

Spiritual Blessings



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Search ... and Pray

by Stuart Allen

BOTH THE OLD AND NEW Testaments are God's writings; they are sacred and must therefore be treated with the utmost reverence and respect, for otherwise how can we hope to receive understanding and blessing from them?

Our aim then is to handle the Word of God carefully and wisely so that, as far as it is possible, the human element with its fallibility is excluded in its interpretation. If this is not done, the Bible can be made to mean anything, and truth cannot possibly be realized. As a preparation, two things are necessary.


(1) The determination to **search** the Scriptures. God's Word contains inexhaustible spiritual wealth, but His jewels are not scattered on the surface; we must be prepared to *dig* for them. God has little use for lazy Christians who are prepared to receive everything second hand, without any effort on their part. Just as a person cannot do proper gardening without tools such as a spade or fork, so the believer cannot properly dig into the Scriptures without the aid of a good concordance.

(2) There must be **prayer** for, and dependence upon the enlightenment of

the Holy Spirit. Man's intellect, unaided by God, cannot understand and assimilate Divine Truth. 'The natural man receiveth

not the things of the Spirit of God ... neither can he (get to) know them, because they are spiritually discerned' (1 Cor. 2:14). Human cleverness or education by itself cannot discover it. While we greatly value Christian scholarship, scholars as such have no monopoly of the Holy Spirit; in fact scholarship, unless kept subservient to God's revealing power, can be an effective bar to its realization. Many scholars have become blinded by their own scholarship.

The Truth of God is *spiritually discerned*, and God is willing to bestow this understanding on all who are humble and childlike enough to receive and sincerely seek for it. Christ said 'I thank Thee, O Father ... because Thou hast hid these things from the *wise and prudent*, and hast *revealed them unto babes*' (Matt. 11:25). It is only in the spirit of lowliness and humility that we can receive enlightenment from God. We must also be ready to *unlearn* as well as to learn. It is often difficult to cast

wrong ideas from the mind, especially when they have become ingrained through faulty teaching and upbringing. But this is essential if truth is to enter and take possession of our thinking. 

This article is an extract from Stuart Allen's excellent booklet, "God's Word Written".



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The Berean Bible Fellowship of AUSTRALIA
Incorporated
2 Timothy 3:15 2 Timothy 3:16

The President's Word

David Tavender



GREETINGS TO READERS OF *Spiritual Blessings* around the world.

These are among my first written words as the new President of the Berean Bible Fellowship of Australia (BBFA), and it will be my pleasure and privilege over the next three years to help keep you up to date about the activities of a Christian fellowship I am proud to be associated with.

A New Committee

It is important to emphasise that the administration of the BBFA is far from being a "one man show", however. Our Fellowship's affairs are managed by a seven member Committee, elected to their positions for a three-year term. Following recent elections for administrative positions within the Berean Bible Fellowship of Australia, a new Committee, listed on page 9, was formed. I can safely say that we are approaching the task ahead with enthusiasm and anticipation.

Together, we will be looking to our Lord for guidance in carrying out our duties and responsibilities, because, "except the LORD build the house, they labour in vain that build it" (Psalm 127:1). In that light, we affirm that the new Committee is dedicated to furthering the Fellowship's objectives:

- to promote a general interest in the Bible;
- to encourage Bible study;
- to make plain what is the Dispensation of the Mystery as revealed only to the Apostle Paul;
- to foster communication through the fellowship of likeminded believers;
- to do all things as are conducive or incidental to the attainment of the above objects, including:
printing and promoting suitable literature;
and conducting Bible study meetings and seminars.

Readers of *Spiritual Blessings* are invited to contact the Committee via the contact addresses on page 9, regarding any aspect of the BBFA's work and ministry.

Of course, it would be wrong of me not to acknowledge the efforts of the former Committee – John Hutton (President for one year, Vice President for two), Athol Walter (Vice President for one year, President for the previous five years), Sue Hall (Treasurer for six years), Margaret Abbott (Secretary for six years), and Committee members Frank Haegler, Neville Ward and Robin Ward. They have served well, placing the Fellowship in a good shape to move onward and upward, and have been extremely helpful during the transition phase. Thank you to each one.

Other News

Briefly, we have once again had an uplifting time during our annual conference at Camp Toukley in September. You can read a fuller report on pages 10 and 11, but I would like to express my thanks to all who made it another terrific weekend of Bible study and fellowship. Next year's conference is September 20th, 21st and 22nd, 2008 at the same venue, and if you haven't thought seriously before about spending a weekend like this around God's Word, why not give it some consideration and start planning ahead to join us? In the meantime, there are always the regular Bible study meetings held in the Brisbane, Sydney and NSW Hunter regions. Join with Christian believers who are serious about studying God's Word, and receive some exciting Bible teaching. Meat, instead of the milk that is so often given as a substitute. See page 12 for times, dates and venues.

Our recent "Bibles for Malawi" appeal prompted a very generous response from *Spiritual Blessings* readers. Our thanks go to all who see the need for God's Word to be accessible to His people in countries less privileged. We hope to provide further updates in future editions of the magazine.

And finally, a note about our magazine's editor, Athol Walter, who had a bit of a health scare recently. He continues, after more than 40 years, to be a tireless worker for promoting the Bible rightly divided, in this country and overseas, through his regular Bible study talks, the witness of this magazine and his excellent articles on the BBFEA's web site: www.spiritualblessings.org. On behalf of the Fellowship, we wish him a speedy recovery back to full health. Our prayers and thoughts are with him, his wife Eveline, and their family during this testing period.

Until next time, may the Lord be glorified by our witness, our walk, and the study of His Word. 📖

Times and Signs



by Charles H. Welch

THOSE WHO HAVE LEARNED TO distinguish between prophetic fulfilment and the present parenthetical interposition of the dispensation of the mystery, do not look at the present cavalcade of 'wars and rumours of wars', or the recurrence of 'famines, pestilences and earthquakes' as 'fulfilments' of prophecy, they see clearly that when Israel became Lo-ammi 'not my people' (Hosea 1:9), the prophetic clock stopped (Acts 28:28), and will not go again until the present parenthetical dispensation is completed.

Speaking generally concerning prophetic interpretation, whether to do with Israel or to do with the prophetic utterances of 1 Timothy 4 or 2 Timothy 3 and 4 (which comprehend practically all that is prophetic in the prison epistles), there are two main principles to remember.

1. The time, season, day and hour of prophetic fulfilment is hid.

'... It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in His own power' (Acts 1:7).

'But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but My Father only' (Matt. 24:36).

'Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of Man cometh' (Matt. 25:13).

2. While the day and the hour is unknown, there are 'signs' that the believer should 'discern'.

'... When it is evening, ye say, it will be fair weather: for the sky is red ... ye can discern the face of the sky; but can ye not discern the signs of the times?' (Matt. 16:2,3).

'Now learn a parable of the fig tree; when his branch is yet tender, and putteth forth leaves, ye know that summer is nigh: so likewise ye, when ye shall see all these things, know that it (He) is near, even at the doors' (Matt. 24:32,33).

The recognition that the day and the hour of the Lord's return is hidden with intention by the Lord, by no means forbids an intelligent reading both of the Scriptures and of the signs of the times. These are as clearly indicated in Matthew 24:32,33,38 and 39, as the attempt to compute the date is forbidden in Matthew 24:36. Let us become a little better acquainted with these two complementary principles.

The Father Hath Put In His Own Power

Which the Father hath put in His own power' (Acts 1:7) - This passage is translated in the R.V. 'Which the Father hath set within His own authority', and as a marginal reading adds 'or appointed by' for the word 'set'. Some interpret this passage to mean, that the Father hath appointed the times or seasons by His own power, but others see that the words mean that the question of times and seasons have been placed by the Father within His own jurisdiction or authority.

The word translated 'power' in Acts 1:7 is the Greek *exousia*. 'Power', should be reserved for the translation of *dunamis* as in Acts 1:8, the use of the same word for both Greek words is confusing. The apostles received **power**, but the Father retained **authority**. *Dunamis* is derived from 'ability', but *exousia* is derived from 'being'. For examples taken from the A.V. where *exousia* is translated 'authority', see, Matthew 7:29; 21:23; Acts 9:14; 1 Corinthians 15:24. The verb *tithemi*, 'put' in Acts 1:7 of the A.V., means literally 'to place'. It is used in Acts some 23 times, and is translated 'laid', 'whom they laid daily at the gate of the temple' (Acts 3:2, and six other occasions). The other passages in the Acts where *tithemi* is translated 'to put', refer to 'prison' (Acts 4:3; 5:18,25; 12:4).

In the epistles it is rendered in addition to these, by such words as 'to set'; 'to commit'; 'to appoint' and 'to ordain'. The idea of authority is evident in every reference. The phrase 'in His own authority' can be interpreted in the light of the same Greek words found in Acts 5:4 'was it not in thine own power?' or as Moffatt freely renders it 'and even after the sale, was the money not yours to do as you pleased about it?' Not only has the Father complete jurisdiction over 'times and seasons' but the specific 'day and hour' when the Son of Man shall come is not even known by 'the angels' although they may 'desire to look into these things'.

In Mark 13:32 we have a fuller and more comprehensive statement: 'But of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father'. In the face of such statements, all attempts to calculate, forecast or otherwise anticipate 'the day and the hour' are alike foredoomed to failure and contrary to Scripture. 📖

This is an extract from "Signs of the Times", by Charles Welch. In it, he further expands upon the second point - signs a believer should discern. This booklet is available from the BBFA Book Agency - see back page for details.

Our Standing and Our Walk

by David Fryer*

Ephesians 2:1-5

1 And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins;
2 Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience:
3 Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others.
4 But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us,
5 Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved).

Ephesians 4:1

“... therefore ... walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called.”

EPHESIANS 2:1-3 DECLARES that we were previously dead in trespasses and sins, children of wrath, children of disobedience, fulfilling the lusts and desires of the flesh. The same passage, printed in the column at left, then goes on to tell us, “but God, who is rich in mercy ... hath quickened us [i.e. made us alive] together with Christ; by grace are ye saved ...” (Ephesians 2:4,5).

Not by any good works of ourselves was this done, lest any should boast. We can try to please God to gain our salvation by our own methods: living good lives; we can be very religious; we can even read our Bibles ... and yet not know Him, Whom to know is life eternal.

The most wonderful thing that could happen to us in this life is that God, by His great love and grace would bring us to know Him through His dear Son, our Lord and Saviour, and then **be** our very life. Paul wrote in Colossians 1:12,13 that we should be “giving thanks unto the Father” – and no wonder, for He “hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of His dear Son”.

For the Christian believer, the first three chapters of Ephesians tell of **our standing** before God. The last three chapters go on to advise us of **our walk**, or how to live each day that we might be pleasing to God our Father.

Our standing is something that no man can change or alter, for it is what God has done for us and

blessed us in Christ. God has redeemed us by the blood of Christ shed for us. He has forgiven us by “the riches of His grace” (Ephesians 1:7). Grace gives us what we don’t deserve - my sins deserve eternal death - but the Lord Jesus died for me, and mercy keeps us from getting what we do deserve. For God hath not appointed us unto wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ.

On the other hand, **our walk**, or how we conduct ourselves, can vary from day to day. Chapters 4, 5 and 6 of Ephesians tell us how to live worthily of our calling in Christ. We have within us the old nature or “old man” (Ephesians 4:22) inherited from Adam, “which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts”. We were born in sin and “shapen in iniquity” (Psalms 51:5). This “old man”, Paul tells us to “put off” and exhorts us to “put on the new man, which, after God, is created in righteousness and true holiness” (Ephesians 4:24).

The Word of God

Now that God has made us “accepted in the Beloved” who is Christ (Ephesians 1:6), He wants us to live a life that is acceptable unto Him. He has blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly

places in Christ, and He bids us to walk worthy or acceptable of this. To do this, we are urged to put on the whole armour of God that He has provided (Ephesians 6:10-17). Not just any armour that we might try to provide for ourselves, but God’s armour.

Part of this armour is “the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God” (Ephesians 6:17). 2 Timothy 3:16,17 shows how this really is a part of God’s armour – it comes from Him, and is an effective tool for our lives:

“... God’s grace gives us what we don’t deserve. God’s mercy keeps us from getting what we do deserve ...”

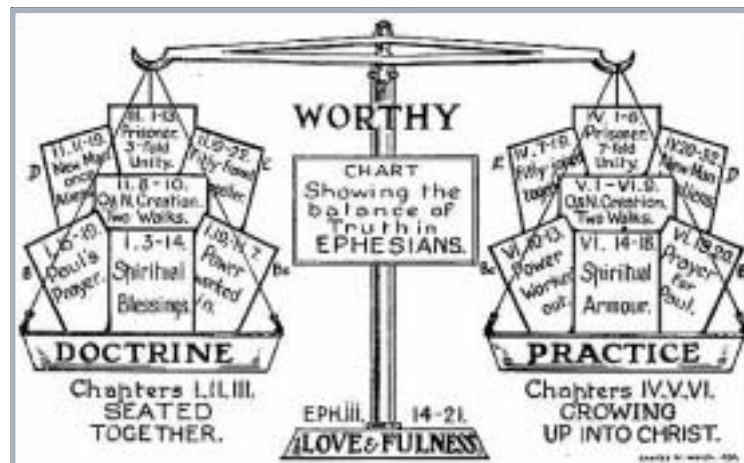
“All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is **profitable** for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works.”

When we compare those verses with what we read elsewhere - “let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom” (Colossians 3:16) - it becomes apparent that God has made every provision for our daily walk in His Word.

Part of this provision may be found in the last three chapters of Ephesians, which tell us very specifically how we might live daily a life that is pleasing to Him. In the same way that, in the Old Testament, God gave the commandments and rules for Israel to live lives pleasing unto Him, so God has given to the Church Which is His Body today the rules to live, whereby we might “walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called” (Ephesians 4:1).

Reward

Now, to those believers who would live faithfully unto Him according to His Word, there is a reward to be gained.



Ephesians 1,2,3 – our standing.
Ephesians 4,5,6 – how to live because of our standing.
Illustration by Charles Welch.

The following words from Colossians 3:23-25 are very clear about this:

“Whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men; knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance: for ye serve the Lord Christ. But he that doeth wrong shall receive for the wrong which he hath done ...”

May we immerse ourselves in God’s Word; may the Holy Spirit open the eyes of our understanding; and may we thus walk in a way pleasing to Him. 📖

** Based on an article by David Fryer, originally titled “Delivered from the Powers of Darkness”; additional thoughts by David Tavender.*

A Kind of Editorial

As noted in the President’s Word, our regular editor, Athol Walter, has had some health issues of late, including having spent some time in hospital. The latest news is that he is on the road to recovery, but he did ask to be relieved of his editorial duties, for this issue of the magazine at least. It is our intention that Athol will be penning the editorial column for the next issue of Spiritual Blessings, and providing another instalment of his excellent series, “Wonderful Words of Life”. Get well soon, Athol.

Have you visited our Web Site yet?

www.spiritualblessings.org

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by Rom Harper

The Birthplace of Christ

THE BIBLE GIVES THE account of the birth of Christ as taking place in Bethlehem. For this we can refer to the Scriptures in Matthew 2:1 and Luke 2:4-6 (see column at left).

Matthew 2:1

Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judaea in the days of Herod the king ...

Luke 2:4-6

4 And Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judaea, unto the city of David, which is called Bethlehem; (because he was of the house and lineage of David:)
5 To be taxed with Mary his espoused wife, being great with child.
6 And so it was, that, while they were there, the days were accomplished that she should be delivered.

From this premise the Christian church has developed certain traditions and has made assumptions about the birthplace of Christ. These statements from Christian tradition are often not reliable and do not have the infallibility of Scripture to prove them.

Early Traditions

Having introduced the topic of the bias of Christian tradition we need to look at some examples. Firstly, church fathers such as Justin Martyr talk about Christ being born in a cave, which fitted the fact that many houses were situated at the front of caves. The caves were used to house animals for each family. Thus, some Christians believe that the Lord Jesus Christ was born in a cave.

Another element in history that has influenced our knowledge of Christ's birth is the events and actions of Helena, Emperor Constantine's mother who, according to tradition, was purported to have located many of the religious sites in the holy land. She believed that, at the time, she was under the influence of some sort of spirit that pointed these places out to her. Therefore in AD 326 Constantine, the Emperor of Rome and his mother had a church built over the site Helena had located. She died in 327 so these sites became a memorial to her by Constantine. While not denigrating the work of God to influence any person to do His will, this seems to me to be trusting very much in the human spirit to determine the divine nature of

God. We are much better off allowing Scripture to determine our knowledge of God and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Swaddling Clothes & Manger

In Scripture we read in Luke 2:1-12 that the Lord Jesus Christ was born in Bethlehem, laid in a manger because there was no room in the inn, and was wrapped in swaddling clothes.

Firstly, the swaddling clothes. The shepherds were told to look for a babe wrapped in these swaddling clothes. This was called a "sign", therefore this must have been an unusual event. According to Dr. E.W. Bullinger, swaddling clothes were strips of cloth like bandages. Other resources show that these bandages were used for binding the dead, somewhat like the Egyptian mummies. It is highly unlikely that the mother of a newborn child would wrap her baby in a death shroud. Therefore, there must have been some significance to this action.

Secondly, the manger. When we think of Christ's birth, we often think of a manger as a wooden structure for feeding and giving water to animals. The Greek word for manger is *phatne*. Other than referring to a 'manger' at Christ's birth, the word *phatne* is used only once more in Scripture in Luke 13:15. Here the word is translated as 'stall', a place to impound animals, and not a feeding trough as depicted in tradition. It is interesting to think that this could be referring to a shelter where Christ was born, rather than the actual furnishing that cradled the Lord Jesus Christ's earthly body.

The signs given to the shepherds were a set of specific directions and signs - i.e. "wrapped in swaddling clothes and laid in **the** (not 'a') manger" (Luke 2:12) - affirming that this was the child born to be their Messiah. These signs were

obviously clearly understood by the shepherds, and they knew the exact location. There are some very interesting articles available about the traditions of Israel when preparing the sacrificial lambs that would be used in the temple of Jerusalem. Initially, though, we need to consider some amazing features about a Hebrew phrase, Migdal Edar.

Migdal Edar

The word Migdal, according to Strong's, means 'tower'. It is first used in Scripture in Genesis 11:4 - "a city with a **tower**". The word Edar means flock and, used with Migdal, means "Tower of the Flock" according to Strong's, who further suggests it was "a shepherd's watchtower near Bethlehem". Originally the watchtowers were built to guard cities. We don't know the exact boundaries of Bethlehem in those days but archaeologists know it was larger than the present day Bethlehem. The oldest tradition puts this tower approximately one mile north of present day Bethlehem and four miles from Jerusalem. It was eventually used as a watchtower for shepherds watching their sheep. Jewish author Alfred Edersheim states that this Migdal Edar was not the watchtower of ordinary flocks that pastured in the barren ground near Bethlehem; rather, that it was a tower close to the town on the road to Jerusalem. We should consider that the flock pastured there was destined for temple sacrifice. This is referred to in passages from the Mishnah (the first recording of oral law of the Jews; next to the Scriptures it is the basic textbook which influenced much of Jewish life and thought).

Micah 4:8 states "O watchtower of the flock (Migdal Edar), O stronghold of the Daughter of Zion, the former dominion will be restored to you; kingship will come to the Daughter of Jerusalem". This was a prophecy of the Jewish Messiah coming to bring the Kingdom to Israel. It is interesting that further on in this passage in verse 10, the prophecy makes reference to the Daughter of Zion

writhing in agony, "... like a woman in labour" who "must leave the city to camp in an open field". The Micah prophecy was God telling his people that He would fulfil His prophecy and that "the LORD will rule over them in Mount Zion from that day and forever"(verse 7). Therefore Micah 4:10 can be considered a reference to the birth of the Lord Jesus Christ. This tower, on the outskirts of Bethlehem, was where the temple flock was bred for sacrifice and is a meaningful picture of the sacrifice that Christ made for all. It is suggested here that you read Micah chapter 4:4 to 5:2, printed on page 9.

Another interesting piece of information comes from Rabbi Mike Short about the tower of the flock and the shepherds who kept the temple flock. These men were trained for this special task, to ensure that no animal was hurt, damaged or blemished. The ewes were taken to the tower for birthing and the lambs were wrapped in swaddling clothes to protect them from bruising or injury. The tower was ceremonially clean and prepared for the birthing of the lambs. This is interesting when we think that Christ was the perfect sacrificial lamb that God provided himself.

In one of the Targums (Aramaic translations of the Hebrew Bible written during the seventy years captivity in Babylon), there is a reference made to Migdal Edar and it is translated as "the

(continued on page 9)



A tower such as this one may have been the birthplace of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Appointed Gifts after Acts 28

by David Tavender

OVER THE YEARS, IN PAST ISSUES of Spiritual Blessings, it has been suggested that evidential miracles, such as miraculous healings, speaking in tongues, raisings from the dead, etc have now ceased. We do not wish to put limitations on what God will and won't do, but we now live under the conditions set forth for us in the epistles written after Acts 28 (Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1 & 2 Timothy, Titus and Philemon), and these miracles are not the normal course of events for today.

There are, however, a few passages in the later epistles which might be a little confusing at first glance, and here I would like to suggest some solutions to apparent problems. Let us now look at the verses in question, all written after Acts 28.

Two passages with similar messages are found in Paul's epistles to **Timothy**:

"Neglect not the gift that is in thee, which was given thee by prophecy, with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery." (1 Timothy 4:14)

"Wherefore I put thee in remembrance that thou stir up the gift of God, which is in thee by the putting on of my hands." (2 Timothy 1:6)

Regarding "the gift which is in thee", we might instantly think of such gifts which abounded in the Acts period, such as miracles, prophecy, discerning of spirits, tongues and their interpretation, etc (see 1 Corinthians 12:7-11). However, before jumping to a conclusion like this, note that we are not told what gift it was that had been given to Timothy. It is purely speculation to say that it was one of these "evidential" miracles (i.e. marvelous workings of which we can see undeniable evidence).

It seems likely that the "laying on of hands" by Paul and others took place in the Acts period, when he spent some time travelling with Timothy, and that was probably when he received the "gift". This

should not cause us undue concern, though. As Stuart Allen writes, "Not every gift of the Spirit was necessarily linked with the testimony to Israel. Some were of enduring value in public service for all time, and though Paul does not specifically mention what the gift was, it was evidently of this nature." (from "The Early and Pastoral Epistles of Paul" p.289).

In the immediate context of 2 Timothy 1:6, Paul goes on to speak of courage ("for God hath not given us the spirit of fear" v.7). This gift, whatever it was, was to be exercised with fortitude and bravery.

In **Ephesians**, we read, "And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers..." (Ephesians 4:11).

Note that these are roles, rather than gifts as such, and that the purpose was "for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ" (Ephesians 4:12). In the former dispensations of the Gospels and Acts, Christ Himself appointed leaders, and those who would carry out His work (e.g. Matthew 10:1-5). Directly after the change at the end of Acts, it was again Christ (now ascended) who appointed leaders and workers, as detailed in Ephesians.

This first book written after the new dispensation began was written to believers under the new dispensation, who were members of "...the household of God; and are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone." (Ephesians 2:19,20).

It is apparent that this was a "once only" appointment for the purpose of laying a foundation, for, in later writings, Paul suggests how leaders might be chosen by a human source. 1 Timothy 3:1-13 and Titus 1:5-9 both outline the appropriate qualities of leaders and workers within the church. The passage in Titus 1:5 is an

exhortation from Paul to "appoint elders in every town, as I directed you" (NIV), not as Christ had done earlier in Ephesians 4:11. Similarly, Timothy was also encouraged by Paul to "do the work of an evangelist" (2 Timothy 4:5), though not apparently ordained by the Lord to do so. Today, there are many people called "teachers", yet how many have been divinely appointed by the Lord Himself? It can't be all of them because they teach different things! Perhaps the more applicable example for us today is Paul's instruction in 2 Timothy 2:2:

"And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also."

Summing up then, the divine appointments of the very earliest days of this dispensation were for a particular one-off purpose – the foundation and revelation of the new conditions in force. These appointments were not continuous, so, today, it is more appropriate for us to use the guidelines set forth in such Scriptures as 1 & 2 Timothy and Titus for establishing leaders and teachers within the church. 📖

The Birthplace of Christ

(continued from page 7)

anointed one of the flock of Israel". Rabbi Munk, using the book of Yonatan in the Targums, makes reference to Micah 4:8 in paraphrasing Genesis 35:21 as, "He spread his tent beyond Migdal Edar, the place King Messiah will reveal himself at the end of days".

The visitation of the angel that the shepherds witnessed, announcing the birth of the Christ, gave them the directions so they would be able to identify the place

where the Messiah would be born, because they were the people who were guarding the temple flock. When they heard the description of the manger (or stall) and the swaddling clothes, they would know where to go because they used the tower of the flock to birth the sacrificial flock.

Having reviewed the preceding evidence from Scripture and other sources it is a compelling argument to place the birth of the Lord Jesus Christ in the tower of the flock on the outskirts of Bethlehem. The significance is not lost on us that Christ came to the world to be both a sacrificial Lamb of God, and the King of Kings. It was not some smelly stable full of animals as depicted by Christian tradition, but the perfect place at the perfect time in God's plan. 📖

Micah 4:4 to 5:2

⁴But they shall sit every man under his vine and under his fig tree; and none shall make them afraid: for the mouth of the LORD of hosts hath spoken it. ⁵For all people will walk every one in the name of his god, and we will walk in the name of the LORD our God for ever and ever.

⁶In that day, saith the LORD, will I assemble her that halteth, and I will gather her that is driven out, and her that I have afflicted; ⁷And I will make her that halted a remnant, and her that was cast far off a strong nation: and the LORD shall reign over them in mount Zion from henceforth, even for ever. **⁸And thou, O tower of the flock, the strong hold of the daughter of Zion, unto thee shall it come, even the first dominion; the kingdom shall come to the daughter of Jerusalem.**

⁹Now why dost thou cry out aloud? is there no king in thee? is thy counsellor perished? for pangs have taken thee as a woman in travail. ¹⁰Be in pain, and labour to bring forth, O daughter of Zion, like a woman in travail: for now shalt thou go forth out of the city, and thou shalt dwell in the

field, and thou shalt go even to Babylon; there shalt thou be delivered; there the LORD shall redeem thee from the hand of thine enemies.

¹¹Now also many nations are gathered against thee, that say, Let her be defiled, and let our eye look upon Zion. ¹²But they know not the thoughts of the LORD, neither understand they his counsel: for he shall gather them as the sheaves into the floor. ¹³Arise and thresh, O daughter of Zion: for I will make thine horn iron, and I will make thy hoofs brass: and thou shalt beat in pieces many people: and I will consecrate their gain unto the LORD, and their substance unto the Lord of the whole earth.

¹Now gather thyself in troops, O daughter of troops: he hath laid siege against us: they shall smite the judge of Israel with a rod upon the cheek. ²But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting.

Spiritual Blessings

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Articles which honour The Lord Christ Jesus, and acknowledge the principle of right division will be considered for publication. All articles are accepted on the basis that they may be used as the BBFA sees fit unless otherwise requested by the author. The interpretation of Scripture by various authors is not necessarily the one held by the majority of the Fellowship.

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The BBFA Tenets:

1. Full Inspiration of the Scriptures.
2. The Deity of Christ.
3. All sufficiency of Christ's One Sacrifice.
4. The Bible study principle of right division.

The BBFA Committee:

President: David Tavender.
V-President: John Hutton.
Treasurer: Julie Milgate.
Secretary: Janelle Tavender.
Committee Members:

Allan Gallaher, Frank Haegler, Rom Harper.



2007 Annual Conference

THE BEREAN BIBLE Fellowship of Australia held this year's Annual Conference at Camp Toukley on the beautiful NSW Central Coast in late September.

This was our fourth visit to Toukley, and the great facilities and friendly atmosphere made our weekend there something special yet again. The conference is always a good chance to put the regular routine on hold, and focus our thoughts on the things of God and His Word uninterrupted for three days.

The weekend was well attended by the local Sydney and Newcastle groups, with a large contingent from Queensland making the long journey to join us. They weren't the only long distance travellers, though, and friends from Tumut (in NSW) and Melbourne also made the trek. With most of the familiar faces, as well as several people joining us for the first time, about 60 people attended the meetings over the course of the weekend.

Terrific fellowship, enthusiastic singing, a daily prayer time and lots of outdoor activities have become staple parts of BBFA conferences, and this time was no different. However, the focus of our time together is the study of the Scriptures and, as always, most of the programme time was allocated for Bible Study sessions, ten in all. Speakers this year were Athol Walter, John Hutton, David Tavender, Frank Haegler and Rom Harper, and their subjects included: Biblical Chronology, The Deity of Christ, Miracles Then and Now, Dispensations and Man's Failure, The Case for Creation, The Lord's Supper, "Holding the Heda", and more (a shortened form of Rom Harper's talk on "The Birthplace of Christ" appears on pages 6, 7 and 9 of this issue of *Spiritual Blessings*). As you can see, there was quite a variety, and almost all of this year's talks were accompanied by helpful charts, slides, summaries, and other visual displays.



Top: The Genesis timeline generates great interest.

Above (L-R): Ron Hodge, Frank Haegler, John and Joan Craig.

Below: Rom Harper and Athol Walter discuss one of the Bible studies.



2007 Annual Conference



Top: Gabby and Bethany enjoying the Camp's activities.



Right: Allan Gallaher with our youngest camper, David.



Below: Mary Harper leading some of the young people in song.

Bottom: Sitting in on a Bible study session.



Recordings of these messages are available on CD, MP3 or audio cassette.

Every three years the administrative positions within the BBFA come up for renewal, and a new Committee (see page 9) was elected at the Annual General Meeting. This meeting provided an opportunity to review the past twelve months of the BBFA, say "thank you" to the outgoing committee for their hard work, and to welcome in those who will administer the affairs of the association for the next three years.

The final evening of our conferences usually a bit less formal, and this year we were led through some chorus singing by many of our younger folk, and Kate and Gabby Harper presented a musical item. Mary Harper did a marvellous job of co-ordinating this portion of the evening, and her contribution was well appreciated. In addition, Janelle Tavender interviewed three of our members - Peter Ward, Graham Marshall and Merilee Haegler - who all told us something of their very different Christian journeys, and the evening finished with a Bible Quiz followed by a short message on 2 Timothy 3:16 from David Tavender. There truly was something for everyone.

Our thanks go to everyone who attended the conference, and to the many people who helped in lots of ways to ensure its smooth operation. Special mention should go to: Sue Hall and Margaret Abbott, who took on much of the paperwork side of things; and to John Hutton, who organised a very well balanced programme.

If you've never attended one of our Bible study weekends or regular meetings, why not check the "For Your Diary" section on page 12, and plan to come along? Keep an eye on *Spiritual Blessings* magazine for details of the next BBFA Annual Conference (20th-22nd September, 2008). We'd love to see you there!

For your diary...

Set aside
these dates
in your diary
today...

2008 Annual Conference

Start planning today
to join us at
Camp Toukley
for the BBFA's
2008 Annual
Conference.



**20th, 21st, 22nd
September 2008**

See pages 10-11 to read about our recent gathering.
Watch for booking details in future issues of Spiritual Blessings.

Other Special Events:

Newcastle Study Day

Sat May 31st, 2008
10.00 am - 3.00 pm
Charlestown Community Hall.
Free of charge.
Co-ordinator:
John Hutton (02) 4943-5694

Brisbane Study Weekend

Sat 8th, Sun 9th, Mon 10th, June 2008
(Queen's Birthday Long Weekend)
Boronia Heights
State School Hall
194 Middle Rd.,
Boronia Heights.
Free of charge.
Co-ordinator:
Frank Haegler (07) 3297-1981



Regular Meetings:

Regular Bible study meetings are held in Brisbane, Sydney, Newcastle and Maitland. Most meetings include some singing, prayer, and then a Bible study message, approx 45-60 mins in length, followed by refreshments. Questions and comments about the study are encouraged. These meetings are free of charge to attend, and everyone is welcome.

Brisbane:

Alternate Sundays
10.00am start
Boronia Hts
State School Hall
194 Middle Rd.,
Boronia Hts.
Group Co-ordinator:
Frank Haegler
(07) 3297-1981

Sydney:

3rd Sunday
of each month.
Lunch 12:30pm.
Study 1:30pm.
Various venues.
Group Co-ordinators:
Athol & Eveline
Walter
(02) 4996-4455

Newcastle:

Every Monday.
7:30pm
34 Aroona St.,
Edgeworth.
Group Co-ordinators:
David & Janelle Tavender
(02) 4950 6708

Maitland:

Alternate Wednesdays.
10.00am
20 Short St., Lorn.
Group Co-ordinator:
Susan Hall
(02) 4933-9380

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Signs of the Times

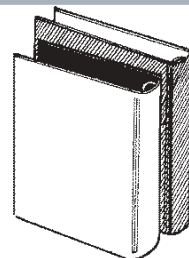
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