

Spiritual Blessings



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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

“No Man Knows The Day ...”

By Athol Walter

It is just a few weeks ago that the nations of the world celebrated the start of a new year in their different ways. In Sydney, there was the usual fireworks spectacular centred on the harbour bridge. I must confess that I did not stay up to watch it on the TV. I think the best place from which to welcome in the new year is one's own comfortable bed. I have found that the new year always awaits me when I wake up the next morning.

But what I find interesting in all this is that in the State of New South Wales, of which Sydney is the capital, we have daylight saving from October to March, during which our clocks go forward one hour. That means that when everyone is cheering, blowing whistles or whatever when the clock strikes midnight, they are actually an hour early, for really, it is only 11 pm. But no one seems to worry about it.

We also have the situation here where our northern neighbours in the state of Queensland do not have daylight saving time, so their clocks are not put forward one hour. This means that someone living near the border between these two States could celebrate new year in New South Wales and then hop over the border and do it all over again an hour later in Queensland. What fun!

But not only do we humans interfere with the clocks, we have also managed to seriously distort our calendars over the last two thousand years, at least. Nine years ago, when the numbers on the calendar went from 1999 to 2000, the world went wild as they celebrated the 'new millenium'. No one seemed to recall that our calendars are out at least

four years. And on a slightly different note, a friend of ours is quite certain that the new millenium started on Jan. 1st 2001, not 2000. As far as I know, she might well be right. Anyway, how did it come about that our calendars are out?

In the year AD 525, the then Pope, John I, asked a Roman abbot named Dionysius Exiguus, to prepare a calendar as a standard for the Western Church. The system in use up to that time was the Alexandrian, which was based on the reign of the Emperor Diocletian. As he had been a persecutor of Christians, it was deemed unseemly to use his calendar, so Dionysius altered the calendar to make the Christian era (so-called) begin with the year of the birth of Christ. This year was called AD 1. But Dionysius was out by at least four years.

We know from the Gospel accounts that the Lord was born during the reign of Herod the Great, whose death seems to have taken place in 4 BC, although there is a little uncertainty about it. I think it can be said that Herod's death could not be later than 4 BC. (In case anyone is not sure, AD means Anno Domine = Year of the Lord, while BC means Before Christ.) Obviously, this means that Dionysius was

Continued on page 3

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In this Issue:

President's Word & Editorial.....	2
Firsts & Seconds.....	4
How I got into Acts 28 Beliefs.....	7
Doctrine & Practice Inseparable.....	9
Brisbane Study Day and We Know The Truth.....	11
Point to Ponder, Notices etc.....	12



President's Word

Greetings once again to all of our readers. The new year has begun, and The Berean Bible Fellowship of Australia has planned several special meetings this year, with others in the pipeline. We hope we'll see you at some or all of them.

If you've never attended any of our meetings, or it's been a while since your last one, we encourage you to pluck up the courage and come along ("I'd forgotten how good these Bible studies are" was heard at last year's Newcastle Bible Study Day from a long time absentee.) All of our meetings are free of charge, except the Annual Conference, where we keep fees to the absolute minimum. Be sure to check the column on page 12 which has details about our regular meetings in Brisbane, Newcastle, Maitland and Sydney.

Special Event - Brisbane

A day of meetings on April 10, 2010 in the Brisbane area has just been finalised. This is the weekend after Easter, and the new venue is the St. Augustine's College at Springfield. Karl Edwards and I will be the speakers. See the advertisement on page 11 for more details.

Special Event - Newcastle

For the last couple of years we have had very profitable and enjoyable days of Bible study at Charlestown Community Hall, and this year we are planning another, this time on Saturday May 29. The exact format is still to be finalised, but we usually meet from 10.00am-4.00pm, with three study meetings. The day includes lunch and light refreshments. It may be a little different this year, but we will confirm the details in the next issue. In the meantime, please keep aside May 29th and plan to join us.

Other Events

This year's annual conference will be held at Camp Toukley on September 18th, 19th, & 20th. Registration forms will be sent out later in the year, but we invite you to set aside those days for a weekend of Bible study and fellowship. The huge bookstall, complete with freebies and bargains, is always popular, and will be back again. This time we will be joined by Michael and Sylvia Penny.

Michael will be our guest speaker for the weekend, as well as conducting other meetings around NSW, Queensland and, for the first time, Tasmania. Relevant dates and venues will be published when they are finalised.

Optional Subscription

Finally, you will notice that this issue includes an "Optional Subscription" form. Thanks to everyone who has returned this form to us in previous years. We gladly send out our magazine FREE OF CHARGE to anyone who asks, which is why subscription is "optional". If you can't afford the "optional subscription", don't worry, you will still receive our magazine. This is just our way of providing you with an opportunity to help us should you wish to do so. The BBFA has no paid pastors or staff, and is run on a purely voluntary basis. If you would like to help us cover some of the costs of printing, posting and administration, we invite you to return that form with a payment, or simply visit our website at www.spiritualblessings.org/donate to make a donation online.

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

David Tavender.

Editorial

We are back to our usual size of 12 pages in this issue, and I pray that the articles provide stimulation to study God's Word.

I had hoped to have David Milford's reply to Martin Walter's article on Calvinism in the last issue, but with annual holidays etc. it has not yet arrived. It is not intended that the discussion will be allowed to drag on, but if and when David can prepare his response, I think that should be published.

We have quite an international flavour to this issue. I am pleased to have the personal account from Jan Lilleby of Norway, of some of his pilgrimage. I owe Jan an apology. He sent me this article quite some time ago in response to my request, but it was just at that time that I decided to have a heart attack and enjoy the delights of the NSW Health Service. But in all the drama of those days, I forgot that Jan had sent me his story, and it was only recently, while going through some papers, that I came across it. So here it is at last, and I hope you find his story as interesting as I did.

No Man Knows The Day. Cont from Pg. 1

out by those four years. Because the length of the solar year is not an exact number of days, the seasons kept getting out of sync, so on a couple of occasions, days were dropped out of the calendar. Nowadays, we have leap years to keep the date in line with the seasons .

But does it really matter that we are uncertain as to what year it is? In one sense, it makes no difference whether we know the exact date or not. It could be said that the important thing is that we are all working from the same calendar. We must recognize, however, that our calendars are not God's calendar. Whether we have our calendars and clocks right or wrong, God's plan progresses regardless, and when the right time on the right day comes up on God's calendar, the right things happen. There are many instances in Scripture of God's impeccable timing, but before looking at a few of these, I want to mention one example that may be nothing more than a coincidence. I must say that, although we must go outside the Bible for part of the information, I believe it is more than just a coincidence

I refer to the date of the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem. Remember that there have been two Jerusalem Temples destroyed, the first by the Babylonian King, Nebuchadnezzar and the second by the Roman General, Titus. Jeremiah 52:12 & 13 tells us that it was the 10th day of the 5th month that

Nebuchadnezzar's troops burned the Temple. The date for the destruction of the second Temple by the Army of Titus is given by Josephus as the 4th of August AD 70. According to Biblical Chronologist, Floyd Nolan Jones, this translates to the 10th day of the 5th month of the Jewish calendar. It seems that getting the day right has some significance to God.

The next example certainly cannot be written off as coincidence. In Exodus 12:41 we have this: "And it came to pass at the end of the four hundred and thirty years – **on that very same day** – it came to pass that all the armies of the Lord went out from the land of Egypt." What is being said here is that the Exodus took place on the exact day that a period of 430 years ended. To find out to what this refers, we must go back to Gen. 15:13. Here, after the Lord had enacted a covenant with Abraham while he was in a deep sleep, the Lord said to Abraham, "Know certainly that your descendants will be strangers in a land that is not theirs, and will serve them, and they will afflict them four hundred years ..." Just leave the difference between the 400 and 430 years aside for the moment. We are concerned with the end of the period, not the beginning. Abraham was told that his descendants would be strangers in a land 'that was not theirs'. While there they would be enslaved and treated cruelly, but when the stated period was up, they would be brought out of that cruel slavery. And it happened on the very day the period ended. The two differing numbers of years relate to different starting points for the calculations. (For more details, see the article "The Selfsame Day", by Charles Welch, Berean Expositor, Vol. 13, p. 150.)

One of the most moving examples of knowing the day — or not knowing it, as in this case — is found in the Gospels as the Lord's earthly ministry was approaching its climax. Both Matthew and Luke record the Lord's triumphant entry into Jerusalem, but it is only Luke who gives one important detail. We find it in ch. 19:41 & 42: "Now as He drew near, He saw the city and wept over it, saying, 'If you had known, even you, especially in this your day, the things that make for your peace! But now they are hid from your eyes.' " What was the significance of that day? I believe it was the last day of the 62 times seven years given to Daniel by the angel (Daniel 9:24–26). It was to be 62 weeks to Messiah the Prince. Note that the Messiah was to be cut off **after** the 62nd week. It was the one time when the Lord most clearly demonstrated He was the Promised One by riding into Jerusalem on the donkey, as

Editorial cont.

The other writer from overseas is John Kontos of Greece. John lived here in the Hunter region some years back and is an old friend. His article is on p. 11.

It is wonderful to have these contacts with believers in different countries and to learn of the witness to a rightly divided Word being provided by various groups and individuals. While the details of these stories differ, there are nevertheless some similarities to our own pilgrimage. For example, there is the sheer joy that floods into heart and mind as the Scriptures open up in new and unexpected ways. And then on the other hand, we all find that there is a price to pay when witness is made to the truth we have learnt. Family and friends often don't understand, and we sometimes have to walk a lonely road. But we are never left alone, for our Lord is always with us every step of the way.

Athol Walter.

Cont. on p. 6

Firsts and Seconds.

By David Tavender

It is remarkable in the Scriptures how the first in a sequence of events is often that which either fails or is rejected, while the second things are those that are either chosen or successful – things which please God and are accepted by Him. It may well be that this is the Lord's way of keeping the enemy, Satan, guessing and totally incapable of thwarting the grander purposes of God. Of course, there are also lessons for God's children to learn along the way, so let us look at some of these interesting and insightful contrasts found in the Bible – the 'firsts' as opposed to the 'seconds'.

Genesis

Genesis ch. 3 tells the story of the first man Adam, who in 1 Cor. 15:47 is contrasted with the One referred to as the second man. "The first man is of the earth, earthy: the second man is the Lord from Heaven". Adam failed God, 'so He drove out the man'. (Gen. 3:24) However, the Lord Jesus Christ and His work pleased God: "Thou art my beloved son; in Thee I am well pleased". (Luke 3:22)

Adam's first son, Cain, was a failure as well, but Abel, the second son, pleased God by the offering he gave. As such, Abel is a type of Christ, the second man. "Unto Cain and to his offering [the Lord] had not respect ... the Lord had respect unto Abel and to his offering." (Gen. 4:4, 5)

The first son of Abraham, Ishmael, despite being blessed, was not the son of God's earlier promises. "As for Ishmael, I have heard thee: behold, I have blessed him and will make him fruitful, and will multiply him exceedingly." (Gen. 17:20) Rather, it was Isaac, the second son, who was the promised one. "Is anything too hard for the Lord? At the time appointed, I will return unto thee, according to the time of life, and Sarah shall have a son." (Gen. 18:14)

Isaac's two sons, Esau and Jacob, show again how the first is often rejected and the second chosen. "The land whereon thou liest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed." (Gen. 28:13) This was God's promise to Jacob, the second son, chosen by God, whom his father Isaac had blessed instead of Esau, who was born first.

A little later, when Joseph was in Egypt as governor of the land and his brothers came to him the first time for food, they did not recognize him. "Joseph

knew his brothers, but they knew him not." (Gen. 42:8). But Acts 7:13 tells us that, "at the second time, Joseph was made known to his brethren." Joseph is a picture of Christ. The first time Christ came to Israel, they knew Him not as their king and redeemer. The second time, when He comes to reign, He will be revealed to them in great glory. More about this in a moment.

The Exodus

Moses was not accepted by his people in Egypt when he came to them the first time. "Who made thee a prince and judge over us?, said one of his fellow Hebrews (Ex. 2:14). But the second time, he was accepted by his people. "Moses and Aaron went and gathered all the elders of the children of Israel: and Aaron spake all the words which the Lord had spoken unto Moses, and did the signs in the sight of the people, and the people believed." (Ex. 4:29–31).

At Mount Sinai, Tablets (KJV – "tables") of stone containing the law were presented to Moses. They didn't last long, however: "It came to pass as soon as Moses came nigh unto the Camp, that he saw the calf, and the dancing, and Moses' anger waxed hot, and he cast the tables out of his hands and brake them beneath the mount" (Ex. 32:19). However, another set was made, and God said, "I will write on the tables the words that were on the first tables, which thou brakest, and thou shalt put them in the ark." (Deut. 10:2–5). It was this second set, not the first, which was kept.

The first generation from Egypt died in the wilderness, whereas the second entered into the promised land of Canaan. "Doubtless ye shall not come into the land (Canaan) ... but your little ones ... them will I bring in" (Numbers 14:30, 31).

Moses, who originally brought the people out of Egypt, was not permitted to bring them into the land. That task was handed over to another. To the first man, Moses, it was said, "this is the land which I swear unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob, saying I will give it unto thy seed: I have caused thee to see it with thine eyes, but thou shalt not go over thither" (Deut. 34:4). To the second man, Joshua, it was said, "Moses my servant is dead: now therefore arise, go over this Jordan, thou, and all this people,

unto the land which I do give to them, even to the children of Israel.” (Joshua 1:2).

Kings of Israel.

The first king of Israel, Saul, was a failure. The second king, David, was a man after God’s own heart, and was accepted. Saul’s kingship came to an end when the Lord declared, “I have rejected him from reigning over Israel”. We then read that “the Spirit of the Lord departed from Saul” and that “the Spirit of the Lord came upon David” (1 Sam. 16:1, 13, 14).

The first king to show a desire to build a permanent temple for the Lord was not permitted to do so. This task was for the king after him. It was not David, but Solomon whom God chose for the work. David said, “As for me, I had in mine heart to build an house ... and had made ready for the building: but God said unto me, ‘Thou shalt not build an house for my name, because thou hast been a man of war, and hast shed blood’ ... And he said unto me, ‘Solomon thy son, he shall build my house and my courts’” (1 Chron. 28:2, 3, 6).

Christ’s Comings

The first and second comings of Christ are quite startling in their contrasts. His first advent was characterised by humility, rejection and suffering; His second advent will be characterised by power, worship and glory.

God manifest in the flesh first came into this world via a pen fit for animals (Luke 2:7). As an adult, He told His disciples, concerning His first coming, that He “did not come to be served, but to serve” (Mark 10:45 NKJV). Regarding His ministry on earth the first time, we read that “He came unto His own, and His own received Him not” (John 1:11) He was rejected by His own so much so that, when Pilate said to His countrymen, “What will ye then that I shall do unto him whom ye call the King of the Jews?”, they cried out repeatedly, “Crucify Him” (Mark 15:12–14).

Years later, the Apostle Paul exhorted believers to show humility amongst their brethren, and used the example of the Lord’s own humility displayed during His first coming – “Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus; who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: but made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Himself the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: and being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself, and became

obedient unto death, even the death of the cross” (Phil. 2:5-8).

His second coming to the earth will be quite different, though. “When the Son of Man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, He shall sit upon the throne of his glory” (Matt. 25:31). A throne is a symbol of a king to be served by those under his dominion. As opposed to Mark 10:45 quoted earlier, He will then indeed come to be served. When that future glorious coming eventuates, it shall be said that “the kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of His Christ, and He shall reign for ever and ever” (Rev. 11:15). In that time, many shall be required to serve Him, or face consequences: “And it shall be, that whoso will not come up of all the families of the earth unto Jerusalem to worship the King, even upon them shall be no rain.” (Zech. 14:17).

Ultimately, a time will come when, “at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in Heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.” (Phil. 2:10, 11). From the babe born in poverty, who died a criminal’s death, to the universal acknowledgement by all creatures of Him as the Creator and Lord of all things ... I can’t think of a greater contrast, can you?

The Believer

Because of the great sacrifice of our Lord, there are ‘firsts’ and ‘seconds’ which also may be seen in the journey of those whose faith is found in Christ Jesus.

In the first instance, our natural state before God is not a good one, for “all have sinned and come short of the glory of God” (Rom. 3:23). Concerning a state that is right before God, “It is written, there is none righteous, no, not one” (Rom. 3:10). Yet, “now hath He reconciled in the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy and unblameable and unreprouvable in His sight” (Col. 1:21, 22). To emphasise the point, our ‘first’ state before God is unacceptable to Him; our ‘second’ state before God as believers in Christ is to be reckoned as righteous, and therefore now acceptable to Him.

There are ‘firsts’ and ‘seconds’ concerning our bodies of flesh, too. Consider the following contrasts from Paul’s writings as he compares the body we have in this current life, with the body a Christian will be granted after resurrection: [The body] is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption; it is sown in dishonour, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness,

Firsts & Seconds. From previous page.

it is raised in power; ... as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly ... this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory" (1 Cor. 15: 42, 43, 49, 53, 54).

We may also experience suffering during this first phase of our existence, which is to be followed by glory in the second phase. "The sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in us" (Rom. 8:17). "If we suffer, we shall also reign with Him" (2 Tim. 2:12). The contrast is much less than that which pertains to the Lord, but it is nevertheless significant, and something the believer should daily bear in mind.

No Man Knows The Day cont. from p. 3.

prophesied by Zechariah 9:9. It had to be that day, for that was the day marked out on God's calendar.

I hardly need to mention the way in which the right days figured in the arrest and death of the Lamb of God. Back at the time of the Exodus, the Israelites were instructed to choose the lamb that would be sacrificed on the 10th day of the month. Over the next few days, the lamb had to be examined thoroughly for defects, for it had to be perfect. Then the lamb was slain between the evenings on the fourteenth day of the month. The Lord presented Himself to the people and their rulers. He was examined by high priest, by Herod, by Pilate and pronounced to be without sin. Then He was crucified on the fourteenth day.

Yes, in one sense it might be unimportant that our calendars are out, but in another sense, it is important because the integrity of God's Word is at stake. We should also get the timing as right as we can so that we can be as much in step with God as possible.

The title for this article is taken, of course, from Matt. 24:36, where the Lord is answering the Disciples' question concerning the destruction of the Temple and the end of the age. He has been speaking about His return in power and glory (v. 30) and goes on to say, "But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels, but My Father only." Then in 25:13, which is part of the same discourse, the Lord

In Scripture, we see this sentiment presented many times in metaphors like "weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning" (Psalm 30:5); and "He maketh the storm a calm so that the waves thereof are still" (Psalm 107:29). These verses remind us that, despite the things in our lives which currently cause us anguish (first), there is always the comfort and hope which only the Lord can bring us (second). In the New Testament, we see a similar thought expressed – "be careful for nothing [i.e. do not worry over things], but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God: and the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus" (Phil. 4:6, 7).

May we ever look to our God, who has the ages planned, and knows the end from the beginning.

(I am indebted to the late David Fryer and his paper, 'The First and the Second in the Holy Scriptures' for some of the thoughts presented in this article.)

says, "Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour in which the Son of Man is coming".

I think we must link this with what the Lord said in Acts 1:7. Since His resurrection, He had been instructing the disciples about the Kingdom of God. When the time for His departure drew near, they had one question to ask from all that He had said. We read in v. 6. "Lord, will You at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?" He replied, "It is not for you to know times or seasons which the Father has put in His own authority." These two verses have suffered much abuse at the hands of many expositors, but we only need to note that the point of the disciples' question concerned the timing of the Kingdom. The Lord's answer also concerned the timing. He said that the timing of it was not their concern.

He then went on to tell them that they had a job to do and they would be given the power to do it. The Book of Acts, together with the epistles written during the years of the Acts, are the record of how they did indeed carry out their mission.

The Lord, however, had also said previously that as a person can know when summer is on the way because of the signs in nature, so they, and any believer who takes the words of Scripture seriously and at face value, will know when the 'season' is approaching.

Cont. on p. 10

How I Got Into Acts 28 Beliefs

By Jan Lilleby, Norway

Firstly, we must remember that almost all of Christianity has a dispensational approach to the Bible. That goes for Catholics as well as Lutherans, for governmental ruled denominations or free revival movements of various beliefs. Almost all Christians, if they have studied the Bible for a few years, recognize, for instance, that we are not to give animal sacrifices to please the Lord. Neither do we execute anyone for not keeping the Sabbath according to Mosaic Law, or for committing adultery, or breaking many other ordinances found in the Bible. We are all dispensational in our foundational beliefs.

We know, from our reading of the New Testament, that since the death and resurrection of the Lord Christ Jesus, we are saved by faith, without the need for works to 'support' that faith. Salvation is a gift. But many believers tend to confuse faith and works, ending up with a 'hybrid' sort of belief. We tend to confuse the four Gospels with Paul's post-Acts epistles, and thus, without reflecting too much, we think that doctrine from the earthly ministry of Jesus is one and the same as what we find in Paul's later works. We need to remember that Paul was given added revelation which completed the Word of God, and taught the doctrine belonging to the Church which is His Body, which is separate from Israel's promises.

Many Christians seem to be unaware, as I once was, of the fact that Paul **first** ministered to Israel and Jewish proselytes before he was given that famous revelation of the Mystery, which we read of in Eph. 3:1–19 – written in AD 62 after the close of Acts. So most believers are like 'two-legged stew-pots', with a 'blessed' mixture of grace and Mosaic Law – confused as to what we think is the Gospel of Grace.

I do hear, however, most Christian preachers stating this most basic truth that we are saved by faith without works. Some denominations, however, have the practice of water baptism (or christening) of babies to make them God's children. Even in Pentecostal circles, from which I have come, there is a clear confession on this issue. A believer is saved

by faith alone, no works or law-keeping of any kind needed.

And yet, friends, these diverse denominations of fine Christian believers, still do not put into the practice the instruction to 'rightly divide the Word of Truth', as Paul exhorts us in 2 Tim. 2:15. They say we **MUST** be baptized in water, and yet, we are not saved by any other means than our faith in Christ, as Eph. 2:8 says.

Another practice that seems peculiar to me concerns the Law of Moses. This has been abolished as far as the Body of Christ is concerned (Eph. 2:15; Col. 2:14–16), and yet most denominations say in various ways, "Oh, but you must live according to the ten commandments! They consider the Law as eternal truth that runs through each and every dispensation, in spite of the fact that Paul clearly states: "By abolishing in His flesh the enmity (caused by) the Law with its decrees and ordinances ...". The

ten commandments are included in that statement!

So this is the background that brought me to a more thorough and intense study of the Word of God, a

dispensational study. All the inconsistent teaching from pulpits every Sunday made me wonder. There are no contradictions in God's Word as such. These come from our incorrect interpretations, which are the result of our failure to rightly divide the Word of Truth, something of which I was guilty for many years as a Pentecostal believer.

Like many others, however, I also got some help from other believers, firstly from people who had been into the Mid-Acts views for many years. (The Mid-Acts position is that the Church which is His Body commenced when Paul started his ministry about halfway through Acts. Ed.) I read quite a few books – and finally thought, "I have cracked it! I have arrived at the full truth in the right division of God's Word."

But after a couple of years of study, getting a lot of support from an American Mid-Acts website – during which time I started my own web site teaching Mid-Acts beliefs – I stumbled across material from various writers who presented the viewpoint that the Body of Christ did not start until the end of Acts 28.

"We are all dispensational in our foundational beliefs."

And – boy – did I wake up! Through that “Aha” experience, my study gained speed, and I revised my website as I got new light in God’s Word, rightly divided.

Acts 28 beliefs made the New Testament all clear to me. The Church, the Body of Christ, did not start until God gave Paul the revelation of the Mystery. This Mystery had been hid in God up to that moment from before the foundation of the world. And Paul received this revelation in AD 62 as he sat in his rented lodge in Rome as a prisoner (Eph. 1–3).

This explained to me **all the puzzles** I had been struggling with. It explained why Paul made several Nazarite vows during his Acts ministry (Acts 18:18 at Cenchrea and Acts 21:23–25 at Jerusalem). These were free vows made by personal choice according to Numbers 6:2–9. It also solved the mystery of why Paul, for decades, went to the **synagogue celebrating the Sabbath!** It also explained to me how it was that Paul circumcised Timothy according to the Law (Acts 16:3), and why Paul strictly observed the Mosaic Feast of Unleavened Bread by abstaining from travel during the feast (Acts 20:6), as well as observing the Feast of Pentecost (Weeks) as we read in Acts 21–22. Just think of it – Paul, held up as the Apostle of Grace by Mid-Acts believers, still keeping the Law of Moses to the very letter, as late as the year AD 58-59!

I fully understand that many Mid-Acts believers cannot really explain to us (or to themselves) why Paul, during the ministry of the free Grace of God, still observed the Law. They seem not to understand that the Law was included in the New Covenant ministry of the Apostle (2 Cor. 3:6-11; Heb. 9:15; Jer. 31:31–34). The prophesy of a **new covenant** given by Jeremiah, says that the Holy Spirit would make the Israeli believers **KEEP THE LAW**. God would *write the Law into their minds and hearts*. It is impossible that Paul should have kept the Law and, at the same time, taught the assemblies that the Law was abolished! This is the ‘arch contradiction’ of all contradictions made by believers, viz. that Paul, as an apostle of grace (as revealed in Eph. 3:1–10), was still a steady keeper of the Law (Rom. 3:31; 8:4). These huge contradictions witness to us that something must be **wrong with our interpretation of Scripture**, rather than the Scriptures themselves.

If we, as I did, first as an “Acts 2” believer, then as a “Mid-Acts” believer, divide the Word wrongly, the result is confusion and contradictions, and we will have difficulties in publicly explaining the Gospel. I

found that only the “Acts 28” approach to the Bible is the proper solution to these problems. Once I knew that Paul had two ministries – firstly, one to Israel and Jewish proselytes (recorded in Acts); then lastly, the final, new and separate ministry as a prisoner of Jesus Christ for us Gentiles according to the Mystery hid in God – then I understood that Paul’s Law observance could be explained and confusion avoided. Paul’s last seven epistles written after the end of Acts contain the teaching for the new Calling of the Mystery.

Having recognized this important boundary line, it was easy to see that Israel has her own prophetic promises concerning the earthly Kingdom to come with the return of Messiah Jesus. These promises must not be stolen or adapted by the church as its promises. The Church, the Body of Christ, was established/revealed in the very instance that God divorced Israel and left that nation to herself – resulting in the disaster brought on her by the Romans, as we know from history.

The Church, the Body of Christ, can only operate as long as Israel remains divorced from God. But until that moment when God again calls her up, (by the sending of Elijah, and shortly thereafter, by the return of the Lord Jesus) the dispensation of the free Grace of God operates, according to the post-Acts epistles of Paul, through the Mystery Church – which has the task of bringing the message of eternal salvation today. We are not heading for the Kingdom, but for the highest of the Heavens, where Christ now sits by His Father’s right hand, far above all (Eph. 1:20–23).

I thank God for all the fine Christians in the world today – but mostly I thank God for those believers who do take the exhortation in 2 Tim. 2:15 seriously, and rightly divide the Word of Truth.

Do you agree?

Anselm said, “I believe in order that I may understand.” Abelard, years later, said, “I seek understanding in order that I may believe.”

Abelard was wrong. Faith precedes understanding.

Doctrine and Practice, Inseparable.

By Charles Welch

Truth is so vast and its implications so great, that the mind is compelled to analyse, dissect and separate in order to attain to some semblance of understanding, but both teacher and taught should ever remember that truth so dissected is dead: we are but conducting a post-mortem examination. Consequently we differentiate between faith and works, and can consider each separately, yet in strict truth “faith if it hath not works is dead, being alone” (James 2:17), and so are works without faith. Again, we differentiate most markedly between imputed righteousness and practical righteousness, yet if imputed righteousness never manifests itself in practical righteousness, the original reckoning is vain, being unfruitful.

For the purposes of clearer understanding, we speak of Doctrine and Practice, and point out that whereas Ephesians 1–3 contains seven sections devoted to doctrinal truth, Ephesians 4–6 contains seven corresponding sections devoted to practical truth, but if we imagine it to be possible to receive, believe and enjoy the revelation of the doctrinal section while ignoring the practical teaching of the corresponding section, we are in grievous error.

The doctrine cannot be divorced from its divinely described goal, namely “that we should be holy and without blame”. So also the revelation contained in Eph. 1:15–23 presupposes the enlightenment of the eyes: “the eyes of your understanding having been enlightened” (1:18, perfect, passive participle). The fact that salvation is by grace, through faith, and not of works is not to be separated from the equally emphasized fact that it is, nevertheless, “unto good works” (Eph. 2:8-10). The doctrine of Ephesians 1–3 and the practice of Ephesians 3–6 make one undivided whole, and any attempt to explain the one without the other is vain and must end in confusion.

In John’s Gospel the Saviour has given one or two words that point in this direction.

“If any man will to do His will, he shall know of the doctrine” (John 7:17).

“Will do” is the simple future, but this is not what the original says. The R. V. is correct and reads: “If any man willeth to do His will”, showing that the “will” of the person is involved. The same care is called for in translating John 5:40, where the A. V. reads ,

“Ye will not come to Me”, which is given a force nearer to that of the original if made to read, “Ye are not willing to come to Me.” Other examples of the truth that “WILL TO DO” precedes knowledge of doctrine can be easily found.

“If ye continue in My word, then are ye My disciples indeed (John 8:31).

This word “continue” is the translation of *meno*, a key word of John’s Gospel, mostly translated “abide” (see 8:35). So John 15:9 says “continue ye in My love”, but John 15:10 says, “Ye shall abide in My love”. While a different word is used in John 8:44, there appears to be a reference to the danger of the negative side of this truth, for it says of the devil that he “abode not in the truth”.

First then, we have the “will to do”, followed by the taking up of a permanent abode, making the word of the Lord our dwelling place, our atmosphere, our environment: “Ye shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free” (John 8:32). Here the knowledge of the truth which flows out of this abiding, leads to liberty, and makes *free*. While the truth is necessarily expressed in language, a knowledge of grammar is essential to its interpretation, yet nothing is said of grammar, of the laws of interpretation, of literary ability: what is stressed is consistent, corresponding practice.

This is one of the primary lessons which all must learn and practice, if they would understand doctrine aright.

(From the Berean Expositor, Vol. 33, (1945-1946), p. 207.)

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No Man Knows The Day. cont. from p. 6

Back in Matt. 24, the Lord said that just prior to His return, it would be like it had been in the days of Noah. I have seen quite a few different interpretations of the Lord's words, but I personally think His meaning was very simple.

We know that while Noah was building the ark, he preached to the people, warning them of the coming disaster. Did they heed him? No! They mocked him and his sons, all the while going on with their lives as if everything was fine. But disaster struck and caught them unawares. That is what the Lord was saying would happen when He returned. The world at large would be going about their lives, paying absolutely no attention to the relative few who will be trying to get people to listen, repent and so escape the catastrophe that will fall on them so suddenly.

But those who have heeded, and have managed to be faithful amid the persecution — many will be faithful unto death, of course — these will be saved and share with the Lord of Glory in His reign on the earth as King of Kings. While our hope as members of His Body, is to be seated with Him in Glory rather than to reign with Him on earth, we also do not know the day when that hope will be realised. But we can read the signs of the times, for they are growing every day.

We must take care here, and not press events taking place in the world into a particular prophetic

box. I believe without reservation that the Lord will take up His purposes for Israel again, and that every unfulfilled Biblical prophecy relating to them will be fulfilled literally, as all the prophecies that have been fulfilled in the past have been carried out to the letter.

When a stage drama is to be produced, much work has to go on before ever the curtains open and the footlights come on. The players have to be assembled, the props made and put in place, rehearsals are carried out, advertising is carried out and so on. Not one of us thinks, as we sit in our seat in the audience on opening night, that when the curtain goes up, nothing has been done before that moment.

Just the same, it seems to me that we are in the preparation stage for the great drama that is to come. Some of the players, at least, have been chosen. The nation Israel is in existence again, against all the odds. She is hemmed in by enemies who hate her and who vow to drive her into the sea. The world is a global community as never before, and what happens in one corner affects everybody. But the curtain has not yet gone up. The real play has not yet started. But opening night can't be too far away.

Meanwhile, though we do not know the day nor the hour, we have a word of exhortation to heed: "... we should live soberly, righteously and godly in this present age, looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ ..." Titus 2:11-15.

Walk Worthy.

"Only let your conduct be worthy of the gospel of Christ ..." Phil. 1:27. (NKJV)

The verb 'politeuesthe' is correctly rendered in the R. V. margin as 'behave as citizens worthily'. It could be rendered 'let your life as citizens be worthy of the gospel'. They had a heavenly citizenship (3:20) and their present life here should reflect this whether Paul was able to visit them or not.

We need to be constantly reminded that there is a three-fold injunction to 'walk worthy' in the prison Epistles:

"Walk worthy of the calling" (Eph. 4:1)

"Walk worthy of the gospel" (Phil. 1:27)

"Walk worthy of the Lord" (Col. 1:10),

and this covers every circumstance in the home and outside. The Philippians, as Roman citizens,

were intensely proud of their civic privileges with all the benefits that came from being a Roman colony. Though living far from Rome, they enjoyed privileges as though they were resident there. As Dibelius puts it, 'it signifies a colony of foreigners whose organisation reflects in miniature the politeia of the homeland'.

Similarly, from a spiritual standpoint, though far away from heavenly places, they were citizens by grace of an exalted sphere there, and thus could not avoid the responsibility that such an overwhelming blessing brought. We too, are in their position; from one sense very much on this earth, yet our home is not here. We are pilgrims, passing through to our eternal home in the heavenlies. May our practical response be like the Hebrew believers who, by their faith and conduct, declared plainly that they sought a better country, a heavenly one (Heb. 11:14-16).

By Stuart Allen. From "The Plan of God 37", B/E Vol. 46, p.19.

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Worth thinking about:

“We must always remember that God’s revelation, the Bible, is a reduction of reality”

Jason Dulle.

We know God’s Truth.

It Is Jesus Christ!

By John Kontos, Abu Dhabi

This verse is one of the clearest and best-known statements by Jesus: “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one can come to the Father except through me.” John 14:6. The Bible also says that Jesus was full of grace and truth. Truth is not a principle. Truth is a person; truth is Jesus Christ.

Notice that the Lord Jesus says, “I am the truth” He doesn’t say truth is a religion, or a ritual, or a set of rules and regulations. He says “I.” Truth is a person.

This is what separates Jesus Christ from every other leader of every other faith. Other leaders have said, “I’m looking for the truth”, or “I’m teaching the truth” or “I point to the truth” or “I’m a prophet of truth.” Christ comes and says, “I am the truth.”

A lot of people say, “I think Jesus was just a great teacher.” But he couldn’t be just that: No great teacher would claim to be God if he wasn’t. Either the Lord Jesus is conning people who believe a lie, or he was nuts, or **is who he said he was**. Everybody’s betting their life on something. I’m betting my life that Jesus Christ is who he said he was.

What do you do with the truth once you’ve discovered it? Four things:

1. Believe the truth!
2. Do the truth. Truth is not just an intellectual exercise; it’s something you obey.
3. Stand for the truth. The Bible tells us our responsibility is to never oppose the truth but to stand for it at all times.
4. Spread the truth.

The Bible says, “Let everything you do reflect your love of the truth and the fact that you were in dead earnest about it.” (Titus 2:7)

There’s a lot in the Bible that I don’t understand and that makes me uncomfortable. But the fact remains, it is the truth. It is a map that always takes me where it promises. To repeat and finish the quote I started with:

“Jesus told him, ‘I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one can come to the Father except through me. If you had really known me, you would know who my Father is. From now on, you do know him and have seen him!’” (John 14:6-7)

Words Of St. Francis Of Assisi

“Many, when they sin, blame their enemy or neighbour. This should not be, for everyone has his enemy, (the old nature) in his own power, namely, the body through which he sins. Thus blessed is the servant who always holds captive and guards himself against the enemy delivered to him (the old nature), for when he does this, no other enemy can hurt him.”

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231 Andrew Rd, Greenbank.
Group Co-ordinator: Frank Haegler (07) 3297 1981

Sydney:

4th. Sunday each month 3pm.
45/45 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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