and the gracious Lord was too much for him; he felt if others said nothing, he must. The Lord Jesus, pausing in His lowly work, looked at Peter and said, “If I wash thee not, thou hast no part (no portion) with Me.” All Peter’s qualms fled before the prospect of not having a part with his beloved Master, and he more than undoes what he had previously said by exclaiming, “Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head”, rather than forfeit a share with Thee. Again he has to learn the lesson of his own ignorance. This time he goes to the other extreme. The Lord answers him with the words, “He who is bathed, needs only to wash his feet, but is completely clean ...”.

What lessons are here! Do we not see that only those who have been washed by the Lord have any share with Him? May every reader know the completeness of the cleansing *once and for ever* that results from the application of the atoning blood of Christ.

Peter’s words, “Not my feet only, but also my hands and my head” are echoed daily by many believers, who, seeing their own unworthiness, belittle the fulness that is theirs in Christ, and do not rest upon the gracious words that they are “accepted in the Beloved”, and that they are “complete in Him”. To such the reply of the Lord may come with power, “He that is bathed ... is clean every whit”. (AV)

Two most important aspects of sanctification are to be found in verse 10:-

1. “He that is bathed is completely clean”.
2. Nevertheless, such an one needs “to wash his feet”.

We are continually forgetting that

these two go together. Not only are we in heavenly places in Christ, but we are also still in the body on the earth. Some, realising that the Scriptures teach that the believer is “complete in Christ”, emphasize the first sentence, “they are clean every whit”. These either develop some phase of “sinless perfection”, or irresponsible license. They forget that there will be a continual need for those who are clean every whit to wash their feet. Others, realising that since their conversion their feet have strayed from the path of truth, forget their unaltered and unalterable perfectness in Christ, and so not only pray for the washing of their feet, but also the their head and their hands. They forget that the Lord has “forgiven us *all* trespasses”; that He has made us “new creatures in Christ Jesus”, and that our “walk” here below cannot alter our “position” in the heavenlies in Christ. The first class develop spiritual pride; the second spiritual despair.

Let us remember the *perfectness* of His cleansing, and also the imperfectness of our walk as believers. We shall then be able, like Paul, not only to say, “O wretched man that I am”, but also, “There is therefore now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus”.

“If we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin. If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us. My little children, these things I write unto you that ye sin not, and if any man sin, we have an Advocate (Paraclete) with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.” (1 John 1:7-2:1)

# He, She Or It?

## Gender in Translation

By Athol Walter

that, but rather about Christ and the Church.

Another point. The translators who insist on 'her' for the church, are inconsistent to say the least. For example, the Greek word for 'head', kephale, is also a feminine word, and in Greek the correct pronouns for head would be 'she' and 'her'. This, however, would not mean that Christ as the Head of the Body had suddenly become a female, anymore than the use of the feminine pronouns in Greek relating to the word 'church' mean that therefore, the Church is the Bride. Rest assured, dear reader. Christ loved the church and gave Himself for IT.

We should recognise that these titles used by God in the Scriptures for His different families, such as Israel, the Bride and the Body, are figures of speech to a certain extent. That does not mean they are not real, they are, but it seems to me that they are used by God to teach us about the different relationships each of these companies has with the Lord who is their Saviour.

To Israel, the Lord is the King. Jehovah also calls Israel His wife. The Church of the Acts period, properly called the Bride of the Lamb, has a relationship to the Lord as a bride to her intended bridegroom. The relationship of the Lord to the Church which is His Body is that of Head, and Paul tells us in the closing verses of Eph. 1 that the Church which is His Body fills up the Head, who in His turn is the One who fills all in all. Once again, we should rightly divide the things that the Holy Spirit teaches, or in the words of Phil. 1:10, we must distinguish the things that differ (marginal reading) and approve the things that are excellent. God does not 'mix His metaphors', and neither should we.

I want to tell you an amusing little incident that happened to me some years back. I had to spend some time one afternoon with a man who was an immigrant from Poland. Although he spoke with a heavy accent, his English was good. As we chatted together, he told me how his wife had noticed a mouse in their laundry, and he went out to see if he could catch it. He spotted the mouse, but it ran away from him, and these are the exact words he used to describe what happened next. "She ran under the washing machine."

I knew that he was referring to the mouse and not his wife, so I asked him, "How did you know the mouse was a girl?" He grinned sheepishly and said that he knew he'd made a mistake as soon as he'd said it. I then said, "I guess the word mouse is feminine in Polish", and he said that was so.

The point is that expositors will often tell us that the Church is feminine, for after all, it is the Bride of Christ, and in Eph. 5:25-27 Paul refers to the Church as 'her'. This view is almost universal amongst evangelicals, and is used to oppose our teaching that the Church which is His Body, spoken of in the epistles written after the end of the Book of Acts, is not the same company as the Church which was being called out by the Lord during the Acts period.

If we read Ephesians carefully, we will see that the Church which is His Body is male, not female, but we will come to that a little later. Firstly, let's deal with the matter of that word 'her' in Eph. 5.

It simply is a matter of bad translation, as with my Polish friend above, although with him it was an excusable mistake. It is correct for a Pole to use the

pronoun 'her' when speaking of a mouse, because the word mouse in Polish is a feminine word. That has nothing to do with the sex of the mouse. In English, however, mouse is a neuter word, and should be referred to as 'it'. Similarly, a German speaker must refer to a table as him, not because the table is a man, but because the German word for table, 'Tisch', is a masculine word. These gender specific words are practically non-existent in English, although people who own boats will refer to them as 'she'. That, however, has nothing to do with grammar!

The Greek word for church is a feminine word, but when it is translated into English, it ceases to be a feminine word and becomes a neuter one. Therefore, the correct translation into English of the pronoun relating to church is 'it', not 'she' or 'her'.

Not all modern translations use the word 'her', but most do. The New English Bible is one that does not. So why is the word 'her' used like this? I suspect it is because the translators are doing some interpreting as well as translating, probably without intending to. The belief that there is only one Church, and that one Church is the Bride, is so entrenched that, when they come to the Ephesians passage, they automatically write 'her'.

It should be noted that Eph. 5 nowhere says that the church is a bride. What Paul is teaching is the relative positions of husbands and wives, using Christ's sacrificial love for the Church as an example of the type of love a Christian husband should have and display for his wife. He makes the additional point that the union between husband and wife is something of a mystery, but then states that he is not talking about



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