

# Spiritual Blessings



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## Exposition

# Setting The Record Straight

## On Jehovah In Genesis Part 1 *by Kenneth Evans*

### Introduction

The Bible itself tells us that “All Scripture is given by inspiration of God...” (2 Tim. 3: 16). Amongst other things, by this statement we understand that no Scripture may contradict another. Any apparent conflict must have a logical solution. Often, exegetes discover they have considered one of the passages out of context. As well, the Bible instructs that we are called to “rightly divide the word of truth” (2 Tim. 2: 15) so there must be meaning to the sometimes puzzling passages. So it is with the confusion that reigns throughout the church between the following passages: “... Abram called on the name of Jehovah ...” and “... by My name, Jehovah, I was not known to them.” It is clear that either God was known as *Jehovah* to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, or He was not.

### The name, *Jehovah*

It is essential, firstly, to consider the word, *Jehovah*. English translators of the Old Testament do not use this word, although it has been well recognised by hymn writers for many centuries. *Jehovah* is the Anglicised version of the Hebrew name for God, YHWH or Yahweh. How so? Hebrew does not have vowels as such, but jots and tittles that aid pronunciation. YaHoWeH becomes JeHoVaH simply by

inserting the ‘J’ and ‘V’ sounds in place of the Hebrew ‘Y’ and ‘W’ sounds. This is not uncommon. Many languages pronounce English’s ‘J’ as ‘Y’, ‘H’, or ‘I’. ‘W’ is frequently replaced with ‘V’ as in Germanic languages. Yahweh thus quickly becomes *Jehovah*. The author’s surname is of Welsh extraction: Evans, i.e., son of Evan. In other languages and dialects, Evan is known as Ewan, Euan, Ivan, Ian, Iain, Yan, Jan, John, Sean, and Shaun, amongst others — simply by changing the pronunciation of either a vowel or a consonant.

I said *Jehovah* (or *Yahweh*) does not appear in English translations of the Old Testament. Jewish Rabbi’s became so extremely concerned not to “...take the name of Jehovah, your God, in vain...” (Exod. 20: 7) that they invented a means by which they would safely ensure they did not commit such a grievous sin. Their system, when Anglicised, replaced *Jehovah/Yahweh* with ‘lord’. However, another Hebrew word, *Adonai*, meaning Master, can also be translated ‘lord’. So, to highlight the occasions on which ‘lord’ is actually the name of God, the Bible consistently spells the word in upper case letters, with a large ‘L’ and smaller ‘ORD’ — thus: LORD.

Throughout this study, *Jehovah* is used where God’s name appears in the Bible text, in preference to *Yahweh*.

### Moses’ introduction to Jehovah

Moses, although Hebrew, was raised in the palace of the Pharaoh of Egypt as the adopted son of Pharaoh’s daughter, during an era in which the children of Israel had become slaves to the Egyptians. His own Hebrew mother was his nurse. We do not know how much Jewish history Jochebed, a daughter of Israel’s son, Levi, was able to instill into the child. Considering the extraordinary lengths to which she went in order to ensure her son’s safety — we all know about the basket in the bulrushes by the Nile River (Exod. 1: 15–2: 11) — it is quite likely that Jochebed found a means through which to instruct Moses regarding the God of his own people. But that is another subject. It was not until he was forty years of age that Moses came away from the training he was receiving as a future Pharaoh.

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# Editorial

**Athol Walter**

**T**he visit of Mike and Sylvia Penny is getting very close now – the first engagement is the weekend conference at Toukley from the 23rd to the 25th. September. Other engagements in Newcastle and Brisbane follow. After completing these engagements, the Pennys fly on to New Zealand to have meetings with the Acts 28 group in the Hamilton district of the North Island. Please join with us in praying that the Lord will use Mike’s ministry for His own purposes and glory. We urge our readers to hear Mike if at all possible.

We have a new contributor in this issue. Ken Evans, from Brisbane, is associated with our group in that city, and also has a teaching ministry of his own. His series of

three articles on the Name of Jehovah in Genesis starts in this issue. We thank Ken for his work, and I pray that our readers will find help and blessing in what he has to say.

I am writing these lines as the war in Lebanon escalates. Several people have asked about the significance of these frequent conflicts in and around Israel. Is this prophecy being fulfilled? I make no claim to being an expert on prophecy, but I am quite sure about this point. No, what we are seeing happening now is not the fulfillment of prophecy. It is, rather, the preparation for the fulfillment of prophecy. Over the past 100 years or so, God has quietly but steadily been bringing about the conditions required for the circumstances leading up to the final week of Daniel’s vision of the 70 weeks.

It is like the setting of the stage for a play. The scenery has to be built and put in place. The props have to be made ready. Players for the various parts have to be found and brought together. So much has to be done before ever the play actually has its performance. I

believe we are somewhere in the preparations.

A number of things still have to come about before the ‘play’ can start. For one thing, a temple must be built in Jerusalem, and then at a later date, a seemingly great statesman will forge a treaty between Israel and her enemies. When that happens, know that the climax is near. What about the Church which is His Body? That, I believe, must go first. When I say that, I am not referring to the ‘rapture’ of 1 Thess. 4. I am referring to the ‘out-resurrection, out from the dead ones’, that Paul speaks of in Phil. 3:11.

What should we do in the meantime? Walk as faithfully and as worthily of our Lord and Head as we can, endeavouring in the power of His might, to witness as clearly as we can to the saving and keeping power of God in Christ Jesus our Lord, and make as many as possible see just what is the dispensation of the Mystery.

In His grace and love,  
Athol Walter.

## A Search For Truth

**I**grew up in a family in which religion or the Bible played no part. My mother’s family had a Church of England background, but as far as I know, they were only nominal Anglicans at best. My father had no time for God or religion and would never talk to me about it until the day he died, and I had been a believer for forty years when that happened. For a reason I am not aware of, when I was about about nine years of age, my mother thought it would be a good thing for me to go to Sunday school at the local Presbyterian Church. That lasted about a year and when I left she did not object.

Some of my friends attended a boys’ club called ‘the Legion’, and when I was about twelve I joined as well and had a great time every

Friday night. One night as we lined up for roll-call, a Salvation Army Officer came into the hall and I asked my friend what he was doing there and I was told that we were at the Salvation Army. I knew what the Salvation Army was, as I had seen them marching along the streets, but had no idea that ‘Legion’ was a part of the Army in spite of all the Army paraphernalia in the hall.

I began to go to the Army Sunday school, learned to play a brass instrument and thankfully learned the Biblical stories, mainly from the O. T. At about 15 years of age I started going to Church on a Sunday night. I did not have a religious background and might as well have been in China, because I didn’t understand the language. Words like Salvation, Redemption,

A Testimony  
By John Hutton,  
Newcastle,  
Australia.



Sanctification, the New Birth etc. meant nothing to me and the whole service seemed very strange – but something kept me going back.

Each Sunday night the Army would faithfully, earnestly and forcefully preach the Gospel and by the end of six months I had learned enough to realize that I was a sinner and that Jesus had died for me and I needed to give my life to Him and invite him into my heart, so that I would have my sins forgiven. For several weeks I was under conviction to make a ‘decision’, but did not have the courage to do so.

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# Setting The Record Straight On Jehovah In Genesis

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Some time after this, after he had run away to the land of Midian and commenced work for Jethro, who was a priest in his nation before the God of Abraham, Midian's father, Moses met *Jehovah*. The account in Exodus 3: 1 – 4:17 begins: "And the Angel of *Jehovah* appeared to him in a flame of fire from the midst of a bush." Two verses later we are told: "God called to him from the midst of the bush ..." The Angel of *Jehovah* in the bush is God Himself. *Jehovah* then introduced Himself to Moses in verse 6 as: "I am the God of your father Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." Moses' response was to prostrate himself and hide his face from this holy God. He was immediately made aware that *Jehovah* was not one of the Egyptian gods by which he was surrounded during his earlier adult years. Neither was *Jehovah* in a covenant relationship with Jethro's people, even though Jethro knew and worshipped Him. *Jehovah* was the God of Abraham-Isaac-Jacob — Israel.

Next, *Jehovah* set about ensuring Moses understood His name. *Jehovah* told Moses twice in that conversation that He was: "*Jehovah, the God of your fathers*", once "*Jehovah, the God of their fathers*" and once "*Jehovah, the God of the Hebrews*". Moses' response was one of humility and due respect as he addressed *Jehovah*, not by name, but as "Oh my Lord [Adonai]". Even when addressing Pharaoh in chapter 5: 1-2, Moses said: "*Thus says Jehovah, God of Israel.*" In refusing Moses' plea, Pharaoh retorted: "*Who is Jehovah, that I should obey His voice...?*", and responded by increasing the hardships on the Hebrew people as his slaves. As a result of their increased burden, the people even turned against Moses. What kind of deliverer/saviour was he? His people were worse off since he got involved!

Thus setting the scene for the passage mentioned in the introduction above, it can be easily seen that *Jehovah* is reassuring Moses of His presence, power and purpose when he says (Exod. 6:2-6a): "*I am Jehovah. I appeared to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, as God Almighty but by My name, Jehovah, I was not known to them. I have also established My covenant with them, to give them the land of Canaan, the land of their pilgrimage in which they were strangers. And I have also heard the groaning of the children of Israel whom the Egyptians keep in bondage, and I have remembered My covenant. Therefore, say to the children of Israel...*"

It does not make sense that in reassuring Moses and the Israelites that He is their fathers' God; that He hears their groaning; that He has remembered the covenant He made with their forefather Abraham in which He stated they would be pilgrims and later enslaved in a strange land, coming out in the fourth generation, 430 years after His promise to Abraham — NOW — to say He was not known to them as *Jehovah*. He uses His name here (6: 2b-4a) so that the children of Israel WILL know it is of Him who Moses speaks. The Hebrew Old Testament text does not have punctuation marks, which makes for difficulty in translating. Whole meanings can be reversed where word order is confused or punctuation placed in a different position. The text in question literally reads (words reversed for simplicity as Hebrew reads right to left): **YHWH raah Abraham Yitschaq Yacob EI Shaddai shem YHWH lo yada gam quwm beriyth** — "*Jehovah appeared Abraham Isaac Jacob God Almighty name Jehovah not known also established covenant*". The rest is up to the translators so that we can make sense of it. Here are a few translation efforts, with the actual words in *italics*:

➤ "I am *Jehovah*. I appeared to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, as God Almighty, but by My name *Jehovah* I was not known to them. I have also established My covenant with them ..." (NKJV)

➤ "I am *Jehovah*. And I appeared unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob, by the name of God Almighty, but by My name *Jehovah* was I not known to them. And I have also established My covenant with them ..." (AV)

➤ "I am *Jehovah*. I appeared to Abraham, to Isaac and to Jacob as God Almighty, but by My name *Jehovah* I did not make Myself known to them. I also established My covenant with them ..." (NIV)

➤ "I am *Jehovah*. And I appeared to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, as God Almighty, but by My name, *Jehovah*, I did not make Myself known to them. And I also established My covenant with them ..." (NASB)

➤ "I am *Jehovah*. I appeared to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, as God Almighty, but by My name *Jehovah* I did not make Myself known to them. I have also established My covenant with them ..." (Amp)

➤ "I am *Jehovah*. And I appeared to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, as God Almighty, and by My name *Jehovah* I never made Myself known to them. And I also established My covenant with them ..." (Interlinear)

➤ "I am *Jehovah*. And I appeared to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, as Almighty God, but I did not make Myself known to them by my holy name, *Jehovah*. I also made My covenant with them ..." (Good News)

God's Holy Spirit is the Author of Scripture. As He cannot be a liar, there can be no conflict between any two passages. One would also expect that He would get the

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grammar right. As this article shows, God WAS known to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob — as well as Adam, Noah, Job, Laban, Jethro, and others — as *Jehovah*, so the Exodus passage cannot be stating that He was not. The answer lies in that rather than a declarative statement, in order to reassure Moses, God was making an interrogative statement — a rhetorical question — “but by My name Jehovah was I not known to them?” The Authorised Version has come very close. It just needed to add a question mark. Translators have combined a negative statement (I was not known) with a positive (I have also established). Together they do not make sense.

The reader should immediately be wondering how, if He wasn't known by His covenant name, God could have established a covenant with these people. Who enters covenants and/or contracts without the name of the person with whom they are covenanting/contracting? Marriage is a covenant relationship. Could you imagine not finding out your husband or wife's name until your Golden Wedding Anniversary, and only ever knowing him or her as Groom or Bride?

The translated text in Exodus 6: 2b-4a could just as easily, and correctly, read:

➤ “I, *Jehovah*, appeared to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob as God Almighty. By My name, *Jehovah*, was I not known to them? I even established a covenant with them.” or

➤ “I am *Jehovah*. I appeared to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob as God Almighty. Was I not known to them by My name, *Jehovah*? I even established a covenant with them.”

I can just see God with Moses: “Why are you so despondent? I,

*Jehovah*, appeared to Abraham, Isaac, and your great-great-grandfather Jacob as God Almighty. Did they not know Me by My name, *Jehovah* — just as you now know Me? I even established a covenant with them, promising to bring you all home to your own land, this year!”

Jethro (*Reuel*, friend of God), a descendant of one of Abraham's sons by Keturah, Midian, acknowledged and worshipped God as *Jehovah* in Exodus 18: 11-12: “*Now I know that Jehovah is greater than all the gods ...’ Then Jethro, Moses’ father-in-law, offered a burnt offering and other sacrifices to God.*” Where did he hear God's personal name if it wasn't from his ancestor, Abraham? For the previous 215 years, the children of Israel had been living in Egypt, in captivity for up to half that time.

Another non-Israelite, Job, believed by most Bible commentators to also be a contemporary of Abraham, knew God as *Jehovah* (Job 1: 21): “... *Jehovah gave and Jehovah has taken away. Blessed be the name of Jehovah.*” From where did Job learn the personal name of God, if it was not revealed until the time of Moses?

*To be continued*

## A Point to Ponder

### The Extent of The Promised Land.

“I have elsewhere pointed out that the land which God by oath and covenant promised to the fathers (of Israel) is about fifty times as large as the Jews actually possessed, and that it is only pitiable ignorance which made the superficial Voltaire utter the blasphemy that the God of the Jews must have been a little God, because He gave His people a land

no larger than Wales and called it ‘a good land and a large’. (Ex. 3.8)

Surely a land which includes in its boundaries an area at least one third more than the whole of France may with right be called ‘a large land’, but it is possible that even the larger land, with its desert parts transformed into fruitful fields, will not be able to contain the whole of blessed Israel in the millennial period, so great and rapid will be the increase of the saved remnant.”

From “The Visions and Prophecies of Zechariah” by David Baron, 1918. Pp. 369/70.

### 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.  
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.

# Cornelius: A Good Man In A Crisis

by Athol Walter

I propose to jump over quite a few of the early chapters of Acts for the moment, and consider the conversion of Cornelius recorded in ch. 10, for if we can see the far-reaching ramifications of his conversion, it will sort out a number of other common misconceptions about the Book of Acts. I have used the figure of signposts throughout Acts in earlier studies, meaning by this that various people and the events in which they figure, are pointers to the progress of God's purpose in those critical years from the Lord's ascension to the setting aside of Israel at the end of Acts. The conversion of Cornelius, together with the group who were with him, is one of the largest of these signposts. Because this study covers a number of different, though associated, topics, I will break it up into sections to make it easier to get hold of.

I'm having a little play on words in this study's title. There is no doubt that Cornelius was a good man. Read what is said about him in v. 2. But more importantly, the conversion of Cornelius and his friends does indeed mark a real moment of crisis in the progress of the witness of the apostles and their fellow workers. If you think I am exaggerating when I say that, please be patient, for that is exactly what I intend to show you. But, in the meantime, consider a couple of things.

Read Acts 10 through if you haven't already done so, and notice the extraordinary lengths the Lord had to go to in order to get Peter to visit Cornelius. Then, notice that it is very soon after this event, that Peter practically disappears from the pages of Acts, and his position as the key figure in the story is taken over by Saul of Tarsus, who was also called Paul. Connected with that is the change of 'headquarters' from Jerusalem to Antioch in Syria. I

think that these few things by themselves should shout 'Crisis' to us.

Who was Cornelius? He was a Roman military officer, a Centurion, meaning he was in charge of 100 men. It does not automatically follow that he was a naturally-born Roman, but because his 'regiment' is said to be the 'Italian Band', it could well be so. We are certain, however, that he was a Gentile and not a Jew, if for no other reason than it took so much to get Peter than go to him.

It is obvious that Cornelius was devout and charitable. Many thoughtful people in the Roman world had become sickened by the multitude of Greek and Roman gods and the depravity that was often connected with their worship. It is understandable, then, that when they came into contact with Judaism with its teaching of the One God who could not be represented by an idol, and who demanded of His followers a moral and upright life, they found themselves attracted to it. Some of them even became Jewish proselytes and underwent circumcision. Many, however, did not deem it necessary to take that step and were content to be 'fellow-travellers', as it were. There were many such folk in the Mediterranean world, as the record of Acts itself shows us, for in many of the cities that Paul and his helpers visited, there were large numbers of Gentiles attending the synagogues. These became a fruitful field for Paul.

Acts 10 recounts how Cornelius received a vision from God in answer to his prayers. He is told to send to Joppa for Peter, who would tell him what he must do. Cornelius, a man of action, immediately dispatched a little delegation to find Peter.

The next day at midday, Peter was

at prayer on the flat roof of the house while waiting for lunch to be served. He was hungry, and fell into a trance, during which he had an extraordinary vision. You already know the details, but I hope you realise just how abhorrent it would have been for Peter to eat any of the animals in the vision. They were unclean as far as the Law of Moses was concerned, and as Peter said, he had never eaten any of them in his whole life. Whose voice was it that told Peter to eat? Peter knew that voice, for he said in reply, 'Not so, Lord.' I doubt that Peter would have taken notice of anyone else but the Lord. Even so he argued. Can you imagine it? The Lord gives His Apostle a command, and Peter says, "No way, Lord", to put it colloquially. And he did it three times! It shows the strength of Peter's commitment to the Law of Moses. Then the sheet was withdrawn.

Peter came out of his trance and was trying to work out what the vision meant, when the delegation from Cornelius knocked at the door and asked for him. The Holy Spirit told Peter that he was to go with them, doubting nothing, for the Spirit had sent them. I suspect that if we put the Spirit's words into plain, everyday English, they would read something like this. "Peter, there are three men at the door looking for you. Go with them, for I have sent them, and don't argue about it. Just go!"

So Peter, with some companions, went with the men, and now we must look carefully at the record. Notice Peter's attitude to Cornelius. Look at v. 28. "You know how unlawful it is for a Jewish man to keep company with or go to one of another nation. But God has shown me that I should not call any

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man common or unclean.” In other words, Peter is saying that if he hadn’t had the vision, he would not have come anywhere near Cornelius and would have considered him common and unclean. ‘Unclean’ is used in the ceremonial sense of the Law of Moses. It does not mean that Cornelius needed a bath! Also, don’t miss the fact that Peter, all these years after Pentecost, still considers himself a Jew under the Law.

In v. 29, Peter asks Cornelius why he sent for him. This is a strange request if Peter’s mission was to preach the Gospel to the ‘whosoever’. Cornelius tells of his prayers and his vision, and asks Peter to tell them what God’s message is. Peter gives something of a potted history of the earthly ministry of the Lord and their witness to Israel since Acts 2. Notice v. 44 & 45 “While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit fell on all those who heard the word. And those of the circumcision who believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out on Gentiles also.” As a result, Cornelius and his friends started to speak in tongues and magnify God. It seems as if the Holy Spirit could wait no longer while Peter was, in a sense, babbling on, and just poured out ‘the power from on high’ on the Gentiles present.

Peter’s next words in v. 47 bear thinking about too. “Can anyone forbid water, that these should not be baptized ...?” It sounds as if Peter half expected some of his party to try to forbid the baptism of these Gentiles. Notice also how these events fulfill the conditions outlined in the closing verses of Mark 16, “... he that believes and is baptized shall be saved ...”

Before we move on, compare Peter’s words to Cornelius with Paul’s address to the men of Athens, which is found in Acts 17. Peter talks about the Lord’s earthly ministry to Israel, and mentions the witness of the prophets. Paul, on the other hand, does not quote the Old Testament once. He uses the altar dedicated to the Unknown God as his point of reference. He refers to God as the Creator of everything, and quotes from their own poets to prove his point. He points to the oneness of humanity, and stresses, that although God has overlooked humanity’s ignorance of Him in times past, the day had now come when God commanded all men everywhere to repent and turn to Him, because a day of judgement, together with a Judge, had been appointed. The only reference he made to the Lord’s earthly life was the resurrection.

If you say that this different approach was only to be expected because Paul was suiting his argument to his audience, my response would be to ask why Peter didn’t do the same? I think the truth is that Peter not only did not know any Greek poets to quote, for instance, but he did not need to know them. He was the Apostle of the Circumcision (Israel, in other words) and he not only was very well equipped for that task, he did it faithfully. Peter was as well suited to the task God chose him for, as Paul was to his.

Returning to the account of Peter and Cornelius, the sequel to it comes in the next chapter. Please read the first 18 verses of ch. 11. We can summarize this passage quite simply. When the assembly in Jerusalem heard that Peter had gone in to Gentiles and had actually baptized them, they called him to account. Peter recounted the whole story to them, and concludes in v. 17 with these words: “If therefore God gave them

the same gift as He gave us when we believed on the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I that I could withstand God?” It seems that the thought of withstanding God might have crossed Peter’s mind. He had needed the vision three times to be convinced that he should even go to Cornelius. By the way, ‘withstand’ is the same word as ‘forbid’ in 10:47.

Now look at 11:18. “When they heard these things they became silent; and they glorified God, saying, “so then God has also granted to the Gentiles repentance to life”. Peter’s words silenced the protests, and you can hear the amazement in their voices as they come to understand that God’s salvation is going beyond the confines of Israel. We’ll think more about that in another section of this study.

It is vital that we understand why the conversion of Cornelius is such a critical turning point in the development of God’s plans. We need to remember that these events took place not long after the death of Stephen. That tragedy marked the climax of the rejection of the apostles’ witness to the Jews of the homeland. To use the language of Hebrews 6, they had, in effect, crucified the Lord the second time, and this time there could be no place for repentance. I think that Stephen’s death marks the end of the **public witness** to the Jews in the homeland, but the end for Israel is not yet.

As has been said before, Acts divides neatly into two parts. The first 12 chapters cover the renewed offer of the Kingdom to that part of the nation of Israel who lived in the homeland. In spite of repeated demonstrations of God’s wonderful power and the teaching of the Apostles, the people, together with their leaders, still said by their actions, “We will not have

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this man Jesus to rule over us". Their refusal was made brutally clear when they took Stephen and murdered him.

There were, however, many Jews in the lands around the Mediterranean and they, too, must have the opportunity to accept the Lord Jesus as Messiah and Saviour. On this point, it is not an accident that Saul of Tarsus appears on the page of Scripture before we have the events of Acts ch. 10. It seems that no approach could be made to a Gentile before the future Apostle of the Gentiles has come onto the scene. We should also remember that the Dispersion, as the Jews outside the homeland were called, was not forgotten by those in Jerusalem, for James, for example, addresses his epistle to 'the twelve tribes scattered abroad'.

## Cornelius and Acts 2.

One of the most important lessons to be learned from the conversion of Cornelius – and I ask you to consider it carefully – is this. It is the usual teaching of pulpit and commentary that the 'church' started in Acts 2 on the Day of Pentecost, and there were many Gentiles, as well as Jews, saved on that day. But read the closing verses of ch. 2, beginning at 44. I will list the main points. The believers were together, and had all things in common. In other words, they shared everything. They worshipped daily in the Temple, and ate together in each others' homes. Is there any doubt that Peter was in the midst of all that 'togetherness'? If there were Gentiles amongst those believers, and they were all eating and sharing together, how is it that some years later, God had to give Peter a special vision to get him to go to Cornelius, and even then Peter is obviously a very reluctant volunteer? Do you remember his words to Cornelius? "You know

how unlawful it is for a Jewish man to keep company with or go to one of another nation." These words are nothing short of ridiculous if Peter had been eating and sharing everything with Gentile converts straight after Pentecost. Isn't it obvious that Peter, up to the time of his visit to Cornelius, knew nothing of any Gentiles coming into the fellowship of the believers? **The truth is that Cornelius, and those with him, are the first Gentile converts in Acts.** And as we have seen, their conversion caused an uproar in the Jerusalem assembly, which would have been impossible if Gentiles were converted in Acts 2.

By the way, if you think I have missed that we are told in Acts 2 that people in the crowd came from many different countries, and therefore were Gentiles, look at two particular verses. 2:5. "And there were dwelling in Jerusalem **Jews**, devout men, from every nation under heaven." Then v. 10. "... **Jews and proselytes** ..." The crowd was made up of Jews and proselytes who had come to Jerusalem for the Feast of Pentecost from all the countries listed, as well, of course, as the residents of Jerusalem. There were no Gentiles there, and the events of Acts 10 prove it beyond a shadow of a doubt.

Another question now demands attention. If Paul was to be the only one appointed as the Apostle of the Gentiles, why was Peter used to bring the first Gentiles into the fellowship of believers? Should it not have been done by Paul? No, is the short answer. It had to be Peter for one simple reason. Look at Matt. 16:19. "And I will give you (Peter) the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven."

Peter was given the keys of the

Kingdom. Did he get a bunch of keys? No, the meaning was symbolic. He was given authority. Did Peter use the keys to unlock a door to anyone? Yes, he did. He opened the door to the Kingdom in Acts 2 to believing Jews, and then, **when the right time came in God's purposes**, he opened the door the second time for believing Gentiles to come in. Peter was faithful to the commission the Lord gave him – "Feed my sheep, Peter" – and he used his authority as the holder of the keys of the Kingdom to open the door to those who would receive Israel's Messiah in the days of His rejection.

Two further questions that must be dealt with are these.

1 Why did the Apostles and others in the Jerusalem Church find it so hard to accept Gentiles?

2. What is the significance of the bringing in of Gentiles at that time?

We will consider these matters in further sections of this study, as the Lord provides.

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## Points to Ponder

"From the Book of Genesis on, revelation always follows obedience. God gives you some truth and sees what you can do with it. If you act on it, He'll give you some more. That's the pattern.

We may say, 'Seeing is believing', but the opposite is the actual truth: 'Believing is seeing'."

Chuck Missler. "Learn the Bible in 24 Hours. P. 216.

"A fisherman cleans the fish AFTER the fish are caught."

# Just So - Or Maybe Not

The following article is made up of extracts taken from a pamphlet published by A. J. Harrop, sometime in the last century in England. As may be seen, Bro. Harrop had a way of looking at things that makes one stop and think.

A: I say, old chap, you are a Christian, aren't you?

B: Oh yes, thank God; been one for many a long year.

A: Do you believe the Bible?

B: Yes, certainly.

A: All of it?

B: Yes, from cover to cover.

A: When do you pay your Redemption money?

B: My what?

A: Your Redemption money. (Exodus 30:13)

B: Oh, that was all done away in Christ. All the Old Testament was fulfilled in Him. We live in New Testament times now.

A: Oh, I see. Would you please give me fifty dollars?

B: I'm afraid I can't do that, old chap.

A: Well, it says "Give to him that asketh of thee". That's New Testament.

B: Yes, but you see I can't afford it. It wouldn't be fair to my wife and family. You see it also says, "If any provide not for his own and specially for those of his own house ... he is worse than an infidel" (1 Tim. 5:8).

A: Oh, I see, that verse cancels the other one out?

B: No, not quite that exactly.

A: Well, never mind. I'm not so hard up really, but there is something more important I would like to ask you.

B: What is that?

A: I'm very conscious of the fact that I'm a sinner.

B: Ah! Now I think I can help you.

A: Good. Will you remit my sins. (John 20:23).

B: Me? Oh no, I can't do that. That was only said to the disciples, you know.

A: Yes, but He said to the disciples when alone by themselves, "Take eat, this is My Body," etc. You do that, don't you? How do you know what is meant for you and what isn't?

B: Well, the Holy Spirit guides you, you know.

A: H'm. I see. Do you think I might join your church?

B: Oh, yes, certainly. Glad to have you. That is, provided you can assure us you have been saved. Then you can be baptized and join the church.

A: But that's wrong, surely.

B: Wrong? How do you mean?

A: Well, I see it says, "He that believeth and is baptized SHALL BE SAVED . (Mark 16:16). You want me to be saved first.

B: How do you manage to get hold of all these queer texts?

A: Queer? I thought you said you believed the Bible.

B: Yes, so I do.

A: Well, just one more thing. I've a sister who is epileptic. Would you come along and heal her for me?

B: I can't do that, old chap.

A: But it says, "Heal the sick, cleanse the leper" – all New Testament.

B: Yes, I know it does, but we can't do it now, you know.

A: Can't do it? Why, you were told to do it!

B: Yes, the early disciples did it; but we can't now.

A: I'm afraid I don't understand. By the way, you do a bit of preaching yourself, don't you?

B: Yes, sometimes.

A: Would you let me come with you when you go to the Synagogue?

B: I never go to a Synagogue.

A: Well, surely you ought to do so. Paul did, didn't he? And Paul said, "To the Jew first."

B: Well, we don't have to do that nowadays, you know it says "Neither Jew nor Greek, bond nor free" etc.

A: Oh, I see, that one cancels out the other one again; it's very mystifying.

B: Oh, no, not really. I explained that the Holy Spirit guides us in the reading. You do seem to think of some strange things. I hope you haven't got many more questions like this.

A: Well, I have a few, but that will do for now.

On this note, the two men parted. Later, A was approached by a third man C.

C: I heard about your conversation with Mr. B the other day and I was very interested.

A: Oh, can you answer any of my questions?

C: Oh yes, I think so. Have you ever heard of "Rightly dividing the Word of Truth"?

A: Yes, those words come in one of the Epistles – Timothy, I think.

C: Good. I see you know your Bible pretty well. Which part ought we to obey, do you think?

A: Why, all of it, I suppose.

C: No wonder you are in a fog. God said to Noah, "Every moving thing that liveth shall be meat for you, but flesh with the life thereof which is the blood thereof shall ye not eat." Are you keeping that commandment?

# ***Just So - Or Maybe Not***

A: No, I don't think that applies to me.

C: Good, we're getting on. I wonder what does apply to us? Do all those sacrifices commanded in Leviticus apply, do you think?

A: Oh, no. B told me they were all fulfilled in Christ. Our instructions are all in the New Testament.

C: Just so. But then you found that Mr. B could not heal the sick, nor would he give you \$50. Why was that, do you think?

A: That's where I'm mystified.

C: Well, the truth is that those instructions don't apply to us either. Neither does water baptism, nor going to the Jew first, nor remitting sins.

A: Here, wait a minute! You'll upset a lot of Christians saying things like that.

C: Yes, I know that, but I'm for the truth, even if I lose all my friends. Are you willing to go on and examine these things?

A: Yes, I'd like to.

C: Good again. Well, we want to discover when our dispensation, as they call it, commenced and what are the instructions concerning it.

A: That would be helpful.

C: Now the dispensation of the Children of Israel commenced when God told Abram to leave his family and country. That dispensation went right on until the end of the Acts of the Apostles.

A: How do you make that out? I can understand it began at Abram, but surely it terminated at the Crucifixion and our dispensation commenced at Pentecost. That's what I've always been taught.

C: That's why you're so confused. That's wrongly dividing the Word of Truth. But we'll come to it gradually. As you know, all of the Old Testament from Gen. 12 on

concerned the Jews – all the historical parts, all the prophecies.

A: How do you make that out? Many Christians think it is really about the church.

C: Well, for instance, take Isaiah's prophecy. The first verse says, "The vision of Isaiah ... concerning Judah and Jerusalem. Not a word about the Church there. So, all that follows really concerns Judah and Jerusalem, and we must be careful not to try to take Israel's blessings from her.

A: I suppose this is what you mean by rightly dividing the Word?.

C: Yes, that's it. Now consider some of the prophecies a minute. They promise to Israel a glorious kingdom – a reign of righteousness – a glorious King – a Messiah – and through this reign all the nations of the earth shall be blessed.

A: These things don't seem to have come off, do they?

C: No, they haven't – at any rate, not yet. Well now, the Messiah came. John the Baptist proclaimed, "Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand." The Lord Jesus announced the same message." You see, it only wanted the repentance of Israel as a nation and the King was there ready.

A: But they crucified Him instead. Now what has happened to all the prophecies?

C: Wait a minute. We know He was crucified, but He rose again and then ascended and then came Pentecost.

A: Yes, the beginning of the Church.

C: No, not the beginning of anything – the end of something. Peter said it was the fulfillment of Joel's prophecy, "In the last days, saith God, I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh." The last days, mark you.

A: You've lost me there..

C: Don't you see? God gave Israel another chance. Peter (the apostle of the Circumcision) was speaking to Jews only. Acts 2:5 says, "There were dwelling at Jerusalem, Jews, devout men, out of every nation under heaven" – a list of places given from whence they came – "Jews and proselytes" (those converted to Judaism). Peter calls them "Ye men of Israel".

A: Excuse me just a minute. That makes me want to cry. To think that after all that had happened – the mocking – the railing on Him – the underhanded cruelty – the scourging – the crucifixion – to think that God could forgive and give them another chance after that. It's too wonderful to think on.

C: Yes, but it's true. His love is so amazing. Peter said to the Children of Israel, "Repent that your sins may be blotted out," which of course, includes all those things you mentioned.

A: How wonderful!

C: Yes, and with their repentance would follow the fulfillment of the prophecies – the great tribulation – the antichrist – the glorious return of the Lord – the setting up of the Kingdom – and the "last days" of that era and the beginning of the millennial reign of Righteousness and Peace.

A: That accounts for the expectant note in all the apostles' messages. They all said the return of the Lord was near.

C: Exactly. Paul thought he would live to see it, and our Lord suggested that John might do so.

A: Yes, yes, I remember all that, but now all those prophecies have failed, I suppose.

C: Oh no, the Jews failed – the prophecies were postponed. The last chapter of the Acts reveals the

# A Search For Truth

One night, as the appeal was in progress, I felt a hand on my shoulder and a voice asking, 'Would you like to make a decision tonight?' I went out to the front and made the decision that I knew I should. I don't know who the person was who helped me get the courage that night but I thank God for that person. What I do know is that I was Born Again that night and that it was a marvellous experience.

In time, I got married, had children, settled down in the Army and it was an active and good life. The Army was very evangelical, so there was plenty to do. Music played a big part in the worship and service, and I enjoyed playing in the band. Our social life was also well catered for.

The only problem I had was that I could not help listening to the sermons every Sunday, even though I was advised by others not to do so as they were too confusing. Sometimes things were said that I couldn't understand, especially about the Bible, and when I asked someone what was meant, I was told that it wasn't important to understand everything. What was important was to be as involved as possible in the 'work' of the Army, and even if I had disagreed, I could not argue that the 'work' was a good thing to be doing.

Years passed with me asking questions and not getting answers when, about thirty years ago, an event occurred that changed my life. I was the speaker in an 'Open-air' meeting one Sunday night, and as I gave my talk, a fellow, well under the influence of alcohol, began heckling me. I only wanted to get my talk finished as quickly as possible, and I wished that the earth would open up and swallow that heckler. When I finished, I took my place in the band and we began to play a march. In the

middle of the piece, the thought hit me hard that I didn't have the words that the heckler needed, and then the words of a pop song passed through my mind. I must have heard this song on the radio at work. In the song a man was trying to win his girl and telling her 'its only words, but words are all I have to win your heart away'. I did not have the words that the heckler, or I needed, and I made up my mind to get them. But where from?

I learned twenty years later, that the words of the song were written and sung by a group called the Bee Gees. I am convinced that God caused those words to cross my mind, but why a pop song? It would have been no use Him using the words of Scripture, because the terrible truth was that I didn't know any.

I had accepted the first doctrine of my Church – and still do to this day – which says that 'the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament are given by inspiration of God (or are God-breathed) and that **they only** constitute the Divine rule for Christian faith and practice'. I decided that if I was to get the right words then the Bible was the place to get them from, but was the Bible inspired? Could I trust it? And if I could, what on earth did it all mean?

So I began to listen to our minister even more intently. He was a good man, the only man I have ever met that I consider to be without guile, but he did not have answers for me. I listened to Pentecostal friends, and even got baptized, but it didn't work. I got the magazines by Herbert Armstrong, and while I certainly learned some stuff there, especially about the fallacies of evolution, they did not hold the answers that I was looking for, whatever they were! After a lot of thought, I decided that the Bible must be God's Word because I could not accept that the God who

loved me so much that He gave His only born Son to die for me, would not leave a record that I could not trust. I decided that if I could not understand the Bible, then the fault must lie in me and not in the Book.

Some years of frustration followed, and I even began to despair. At that time, news filtered throughout the Army in my city that a man and his family had come up from down Melbourne way. They were attending the Army in a different suburb than I did, and he had opened a Christian Book shop. The message was that this man was a heretic, especially because he believed that a person could not 'lose their salvation'. He was to be avoided at all costs, and I determined to do just that.

One day, after I had my hair cut, I noticed a Christian Book Shop just a few doors along the street from the barber shop, and I decided to go in and have a browse. The owner of the shop seemed a nice fellow and the thing that impressed me was that he appeared to have a fairly good knowledge of Scripture. As I was leaving, he gave me a booklet called 'Far Above All', and when I got into my truck I threw it up on the dashboard intending to read it later. Many months passed and I decided to visit the shop again and I noticed the book on the dashboard. The blue cover had turned white from the effects of the sun, but I thought I had better read it before I went to the shop in case the owner asked me what I thought about it. I hardly understood a word in the book, but a few things seemed to make some sense, even to me who knew almost nothing.

In the course of our conversation, I said that what I liked about Paul was that he based what he wrote on the words of Jesus. The man gently asked me, 'So you believe that the words of Jesus are more inspired than the words of Paul?'

# A Search For Truth

'Of course I do', I replied, and he didn't argue.

A few nights later, as I thought about our conversation, the realization hit me like a brick between the eyes that if I believed the doctrine which I quoted above, then, every word in the Bible must be of equal inspiration. The first words in Genesis must be just as much inspired as the last words in Revelation and every word in between.

The first two parts of my quest had been decided. 'Was the Bible inspired?' Yes, I believed that it was. 'Could I trust it?' Yes, I believed that I could, for surely the God who was capable of creating the universe with a word was more than capable of preserving His Word against any odds. The third question remained to be answered, 'What on earth did it all mean'? What was the key to understanding it?

At the next meeting with the Book Shop owner, he pointed out that Israel was not the Church and that Paul had received a new revelation from God that was written about for the first time in Ephesians 3. Paul had also instructed Timothy in his last letter, that to be an

unashamed workman in the sight of God, the Bible had to be 'rightly divided'. I didn't understand all that was meant by what he said, but I could see that the words were there in the Book that I believed must have the answers that I was looking for. I had never read Ephesians 3 before, or if I had, I had never had the ears to hear it. But I had discovered the 'key' that I had been searching for.

It was about this time that I discovered that the Book Store owner was the very heretic I had been warned about and who I had been determined to avoid! I think that God had other plans.

Here, at last, was the answer to my final question. The Bible began to make sense, but there was so much to learn. About thirty years have passed since then and I have learned a lot more and know there is still much more to learn. I am, however, seeing the great plan of God and how perfect it is. I still apply the principle of 'right division' to every thing that I hear. Sometimes I hear something that surprises me, or that I think might be wrong, and then have to admit, after examination and testing it against other Scripture, that I have

to change my opinion on some things. I am, however, more convinced now than ever I was way back then, that Paul was indeed given a new revelation from God. He can be trusted as God's Apostle, His Sent One to me, a Gentile.

I have discovered that I am in a Church which was chosen 'before the *foundation* of the world' and am 'highly favoured', and that I am 'co-seated in the heavenly places with Christ Jesus', 'far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age, but also in that which is to come'. As wonderful as those blessings are, they are not the reason that I believe in 'right division'. It is the only approach to Scripture that I have found or heard of that answers more questions than it raises, and using it, the Bible makes sense. The Bible is not a book of contradictions and errors, but every word and passage has its place and those things which are hard to understand at the moment, will be worked out at the right time and in the right place in the great plan of God and according to the 'good pleasure of His will'.

.....cont from Pg. 9

## Just So - Or Maybe Not

final pleadings of Paul to his countrymen and the final refusal, and that's when that dispensation ended.

A: Well, what happened next?

C: Once more God showed His love and grace. He made a special revelation to Paul, Ephesians 3:1-10. He revealed a secret (mystery) never before made known. Paul no longer says "For the hope of Israel am I bound with this chain." Now he becomes the "Prisoner for you Gentiles". So you see all the instructions concerning this dispensation are given in epistles written after Acts 28, and these are

the only ceremonial instructions that apply to us.

A: Now I begin to understand why Paul in one place suggests that this is no time to marry and have children, and in another says, "Let the younger women marry." It explains quite a lot, but there are still many questions in my mind.

C: Well, now you have the key, 2 Tim. 2:15. And there is another verse to remember.

A: Which verse?

C: Why, 2 Timothy 3:16, "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God and is profitable for doctrine - reproof - instruction in

righteousness," etc.

A: Well, that brings us back to where we started.

C: Yes, just so - or maybe not. Well, goodbye for now. We'll talk later.

THE END. (Possibly).





Guest Speaker Mike Penny from the UK (and his wife Sylvia) will be joining us for the 2006 Annual Conference. Mike is an experienced and motivating speaker on all subjects scriptural and has many published articles and books.

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