

Spiritual Blessings



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Exposition

The Name Jehovah in Genesis 1 to 11

Part 3

Jehovah's Oath

The Angel of Jehovah called to Abraham a second time at Moriah after Abraham had offered the substitute ram, and named the place *Jehovah Jireh*. This time God swore an oath to Abraham (Gen. 22: 16-18): “By Myself I have sworn,’ says *Jehovah*, ‘because you have done this thing and have not withheld your son ...’” God swore that oath by the only name powerful enough to stand: His own, *Jehovah*. The oath is in the name itself, not just an inference that God may or may not have a personal name. There can be no doubt here that God introduces Himself as *Jehovah*, wanting to bless Abraham abundantly, and through him bless all peoples.

After the birth of John the Baptist, Zacharias proclaimed: “*Blessed be the Lord God of Israel for He has visited and redeemed His people ... to remember His holy covenant — the oath which He swore to our father, Abraham.*” (Luke 1: 68, 72-73). Zacharias, High Priest, knew the Torah like the back of his hand. He knew implicitly that Abraham knew God as *Jehovah* and that there were no conflicting passages in the Books of the Law. The oath to Abraham was sworn in God’s name, *Jehovah*.

The writer to the Hebrews recorded: “*For when God made a promise to Abraham, because He*

could swear by no one greater, swore by Himself...” (Heb. 6: 13). The writer understood that to swear by Himself, God had to use His name, *Jehovah*.

Moses did not change the words of Jehovah’s oath. God certainly changed the names of Abram, Sarai, and Jacob in Genesis, however Moses never used their new names before the changes were made, i.e., Moses never used the name Abraham before *Jehovah* had changed it from Abram. We can be sure that, to be consistent, Moses would not have used the name, *Jehovah*, if it had not yet been revealed throughout Genesis.

Covenant developments (Gen. 25: 12–50: 26)

Both Isaac and Rebekah pleaded with *Jehovah* regarding a child (25: 21-22). *Jehovah’s* response to Rebekah (25: 23) indicates His continuing covenant development with Isaac, as opposed to Ishmael, and Jacob, as opposed to Esau: “*Jehovah said to her, ‘Two nations are in your womb. Two peoples shall be separated from your body. One people shall be stronger than the other and the older shall serve the younger.’*” It was as *Jehovah* that God told Isaac (26: 2-3): “*Do not go down to Egypt ... dwell in this land and I will be with you and bless you ... and I will perform the oath which I swore to Abraham your father ... because Abraham obeyed My voice and kept My charge, My commandments, My statutes, and My laws.*” Abraham

by Kenneth Evans

obeyed and kept *Jehovah’s* charge, commandments, statutes, and laws. Obviously these pre-dated and differed from those of the Law of Moses. If Moses stands condemned of overwriting later revelations of God into Genesis, than he must equally be guilty of overwriting the law God gave him at Sinai back into Genesis. I don’t hear any commentators suggesting this. No doubt, because he did not. Neither did he do such a thing with God’s name. The writer to the Hebrews understood Isaac to be a man of faith in *Jehovah* (Heb. 11: 20).

It was of *Jehovah* that Jacob spoke (27: 20) when responding, in the guise of his brother, to his father: “*Because Jehovah, your God brought it to me.*” Jacob understood that Isaac knew God personally and in covenant relationship. Isaac blessed Jacob when sending him away to safety from Esau by the name of *God Almighty* (28: 3). That he was out

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Editorial

Athol Walter

The New Year is already with us, and in fact, as I write, January has almost flown past! Those of our readers who know Eveline and me personally will be concerned to know that she is experiencing some health problems. She has suffered several strange turns over the last 18 months, and none of the medical people could get to the bottom of it. In fact, we spent New Years Eve in the emergency ward of a Newcastle hospital. But just over a week ago, she had a more severe episode, and this time it was tracked down to 'silent' heart attacks. The 'silent' means no pain, so we have discovered, and it was that fact which caused all the confusion.

She was in hospital for a week, during which time an angiogram

showed that her coronary arteries were clear of blockages so no by-passes or stents were required. But the heart muscle is damaged and weakened and she is now home again, and adjusting to a regime of various medications and gentle exercises. The love, concern and prayers of our family and friends has been overwhelming, and is greatly appreciated. We thank the Lord for such an outcome, and we will need to make some changes not only to our life-style, but also to some avenues of our service for Him. We both are very conscious of His presence with us.

My apologies to those of you who don't know us personally for including these personal details, but I hope you understand that many readers do know us, and will appreciate them.

So what have we in this issue? Ken Evans' series on the Name of Jehovah in Genesis concludes, and I certainly hope that you give these articles the attention they deserve. Mike Penny has contributed an

article for the Dispensational Basics series dealing with the reasons for the negative responses by the Jerusalem Church to the conversion of Cornelius, his family and friends. Again, I hope that you think deeply about the implications of the facts presented in this series, facts that are clear on the pages of God's Word, but which seem to have been missed by so many.

Then to follow up on her report of our annual conference last year, Sylvia Penny has given us an account of the rest of their visit to Australia. Perhaps it will whet the appetite of overseas readers to come and share with us in our annual conference later in the year. We would love to have you.

What blessed people we are! The Lord is gracious and very kind, and is faithful to every promise made to us. What we can give Him in return seems so little, but that is no excuse for giving nothing!

Yours in His love and grace,

Athol Walter.

A New Year's Challenge For You.

(Notes from an old preacher's sermons)

How are your New Year's resolutions going? It seems to be the rule rather than the exception that we don't do very well with them. There are, however, a few exceptional folk who make their resolutions and carry them out without fail. Oh, to be like that!

I must admit I got to the stage a few years ago, where I stopped making any resolutions at all, because I had learned from experience that I not only didn't keep them, but I had forgotten what they were by the 1st of February!

It must be said, however, that goals are very worthwhile to guide our efforts, and after all, a new year's resolution is nothing more nor less

than an expressed goal, and as such, it would certainly be to our profit to make good ones and carry them through.

Whether you have made any resolutions or not this year, I would like to urge you very strongly to resolve now that for this year you will take God at His word. If each one of us really did take God at His word, I'm sure we would look back this time next year and be absolutely astounded at the way things had gone. I'm sure that our personal lives, our families, our work and the Christian fellowship we are involved in, would all be greatly different.

Now, if you ask me to give you a detailed account of how things will be different in 12 months time should you take God at His word, I could not do it. I could not give

details for the simple reason that God has different plans for us each. I believe, however, that I can give you some general guidelines.

There is one thing I can say with certainty, and that is that it will not be easy to carry out this resolution. It will be exciting, though, because the moment we try to get closer to the Lord and serve Him more faithfully, the enemy is going to stir up some trouble, somewhere, somehow. But we have the Lord's constant presence, and we are more than conquerors through Christ – if we will only take God at His word.

As well as trouble, there will also be challenges. These come from God, for when we place ourselves on His altar, He will test us to see how sincere we are. I know from *Continued Pg. 4.....*

The Name Jehovah in Genesis 1 to 11

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of fellowship with God is obvious. He knew it was God's intention that Jacob receive the blessings — *"the older shall serve the younger"* — but set about to give them to Esau. Just as Adam hid from *Jehovah* when guilty of sin, no doubt Isaac felt guilty and ashamed, and could not therefore enjoy uninterrupted fellowship with Him.

It was Jacob who struggled with God. When he asked God for His name, God replied: *"Why is it that you ask about My name?"* Jacob has been preserved in history as a man of faith in *Jehovah* (Heb. 11: 21): *"By faith, Jacob, when he was dying, blessed each of the sons of Joseph and worshipped, leaning on the top of his staff."* But there is a distinct lack of use of the name, *Jehovah*, by Jacob. He spoke of God with respect and awe, built an altar at a place he named *El Eloe Israel* [God, the God of the prince of God] (33: 20), built another altar at *El Bethel* (35: 7), and was aware that *El Shaddai* (35: 11) spoke with him. This seems odd for one who enjoyed a covenant relationship with *Jehovah*, with all its repeated and renewed promises. Jacob — almost robbed of his rightful birthright and blessing by his father and brother, duped of his bride by his father-in-law, cheated of his income by the same man, robbed of his beloved son for twenty-two years by his other sons, cheated of his daughter's virginity by the Hivite, Shechem — the deceived, not the deceiver, esteemed and honoured God, although he appears not to have made use of His personal name. Odd until, that is, one realises that the written account is mostly within that section of Genesis authored by his ungodly brother, Esau (25: 19–36: 1).

Meaning of the Name, Jehovah

The name of God, *Jehovah*, is used throughout the Old Testament, appearing more than 6,400 times.

It was obviously very special to the Jewish people as seen by the way they guarded against its misuse.

Jehovah, or YHWH, bears the meaning **self-existent** or **eternal**. Hence the use of *I Am* by God in Exodus — *I Am*; The Self-existent One. When used by the Lord Jesus to explain that He existed even before Abraham — *"Most assuredly, I say unto you, before Abraham was, I AM."* (John 8: 58) — we realise an element of **unchanging** character exists: *"Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, today, and forever"* (Heb. 13: 8). Whilst we speak of the Living God, life is never associated with *Jehovah*. It is inconceivable that He could be other than Who He is. The name is derived from two Hebrew words, Yah/Jah — He is — and Hawah/Havah — to be, or being.

It is used of God in relation to his involvement with His people, be they people from creation to post-Babel, the patriarchs, or the nation of Israel. Israel's relationship is as the wife of *Jehovah*. The name *Jehovah* expresses God's moral and spiritual attributes, His personality, His unchanging nature and will, and the source of every spiritual blessing upon humankind.

As well as by itself, *Jehovah* appears in the Old Testament in conjunction with other names, for instance:

- *Jehovah Jireh*, by Abraham in Gen. 22: 14, *Jehovah will Provide* — because of His omniscience, He is able to provide, supply, and care for our every need;
- *Jehovah Nissi*, by Moses in Exod. 17: 15, *Jehovah our Banner* — our source of unity and being; and to whom we will be loyal and give every honour;
- *Jehovah Shalom*, by Gideon in Judg. 6: 24, *Jehovah our Peace* — the source of our peace, rest, healing, restitution, redemption ...

- *Jehovah Asah*, Psalm 95: 6, *Jehovah our Maker* — the Potter, moulding and shaping us into His image; the Master Carpenter.

Conclusion

As we have seen, after each of the crises of the fall, the global flood and the tower of Babel, it was *Jehovah* who gave a word of grace, each a prophecy directed at His coming as Redeemer:

- *"Jehovah God said to the serpent, 'Because you have done this ... I will put enmity between your seed and her Seed; He shall bruise your head and you shall bruise His heel'."* (Gen. 3: 14-15) — *Jehovah* covenanted to bless humankind by His grace, guaranteeing that a male descendant of Eve, therefore human, would forever set aright things that sin had broken.

- *"Blessed be Jehovah, God of Shem ... May God ... dwell in the tents of Shem."* (Gen. 9: 26-27) — *Jehovah* Himself will come in the line of Shem and live on earth. What a promise!

- *"Jehovah said to Abram, '... I will make you a great nation and I will bless you; I will make your name great and you shall be a blessing; I will bless those who bless you and curse those who curse you, and in you all the families will be blessed'."* (Gen. 12: 1-3) — At Babel, the people had sought a name for themselves, however *Jehovah* graced Semitic Abram with a name: to be the source of Messianic blessing both to his own descendants and to all the people groups of the world.

Jehovah entered into covenant with Adam — the Adamic Covenant — so as to bless all Adam's descendants, through Eve's Seed.

Jehovah entered into covenant with Noah — the Noahic Covenant — so as to bless all Noah's descendants, through Shem's Seed.

The Name Jehovah in Genesis 1 to 11

Jehovah entered into covenant with Abraham — the Abrahamic Covenant — so as to bless all the people/families of the world, through his Seed.

Jehovah entered into covenant with Moses — the Mosaic Covenant — to establish the means through which Israel would become that blessing, set apart unto *Jehovah* in relationship, service, and witness.

To Pharaoh, *Jehovah* said through Moses: "By this [the plagues] you

will know that I am Jehovah." (Exod. 8: 17). It wasn't that God necessarily sought to punish or annihilate ungodly nations. He doesn't want that any should perish. But God will use whatever means and power is required to ensure all peoples know that He is *Jehovah*, God of Heaven. Even the children of Israel had to choose whether or not to serve *Jehovah*: "Choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve ... and the people said to Joshua, 'We will serve Jehovah'. So Joshua said

to the people, 'You are witnesses against yourselves that you have chosen Jehovah, to serve Him'." (Josh. 24:15, 21-22)

That has been the choice for every person down through the ages: "Will you choose *Jehovah*?"

May your answer to that question be as it was for Joshua (Josh. 24: 15), and Kenneth Evans: "As for me and my house, we will serve Jehovah."

"For whoever calls on the name, Jehovah, shall be saved." (Joel 2: 32; Rom. 10: 13) □

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 2007

22nd - 24th September 2007
at Camp Toukley.

A New Year's Challenge For You.

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my own experience, as well as from what others have told me, that God takes us at our word, so if you make a commitment to Him and promise Him something, be sure He will expect you to follow through.

I think you can also be sure that ways of service will open up that you may never have dreamed of. Now that can be rather frightening, but I have found that God doesn't try to put square pegs into round holes. The Lord knows us better even than we do ourselves, and we can trust Him to call us to tasks that are within our capabilities and talents. It is also wonderfully true that He fits us for the work He asks us to do. And if we will indeed take Him at His word and 'trust and obey', not only will there be great things done for Him, but there will be wonderful fulfillment for us as we see the hand of the Lord achieving undreamt-of outcomes.

And imagine the effect on our church or fellowship group, if even a small number of the members faithfully took God at His word for one year. The growth in love, in fellowship, in maturity, in understanding and in service would be incalculable. So those are some of the general things that

I believe would surely follow if we were to take God at His word, even for one year.

But what does it mean to take God at His word? How do we do it? To say that we will take God at His word is simply to give a definition of faith, for that is precisely what faith is. Faith operates on every level of our lives, actually. Someone tells us something, and for a variety of reasons, we believe what we have been told, and we act on it. Of course, what God has said is generally far more important than what others may tell us, but the principle is the same. To have faith in God simply means that we believe what He has said, and we act on it.

A great example in the Bible of someone taking God at His word is Abraham. God certainly tested that man's willingness to obey Him. Abraham had believed God when, against all the odds, he was told he and Sarah would have their son. Then some years later, God said, "Take, your son, your ONLY ISAAC, (for that is what the Hebrew literally says) and offer him to me as a sacrifice." What a test that was! How would you have responded to that challenge? I doubt very much that I would have

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Not More Christians! By Michael Penny



(When Mike and Sylvia were with us in Australia several months ago, I asked Mike if he would contribute the next article in the Dispensational Basics series, and deal with the very negative reaction of the Jewish Church to the conversion of Cornelius and his friends. This article is Mike's response, and I am very grateful that he has taken the time out of his busy schedule to give us this study. Ed.)

I read about this church where one of the leaders, who while away from his own church on a ministry trip, went into the home of a person who was not fully accepted in the community. Anyway, when he was there this person and his family all responded to the ministry of the leader and all became believers in the Lord Jesus Christ. However, when the leader returned home, he was questioned and criticised by his church as to why he had visited such a person.

Can you believe it? Well I can, because I read about it. No, not in a newspaper or a magazine, but in the Bible! The leader was Peter. The person was Cornelius. And the church was in Jerusalem – see Acts 11:1-18. What was going on here?

A common error

One of the common errors in misunderstanding the Bible is to

read truth revealed at one time into earlier books of the Bible. For example, if Abraham lived to be 175 years and there are 52 weeks in a year, how many Sabbaths did Abraham keep? This is not an exercise in arithmetic because the answer is zero. Abraham lived 400 years before the Law was given to Moses. Thus we are wrong to read Sabbath Law back into Genesis or into the earlier parts of Exodus.

It is true that God wanted the message of Salvation to go to the Gentiles, but when did that come in?

God's revealed plan up to that time

During the Old Testament, the Gospels and into the Acts period, there were three strands of teaching which concerned the Gentiles.

(1) First there was the Abrahamic Covenant of Genesis 12:1-3, in which God said "I will bless those who bless you."

(2) Second, as time went by, it became possible for Gentiles to join themselves to the people of Israel. To do this they had to be circumcised, observe the Sabbath, and do their best to keep the rest of the Mosaic Law, just like any Jew: see Isaiah 56:3-7. Such Gentile converts to Judaism were known as 'Proselytes'.

(3) And there was also the ultimate plan; that Israel would become a Kingdom of Priests to the Gentile Nations, teaching them about the Lord: see Exodus 19:4-6.

The Abrahamic Covenant

We see this in operation when our Lord was on earth. When He came to Capernaum there was a Gentile Centurion whose servant was ill and needed healing. The leaders of the Jews came to Christ and said to Him, "This man deserves to have you do this, because he loves our nation and has built our

synagogue" (Luke 7:4-5). And our Lord healed the centurion's servant.

And this was the same with Cornelius, of whom we read, "He and all his family were devout and God-fearing; he gave generously to those in need and prayed to God regularly" (Acts 10:2). As he was stationed in Caesarea in Judea the poor to whom he gave were obviously Jewish poor.

Proselytes and God-fearers

During the time our Lord was on earth, and into the Acts of the Apostles, a number of thinking Gentiles became disillusioned with the emptiness and hypocrisy of pagan worship. Drunkenness was the mode of worship in the temple of Bacchus; the temple of Zeus in Corinth had 1,000 priestesses, well, prostitutes really, and intercourse was considered an act of worship; and orgies figured in the temple of Dionysius.

However, throughout that Greco-Roman world there was a hard working, moralistic group of people. Their worship consisted of singing songs, praying, reading from some scrolls and listening to someone talk about the reading. Slowly, a number of Gentiles started to attend the synagogues and in some places the number got so great, that when new synagogues were built there were special sections for these Gentiles, who were known as God-fearers.

If these God-fearers took the step of being circumcised, then they became Proselytes and were fully embraced into both Jewish religion and society. However, God-fearers, while welcome in the synagogue, were not welcomed into Jewish homes and it was not acceptable for Jews to visit their homes. Cornelius was a God-

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fearer (Acts 10:2) and we read of many more in the synagogues that Paul visited.

The Kingdom of Priests

However, the big plan for the Gentiles would only be fulfilled when Israel became a kingdom of priests and this was on the mind of the disciples when, at the start of Acts, they asked the Lord “Are you at this time going to restore the Kingdom to Israel?” (Acts 1:6). He gave them an evasive answer, but He did give them a road map – Jerusalem first, then Judea, then Samaria and then, ultimately, the ends of the earth (Acts 1:8).

They embarked on this work gaining thousands of converts (Acts 2:41; 4:4), but opposition arose, headed by the Jewish leadership, and many Christians fled Jerusalem and Judea. Thus the task of converting Israel and of them becoming a kingdom of priests, was stalled so go to the Gentiles? It's not time yet!

A New Thing

It was no secret what God would do if the nation of Israel did not fully obey the Law; Deuteronomy 28:15-68 spells out the judgments. Also, Isaiah 6 made it clear that if the Nation hardened its hearts and became blind and deaf, it would be cut down like a tree, and taken into exile – which is just what happened at the hands of the Babylonians.

However, during Acts there was now a different problem in Israel; some believed and some opposed. “Israel has experienced a hardening in part,” is how Paul described it in Romans 11:25. What was God going to do about this? Romans 11:11-27 provides the answer.

God sent some people, like Peter, to the Gentiles and His reason for

doing so was to arouse Israel, to provoke them, and so to save them (Romans 11:11-14). The analogy given in Romans 11 is that of a wild olive branch (the Gentiles) being grafted into the cultivated olive tree (Israel). In olive farming this would frequently result in the cultivated olive tree producing more and better fruit. This was God's desire for Israel, but this was something new and had been a secret (a better word than ‘mystery’ in Romans 11:25). If all this is the case, then we can well understand Peter's reluctance to go to Cornelius in the first place and the Jerusalem church questioning him about it.

However, we must make it clear that this was the reason for Gentile salvation during the period covered by the Acts of the Apostles, viz. to provoke Israel through jealousy into accepting the Messiah. But that is not the reason why Gentiles are saved today.

Did it work?

As we read Acts we can see the Jews being aroused in a number of places. Some did believe while others were provoked, but not into believing that Jesus was the Messiah (Christ), the Son of God. Rather they became jealous, abusive and violent (Acts 13:45). And throughout the rest of the Acts of the Apostles this situation continued, but it could not go on and on for ever, and it seems that slowly the opposition grew.

When we get to the end of Acts we read the final pronouncement of Isaiah's sad prophecy. Israel had now hardened its heart. It was deaf to the teachings of the Apostles and blind to the Scriptures which clearly showed that Jesus was the Christ, the Son of God. As that was the situation it is not surprising that, just as years earlier that nation had been taken into exile by the Babylonians, Israel

were soon exiled throughout the Roman Empire when the Romans destroyed the city and the temple in AD70.

What was God going to do now?

Following the quotation from Isaiah 6 in Acts 28:25-28, we read that, “God's salvation has been sent to the Gentiles and they will listen.” And listen they did. This was the point where the Secret (Mystery) concerning the Church which is His Body was first revealed through Paul. This was God's answer to the failure of Israel. They pass off the centre of God's stage for the present time, and no longer do they have the privileged first place that was once theirs.

When Christian history opens at the start of the second century, we find that the early church fathers were all Gentiles. There was not one Jew amongst them. And to this present day, God deals with us all simply on the basis of our kinship to Adam, not as Jew or Gentile.

.....Now let's pause & consider

– by Athol Walter

The last three articles in the Dispensational Basics series dealing with the conversion of Cornelius—including the one above by Mike Penny – touch on significant developments in God's plan for Israel and the nations. I believe they are important enough for us to pause now and ponder the implications of what happened during those early years of the Acts period.

A correct understanding of the position and purpose of Cornelius resolves a number of contentious issues. These issues not only bear on events at the beginning of Acts, they also cast their shadows on what follows Peter's visit to Cornelius. They also help to clarify our position today in the purposes of God. So let's pause and review

Now Let's Pause and Consider

the more outstanding points in these three articles.

The passage of time is not obvious in the Book of Acts, but most commentators state that at least seven years – possibly more – had passed between the events of chapters 1-4 and Peter's visit to Cornelius. We must remember those passing years.

Point 1. Following the conversion of thousands of Jews in those early days, we read that all who believed had all things in common, and moved from house to house sharing meals and fellowship. (Acts 2:46; 4:31-33). The Apostles, and others, witnessed not only to the common people of Israel, but also to the leaders of the nation. The witness was accompanied by great signs and wonders.

Years pass and we come to ch. 10 where Peter goes to visit Cornelius after receiving an extraordinary vision. The Scriptures testify to the upright character of Cornelius, yet Peter does not hesitate to tell him that he, Peter, would not have come to visit him had it not been for the vision. Cornelius and those with him were converted and began to speak in tongues.

Pause here for a moment. If there were Gentiles present and converted at Pentecost in Acts 2, as is usually taught, and if all those who became believers in Jesus as the Messiah had meals together, surely Peter, being thus accustomed to eating and fellowshiping with Gentiles, would have not needed any special prompting from God to go to the Gentile Cornelius. The truth is – and it is clearly stated in the Scriptural record – that there were only Jews and proselytes present on the Day of Pentecost, and that NO Gentiles came into the fellowship of believers before the

conversion of Cornelius. He was the **first Gentile** to be converted in the Book of Acts, at least 7 years after Acts 2.

Point 2. Why were there no Gentiles early in Acts, and why, suddenly, is Peter sent to a Gentile? There were no Gentiles in the early years because it was necessary that Israel be brought into a state of righteousness with God, in order that they could become the nation of priests that God had destined them to be. So in the early part of Acts, the message is to Israel ONLY, and then after the conversion of Cornelius, it is to Israel FIRST. Obviously, Cornelius' conversion is a moment of some importance.

Point 3. So, what is the point of Cornelius, the first Gentile convert? Paul gives the answer in Romans 9-11. In spite of the ministry of Peter and his colleagues and the many miraculous signs performed by them, the nation of Israel as a whole was not responding positively to the witness. The heart of the nation was becoming hardened. Drastic measures were called for, so God sent Peter to Cornelius, opening the door to Gentile converts, in an effort to stir up the people of Israel to accept their spiritual destiny even out of a jealous spirit.

Point 4. Acts 11 shows that Peter's visit to Cornelius shocked the Jerusalem believers. Peter was almost put on trial! The reasons for their strong reaction is not hard to find, and Mike Penny has discussed them in his article above. The Jewish religion emphasised the superiority of the Jew over the Gentile at every turn, and indeed, the various religions of the Gentile world were often thoroughly debauched. So, not only did their religion put a barrier between themselves and Gentiles, the immoral and shallow lives of

many Gentiles disgusted Jews who came in contact with them.

However, many Gentiles were looking for something better. Judaism, with its high moral standards and the belief in one God, attracted them, and many of them found their way to Jewish synagogues. Here they were tolerated, but they were not received into Jewish homes or society. So, imagine then the thoughts and feelings of Jewish believers in Jerusalem when they heard that Peter had gone into a Gentile house and fellowshiped with them. How could people who probably indulged in grossly immoral practices be welcomed into their fellowship? Could they possibly be expected to eat with them and share with them, when their whole upbringing had forbidden it? It is hard for us to enter into their feelings, but we should try to understand their dilemma as much as possible.

Point 5. Why was it Peter, and not Paul, who was sent to Cornelius, a Gentile? Simply because the Lord had given to Peter the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven. Peter's commission was to feed the sheep of the House of Israel, and he did his appointed task admirably. But when it came to Gentiles, Peter was just not the man. But it was Peter who had to use the Keys. He opened the door – figuratively, of course – to Jewish believers on the Day of Pentecost, and he also opened the door for Gentiles when he went to Cornelius. But it was Paul and his colleagues who took the witness to Jews living outside of Palestine. Paul was as much a Jew as Peter was, but because of his upbringing in a Gentile city, and probably because of his temperament too, he was not at a loss when confronted by Gentiles. But

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A Brief History of Our Time in Australia!



by Sylvia Penny

We spent 3½ weeks in Australia altogether, and the time just flew by. We met a number of old friends, and many new ones – so many, that we lost count after a while! Mike was kept busy for most of our trip, taking meetings in several different places centred around the Newcastle area, and also near Brisbane. By the end of our visit he had conducted nearly 30 different meetings. On our occasional free days our hosts kindly took us to visit different places of interest, to give us a “taste of Australia”, and we ended up seeing lots of beautiful scenery, and many plants and animals unique to Australia. We also sampled lots of home-cooking which was wonderful, the most unusual dish incorporating some kangaroo meat!

Arrival

We were met at the airport by John and Joan Craig, weary from jet-lag, and having spent over 24 hours on different aeroplanes. They anticipated everything we would need on arrival, and gave us a brilliant welcome. After being showered, rested and fed, Athol and Eveline Walter met us half way between Sydney and Newcastle and took us straight to David and

Janelle Tavender’s, where we stayed for the next four nights, and Mike recharged his batteries ready to take his first meeting on Thursday night. David and Janelle took us to see some of the local sights including Lake Macquarie, the Sugarloaf Mountain and Black Butt Reservation where we did the standard tourist activity of watching koalas and kangaroos!

Our first week

Our first meeting was on Thursday evening at Clem and Julie Milgate’s house, where Mike spoke on how to approach the Bible, using circumcision and the Sabbath as examples of instructions given by God that changed depending on the time in history, and who He was speaking to.

We were then whisked away into the country to stay with Athol and Eveline Walter on Friday night, before travelling down to Camp Toukley with them for the first weekend conference, which ran from Saturday to Monday. (A separate report on the conference weekend appeared in the last issue. Ed.) We had a wonderful, although tiring, time at the camp, and having conducted 11 meetings one after the other, Mike then had a brief break until Tuesday evening.

Martin Walter organised a meeting near Gosford for the Tuesday night, and Mike again spoke on approaching the Bible, this time using the example of healing to show how things change depending on what period of time it is, and who God is dealing with. On Thursday night there was a meeting at David and Janelle Tavender’s where Mike dealt with the dating of John’s gospel, and who it was written for.

During the week from Monday to Thursday we stayed with Clem and Julie Milgate who made us feel totally at home, and although we had never met before, by the time we left, we felt we had known them for years! They drove us around showing us more highlights of the Newcastle area, including the quaint village of Morpeth, the Newcastle foreshore, and the spectacular Hunter Valley Gardens.

Our second week

On Friday, off we went again to stay with Athol and Eveline until the following Tuesday. It was lovely to have a long week-end out in the country, but despite being told many tales of kangaroo sightings in their backyard I’m afraid I was never out of bed early enough to see them! Friday was free, so we visited Nelson Bay at Port Stephens, and had a relaxing day masquerading as tourists, eating fish and chips and ice-cream, and admiring the beautiful views.

Saturday was spent at a day conference in Charlestown. Mike gave three talks giving an overview of the whole Bible, outlining the background and differences between the Old Testament, the Gospel and Acts period, and the present age of grace starting at Acts 28. Sunday was spent at Athol and Eveline’s with an open day of fellowship, an informal session of questions and answers, and plenty of good food to help keep us going. On Monday, Mike led the regular Monday evening meeting at David and Janelle’s house, and gave a talk on prophecy, setting out the scenario for the end times, both before and after our Lord’s return to the earth, and touching on the resurrection of believers and unbelievers and when this will be.

A Brief History of Our Time in Australia!

Our third week

On Tuesday morning we flew up to Brisbane to stay with Frank and Merilee Haegler until the following Monday. We had a very relaxing week, and Mike had a chance to rest his voice from speaking. Rom and Mary Harper and family gave us a wonderful “taste of Queensland” on Thursday when they drove us to the mountains for a tree-top board-walk above the subtropical rainforest, followed by a journey to see the Gold Coast in all its glory just as the sun was setting. It is a tourist’s paradise, and we all dutifully removed our shoes and walked along the beach and paddled in the Pacific Ocean. I couldn’t believe how warm it was!

On Friday night, Mike gave his first talk in the area, just south of Brisbane at Highgate Hill. He spoke on the Sabbath again and its significance at different times, and who was required to keep it, and when. On Saturday and Sunday there was a conference at the usual meeting place at Redbank Plains. On Saturday Mike gave 4 sessions on the “Meaning of Miracles.” He started off by asking what the significance of miracles was to Jews as compared to Gentiles. The second study was on the miracles of healing, and how this changed from before the Acts 28 dividing line to the situation we have today. The third study was on the miracles of judgement, which are too often ignored, and showed how they go hand in hand with miracles of blessing. The fourth study looked at the miracles of speaking in tongues, and the gift of wisdom and knowledge enabling the “unschooled and ignorant” disciples to speak boldly about their faith. There was time for questions and answers after every session.

Sunday followed the same format, and there were 4 sessions, this

time on the “Work of the Holy Spirit” throughout the Bible. Firstly, Mike talked about the Holy Spirit being a person, rather than an impersonal force. The second talk discussed the work of the Holy Spirit in the Old Testament and the Gospels, showing how He filled particular individuals for a particular purpose, but then withdrew again when the task was done. The third talk referred to the Holy Spirit during the Acts period and about the gifts associated with that time. The final talk concentrated on the work of the Holy Spirit in the present age of grace. The Holy Spirit permanently indwells all believers, as we are sealed with the Holy Spirit at the point of believing. (Ephesians 1:13,14).

It was a great week-end of studies questions, answers, singing, fellowship, and sharing in lots of good food provided by everyone who came. Our whole time together was uplifting and enjoyable, and centred upon the Lord Jesus Christ and His Word for us. Rom and Mary added a final finishing touch to our week ‘up north’ by taking us out for a lovely Chinese meal followed by deep fried ice-cream!!!

Departure

We left Brisbane first thing Monday morning, and flew back down to Newcastle for our final few days in Australia. We were met by David and spent Monday evening at the usual meeting, this time with Athol in the chair! For me, it was a chance to hear someone else other than Mike, and for Mike it was a chance to ask some questions rather than be asked! As the subject was the 70 weeks in Daniel’s prophecy, there were plenty of questions to ask! It was an excellent study, presented clearly and succinctly.

David and Janelle drove us down to Sydney by way of the scenic

route, with a lunch stop at ‘The Entrance’, and a nostalgia stop at Terrigal to show us where we came for the conference 22 years ago. They dropped us at Peter and Anne Ward’s apartment on the banks of the Parramatta River, where we spent our last two nights in Australia. We certainly finished our trip in spectacular fashion by seeing the sights of Sydney both by day and night. We toured the opera house and viewed Sydney harbour on a delightful boat trip, and the final cherry on the cake was attending a Gala performance at the Sydney Opera House celebrating the 50th anniversary of Opera Australia on our final evening there. It was a fantastic finish to a wonderful trip, and for Mike, a dream come true!

Final thoughts

We both thoroughly enjoyed our visit to Australia from start to finish. We would like to thank everyone for their more-than-generous hospitality, their warm welcome, and the way everyone made us feel so at home. We would particularly like to thank all those who welcomed us into their homes and were so generous towards us with their time and their hospitality, and who helped to make our trip so memorable. We have very fond memories of the many people we met, of the meetings that were held, and the discussions we had. But most of all we remember the wonderful way that our belief in our Lord Jesus Christ binds us together in a unity as co-members of the body of Christ with Him as our Head. It is a wonderful privilege to be able to serve Him together with so many others with a unity of purpose. ■



Getting It Right By Athol Walter

In our last issue, we printed the story of a man in Sydney who, for many years, spent time in George Street, speaking to people about their eternal destiny. The account told of many people all over the world, whose lives had been changed by the witness of this faithful servant of the Lord. The information came to us from a tape recording on which a Christian Pastor recounted the story, and one of the men in our Fellowship transcribed the account from the tape.

It turns out that, while the fundamentals of the story are correct, some details were wrong. A member of our Sydney fellowship happened to know something of the story and obtained a book which contains the true account. He kindly sent the book to me, and we are happy to set the record straight. In fact, in his foreword to the book, the author tells how the story has been embellished many times, which caused some distress to the family, and he wrote the book to set the record straight. The title of the book is "Jenner of George St." written by Dr Raymond Wilson, who also published it.

So here, briefly, are the facts. The man's name was Frank Jenner. He

was born in Southampton, England in 1903. His father was a retired sea captain. Frank was sent to sea at the age of twelve on a training ship for 'naughty boys', although, according to the records, he was not a bad boy. He loved the life of a sailor. He later joined the Royal Navy, then jumped ship and spent some time in the US navy. He jumped ship again, this time in Melbourne, Australia. It was in Melbourne that he met the girl who would become his wife, Jessie, and they were married in 1929. Around this time, he joined the Australian Navy.

It was in Melbourne also, that Frank came upon an open-air meeting being conducted by some 'Brethren' men. He stopped to listen, and got talking to some of the men. He accepted their invitation to go with them for a cup of tea and a chat, and later that evening he responded to the invitation to give his life to the Lord. Much happened which we can't record here, but eventually the Jenner family moved to Sydney. Over the years, Frank Jenner developed his unique method of evangelism, as described in the previous article. He not only accosted people, but any who showed interest were invited back

to the Gospel Hall, or often to his home for a meal and earnest talk.

The other point that should be corrected concerns the time of Frank's death. The account we heard told how a preacher came from overseas and wanted to meet the man about whom he had heard so much. He was taken to Frank's home and was able to tell him of the many converts he had met, whose life had been changed by their encounter with Jenner of George Street. It was said then that Frank died a week or so later. While that makes for a very moving story, it is not true.

Yes, indeed, the overseas preacher came looking for him and was able to tell him about the many now serving the Lord, of whom Frank knew nothing. That was in 1953, but Frank Jenner lived on for many years, falling asleep in Christ on 8th. May, 1977.

The book is well worth reading, and if you cannot obtain it at your Christian Bookshop, the publisher's name and address is: Dr. Raymond Wilson, P. O. Box 477, South Hurstville, NSW, Australia, 2221. Email address: redowilson@smartchat.net.au

Now Let's Pause and Consider

.....cont from Pg. 7

always, throughout Acts, it is Jew first, and only when Jews oppose, does Paul turn to Gentiles.

As I said, it was Jew first all the way to the end of Acts, but that is not the situation we find ourselves in today. Reader, look around you. Do you know any Christian preacher who goes into the Jewish synagogue before preaching Christ to any Gentiles? No, it doesn't happen. I am aware that there are missions to Jewish people, and all power to them, but

that is quite a different thing. The conversion of a Gentile today does not cause a ripple on the surface of any Jewish community, as it did in Paul's day. A change has taken place, and that change occurred at the end of Acts, chapter 28, 17-29. This is the point where Israel was set aside by God. This is the point where the miraculous signs stopped. It is after this that Paul receives the revelation of the Dispensation of the Mystery and the Church which is His Body. It is a grave mistake to read these later revelations of God back into the

earlier dispensation of Acts. It is precisely this that has brought about all the confusion amongst Christian denominations.

As someone once very wisely observed: Distinguish the dispensations and the difficulties disappear.

Brethren, think on these things. □



A New Year's Challenge For You.

.....cont from Pg. 4

risen to the occasion, but the Scriptures tell us that Abraham got up early the very next morning, made his preparations, and set off immediately with Isaac and a couple of servants, to the place God had told him about. And, as we know full well, it was Abraham's prompt and complete obedience to that challenge that opened the floodgates of God's blessing on his life.

While we may not be an Abraham with an Isaac to offer, don't be surprised if God puts His finger on something that is very precious to you and asks you to give it to Him. So while I can ask if you take God at His word, it is a question that each of us must answer personally.

There is, however, another point to be made. If we are to take God at His word, we must know what He has said! After long experience, I believe that this is the area of greatest weakness with most of us. It is a basic tenet of our faith that it is the Bible, God's Word, that is the guide for our faith and walk as Christians. But how well do we know it? This was one issue I had to settle some years ago as a young believer. I was a keen musician, and could play several instruments reasonably well. I spent quite a bit of time most days practicing, until I realised that I spent far more time on my music than I did on my Bible study. I knew the balance was not right, so I bit the bullet and changed my priorities. No, the piano did not go out the window, but it took a lesser place to the Bible and its study. If God had called me to be a concert pianist for Him, then it might have been different, but He had called me to teach and preach His Word, so that had to come first. I haven't always been so successful in handling God's challenges, but I got that one right, I'm glad to say.

So let me press you a little. Where

does God's Word stand in your list of priorities? Do other things crowd out the reading and study of it? More than one person has said to me over the years, that I am so lucky to be able to play the piano well. No, no. Luck had nothing to do with it. I worked hard at it, and sacrificed many afternoons of childhood, practicing. Some have also inferred that I am lucky that I know my Bible so well. I must say that I do not know it as well as I should, but once again, luck has nothing to do with it. If you put the work in, you will reap the rewards.

But there are principles of Bible study that we should learn. I'll mention just a few. The Bible should be the most familiar book to us, by far, that we have on our shelf. "Your Word have I hid in my heart" is a sound precept.

The Scriptures themselves tell us that we must also "compare spiritual with spiritual". The Greek of this verse – 1 Cor. 2:13 – and the preceding verse, goes like this: "And we received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit from God, in order that we may know the things freely given to us by God; which things also we speak not in words taught of human wisdom, but in words taught of the Spirit, comparing spiritual things with spiritual things."

Now that's quite a mouthful, to say the least, but it directs us to spiritual truth, couched in spiritual words, and ultimately discerned by the spiritual person. It is only as the spirit of Christ lives and grows in us that we come to any sort of understanding of the Bible's great spiritual themes. There is also the thought in these verses that the Bible's themes are connected, and rightly understood do not contradict each other. So by checking, comparing and evaluating, we grow not only in knowledge, but also in grace.

Closely allied with the principle of 'comparing spiritual with spiritual' is the other great fundamental Bible study principle of right division. "Do your utmost to present yourself to God approved (i.e. tested by trial), a workman who has no cause to be ashamed, correctly analyzing and accurately dividing the Word of Truth." 2 Tim. 2:15.

If the words 'correctly analyzing and accurately dividing the Word of Truth' are something of a puzzle, then I suggest the phrase 'correctly apportioning the Word of Truth'. It means, simply, to allow the different parts of Scripture to speak to the different sections of God's family for whom they were intended. So I, a Gentile, do not try to appropriate promises and punishments (I'm glad about that bit!) that belong to Israel, for instance.

So, do you accept my challenge? Will you take God at His Word for the rest of this year? I hope so, but it really is a question that you must decide on your knees before your Saviour and Lord. □

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2 Timothy 2:15 2 Timothy 3:16