


Spiritual Blessings



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The Seven Churches Of Revelation

(This article, submitted by Merilee Haegler, is from a study on Revelation presented by Frank Haegler in Brisbane recently. It is not intended as an in-depth study of the symbology involved, but rather looks at what is said within the context of the whole Bible. All references are from the KJV unless otherwise stated.)

The messages to the seven churches have been given many different interpretations over the centuries. Some believe Revelation to be for different times: part to be fulfilled at the time the prophecy was given, part for today, and part for the future. This is taken from Rev. 1:19 which says: "Write the things which thou hast seen, and the things which are, and the things which shall be hereafter." This is interpreted to mean that it is for past, present and future. However, a better translation of the Greek is: "Write what you have seen, what it means, and what will soon come to pass". From this it seems more likely that the book of the Revelation is for one specific time.

Attempts have often been made to find prophetic meaning in this message for one's own time, resulting in some rather fanciful views. Certainly, we can take applications from the messages to the churches, but we also need to be careful about appropriating things that were not meant for us.

So who is this prophecy meant for? Rev. 1:5-6 says, "Unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and His Father, to Him be glory and dominion for ever and ever." The NIV has: "a kingdom and priests" in the place of "kings and priests", and this is a more accurate translation. Isaiah 61 answers our question as to who is addressed. Verse 6 is very similar to that written in Revelation and says, "But ye shall be named the priests of the Lord: men shall call you the ministers of our God." Also, verse 3 tells us this is Zion or Israel. Revelation contains 285 references to the Old Testament. This is a great many compared to 102 references in Hebrews and 92 in Matthew. There is much symbology in Revelation that is the same as the Old Testament; to name some:

the temple, the tabernacle, manna, the altar of incense, cherubim, judgement and ruling with a rod of iron. It becomes clear that a good understanding of the Old Testament is necessary to come to grips with Revelation and, like the Old Testament, Revelation centres on Israel, judging by the book's internal evidence.

The seven churches are seven literal congregations of Jewish believers whom John addressed. If the nation of Israel had repented when John the Baptist, and then Christ, had spoken to them, the kingdom would indeed have come at that time. But as they rejected both Christ and then His apostles during the Acts period, the nation was laid aside and "the salvation of God [was] sent unto the Gentiles" (Acts 28:28). Does this mean, then, that Israel was made "not His people" for ever? The general Christian view today is that the church has become spiritual Israel and has totally replaced the people of Israel in God's plans. But the Bible clearly tells us regarding Israel that "the gifts and calling of God are without repentance" (Rom. 11:29). They are not laid aside forever because of unbelief, but so that they may be saved in the end, to the praise of His grace and mercy (vv30-32). In the Old Testament, when God's people rebelled against Him, He gave them over to captivity, as can be seen when Babylon overran Israel in the days of Daniel. Another example is when the nation rejected their Messiah and the temple was destroyed

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"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ." Eph. 1:3



President's Word

Greetings to all of our readers around the world. Once again, there's a lot to tell you about, and only a limited space in which to do it.

Annual Conference

The BBFA's Annual Conference is always a highlight on our calendar, and this year we will be meeting again at Camp Toukley on the NSW Central Coast. I invite you to join with us for a break away from your regular routine, and spend some quality time around God's Word, in fellowship with other Christian folk. A registration form will be included with the next issue of Spiritual Blessings, but plan now to keep September 19th, 20th & 21st free. If you can't wait until the next issue for more details, you may like to get in touch with us via one of the contact addresses on page 12.

For those who like to plan long term, next year's Annual Conference (September 2010) will feature guest speaker and author from the UK, Michael Penny. Michael will also conduct a number of other meetings during his visit to Australia.

Special Meetings

Previously, we had advertised another Bible Study Day to be held in the Newcastle area in late August. However, due to various circumstances, that event will not now be going ahead. We apologise for any inconvenience caused as a result. We'll keep you posted in Spiritual Blessings of any special meetings coming up, but you can also see this information, with more details, on our web site. Go to www.spiritualblessings.org and click on "Meetings".

Videos

Earlier this year we experimented with broadcasting our Newcastle Bible studies live over the internet. Though they were received quite well, they were not without their problems from a technical aspect, and so we have postponed further broadcasts of this nature until we can overcome some of the hurdles encountered. Nevertheless, there are several videos of Athol Walter's excellent series on the Psalms, which may be viewed on the internet free of charge. The lengthy address which will take you straight there is <http://www.ustream.tv/discovery/recorded/all?broadcast=596471>

Book Agency Web Site

As promised, the BBFA Book Agency web site is now up and running. See our feature on pages 6 and 7 for more about what you can find there. Better still go to www.spiritualblessings.org/book and look at it first hand! There's more there than what you might think.

Our Friends and Supporters

Finally, on page 9 is a short tribute to the late Betty Argent, who was associated with our Fellowship over a long period of time. Betty was typical of many people who support and promote the work of the BBFA, but whose efforts often go unmentioned. Of course, such friends as these do not seek praise or recognition for their efforts, because their service is for the Lord Jesus Christ. Nevertheless, we extend our gratitude and appreciation to all those who contribute to making the Berean Bible Fellowship of Australia a "fellowship", and not just an "organisation". To those who attend our meetings, pass on our literature, write and present Bible studies, set up meeting rooms, spread the word about our ministry, make donations, offer encouragement and advice to those of us who administer the BBFA, and to those who contribute their time and effort in many other ways not mentioned in this list - we say a heartfelt "Thank You". This ministry could not function without you, and we offer praise to our God because of people like yourselves.

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

David Tavender.

Editorial

The flavour of this issue is a little different from usual, as the major article looks at the Prophecy of Revelation. This is not an easy part of Scripture, and I hope that the work of Frank and Merilee Haegler will help. I appreciate the efforts of our contributors, both those who have contributed articles from the writings of others and, of course, those who have written articles themselves.

I recently read a book called "Israel's New Disciples", in which a number of Jewish Christians in Israel are interviewed. They describe their work in witnessing for Jeshua the Messiah amongst the Israeli population, and it is exciting to read that there are now, in Israel, thousands of Messianic Jews, as they prefer to be called. In spite of some persecution, their numbers are growing. An interesting aspect about this work is that there is a proportion of Arab Christians who are uniting with their Jewish brethren in this witness.

I think that there are definite signs in the world that the 'figtree is starting to sprout'. Israel is back in the land, though mainly in unbelief. The growth of Messianic Jews is another sprouting bud on the tree, and it is significant that these new converts to Christ see their ministry as completely separate from Gentile churches. They understand that there are hard times ahead for them, but they have complete trust in their Lord. The other major factor needed, but which is still missing is, of course, the Temple. That, I think, is probably one of the next things to watch for.

If these phenomena are indeed signs that God is preparing to take up His work with Israel once more, it raises the question of how much time is left for the witness concerning the Mystery. Any thoughts anyone?

Athol Walter.

[cont. from page 1]

by Titus, just as Christ foretold. Today, while Israel are set aside, we experience God's incredible mercy (Rom. 11:25). This age is the Age of Grace and Rom. 5:21 tells us that grace reigns. You will find nothing in Revelation directly addressing believers today, because Revelation is about God's severe judgments. Therefore its message cannot be to believers in this age of grace when God sits on a throne of undiluted mercy.

So if Israel has been temporarily set aside, to what time does the prophecy to the seven churches refer? Rev 1:10 says "I was in the Spirit on the Lord's Day..." The Greek is more correctly translated as "the Day of the Lord", so that this verse says that John visited the Day of the Lord. This day is spoken of 26 times in Scripture and is the Day of God's judgement. Isa. 13:6 explains it, "Howl ye; for the Day of the Lord is at hand; it shall come as a destruction from the Almighty." Verse 9 says, "Behold, the Day of the Lord cometh, cruel both with wrath and fierce anger, to lay the land desolate: and He shall destroy the sinners thereof out of it." John's visions, therefore, are about God's judgments, which even a slight knowledge of Revelation shows to be true.

The term "The Day of the Lord" is another example of Revelation's close correlation with the Old Testament. Jer. 30:4-7 says, "And these are the words that the Lord spake concerning Israel ... We have heard a voice of trembling, of fear and not of peace ... Alas, for that Day is great, so that none is like it: it is even the time of Jacob's trouble; but he shall be saved out of it." So it is a time of tribulation for Israel (Jacob also being known as Israel) in order that they will return to God again. He will bring them back to Himself and all that God promised them will be fulfilled. The Old Testament prophets are full of God gathering His people. "Therefore say unto the house of Israel ... I will take you from among the heathen, and gather you out of all countries, and will bring you into your own land ... A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you" (Ezek. 36:22,24,26). "For ye shall go out with joy and be led forth with peace: the mountains and the hills shall break forth before you into singing, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands" (Isa. 55:12). God wants to save Israel and fulfil all His promises to them, but He has to bring them to repentance first.

Thus we see that the messages to the seven churches will be to Israel again, in the time when Christ's return is near. What John wrote applied to the churches of his time and will again be relevant to the Jews who will face the still future Day of the Lord. The precise meaning of these prophecies will be very clear to them, even though, at present, we can't always see the significance of, for example, the exact locations of the churches. Will there be congregations

of believing Jews in the cities spoken of at the time of the day of the Lord? It's hard to know, but whether there are or not is beside the point. Churches were there when John wrote Revelation and the messages will be understood in the future by those who go through the tribulation and they, we can be sure, will take heart from what is written. Prophecy is only clearly understood at the time of its fulfilment.

What is said to the seven churches is closely correlated with the rest of Revelation, using symbols and phrases that are found elsewhere in the book. This is true of the passages containing the descriptions of the seven seals, the seven trumpets and the seven vials (bowls). And while there are those who see the happenings to be separate, consecutive events, when one studies the book as a whole, it seems more likely that John was given a vision of seven seals, and then the visions of seven trumpets and seven vials add more detail to that first vision, all referring to the same events. Again, this leads us to conclude that the whole of Revelation is written with the seven churches in mind.

Two things are said to each of the churches. The first is that the Lord Jesus "knoweth thy works". The subject of works shows that those addressed had knowledge of God and it is their service to Him that is discussed. The Lord can see all their failures and addresses these directly in His words to the individual churches. The second thing is: "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches." God wants them to stand worthy before Him; to have them respond to His instructions so that they will gain their reward. Rev. 1:3 (NIV) says, "Blessed are those who hear it [the book of Revelation] and take to heart what is written in it."

At the end of each message, the overcomers are addressed and we may well ask, "Overcomers of what?" They are overcomers in the Day of the Lord, i.e. in the tribulation. They are those who are faithful to the end in circumstances that are beyond our comprehension.

EPHESUS is the first church addressed. This city was the influential capital of Asia Minor on the Aegean Sea. It is now a huge metropolis of streets, arches and ruins.

Jesus Christ speaks of Himself to the Ephesians as He "who holds the seven stars in His right hand and walks among the seven golden lampstands" (Rev. 2:1 NIV). Rev. 1:20 (NIV) tells us that "The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches, and the seven lampstands are the seven churches." So God is aware of, and among, His people.

They are commended for their good works and endurance against wickedness and false doctrine

(Rev. 2:2-3); but are also exhorted to repent and strive for their reward. "Return to your first love" (2:4), they are told. The Lord tells the overcomers that He will give them to eat of the Tree of Life, which is in Paradise (v. 7). Rev 22:1-2 tells us more about this tree, saying that God dwells with man and there is access to the Tree of Life which grows beside the river in the middle of the street, in the city of God. We also learn what the Ephesians will eat: the Tree bears twelve types of fruit, a different one each month, and it seems that the leaves are for the health of the nations. We could say the message to the Ephesians is, "Hold fast, overcome, and you will be in Paradise with Me, where there will be no more curse (22:3) or pain." (21:4). What a wonderful incentive to return fully to their Maker!

SMYRNA, in those days, was located north of Ephesus, in a powerful trading position, also on the Aegean Sea. It was known for its harbours, commerce and market places and is now the modern city of Izmir in Turkey.

Rev. 2:8-11 tells about the church of Smyrna suffering persecution, poverty and martyrdom. In this section there is much life and death symbology. The Lord speaks to them as He that was dead and has overcome death. Some of them will be imprisoned as a test of faith. They are exhorted to endure, even to death, and they will receive a crown of life. (As an aside, it's interesting that the Greek for crown is *stephanos*, and Stephen was the first Christian martyr.) Crowns often indicate reward, as in 2 Tim. 4:8 which mentions a crown of righteousness; a crown of glory for church elders in 1 Pet. 5:4; and also an incorruptible crown (1 Cor. 9:25). Crowns are also seen in Revelation being worn by the 24 elders (Rev 4:4,10) and by Christ as the coming Conqueror (Rev. 6:2 and 14:14).

The overcomers of Smyrna are also told that they will not be hurt by the second death, which would mean much to those facing martyrdom. Rev. 20:6 says that those whom the second death can't touch, will be part of the first resurrection. 20:14 speaks of the second death as the Lake of Fire, and 21:8 (NIV) tells us the type of people who will be condemned to the second death; "...the cowardly, the unbelieving, the vile, the murderers, the sexually immoral, those who practise magic arts, the idolaters and all liars..."

Here is another link between the seven churches and the rest of Revelation. Those who listen and are faithful will never again have to fear death. Christ calls Himself the First and the Last; He is the **firstborn** from the dead (Col 1:18) and the One who will vanquish death at the **last** (1 Cor 15:54-57).

PERGAMOS had become a major city by the third century BC. In John's time, it was a hub of

Greek and Roman temple worship. It's not surprising, then, that they were a worldly church, probably influenced by their community. They had mixed their doctrine and needed to repent. Christ speaks to them in 2:12-17 as "He which has the sharp sword with two edges," a warning in itself, and says further, "Repent or else I will come... and will fight against (you) with the sword of My mouth." 19:15 is another related verse which says that the Lord has a sharp sword that goes out of His mouth; in this instance, to judge the nations.

But the church of Pergamos is commended for holding true in the place where Satan dwells. Maybe the devil is present in the heathen worship; maybe the beast is already active (Rev. 13); we can't be sure of the full meaning, but we do know that Satan is cast out of heaven around this time and will be on the earth full of fury (12:9,12).

This group is told if they overcome they will be given hidden manna to eat, a white stone, and a new name known only to themselves. Manna we know from Exodus, when God fed the Israelites in the wilderness. It is mentioned again in Ps. 78:24-25 where it is called "angel's food". The white stones possibly refer to the Ancients who called white stones 'victory stones', and this certainly applies to overcomers. Isa. 62:2 says that Israel will receive a new name from God. Christ also has a name that only He knows (Rev. 19:12). The message to the faithful at Pergamos is, "Hang on to what you know, resist evil teaching, and I will share a secret name with you, a victory stone and manna that's hidden."

THYATIRA was about 70 km inland from the Aegean Sea and was known for its textiles and dyeing trade. It is now the Turkish city of Akishar. The message to this church was from "the Son of God whose eyes are like blazing fire" (Rev. 2:18, NIV). Ch. 19:12 has almost identical wording, and 1:14 says, "His eyes were as a flame of fire." While the exact meaning of these verses is unclear, we associate burning eyes with anger and intense emotion and maybe that's what is inferred here. Certainly the Lord rebukes these people, as we shall see. He is also spoken of in chapter one as having "feet...like bronze glowing in a furnace" (1:15 NIV) which is the same as the message to Thyatira from "the Son whose feet are like burnished brass." This seems to speak of the supernatural and glory.

Christ rebukes them for allowing a Jezebel among them. Jezebel was the worst woman in Israel's history and she is still a byword today. Rev. 2:24 calls this teaching "the depths of Satan" and just as Jezebel of old turned Israel to the worship of Baal, so in this passage, some have followed this 'new Jezebel' to immorality and heathen practises. God warns them that they will suffer great tribulation and even death if they do not repent.

But the Lord commends some in this church for increasing in good works. Christ says to those who endure to the end that He will give them authority over the nations and they “shall rule them with a rod of iron, as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers; even as I received of my Father” (Rev. 2:27). The first reference to the ‘rod of iron’ in the Bible is Ps. 2:9 where the Father gives the Son rule over the earth. Isa. 11:4 calls it “the rod of His mouth” because “with the breath of His lips He will slay the wicked.” Rev. 12:5 tells us of the “Man Child who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron.” And 19:15-16 shows the conquering Lord Jesus: “And out of His mouth goeth a sharp sword that with it He should smite the nations; and He shall rule them with a rod of iron: and He treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. And He hath on His vesture (robe) and on His thigh a name written, “KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS.” So the faithful of Thyatira will rule with Christ as their reward.

The church in Thyatira is also promised the Morning Star, of which it is said in Rev. 22:16 (NIV), “I, Jesus...am the Root and the Offspring of David, and the bright Morning Star.” So Christ Himself is promised to the faithful of Thyatira. What incredible rewards they will receive if they stay true: not only to be with Jesus Christ, the Morning Star, but also to rule with Him!

SARDIS was about 100km inland from Ephesus and Smyrna. Today there are popular ruins of decadent temples and bathhouse complexes. The church in Sardis is the one we are warned about, lest our personal experience fades like theirs. They had grown cold, were dying and dead. Had the decadence of the local heathenism influenced their Christianity, we wonder?

Christ warns them to repent or He will come on them as a thief (Rev. 3:3). This puts us in mind of 1 Thess. 5:2 and 2 Pet. 3:10 which both state that the Lord will come “as a thief in the night” and will surprise those who aren’t prepared (Mt 24:42-44). For those of us brought up with the traditional Christian teaching that this refers to the church, it takes quite a shift in our thinking to realize it is the Jews addressed in all these passages and not the church which is His Body. God is warning His people of Israel to be ready to meet their Messiah. Revelation has a further reference to a thief in Rev. 16:15, “Behold, I come as a thief. Blessed is he that watcheth and keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked, and they see his shame.” While this chapter tells of the angels with the seven last plagues, it’s interesting that the exhortation is very similar to what is said in the message to Sardis.

Christ speaks to Sardis as the One with the seven stars, as He did to Ephesus; and also as the One who has the seven spirits of God (Rev. 3:1). It’s hard

to draw conclusions about the seven spirits as they are only mentioned in the first five chapters of Revelation. In each of the other three verses they are closely connected with God and/or Christ, especially in 1:4-5. They are symbolized by seven lamps in 4:5 and seven eyes, which probably speak of Christ’s ability to see things perfectly, in 5:6. Are they a deeper explanation of the Holy Spirit or something we have yet to learn? They are, at least, an example of how far above and beyond our understanding are God and His doings.

In spite of the surrounding evil in Sardis, there are still a few who will wear white and are called worthy. But even those in gross error are told that if they repent and overcome, their names won’t be blotted out of the Book of Life (as they will, the inference being, if they continue in their ways) but they will share in the reward and Christ will acknowledge them before the Father. They still can wear white if they turn back to God. White clothing is worn by the twenty-four elders (4:4); by those martyred for their faith (6:9, 11); by the great multitude who came out of tribulation (mentioned after the 144,000 are listed in 7:9); the seven angels having the seven last plagues wear white (15:6); and also the armies of heaven who follow the Conquering Christ. There is one more reference and it answers the question, ‘What does white linen clothing represent?’ It’s Rev. 19:8 - “And to her (the Lamb’s wife, v. 7) was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints.” So white raiment indicates righteousness.

Being in the Book of Life, as the church of Sardis is promised, is a desirable thing. But what is this book? There are eight references to it in the New Testament, all but one (Phil. 4:3) being in Revelation. Daniel also refers to “Thy People...written in the book” (Dan 12:1), and the Ps. 69:28 seems to speak of the Book of Life also, “Let them be blotted out of the book of the living, and not be written with the righteous.” Isa. 4:3 refers to a book, too, “And it shall come to pass, that he that is left in Zion, and he that remaineth in Jerusalem shall be called holy, even every one that is written among the living in Jerusalem.” It appears that Israel had known of this book for many years. Even Moses alludes to it in Ex. 32:32-33. Rev. 13:8; 17:8 and 21:27 contrast those written in the Book with evildoers. Ch. 20:12, 15 gives us the best idea of what the Book is, “Whosoever was not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire.” So we can see that, by and large, the Book of Life lists those who have life.

The KJV has a similar passage in Rev. 22:19, “And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the Book of Life...”. This is actually a mistranslation, the NIV

BBFA Book Agency - New Web Site

The BBFA has recently established a new web site for the BBFA Book Agency, which exists to distribute Bible study resources.

The address of the new site is

www.spiritualblessings.org/book

Here, we thought we'd show you parts of some of the pages - but why not visit this new site yourself?

More Details

On the new site you may view hundreds of great Bible study resources, search for works by Christian authors, or look for particular books or recorded message titles.

Items are categorised on the new BBFA Book Agency web site in a number of ways. You may search out works by a particular author, by a particular category, or by looking through the alphabetical listing of titles.

Almost all of the items on the site are available in paperback/hardback book form and these are for sale. Many such items are also available from other organizations in countries outside of Australia, and these are listed on the relevant book/item pages. You may wish to contact these other organizations for quicker and cheaper delivery of items. Many of the items on our new web site are also available in electronic form and are FREE to view or download, either from our main BBFA website or from external sites.

Titles Listed by Category...

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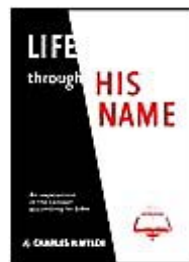
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Above: All items may be searched for by category.

Below: Each book or item has its own page, which will include a graphic of the book and a short synopsis. Many book pages include independent reviews, and, where available, a link to where the book may be read online free, as at the bottom of the sample below.

Life Through His Name...



By **Charles H. Welch**

Hardback: 452 pages

\$24.95

The title underlies a dominant theme which runs through John's gospel. The wonderful exposition of a book which is particularly applicable to the world today, reveals, as never before, the purpose of John in writing this gospel some 50 years after our Lord's crucifixion. The first essential is 'Life'. In this book Christ is set forth as the Bread of Life, the Light of Life, and the Resurrection and the Life.

This book is published online [here](#).

Authors Page (Below):

Each author or speaker has their own page, on which their works are listed, along with some biographical details and, in most cases, a photo or two. From this page you may click on the title of one their works and find out more about it, order it, or even read it free of charge, if it is available online.

The example below is a page dedicated to Dr E. W. Bullinger. Only a selection of his writings are shown here in this sample, but the full list may be viewed on the web site. The print quality on the actual web page is much better than what we have been able to reproduce in the sample below.

E. W. Bullinger...

Biographical notes:



Dr. E.W. Bullinger was born on December 15, 1837 in Canterbury, England. He was a direct descendent of the great Swiss Reformer Johann Heinrich Bullinger, a covenant theologian, who succeeded Zwingli in Zurich in December of 1531.

Bullinger was educated at King's College, London. He was a recognized scholar in the field of biblical languages. The Archbishop of Canterbury granted him an honorary Doctorate of Divinity degree in 1881 in recognition of his biblical scholarship.

Dr. Bullinger died on June 6, 1913, in London, England.

Further details may be found in *E.W. Bullinger - A Biography: (J. Carey)* A carefully researched yet very readable biography of a man who dedicated his life wholeheartedly to the service of God, and to the teaching of His Word. New edition includes photographs.

Books by this author:

A CRITICAL LEXICON & CONCORDANCE OF THE N. T.: Listing every English word in alphabetical order, this comprehensive volume enables the reader to find the Greek word from which an English word has been translated in the New Testament. A great help to those wishing to determine the exact meaning of the original inspired text.

ALSO: Consists of a listing (and explanations) of 376 N.T. passages where the word "also" may be ambiguous or misleading to the English reader.

THE BOOK OF JOB: Incorporating "Job - The Oldest Lesson in the World" by the same author, this book includes more detailed passage structures, brief explanatory and critical notes, and a new rhythmic translation.

THE CHIEF MUSICIAN: This book focuses on the titles of the Psalms, and their relation to the passage which follows. Other facets of the Psalms are also dealt with.

Finances, free material, and the BBFA Book Agency

The BBFA Book Agency is a not-for-profit organisation, which distributes Bible study resources on behalf of the Berean Bible Fellowship of Australia (BBFA). It is run on a purely voluntary basis. There are no paid staff members, and no one profits financially from its activities.

We seek to honour the Lord Jesus Christ with this ministry. As such, it is part of the BBFA's charter to promote a general interest in the Bible, and to

encourage Bible study. Thus, the resources made available through our web sites are designed to do just that.

Because we are not seeking to benefit financially, we are happy to point out, through this web site, where FREE Bible study material may be obtained, or where you might be able to pick up certain items cheaper, depending on where you live in the world. Visit our web site today.

being correct to the Greek, "...God will take away from him his share in the Tree of Life..." No mention of the Book is made in the original.

So God promises Sardis righteousness (white robes) and life, not only to the faithful, but also to those who will turn to Him again. Truly, God displays His great mercy and faithfulness to this church, desiring that they may overcome and reach their potential.

PHILADELPHIA lies 130 kms east of Smyrna and was known for a variety of temples and worship centres. It's interesting that God's temple features in the rewards promised to Philadelphia.

This is the church of brotherly love, which is the meaning of the Greek word. Philadelphia is the only group addressed without reproof. Indeed, because of their faithfulness, they will be kept "from the hour of temptation..." (3:10). 12:14 also tells of a group who escape tribulation. Here the woman, depicting Israel, is taken into the wilderness to a place of safety. Christ speaks to Philadelphia as the One having "set before (them) an open door, and no man can shut it..." (3:8). Maybe this also is in reference to their escape. God deals with Israel according to their works and it appears that because of their worthiness, Philadelphia will evade that evil time, having God's protection.

The Lord also speaks to them as "He that hath the Key of David" (3:7). This key is spoken of in Isa. 22:22, which speaks of Eliakim as a descendant of David, but the reference in Revelation shows it to also be a prophecy of Christ, who will rule on David's throne. Isa. 22:21, 22 say, "And I will clothe him with thy robe, and strengthen him with thy girdle, and I will commit thy government into his hand: and he shall be a father to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and to the house of Judah. And the key of the house of David will I lay upon His shoulder..." So the Key of David is shown to be his throne and in Revelation, Christ is speaking to Philadelphia as their coming King and the Key of David is the key to the Kingdom.

Though the Philadelphians are faithful, they still must overcome, "that no man take (their) crown." (3:11). Crowns, as we saw in the message to Smyrna, are rewards for achievement. This church is also told that if they hold fast they will be made pillars in the temple of their God and will dwell there. The temple is the place where God's throne is and His power and glory are evident (16:17 & 15:8). The temple is mentioned 13 times in Revelation and half of these are in reference to the seven plagues being poured on the earth (eg. 14:15). One passage very similar to the message to Philadelphia is to the great multitude in 7:14-15. "These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have

washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore are they before the throne of God and serve Him day and night in His temple." How wonderful to be with God always!

The worthy Philadelphians are promised a new name like those at Pergamos, and have the name of God and of the New Jerusalem written on them. Surely this denotes God's ownership and approval and that they belong to the heavenly city. Then those liars and pretenders who harassed the faithful will be seen to be of the synagogue of Satan and will acknowledge the fidelity of these who have been true to God's name.

LAODICEA is the famous "lukewarm" church. It was, and still is, located in the Lycus River valley and was a primary trade route between East and West. It was also the major hub of the Roman aqueduct system.

The Lord Jesus addresses Himself to this church as "The Beginning of the Creation of God" (3:14). The NIV reads "the Ruler of God's creation" and the Zondervan Parallel New Testament in Greek and English has "the Chief of the creation of God." These translations are equally accurate to the original language. This gives broader meaning to the verse, so that Christ is seen not only as "the first begotten of the dead" (1:5) but also the One who reigns over all creation. He is also called "the Faithful and True Witness" (3:14). Maybe this title is used in contrast to the Laodicean's carelessness. Though they have a semblance of religion, it is not much more than that. It just gives them false security. They are blind to their folly and oblivious to their fate. God says it would be better if they were cold and knew their true position. He warns them to repent or He will spew them out of His mouth. But He still loves them and seeks for their change.

Now we come to the verse that evangelicals have used many times as a call to sinners to repent, "Behold I stand at the door and knock" (3:20). This may be a fair application of the passage, but it is not the verse's intent. Its use in this way has eclipsed the real meaning. We need to take notice of the context here. The warning is to those in the tribulation, when Christ's return is at hand, and the message is directed to lukewarm *Jews*. Jesus knocks at their door to see if they will return to their God and serve Him in faithfulness. If they will let Him in, He will come in and eat with them. 19:9 says, "Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb."

The Laodiceans who overcome will be rewarded by being granted to sit with Christ in His throne. *Thronos* is used forty-six times in Revelation alone, showing its significance. The New English Greek Concordance and Lexicon says it means "throne, seat of authority or sovereignty". This is borne out in Lk. 1:52 where "the mighty" are "put down...from their

seats”, and in Col. 1:16 (NIV) where Christ created “all...thrones, or powers, or rulers, or authorities.” So Laodicea is being told they will reign with Christ. In Revelation, the vast majority of the verses containing *thronos* refer to God’s throne and there are some awesome descriptions of the throne room and God’s majesty. The only other references are where the twenty-four elders sit on thrones, and several places that speak about the beast’s seat or throne.

The dominant question in all of Revelation is “Who is going to be seated on the Throne? Who will have dominion? Who will rule all the earth?” At the moment, Satan has usurped the throne of God and is the god of this age. But this book brings into sharp focus the climax of the story, and we see clearly that in the end, God will hold His rightful place in the world. There is one other verse containing *thronos* and it is unclear just who this group is. “I saw thrones on which were seated those who had been given authority to judge. And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded because of their testimony for Jesus and because of the Word of God. They had not worshipped the beast or his image and had not received his mark on their foreheads or their hands. They came to life and reigned with Christ a thousand years” (20:4. NIV). Whoever this group is, we can again see the incredible reward and honour of being enthroned with Christ, just as the Laodiceans are promised.

CONCLUSION. As a result of our study which has showed the correlation of each message to the seven churches, it appears that the seven churches are representative of seven different types of Jews and the different attitudes they display to God at the time of the end. For example, the Philadelphian church represents the faithful who will be kept safe in tribulation; Sardis is indicative of those who have all but forsaken their Maker; the others are variations in between. But with all these groups, we see a faithful God seeking, in all liberality, for His people to return. He is, however, also at the point of final judgement. Christ is about to come as a God of vengeance, not only to His people, but also to Israel’s enemies. It is clear from the conclusion of this book that the faithful of Israel “will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with Him for a thousand years” (Rev. 20:6). This will fulfil the long-standing promise God made to Moses that has never been fulfilled, “And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and a holy nation” (Ex. 19:6). Israel will, at last, inherit all the promises to Abraham and the promised land with all the associated blessings. Christ’s rule will finally bring peace to the world, the peace which mankind is unable to ever achieve alone.

Tribute Mrs. Betty Argent.

Members of the BBFA have been saddened to learn that Mrs Betty Argent fell asleep in Christ on May 10th. this year. Yet in spite of our sense of grief at the loss of a beloved friend, we rejoice in the memory of Betty’s constant demonstration of the presence and joy of the Lord Jesus Christ in her life.

Betty and her late husband Les were early members of the Sydney Berean group that met for fellowship and study in the homes of various members, or, when the weather was suitable, in the Sydney Botanical Gardens. The Argents were also members of local Baptist churches.

Betty was a keen Bible student and was an enthusiastic participant in the Bible study meetings. She loved to get together with her like-minded friends and grow in grace and the knowledge of her Lord and Saviour through the study and fellowship. Those who knew Betty were blessed in many ways.

The last few years of her life saw Betty’s health decline, and life became something of a struggle. We are comforted to know that our sister’s life is hid with Christ in God, and that we will rejoice with her on that great day when we are manifested with our Lord in Glory. (Col. 3:3 & 4)

We extend our sympathy to Betty’s family members, knowing that, while they grieve over their mother’s loss, they do not grieve as others who are without the promise of eternal life in Christ.

Bible Study and Fellowship Day

Rutherford Community Centre
Arthur St. Rutherford, NSW.
Saturday, 11th. July 2009

Two Sessions: 10.00 am & 1.30 pm

Studies by Athol Walter (on “Genesis”) and David Tavender (on “Revelation”)

Hearty singing; warm fellowship; great studies.

Come and join us.

Light lunch and refreshments provided.

Phone Sue Hall, Co-ordinator, 4993 9009
for more details.

“As I wrote afore in few words...”

By Athol Walter.

A question was asked recently about Paul's statement in Eph. 3:3 & 4, that he had written previously, a 'few words' (AV) about the Mystery of Christ. The questioner wanted to know where those 'few words' were to be found. It is a good question, and has even sent some Bible scholars on long searches for lost writings of Paul to find the answer. That is rather sad, because the answer is in the very epistle that raises the question.

The Mystery of Christ is one of a number of mysteries mentioned in the Bible, and being centred in the Lord Himself, is of the utmost importance. There is obviously a parenthesis in these early verses of Eph. 3, and I want to suggest that the closing of the parenthesis at the end of v. 4 is incorrect. The closing bracket should be at the end of v. 5, and gives us further information. In plain language, Paul is saying that the mystery of Christ was not made known in other ages to the sons of men AS it has now been revealed by the Spirit to His holy apostles and prophets. The word 'as' makes a comparison, and the meaning is made clearer by translating the sentence 'the mystery ... was not made known in other ages ... to the extent it has now been revealed ...'. In other words, the mystery of Christ was revealed little by little in earlier ages, and the more complete revelation awaited the New Testament times. We should note that Paul claims to have a deeper knowledge of it than others.

To find the 'few words', we have only to turn to ch. 1. It is in vv. 15 to 23 that Paul shows his deeper knowledge of the mystery of Christ.

From v. 15 on, Paul prays that the saints would come to understand some marvelous things, which he lists for them: Christ was raised from the dead; then He was seated at God's right hand in the heavenlies, far above all rule and authority and power and lordship and every name that is named; God put all things under Christ's feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to the church which is His body, the fulness of Him who fills all in all. (vv. 20–23.)

Tucked away in those statements is a small quote from Psalm 8. Did you spot it? I hope you will pause and read this short Psalm right now, for I can only quote selectively from vv. 4 to 6: "What is man that You are mindful of him ...? For You have made Him a little lower than the angels ... You have made him to have dominion over the works of your hands; You **have put all things under his feet ...**"

In Psalm 8 the words apply to Adam, but Paul lifts them out of the Psalm and unhesitatingly applies them to Christ. Notice what God put under Adam's feet (v. 7): sheep, oxen, beasts of the field, birds, fish. This, of course, agrees with the opening chapters of Genesis, where Adam indeed was given dominion over the natural world around him.

Now compare this with what Paul says about the Lord Jesus. The 'all things' put under the feet of Christ are rule and authority and power and lordship, and every name (or title) that is named. While hints about these things had been given throughout the centuries, this was the most comprehensive statement we have about the dominion of the Lord. These are the 'few words', I believe, to which Paul referred in Eph. 3:3.

Another part of the question that I mentioned at the beginning of this article, was about Paul's reason for referring to the mystery of Christ like this. The answer is inferred from several statements he makes throughout Eph. 3, as well as in other places. He says that, in contrast to the mystery of Christ, The Mystery that he claims here to have received by special revelation, had never been revealed before that point in time when he, Paul, first made it known. It had not been revealed little by little as the mystery of Christ had, but was hidden in God from before the foundation of the world. (Also compare Eph. 3:5 with Col. 1:26.) Unless words have lost their meaning, this can only mean that we will not be able to find The Mystery anywhere in the Bible before the epistle to the Ephesians was written. It is not there in any prophecy or type, either of a person or event. This means that, contrary to his custom in earlier epistles, where his teaching is based firmly on what is said in the Old Testament, he cannot refer to any prophet or Psalm, for example, to substantiate his claim concerning this new Mystery. So he appeals to his demonstrated superior knowledge in the mystery of Christ and asks his readers, on that basis, to trust this new revelation he has been commissioned to make.

It is one of the saddest parts of Church history that the Church at large did not accept Paul's revelation of the Mystery concerning the Church, the Body of Christ. We find practically nothing of it in any of the writings of the early 'church fathers'. Fortunately, it is preserved on the pages of Scripture, and is available to all 'who have eyes to see'.

Be that as it may, Paul certainly has demonstrated a deep knowledge of the mystery of Christ, and what he reveals in Ephesians about the dominion of Christ in all things to His Church, together with His Headship of it, could be termed the 'capstone' of the mystery of Christ.

Light Upon the Word

“... not in the words which man’s wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth ...” (1 Cor. 2:13)

The Bible, the Word of God, is a very wonderful book. It is the Book of books. The perfect harmony of all the parts written by different human agencies, but with one Author, it is a miracle in itself. Its accuracy as to science is wonderful. Its accuracy as to history is being confirmed all the time by the spade of the archaeologist. Even its numerical structure is a delight to those interested in mathematics. It has beautiful poetry, and its literary structure is not even attempted in the writings of men.

But for all that it is useless to most people, a mere book. They might just as well try to read it upside down, for all they can get out of it. Unbelieving people even of high rank can spend a lifetime in its study and even teach it, but still never get its message. It is a closed book to them. It is a bit like a sundial which takes a light from heaven to make its purpose understood and realised. That light from heaven is the Holy Spirit. He is our teacher.



Without Him, the Bible is useless to us, even as a sundial is useless without the sun. He can shine upon the Holy Word and make it meaningful to us. May we ever seek the light!

It is one thing to know the Scriptures by memory after reading or hearing, but only the Holy Spirit can open one’s understanding to grasp the truths within – bringing a conscious reality of these truths – and when they become real to a believer it causes his heart to be lifted up in praise and thanks unto Him.

“In Everything ... Give Thanks”

Below is a prayer based on the following exhortation from the Scriptures to give thanks:- “Be careful for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with **thanksgiving**, let your requests be made known unto God” (Phil. 4:6)

Thank You, Lord, for the redemption through Christ’s blood and forgiveness of sins: “*In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace.*” (Eph. 1:7)

Thank You, Lord, for your mercy: “*God, who is rich in mercy ... his great love wherewith he loved us.*” (Eph. 2:4)

Thank You, Lord, for your grace: “*Even when we were dead in sins, [He] hath quickened us together with Christ; by grace ye are saved.*” (Eph. 2:5)

Thank You, Lord, for delivering us from the power of darkness: “*The Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light; Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, ... hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son: in whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins.*” (Col. 1:12-14)

Thank You, Lord, for your loving kindness: “*The kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us.*” (Titus 3:4,5)

Thank You, Lord, for your spirit: “*After ... ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise, Which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession.*” (Eph. 1:13,14)

Thank You, Lord, for your wisdom: “*The holy Scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.*” (2 Tim. 3:15)

Thank You, Lord, for your strength: “*I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.*” (Phil. 4:13)

Thank You, Lord, for the provisions you are yet to give: “*My God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus.*” (Philippians 4:19)

Thank You, Lord, for the provisions you have already given: “*Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ.*” (Eph. 1:3)

Thank You, Lord, for giving your Son: “*Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift.*” (2 Cor. 9:15).

“Praise ye the LORD. O give thanks unto the LORD; for He is good.” (Psalm 106:1)

For your diary....

BBFA 2009 Annual Conference

Camp Toukley (NSW Central Coast),

September 19th, 20th, 21st, 2009.

Plan now to join us for study and fellowship.

Further details in later issues of Spiritual Blessings.

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You are invited to attend

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

Brisbane:

Every Monday. 7pm start.
Boronia Hts. State School hall.
194 Middle Rd., Boronia Hts.
Group Co-ordinator:
Frank Haegler (07) 3297 1981

Sydney:

4th. Sunday each month 3pm.
25/20 Philips St., Cabarita.
Group Co-ordinators: Peter &
Anne Ward, (02) 9743 3452

Newcastle:

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

Maitland:

Alternate Wednesdays, 10.am.
20 Short St., Lorn.
Group Co-ordinator: Susan Hall,
(02) 4933 9009

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3. All sufficiency of Christ's One Sacrifice.
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