

# Spiritual Blessings



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The official journal of the Berean Bible Fellowship of Australia

## Biblical Basics

# The Bible: Section by Section

## Part 6 - New Testament Letters

This is the final part of our series on Bible sections. In part 5, we looked at the NT historical books, and here we will look at the other NT writings, all of which fit into the NT history somehow.

In this series I have attempted to show that it is important for you to familiarise yourself with the historical events described in the Bible. The historical books (both OT and NT) tell of the events and set the scene. The other writings (such as poetry, prophecy, and in the case of the NT, letters) all fit into that history somehow - see the "Major Sections of the Bible" chart. By having even just a rough idea of the history, you will be in a much better position to understand the other writings, all of which fit into that history somewhere. When we understand that these other writings are not just random isolated thoughts, we are less likely to make poor interpretations.

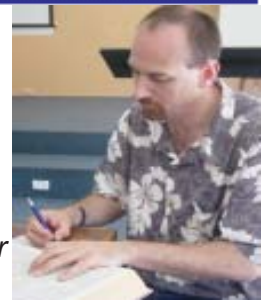
With that in mind, let's first refresh our memories as to the historical events of the New Testament. The first four historical books of the NT are the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. Each of these is a narrative focusing on the life, death

and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. Then comes Acts, a book describing how the apostles preached the message of Christ, firstly to Jews, then later on, to Gentiles as well. 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 at present has no bearing on how God deals with them.

Regarding the NT epistles, these reflect the events which are recorded for us during and after the book of Acts. We include Revelation because it was also an epistle written during Acts - not later as is often suggested - and reflects some of the conditions in force during the Acts period, whilst prophesying many events still to be fulfilled.

Since Israel's place in God's plans has a bearing on how we approach the various epistles, here we

by  
David  
Tavender



present two different ways of categorising them.

### (1) Categories by writer

See the "Epistles of the New Testament" chart on Pg 5. The non-historical writings of the NT may be placed under several broad categories, based on who wrote the letter.

### (2) Observe if during or after Acts

See the "Books of the New Testament" chart on Pg 3. This way of categorising the NT epistles shows whether they were written during the events described in Acts (approx 29 AD - 62 AD), or after Acts (approx 62 AD - 68 AD). This is important to note because, during Acts, God was dealing with Israel as a special nation. However, at Acts 28:25-28, Israel was set aside as a nation which

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# Editorial



**Athol Walter**

Since the last issue, several of our members have worked hard to clean up our Australian mailing list. While we want to send our witness out as widely as possible, we do not want to push it where it is not wanted, nor waste resources where it is not appreciated. We are grateful to those on the mailing list who have responded to the questionnaires. The result has been quite a reduction in the number of magazines sent out, and it has been a valuable learning experience for us.

We would be happy to receive names and addresses of people who you think would be interested in receiving 'Spiritual Blessings', but we ask that you check with the folk concerned first before sending us their details. Failure to do this in the past was one of the reasons why we had so many names of people who really did not want our magazine. As you know, there is no cost involved. If you want to ask about anything, please don't hesitate to write. We will be glad to hear from you.

In this issue, David Tavender concludes his series on The Bible: Section by Section, and we give details of our groups in different places and their activities. I continue my series of articles on Dispensational Basics. This is a longer article than usual, but I think the material must be kept together. I hope that you will not find it too hard to get through.

Our Queensland group held their annual study conference over the

Queen's Birthday long weekend and Mary Harper has given us a report. Just on 50 people attended the ten studies over the weekend, and it was pleasing to welcome a new family. To say that a great time was had by all, though something of a corny cliché, is nevertheless accurate.

Plans are well in hand for the visit of Mike and Sylvia Penny from England for our annual conference at the end of September. The venue at Toukley is a delightful place, and there are plenty of activities for children. We would love to welcome you there, and I can guarantee that you will be greatly blessed by Mike's teaching and the rich fellowship we enjoy.

I pray that you will get a great deal from this issue, and that we all will continue to grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

Athol Walter.

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## The BBFA's Meetings

It has been suggested that readers may be interested in the study meetings we have in various places and what is happening in them. We have four groups at present, in Sydney and the Newcastle area in NSW, and in Brisbane, Qld. Anyone interested in studying the Bible is welcome to attend any of our meetings.

### **Sydney.**

Up until about 1970, this was the only group, and it had been operating from early last century. Forty years ago, about forty people regularly met together, but over the years since then, the older folk have fallen asleep in the Lord, and children have grown up and moved away to make their lives in other places. This year we have changed from meeting in a hall to meeting in the homes of various members, as

was done many years ago, and it has resulted in more folk being able to attend. The meetings are on the third Sunday of each month, at 1:30 pm. Athol Walter is the leader of this meeting, and the present study topic is 'The Pleroma'. The next meeting on July 16<sup>th</sup>, will be held at the home of Eveline and Athol Walter, not in Sydney, but at Clarence Town. Two studies will be given, one before and one after lunch. Phone 4996 4455 for details.

### **Newcastle.**

The Newcastle group meets every Monday evening at 34 Aroona St., Edgeworth, at 7:30 pm, and we have been encouraged of late to have had several new people attend. Various leaders present the studies. Currently, John Hutton is giving a series on the Epistle to the Ephesians. Phone 4950 6708 for further information.

### **Hilldale.**

This recently formed group meets every second Thursday evening at 7 pm in the home of Sue and Greg Hall, 11 Hilldale Rd, Hilldale, a country district not far from the town of Dungog in the Hunter Valley of NSW. This meeting was commenced to cater for an eager group of people fresh to Bible study, but a number of more advanced students of the Bible attend as well. Athol Walter leads this group and the aim of the current studies is to open up the Bible in an easy way by looking at various events and people in the Old Testament that prefigure in some way the life and work of the Lord Jesus Christ. For information about this meeting, phone Sue on 4995 6064.

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# The Bible: Section by Section

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had advantages in God's dealings, and a person is now no longer dealt with on the basis of nationality (Ephesians 2:11-22 & 3:6).

The seven letters written after Acts are: Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1 & 2 Timothy, Titus and Philemon. All other NT epistles, including Revelation, were written earlier, during the Acts period. As such, these other writings reflect the fact that God was dealing with Israel a bit differently to people from other nations. For example, the book of Romans tells us that the Jew (during the Acts period) had an advantage "much in every way" (Romans 3:1,2), and spells out some of the ways God was dealing with them ahead of the Gentile. See also Romans 1:16; 2:9,10.

Why it is important to make this distinction is because we believe that a lot of Christians today try to apply promises, blessings and commands to themselves which really apply to a different group of people. This is not to say that an Acts period book like Romans doesn't say anything to us today - words such as "all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (3:23)

will always apply to you and me. But distinguishing the epistles written during Acts from those written after Acts is one way we can avoid trying to obey instructions which were never meant for us. For a more comprehensive list of differences before and after Acts 28, we encourage you to visit our website, [www.spiritualblessings.org](http://www.spiritualblessings.org), and click on: Articles > Dispensational > Different Conditions Before and After Acts 28; OR, you may write to us and we'll send you a copy of that article.

## Summary

In closing, it is not uncommon for people to read passages like those from the OT prophets or from the NT epistles and start applying the words to themselves, without considering the original setting in which those writings were delivered. It was stated in an earlier part of this series that there are 1189 chapters in the Bible; of these, about 1100 were written while God was dealing with Israel as a nation in a special way not the same as today. This has a major bearing on most Bible passages, yet many Christians today treat the Scriptures as if God's special

dealings with Israel have no bearing at all, and everything automatically applies to us. This is what we mean when we encourage our readers to "rightly divide the word of truth" (2 Timothy 2:15). I do hope this series has been of assistance to your understanding of God's wonderful Word.

At a glance...

Romans: Acts period epistle. In three main sections - fundamentals (ch 1-8), dispensational (9-11), practical teaching (12-16).

1 Corinthians: Acts period epistle. Paul addresses factions of all sorts. There are a number of admonitions regarding their immaturity and inappropriate behaviour, with various points of doctrine intermingled throughout. Includes a chapter (15) on resurrection.

2 Corinthians: Acts period epistle. More about inappropriate behaviour, intermingled with points of doctrine. Paul stresses his credentials.

Galatians: Acts period epistle. Proof of Paul's apostolic authority. Refutes teaching which would lead Christians to go back under the law.

## The Books of the New Testament

### Christ on Earth

approx  
4 BC - 29 AD

**Matthew**  
**Mark**  
**Luke**  
**John**

### Acts Period

approx  
29 AD - 62 AD

**Romans**  
**1 & 2 Corinthians**  
**Galatians**  
**1 & 2 Thessalonians**  
**Hebrews**  
**James**  
**1 & 2 Peter**  
**1, 2 & 3 John**  
**Jude**  
**Revelation**  
**(Acts)**

### After Acts

approx  
62 AD - 68 AD

**Ephesians**  
**Philippians**  
**Colossians**  
**1 & 2 Timothy**  
**Titus**  
**Philemon**

# The Bible: Section by Section

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**Ephesians:** Written after Acts. Possibly a letter which was to be circulated amongst many churches. In two main sections - the first half is about their privileged position before God through His grace; the second half is about walking accordingly. Includes new features introduced after Acts 28 - all centred around equality between Jews and Gentiles in every way. Similar material is covered in Colossians.

**Philippians:** Written after Acts. Much advice on the Christian walk. Includes famous passage on Christ's humility, and subsequent glory (2:5-11).

**Colossians:** Written after Acts. Similar material is covered in Ephesians, with early portions on

doctrine balanced by portions on the Christian walk.

**1 Thessalonians:** Acts period epistle. Quite personal, there are several references to Paul's earlier visit. Includes practical advice and a section on the second coming of Christ.

**2 Thessalonians:** Acts period epistle. Speaks of times before the second coming, as well as references to Paul's visit and more practical advice.

**1 Timothy:** Written after Acts. Paul's letter to "his son" in the faith, Timothy. Advice on positions and roles within the church.

**2 Timothy:** Written after Acts. Similar to 1 Timothy. Probably the last writing of the New Testament,

Paul speaks as a man who has not long to live.

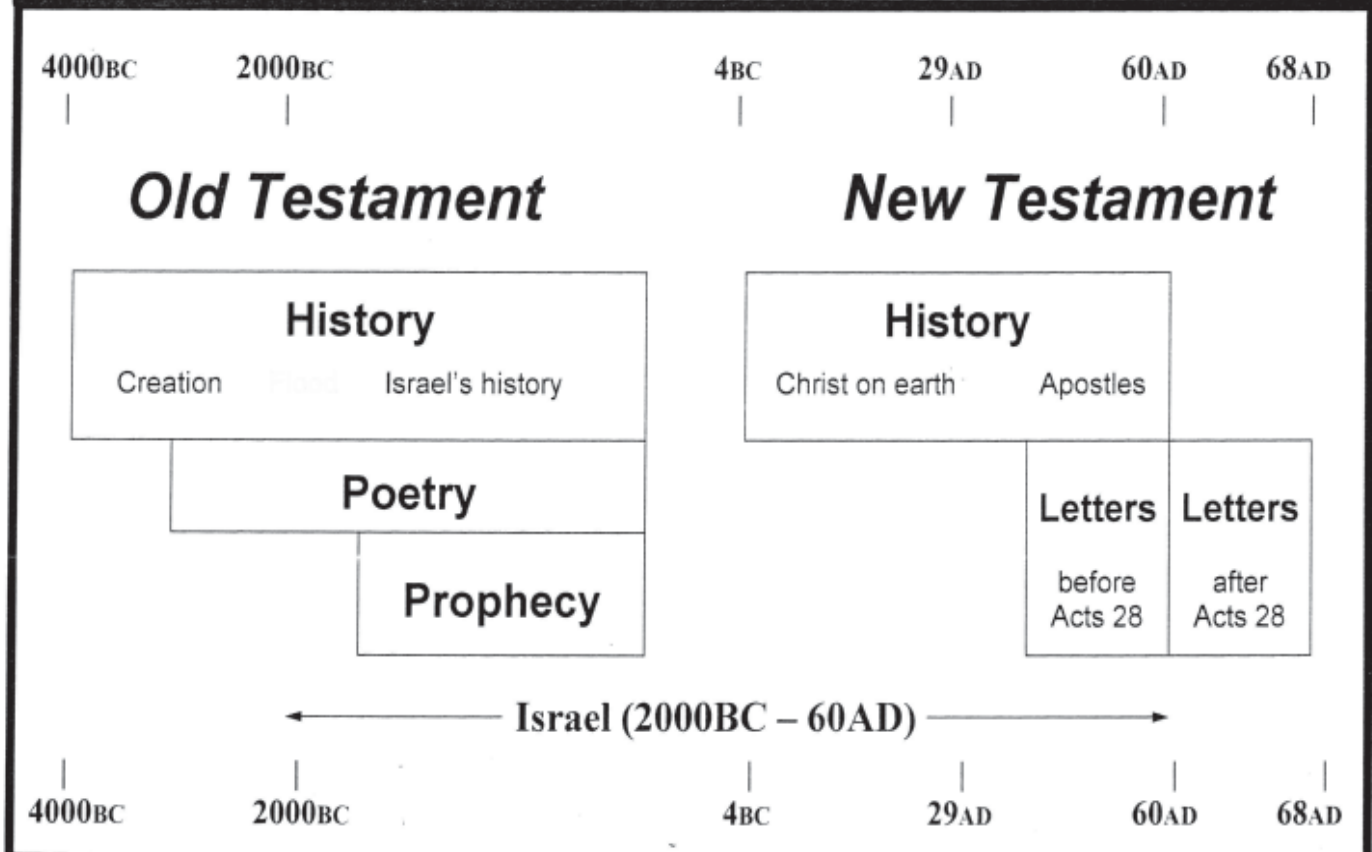
**Titus:** Written after Acts. Includes much pastoral advice, as in the letters to Timothy.

**Philemon:** Written after Acts, to Philemon and others as well. A plea regarding the treatment of Onesimus, a runaway slave of Philemon's.

**Hebrews:** Acts period epistle, probably written by Paul. Contains extensive passages about the law, the tabernacle, the priesthood, etc., tying them in with Christ, of whom these things were a picture. As the name suggests, it is very Jewish in character. Includes a famous chapter (11) on faith.

**James:** Acts period epistle, addressed to Israelites scattered

## Major Sections of the Bible



# The Bible: Section by Section

abroad. A mostly practical epistle, speaking of enduring trials and walking appropriately.

1 Peter: Acts period epistle to Israelites scattered abroad. Includes a number of references to Christ and their relationship to Him as Jews.

2 Peter: Acts period epistle. Similar to 1 Peter, with warnings against following false teachers, and reminders that God will keep His promises.

1 John: Acts period epistle to Jewish readers. Same author as that of John's Gospel. Similar themes of life through belief in Christ Jesus, and practical throughout. The word "love" occurs well over 30 times in this epistle.

2 John: Acts period epistle to a Jewess. A very brief letter anticipating a visit, with a warning to watch against deceivers. The shortest book in the Bible.

3 John: Acts period epistle, probably to a Jewish believer. Again, a very brief letter anticipating a visit. Practical examples of how to live and how not to live.

Jude: Acts period epistle from the Lord's half brother to Jewish believers. Warnings against deception, elaborated upon with examples throughout this short letter.

Revelation: Acts period epistle (See 1:1-4), written in a largely prophetic style, and very Jewish in character. Old Testament references and Jewish imagery throughout. Prophecies events which were to take place "soon" had Israel repented during Acts, but which have now been put on hold, awaiting a time when God will take up Israel again as a special nation in His plans.

## **New Testament Epistles**

### **Paul's Epistles ...**

*Epistles to Churches (Jews & Gentiles):*

**Romans**  
**1 & 2 Corinthians**  
**Galatians**  
**Ephesians**  
**Philippians**  
**Colossians**  
**1 Thessalonians**  
**2 Thessalonians**

*Epistles to Individuals (Gentiles):*

**1 & 2 Timothy**  
**Titus**  
**Philemon**  
*An Epistle by Paul or  
a different author (to Jews):*  
**Hebrews**

### **Others' Epistles ...**

*Epistles to Jews:*

**James**  
**1 & 2 Peter**  
**1, 2, 3 John**  
**Jude**  
**Revelation**

## **The BBFA's Meetings**

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**Brisbane.**

Studies are presented by Frank Haegler and Rom Harper. The group meets alternate Sundays in Redbank Plains High School, starting at 10 am. Phone (07) 3802 1262 for more information. Current studies given by Frank are on Resurrection, looking back to the



# The Brisbane Conference

**June 10-12, 2006** by Mary Harper

The June long weekend Bible Conference in Redbank Plains, Qld 2006, proved again to be a very thought-provoking and discussion-filled time. Athol and Eveline Walter, David and Janelle Tavender and Ron Hodge travelled up from Newcastle, but this year in a slightly faster manner – they flew (by plane that is)!

It was great to see familiar faces from near and far and we welcomed a visiting family who had come for the first time. Athol and David presented all the talks for the weekend, which were truly appreciated by the regulars and visitors alike.

Athol's talks centred around the question "Which Kingdom is That?", and began with the apostles' question to the resurrected Jesus concerning whether He would "restore again the Kingdom to Israel at this time?" Acts 1:6. Athol made the point that something can only really be restored if it has at some stage been taken away from those who had it. The difference between the terms the Kingdom of Heaven and the Kingdom of God was explained. He also looked at kings, kingdoms and thrones throughout the Old Testament and showed that when the reign of David's line ceased in Jerusalem, the crown was passed to the Gentiles.

There were many interesting points revealed from the Scriptures and suggestions that we read certain verses to extend our understanding of God's plan concerning this topic. Finally, Athol showed how when the rightful King came, He was rejected and crucified.

David's first topic was "Names of God". He showed how our Bibles distinguish the word "God" and "LORD". He showed that "God" refers to the "type of being" that God is, whereas "LORD", written with the large capital 'L' and small capitals 'ORD' in the Old Testament is actually God's name, Jehovah. Personally, I found that revelation very helpful. I was able to understand more easily the titles of God that were used and this in turn helped me to comprehend these verses in Scripture. David handed out some very handy bookmarks that showed the different usages of the names of "God" and "LORD". There were different bookmarks for different Bible versions.

David also spoke on the transfiguration from Matthew 17:1-9. He revealed some very interesting points concerning the reading of Scripture, and how important it is that we consider the context.

David gave the final talk for the weekend, which though short, was very powerful. He spoke about not having belief in what, but belief in whom. David seems to have a way in presenting talks that shows different viewpoints and aspects of Scripture that we may have considered differently. When this is done, it is amazing how it opens up a whole new world of meaning!

The Saturday evening was very enjoyable, with a bar-b-que following the talks. This gave everyone plenty of time for discussion on the day's topics and other issues that many were interested in discussing with our learned brothers and sisters from "over the border". Actually, it was interesting to look around at each break over the weekend to see

little groups gathering here and there discussing things, and each time, the members of the groups were different. This gave our southern visitors an opportunity to mix with everyone over the weekend.

We are truly grateful to Athol and David for the time and effort that they put into presenting the studies and for sharing with us. Most importantly, we thank God that we are able to gather together in fellowship to study His Word.

## **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) 3802 1262

### **Sydney:**

3rd Sunday of each month.

Lunch 12:30pm. (BYO)

Study 1:30pm.

Various Venues

For details phone

(02) 4996 4455

### **Newcastle:**

Every Monday.

7:30pm

34 Aroona St

Edgeworth.

(02) 4950 6708

### **Hilldale via Dungog:**

7 pm Alternate Thursdays

11 Hilldale Rd

Hilldale

(02) 49956064

## **BBFA Annual Conference** **2006**

23rd - 25th September 2006  
at Camp Toukley.

# Why do Christian People read the Bible so Differently?

(An extract from a book entitled "The Study of the Bible", author unnamed. Published 1862.)

In searching for an answer, we have been led to conclude that the true explanation will be found in that prevailing neglect of the Bible as a whole, which arises from its being read always in mere fragments; in the *forgetfulness* of the particular purpose for which the Bible was given; in *confusions* regarding its inspiration; in *errors* relating to the Holy Spirit; in the confounding of *revealed* facts with *human inferences*; in bias of one or another; in reading either for 'edification' or for kindling of devout feeling, without first ascertaining *the meaning* of that which is read; in the habit of *accommodating*

Scripture, or of *perverting* it, by exaggeration, projection, or other misapplication of texts; in *allegorizing*, under the influence of unbridled fancy; in the abuse of parallel passages and references, in the *darkening* of the sense which is frequently occasioned by injudicious division into chapters and verses; in the *acceptance* of interpretations drawn from Hymns; in the *neglect* and consequent abuse of unfulfilled prophecy; in *inattention* to the character of the particular dispensation under which we are living; in *errors* as to church authority, and the value of tradition; in *undue reliance* on the

professional labours of the clergy; in turning helps into hindrances; and above all, in habitual indifference to the demand Scripture makes on every man for prolonged study, as an essential pre-requisite to the elevation by means of moral character."

Editor's comment: The above is all one sentence, which makes hard reading for us today! But that was the style 140 years ago. I find myself saying a hearty 'Amen' to what is said, and I hope that our readers will give this extract the time and effort it deserves to fully appreciate what is being said.

## Thoughts From Old Sermon Notes

Reckon These Things.

Reading:

Philippians 4:4-9.

Christians are called upon to be people of compassion, to care for fellow believers, and also those who are not believers. We are told in many places to love one another, to bear with one another, to put the needs of others above our own, for in so doing we demonstrate the love of God for all people.

A thought in passing: in verse 7 of our reading we have the peace of God. Then in verse 9 we have the God of peace. How wonderful to have both!

Verse 8 is our focus for now. "Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy – meditate on these things." (NKJV). The AV has "think on these things".

Now whether we say 'think' or 'meditate', it is very good psychology. "As a man thinks in his heart, so is he." If we fill our minds with good, clean, uplifting thoughts, it has a beneficial effect on us. If, on the other hand, we continually harbour bitter, unpleasant, or depressing thoughts in our minds, it can affect us badly. But is this really what Paul is saying here? I don't think so. We need to look at the words 'Meditate on these things', a little more closely.

The first point to notice is that there is no word for 'on' in the Greek text. Paul actually wrote (in Greek of course), "These things consider." The second point to think about is that the Greek word translated 'meditate on' is 'logizomai', which may look a bit frightening at first, but it is linked to such English words as 'logic' and more to our point, 'logistics'. The Greek word means to calculate, particularly in the arithmetical sense.

While it is always good to consult the dictionary, when it comes to Bible study it is even more important to consider the way a particular word is used. The way the Holy Spirit has used a word should be our guide as to its meaning. So let's see how 'logizomai' is used elsewhere.

We don't have to go far, for Paul has already used it in chapter 3, verse 13 of this very epistle. "Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, ..." There is no need to go on with the quote for the word we want is 'count'. We certainly could not use the word 'meditate' here.

I think the best demonstration of 'logizomai' is found in Romans 4, verses 3 to 6. The relevant word is in capitals.

V. 3. "... it was ACCOUNTED to him for righteousness.

.....cont Pg. 11

# What Kingdom Is That?

By Athol Walter

In these series of studies dealing with Dispensational Basics, we are concentrating on the Book of Acts, for it is in this Book that we can miss our way more easily, perhaps, than anywhere else in the New Testament. To put it another way, at the end of the Lord's earthly ministry which, of course, came to its climax with His death and resurrection, one phase of God's Plan of Redemption came to an end, and the next phase commenced with the instruction the Lord gave to the disciples before He left them. Shortly after that, the disciples were 'clothed with power from on high' on that momentous Day of Pentecost. It is precisely at that point that many believers have turned onto what seems to me to be the wrong road.

It should not be hard to keep on the right track for there are a number of signposts along the road – viz. statements and events – that show us the right way. The signposts seem to be ignored by many, however. Why this should be is difficult to explain, and most of the explanations would be guesses anyway, but one thing is sure, I believe. Christendom missed the signs along the road, and I think that was because, even before his death, most of the early believers had turned away from the Apostle to the Gentiles and the special truths that God had revealed through him.

Paul tells Timothy in his 2nd letter to his son in the faith, in 1:15 "that all those in Asia have turned away from me ..." This was not just a shunning of the man. It was also the shunning of his teaching. It is not without significance that the spark of the Reformation was Luther coming to understand the truth of justification by faith taught in Paul's epistle to the Galatians.

It should also be remembered that Paul alone, of all the New Testament writers, speaks of the position of the Gentile believer relative to Israel during the Acts period, and, as we continually emphasise in these pages, it was through Paul alone that God revealed the Secret which had been kept hidden in Himself from before the foundation of the world, showing for the first time, what He would do after Israel's dismissal at the end of Acts. But we get ahead of ourselves.

The Book of Acts opens with Luke addressing a person called Theophilus, and mentioning the 'former account' he had written of the life and work of the Lord Jesus. That former account, of course, is the Gospel of Luke. I have to admit that for quite a number of years in my early Christian life, I did not realise that there is considerable overlap between the end of Luke's Gospel and the beginning of Acts. It is also true that the closing parts of the other Gospels give us details of the forty days between the resurrection and ascension of the Lord to varying degrees, and it is only by putting all these accounts together that we get as full a picture as possible of what must have been a very exciting few weeks.

Acts covers that period of the forty days in the first nine verses, which is not much, but those few verses contain information that is extremely significant. We are told that during those forty days, the Lord appeared to the disciples and taught them about the Kingdom of God. He also told them specifically to wait in Jerusalem for the coming of the Holy Spirit.

Now look carefully at v. 6. "Therefore, when they had come together, they asked Him, saying, 'Lord, will you at this time restore the Kingdom to Israel?'" (NKJV)

There are expositors who do not hesitate to say that the apostles completely missed the point with this question. I must disagree with them. I think the question of the disciples was spot on. Look at the context.

V. 3: "...He also presented Himself alive ... speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God."

V. 6: "Therefore ... they asked Him, saying. Will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?" Don't overlook the word 'therefore'. It means 'because of this' or 'for this reason'. The Lord taught them about the Kingdom of God, and because of that, they asked whether that kingdom was going to be set up at that time.

How can this be a mistake? In addition to the word 'therefore', think about this. In Luke 24, from v. 36 on, we read about the Lord's sudden appearance to disciples in the upper room. After inviting them to handle Him to see that He was indeed real, and also eating some food in front of them, He does something very significant. It comes in v. 45. "And He opened their understanding that they might comprehend the Scriptures". Please read the sentence again, and let its meaning sink in.

It is impossible to say just when that happened during the forty day period, but regardless of that, it means that they listened to the Lord's teaching about the kingdom of God with minds opened to understand. Notice, this was before the coming of the 'power from on high' on the Day of Pentecost. In the light of all this evidence, how could they possibly have been mistaken?

Some expositors will tell you that the Lord berated them for asking such a 'silly question'. John Calvin actually says that by their question they proved what poor students

# What Kingdom Is That?

they were of such a good Master! I'm afraid I can't see any berating in the Lord's answer. Their question related to when the Kingdom would be set up, and that is the point that the Lord responds to. Look at His answer, v. 7.

"It is not for you to know times or seasons which the Father has put in His own authority. But you shall receive power ... and you shall be witnesses to Me ...". I have touched on this in earlier studies, but let me repeat the salient points. The apostles were to go back to the people of Israel with the message of the Kingdom of God and its King, as was done during the Gospel period. What is added now is the good news of His death and resurrection, which prove beyond doubt, that Jesus is indeed the Son of God, Israel's Messiah. I'm sure the Lord knew what the outcome of this renewed offer of the Kingdom to Israel would be, but He could not reveal that at this time, for not only would it have disheartened the apostles, it would have also given Israel an excuse for their rejection. No, the **timing** of the setting up of the Kingdom was not to be revealed at that time, but the Lord neither corrected their so-called misunderstanding about the Kingdom of God, nor said that the Kingdom had nothing to do with Israel. The apostles' job was to go out and make the offer, witnessing to Christ's death and resurrection, and they were given special powers from the Holy Spirit to do their job.

Many believers today are unclear as to what Kingdom was being spoken about. The centuries-old tradition that the Lord was speaking about a mystical body, the Church, and not a physical kingdom for Israel, has become so entrenched that it is accepted without question. Why has this happened? I think the answer is not difficult to find. As intimated

above, Paul is the only one who was given any revelation about what would happen if Israel rejected the Lord the second time. In the Book of Acts, and also in the epistles written during the time covered by Acts, it is plain that there were many 'teachers' travelling around after Paul, trying to undo his work, especially among Paul's Gentile converts. We can call them 'Judaizers' who believed that Israel was the be-all and end-all of God's work of Salvation, and if Gentiles were to be allowed in to the company of believers, a point that they were not altogether convinced about, then those Gentiles **MUST** become Jews in name and deed. The deed referred to is circumcision. Paul had to spend much of his time and strength in combating these people, who although believers and sincere in what they believed, were nevertheless wrong, and their work, unfortunately, was undermining the progress of the true work of God.

It seems to me that, after the death of Paul, these Judaizers won the day, and the company of believers, en masse, turned back to the expression of the Gospel that belonged to Israel, but not to the Gentile group of believers. Another cause for the confusion of the church in general at that time, was the fate of Israel and Jerusalem in AD 70. I doubt that words of mine can convey the shock and bewilderment of believers when they either saw, or learned, that the Temple in Jerusalem was no more. Israel finished? We didn't expect this! What is God going to do now? I want to scream out, "Read Paul's epistles, and believe what he says, for it is **ONLY** in his writings that we learn that there will be no further chance for Israel if they refuse the second time". Also, it is **ONLY** in the epistles written after Acts closes, particularly

Ephesians and Colossians, that God reveals His secret strategy for the very event of Israel's defection. That secret is, of course, an entirely new company for believers called the Church Which Is His Body.

But Christendom turned away from Paul and came up with the alternative that the Church must have taken Israel's place, and this led in time to the belief therefore, that when we read of Kingdom promises and prophecies in the Old Testament God was really referring to the Church. This then leads inexorably to the mistaken belief that when John the Baptist and the Lord came to Israel proclaiming repentance for the Kingdom of Heaven (or of God) was at hand, they did not mean a 'carnal' kingdom at all, but a 'spiritual', i.e. opposed to 'carnal,' and mystical church. And thus, we arrive at Acts 1:6, where, when we read that the Lord Jesus instructed His disciples about the Kingdom of God during the forty days, He was not meaning 'any sort of Kingdom in or for Israel', but the Church. The inevitable conclusion to this is that the disciples were a bunch of no-hopers, who could not get this idea of a kingdom for Israel out of their minds and had missed the point of the Lord's instruction completely. If that was indeed the case, I can well imagine that the Lord would have dumped them and started with a fresh lot.

Before we look at what transpired in the days and weeks that followed the Lord's ascension, I think we should look at just a few things said about the Kingdom of Israel in the Old Testament. We do not have space to examine the great amount of material available, so I will summarise some, and highlight the most important parts.

## What Kingdom Is That?

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The territory that had been promised to Abraham was very extensive. (See Gen. 15:18-21) Moses told the Children of Israel that they would ask for a king when they got into the Promised Land (Deut. 17:14-20), and that they should take care to follow God's rules about a king. Saul was chosen as the first king of Israel, but is typical of the Antichrist at the time of the end, who usurps the kingdom in the place of the true King, the Lord Jesus Christ. David, of course, typifies Christ as the conquering warrior-king, and both David and his son Solomon greatly extend the territory of the Kingdom. The important thing is to see, and understand, what the Lord promised David. It is in 2 Sam. 7:5-16. The covenant the Lord made with David is unconditional. Note the last part of v. 11. "... the Lord Himself will establish a house for you." And then v. 16: "Your house and your kingdom will endure forever before me; your throne will be established forever."

Before moving on, notice a small point in v. 10 that we might easily overlook: "And (which connects this with what has just gone before) I will provide a place for my people Israel and will plant them so they can have a home of their own and no longer be disturbed." God Himself has connected establishing a house for David (meaning his royal dynasty) with providing a place where His people Israel can dwell in safety. We must pass over much material, but I hope you will read the account of the Kingdom in the books of Samuel, Kings and Chronicles.

For our purpose, we can just say that after Solomon, the Kingdom split in two, Israel in the north and Judah in the south. The tribes of Benjamin and Judah remained

loyal to David's line, so that indeed, David's throne was still in Jerusalem with David's seed on it. But trouble was brewing. The northern kingdom, Israel, was eventually overrun by the Assyrians and taken into captivity. The kingdom of Judah lasted about 150 years longer, and then Nebuchadnezzar, the Babylonian king, carried the last king in the line of David away, and world sovereignty passed from Israel to Gentile powers. This point seems to have been missed by many.

Look at Daniel 2, where the Lord tells Daniel the dream that Nebuchadnezzar had and also it's interpretation. Go to v. 37. "You, O king, (i.e. Nebuchadnezzar) are the king of kings. The God of Heaven has given you dominion and power and might and glory."

Ezekiel 21 is relevant here. V. 26 has this: "This is what the Sovereign Lord says: Take off the turban, remove the crown ... I will make it a ruin ... It will not be restored until he comes to whom it rightfully belongs; to him I will give it." By the way, don't miss the word 'restored' there, will you. That's the word the disciples used in Acts 1:6.

Joel 1 and 2 speak of what the plague of locusts had done to the land. The locusts are the forerunners of the Assyrians and those who followed them, who were the instruments of punishment in God's hands. They all denuded the land and reduced the proud kingdom of Israel (I mean the whole twelve tribes) to nothing. But notice the change at 2:18. Please read right through into ch. 3. I want to focus on v. 25 onwards for now. "I will repay you for the years the locusts have eaten ..." and so on. Where the NIV uses the word 'repay', the AV has 'restore'. Again, make the connection with the disciples' question, "Will you RESTORE ...".

I hope you know your Old Testament prophets well enough to know that they are filled with promises of restoration for Israel, and look forward to the time when David's greater Son will set up His kingdom and reign in Jerusalem. But because of space limitations, I will mention only one other reference in the OT.

Let me quote a couple of verses from the AV without giving you the reference just yet. I wonder if you can finish the quote.

"Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God. Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem, and cry unto her that her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned: for she hath received of the Lord's hand double for all her sins."

Do you know what the next verse says? You will find it in Isa. 40 from verse 1 onwards. And these are the words that follow:

"The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God."

Now come forward with me to John 1:19-23. Priests and Levites were sent from Jerusalem to ask John who he was. He told them he was not the Messiah, nor Elijah, nor the Prophet (i.e. that Moses had spoken of). "Well, who are you then? I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness: Make straight the way of the Lord, as the prophet Isaiah said."

Can you imagine the effect of John's pronouncement on the people who heard him? Every one of his hearers, being Jews, would know immediately he said those words, where the quote was from. Even if we could not make the connection, they would have thought without hesitation, "Comfort ye my people. Say to Jerusalem her sins have been pardoned etc." And they would know exactly what John was

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talking about when he said to the crowds, "Repent, for the Kingdom of God is at hand." And when Jesus of Nazareth started His ministry, He said exactly the same as John.

I would like you to read further on through John 1. A couple of John's disciples followed the Lord when John pointed Him out. Philip joined the little group the next day, and he went and found Nathanael, saying that they had found the promised One. Look at Nathanael's reaction after he met the Lord. (V. 49). "Rabbi, you are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel." Notice the immediate connection in this Jew's mind between the Messiah, the Son of God and the King of Israel.

Again, I must pass over much

material, but we cannot leave out Luke 19. I don't want to focus on it now, but please read the parable the Lord told starting at v. 11, and notice particularly v. 27. Then from v. 28 we read of what we call the triumphal entry into Jerusalem. Here the Lord deliberately fulfills the prophecy of Zech. 9:9. Jerusalem was filling up with pilgrims coming for the Passover Feast in a few days, and notice what they cried out in v. 38. "Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the Lord". When the Pharisees told the Lord to stop the people calling that out, the Lord replied in effect, that He couldn't stop them if He wanted to. The crowds, as well as the Pharisees, knew what it all meant. Here was the promised King.

Then comes what surely must be amongst the most tragic verses in Scripture. Read from v. 41 to the chapter's end. The Lord weeps over the city saying in v. 42, "If you had known, even you, (i.e. Jerusalem and her leaders) especially in this your day, the things that make for your peace! But now they are hidden from your eyes." The next verses tell of the coming destruction, which was carried out to the letter from AD 66 to 70.

All this took place only a few weeks before the disciples were instructed by the Lord concerning the Kingdom of God, and their resultant question, "Will you restore the Kingdom to Israel at this time?" Surely, they were not wrong.

## Thoughts From Old Sermon Notes

V. 4. "... his wages are not COUNTED as a gift.

V. 5. "... His faith IS ACCOUNTED for righteousness.

V. 6. "... to whom God IMPUTES righteousness.

I have always thought it is a pity that, though Paul uses the one word, 'logizomai', in each of the above verses, the translators into English have chosen to render it by different words. By doing so, I think they detract from the force of what Paul is saying. But that is by the way.

The last time Paul uses 'logizomai' in the New Testament is in 2 Timothy 4:16: "At my first defense no one stood with me, but all forsook me. May it not be CHARGED against them."

Now, in all these references we could not use the words 'think' or 'meditate'. The words that are used, though, point to what is really being said in Philippians 4:9. We have several words at our disposal now: count, impute, reckon, even charge. I suggest that 'reckon' is as good as any, so let's rewrite our verse with that word in it.

"Whatever things are true ... RECKON these things." Maybe you are a little puzzled about what that might mean, but of one thing we can be sure. It does not mean that we should be filling our minds with lovely thoughts so that we will feel good.

No, what Paul is telling us to do is this. In our dealings with each other, rather than focus on the faults, or the things that might irritate us, look in others for things

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that are true, honest, pure, just, anything worthy of praise, and reckon these things to each other wherever we possibly can.

How quick we are to reckon fault, or wrong motives, or some such thing, to each other. But this is not God's way with us, and it should not be our way with others. Let us be even quicker to reckon good things to each other, than we are to find fault. It really makes sense to do it, because, when we do, the God of Peace shall be with us.





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