

---

☆ ☆  
☆ ☆  
☆

# Spiritual Blessings

---



Vol. 26 No. 2. Mar/Apr. 2012

---

*“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*

---

Exposition

## The Book Of Acts (6)

By John Hutton, Newcastle, Australia.

Please read Acts chs. 3 & 8 before continuing the study.

In the previous study, I pointed out that devout Jews from all over the world, i.e. the lands where Jews lived, had come to Jerusalem to keep the Feast of Weeks or Pentecost, and that something very special happened on that particular Pentecost. The Apostles and believers received the promise of Christ when He said that they would be baptised with ‘holy ghost’, i. e. endued with power from on high by the Holy Spirit Himself.

Every visitor to Jerusalem heard Peter and the others speak in their own language, something that they should not and could not have been able to do without some sort of miracle taking place.

After Peter’s explanation that what they had witnessed was the fulfilment of Joel’s prophecy, many – about three thousand – believed that Jesus of Nazareth was really the Messiah.

I also pointed out in the last study that the Lord had earlier told the disciples that they would not have gone over all the cities of Judea before He returned. Therefore, the Lord’s speedy return was expected by the Apostles and those who believed. This is why they sold their possessions and shared the proceeds with fellow believers. That same expectation, the near return of Christ, is mentioned in Scripture right up to the end of the Acts period. His return was said to be at hand or very near.

In the next few studies, we will look at miracles in the NT. In our reading, we read of the first miracle performed in the Acts period. Before we look at that miracle in detail, however, we will have a quick look at the miracles performed by Christ in the Gospel period.

In the last chapter of the last prophecy in the OT, i.e. Malachi, we have the last promise that the Messiah would come.

Mal. 4:2. *‘But unto you that fear my name shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in his wings...’*

Not only would He come, but He would come with healing. Now we all know that the Lord performed many miracles in the three years of His ministry.

Matt. 15:30-31. *‘And great multitudes came unto him, having with them those that were lame, blind, dumb, maimed, and many others, and cast them down at Jesus’ feet; and he healed them: <sup>31</sup>Insomuch that the multitude wondered, when they saw the dumb to speak, the maimed to be whole, the lame to walk, and the blind to see: and they glorified the God of Israel’.*

How many of those brought to Him did He heal? All of them! Not only were the sick, and others needing healing, made whole but, as we all

### **In this Issue:**

Acts (6).....	1
Pres. Word, Editorial.....	2
How Hopeful Are You?.....	6
What Happened To Peter?.8	
Amen. Letters.....	11
Notices etc.....	12

Cont. page 3



## President's Word

Greetings once again to all our readers around the world. In mentioning "around the world", we are somewhat humbled that people in all parts of the globe are interested in reading what is presented within these pages. Ultimately, if the Lord is glorified by our magazine and the BBFA's ministry, then this is what we strive for - wherever that may occur.

### Optional Subscription

With the Jan/Feb 2012 issue of Spiritual Blessings, an "Optional Subscription" form was sent out. Many responded kindly and for this we express our gratitude. We do our best to keep our costs to a minimum, but cannot escape the fact that it costs money to carry out activities such as publishing and distributing a magazine, hosting a website, conducting public meetings, etc., and the support of members and friends such as yourselves helps us to keep doing such things. Your help has not gone unappreciated, and to you we say, "Thank You!".

A word of gratitude is also due to all who continue to support our ministry by way of prayer, donations, attendance at our meetings, regular offerings, personal encouragement and advice, passing our Bible study material on to others, or by some other means not always known to us. You may not be aware of it, but each of these sorts of undertakings are very much in keeping with the Objects of the Berean Bible Bible Fellowship of Australia, and we are greatly heartened by any such activity that furthers our ministry. Write or email us for a list of the BBFA's Objects, or go to [www.spiritualblessings.org](http://www.spiritualblessings.org) and click on "About the BBFA", where you will see them listed.

### Brisbane Meetings

The first BBFA meeting for the year in the Brisbane area was held on Sunday March 25th, and was a good day by all accounts. This was a new format in a new venue, and Rom Harper commenced a series looking at the Feasts of the Lord as outlined in Leviticus 23 - quite a fascinating subject. Held on the 4th. Sunday of the month, the next meetings are scheduled for Sun. April 22nd and Sun. May 27th, both starting at 10.00am, and everyone is welcome. You can find out more by contacting Rom on 0412-239-907, or go to our web site -

[www.spiritualblessings.org](http://www.spiritualblessings.org) (click on "Meetings" to read our detailed leaflet). In addition, details of all our regular meetings are listed on the back page of this magazine.

### Website

Speaking of the BBFA's website, its webmaster, Karl Edwards, is currently working on modifying some of its aspects. It may take a little while before the new version of the site is up and running, but we think it will be worth it. There will still be plenty of great Bible study articles, charts, electronic books, details of our meetings, back issues of Spiritual Blessings etc. ... but we are hoping to add some new features, including an audio page and new articles. Watch this space, or better still, go to [www.spiritualblessings.org](http://www.spiritualblessings.org) and watch that space too!

### Annual Conference

It's time to mark your diaries for the BBFA's Annual Conference. This year it will again be held at Bethshan Conference Centre, Wyee (near Morisset, on the NSW Central Coast). Bethshan has upgraded its facilities since we first met there some years ago, and has proved to be a suitable venue for us. The dates are September 22-24, 2012, and details about making a booking will be sent out in a future edition of Spiritual Blessings. However, start making plans now to come and join with us for a weekend of Bible study and fellowship.

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

David Tavender  
[admin@spiritualblessings.org](mailto:admin@spiritualblessings.org)

---

### Editorial

This offering of Spiritual Blessings has quite a wide mix of articles, which should not only instruct readers, but also encourage and inspire us all to a closer walk with the Lord, and a more faithful witness to His love, grace and rich blessings in our lives.

I think that reading a magazine like Spiritual Blessings should have much the same result as attending a Church service or meeting. We should come away from both experiences better people than when we began. If we don't, then someone has failed.

Certainly, it could be the preacher, or in the case of our magazine, the editor and writers. But it could also be the reader who is not giving the proper attention and 'comparing Scripture with Scripture'. In other words, we

Cont. on p. 10

**cont from Pg. 1**

know, there are instances in the Gospels of the dead being raised to life.

John the Baptist was in prison. At the baptism of the Lord, John had seen the Spirit of God descending like a dove. He heard the voice from Heaven say 'This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased'. He must have expected that, if the Messiah had come, then surely the kingdom of David would be set up quickly. But nothing had happened! He had been sent to prison and with plenty of time to think, he must have wondered why it had not happened. Perhaps he wondered if the one he thought was the Messiah might not have been the one after all? He must have been having doubts about the whole thing.

Matt. 11:2-5. *'Now when John had heard in the prison the works of Christ, he sent two of his disciples, <sup>3</sup>And said unto him, Art thou he that should come, or do we look for another? <sup>4</sup>Jesus answered and said unto them, Go and shew John again those things which ye do hear and see: <sup>5</sup>The blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached to them'.*

The Lord's answer was not to tell John that he had been wrong in his doubts, and, yes, He really was the one that Israel were looking for. Instead, He told the messenger to tell John about the miracles He was performing. The Lord may have been sympathetic to the plight of the sick and unhealthy, but the healings and miracles were not done for that reason alone. They were His credentials! They proved who He was, which the Jews should have known!

John 10:24-25. *'Then came the Jews round about him, and said unto him, How long dost thou make us to doubt? If thou be the Christ, tell us plainly. <sup>25</sup>Jesus answered them, I told you, and ye believed not: the works that I do in my Father's name, they bear witness of me'.*

In other words, "I told you that I am the Christ, but if you don't believe what I say, then the miracles I do should prove to you that I am telling the truth".

John 14:11. *'Believe me that I am in the Father, and the Father in me: or else believe me for the very works' sake'.*

Remember what Peter said in Acts 2:22?

*'Ye men of Israel, hear these words; Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you (how did He show that He was approved of God?) by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know'. The miracles and signs were not hid under a bushel, but were plain for all to see.*

We are told in the last verse of John's Gospel that *'...there are also many other things which Jesus did, the which, if they should be written every one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written'.*

Matt. 11:20-21. *'Then began he to upbraid the cities wherein most of his mighty works were done, because they repented not: <sup>21</sup>Woe unto thee, Chorazin! woe unto thee, Bethsaida!'*

Most of His mighty works were done in those cities but, amazingly, there is not one record of any of them in the Bible! If we took the record of all the miracles that the Lord performed in the Gospels and produced a book with them, we would have, at the very least, a booklet.

Now I have a question. If the Lord had failed in only one case when attempting a miracle, what would have happened to His claim that His miracles proved who He was? It could, at best, be doubted.

I reckon that if Jesus of Nazareth had failed in one attempt at a miracle, Satan would have made sure that every library in the world was filled with books about that failure, so that doubt could be cast on the Lord's claim to be who He said He was.

Now John 14:12. *'Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do...'.*

His followers were promised that they would do greater works than Christ had done.

And Mark 16:15-18. *'And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world (or land), and preach the gospel to every creature. <sup>16</sup>He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned. <sup>17</sup>And these signs shall follow them that believe; In my name shall they cast out devils; they*

*The miracles were the Lord's credentials!*

*shall speak with new tongues; <sup>18</sup>They shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover'.*

Notice that the signs 'shall follow', not 'might follow'. That verse was a big problem to me as a young Christian. I looked around for the signs following, but they were not there. It was only when, later, I learned what Pentecost was all about, that I got the answer to the problem.

At the Pentecost in Acts 2, those who believed were endued with 'power from on high' or 'holy spirit', and then in Acts 3, we read about the first healing miracle performed by any Apostle.

Peter and John were going into the Temple when they were confronted with a familiar sight. A lame man, whom Acts 4:22 tells us was a little over forty years of age, was begging and he asked Peter and John for money.

Verse 6 '*Then Peter said, Silver and gold have I none' – Peter knew that the man wanted money. The cripple, however, had no idea who Peter was or what Peter could give him – 'but such as I have give I thee: In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk. <sup>7</sup>And he took him by the right hand, and lifted him up: and immediately his feet and ankle bones received strength. <sup>8</sup>And he leaping up stood, and walked, and entered with them into the temple, walking, and leaping, and praising God'.*

Before we go any further in Acts, please turn to **Isaiah 25:3-6**

*'Strengthen ye the weak hands, and confirm the feeble knees. <sup>4</sup>Say to them that are of a fearful heart, Be strong, fear not: behold, your God will come with vengeance, even God with a recompence; he will come and save you.*

*<sup>5</sup>Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. <sup>6</sup>Then shall the lame man leap as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing'.*

Surely there can be no better example of prophecy being fulfilled than what happened to the man at the Gate Beautiful, can there?

Now please take note. There was no Gospel preached to the man. He was not asked to believe anything about anyone. Faith played no part in this miracle at all. What happened was that Peter, who had the gift of healing, used it. **He used his gift!**

Consider Verse 9:-

*'And all the people saw him walking and praising God'. <sup>10</sup>And they knew that it was he which sat for alms at the Beautiful gate of the temple: and they were filled with wonder and amazement at that which had happened unto him'.*

The people knew the man. They saw the result of what Peter had done. There was no question that he had been healed. Even the priests, the captain of the Temple and the Sadducees, could not deny that the man had been miraculously healed.

Acts 4:14 & 16. '*And beholding the man which was healed standing with them, they could say nothing against it' 'What shall we do to these men? for that indeed a notable miracle hath been done by them is manifest to all them that dwell in Jerusalem; and we cannot deny it'.*

What they could do, and did do, was to forbid Peter and John to speak in the name of Jesus.

Now let us take a little sidetrack from the miracle for a few minutes. Peter and John faced a dilemma. Were they to obey God and be faithful to Him and thereby suffer punishment and rejection by Israel, or obey God and His word?

V. 19. '*But Peter and John answered and said unto them, Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye'.*

"You be the judge! Is it right to obey God or you?", says Peter.

This is a serious matter. If I have been taught something and I absolutely believe it to be true, but then I see something in Scripture that refutes what I so earnestly believe, what do I do? If my church or group is involved, there might well be a price to pay if I say 'I have to believe the Bible and not you'. What is more important, obedience to God and His word, or faithfulness to the church or group that I belong to?

*Notice that the signs  
"shall follow", not  
"might follow"!*

I was saved in the Salvation Army and I am eternally grateful for them and the fact that it was through them that I heard the Gospel. I became a soldier (member) when I was about 15. To do so, I had to learn the 11 doctrines and sign that I believed them. One of the doctrines said that to continue to be saved depended on my continuing obedient faith. If I ceased to be continually obedient to God and stopped believing, then I would lose my salvation. I knew that it was right because I had seen people lose their salvation. I had seen good, upright people who had been loyal members of the Army for years, leave and have nothing to do with God again. You could lose your salvation. I had seen it happen!

When, however, I became interested in the Bible and decided to study it, I was in for a surprise. I found out that salvation was a gift and a gift cannot be taken back, otherwise it is not a gift at all. If it is not a gift, it is wages for something done. In other words, if it was earned by my continual, obedient faith, then it was of works.

I found Scriptures that supported the words of a hymn that we sometimes sing in our Fellowship. I was saved 'by the work He has done and not by the work that I do', and that even if I ceased to believe, the Bible told me that **He**, God, remained faithful as He had given me a gift and could not deny Himself. I believed the Bible and have paid a price, because I said, in effect, "I must obey God rather than men". I can appreciate the decision that Peter and John had to make after the ultimatum given them by the rulers of Israel. I guess we all have to make similar decisions from time to time.

Back to Acts. Peter used the gift that he had been given by the Holy Spirit and healed the man at the gate of the Temple. There was no faith involved on the part of the lame man. Let us now look at a miracle in which there can be no doubt that the faith of the recipient played no part at all.

Acts 20:7. *'And upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them, ready to depart on the morrow; and continued his speech until midnight. <sup>8</sup>And there were many lights in the upper chamber, where they were gathered together. <sup>9</sup>And there sat in a window a certain young man named Eutychus, being fallen into a deep sleep: and as Paul was long preaching,*

*he sunk down with sleep, and fell down from the third loft, and was taken up dead. <sup>10</sup>And Paul went down, and fell on him, and embracing him said, Trouble not yourselves; for his life is in him. <sup>11</sup>When he therefore was come up again, and had broken bread, and eaten, and talked a long while, even till break of day, so he departed. <sup>12</sup>And they brought the young man alive, and were not a little comforted'.*

Paul had been preaching to the believers for quite a while, to say the least. About midnight, a young man named Eutychus who was sitting in a window, fell asleep. He fell out of the window and was killed. Was there a problem? Yes, but only a minor one. Paul went down to Eutychus, fell on him, gave him a hug and Eutychus was raised from the dead. No big deal! Paul used the gift that he had, as Peter had done in Acts 3. All that had happened was that there had been an interruption to Paul's preaching. If a person died in one of our meetings and someone present raised them from the dead, there would be such excitement and thanksgiving that the meeting would come to a sudden stop, wouldn't it? As soon as the fuss was over, however, Paul continued his sermon until daybreak.

Consider these things carefully. Eutychus was dead, so his faith could not have played any part when Paul brought him back to life. Let me repeat, **Paul, like Peter in Acts 3, simply used the gift that he had been given by the Holy Spirit.**

Another instance when faith does not seem to be involved in miracles is recorded in **Acts 28**. Paul had been shipwrecked and took refuge on the island of Melita where the people were very kind to them.

V. 2. *'And the barbarous people shewed us no little kindness: for they kindled a fire, and received us every one, because of the present rain, and because of the cold'.*

Apparently, on the sole basis of that kindness, Paul used his gift of healing and healed them.

V. 7. *'In the same quarters were possessions of the chief man of the island, whose name was Publius; who received us, and lodged us three days courteously. <sup>8</sup>And it came to pass, that the father of Publius lay sick of a fever and of a bloody flux: to whom Paul entered in, and prayed, and laid his hands on him, and healed him. <sup>9</sup>So when this was done,*

*others also, which had diseases in the island, came, and were healed'.*

Again there is no record of the Gospel being preached, or the faith of the people being tested. The people of the island were kind to Paul and those with him, so he returned the kindness by using his gift to heal those who desired it.

We will come back to Paul on Melita in a later study. We will now look at some miracles where some faith was evident.

Acts 5:12, 15-16. *'And by the hands of the apostles were many signs and wonders wrought among the people... <sup>15</sup>Insomuch that they brought forth the sick into the streets, and laid them on beds and couches, that at the least the shadow of Peter passing by might overshadow some of them. <sup>16</sup> There came also a multitude out of the cities round about unto Jerusalem, bringing sick folks, and them which were vexed with unclean spirits: and they were healed every one'.*

The ability of the Apostles to heal people was obviously so well known that people believed, or had faith, that if they could get their sick ones close enough so that even Peter's shadow might fall on them, they would be healed. Those bringing the sick ones had faith that the sick would be healed, but there was no testing the faith of those requiring the healing. Peter didn't even stop, he just passed by. Is it any wonder then, that the people in the surrounding cities flocked to Jerusalem when they heard about the Apostles' ability to heal? And I repeat, **all** the sick who came to the Apostles were healed. In the whole of the Acts period there is not one recorded failure to heal. No failures! And note! The term 'faith-healer' does not appear in Scripture.

If the miracles performed by Christ in three years would have filled countless books, how many books would be filled with the miracles of the believers in the Acts period? If, as I suggested to you, Satan would have made the world aware of any failure on the Lord's part to perform a miracle, don't you think there would be records of the failures of His followers? But there were no failures!

Finally, consider Heb. 2:2-4:-

*'For if the word spoken by angels was steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received*

*a just recompence of reward; <sup>3</sup>How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him ; <sup>4</sup>God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will?'*

We can believe the words of the Lord Jesus, and the words that He continued to speak through the NT writers, because God gave witness to their authenticity by the signs and wonders that they did. The miracles were their credentials! ❖

---

## HOW HOPEFUL ARE YOU?

By Athol Walter.

I recently heard a preacher comment on a line from the hymn, "Jesus, keep me near the Cross", which says, "Hoping, trusting, ever ...". The comment was, "I'm not too sure about that word hoping."

Such a comment is understandable because the word hope now has very little certainty about it. The reason for that is simply because we have been let down so often in what we hoped for. So we often say, "I hope so", when we really have little hope.

It is important to understand that any biblical hope we have must be closely linked to a promise. The hope is only as certain as the promise. Once we have this clearly in mind, we are on solid ground. Why? Because our hopes from Scripture are based on God's promises to us. We know that what God has promised us, will not – indeed cannot – fail, so our hope is certain.

The promises we make must always have some doubt about them, for we are fallible human beings. But when God promises, e.g. that He will never leave us or forsake us, we can believe it 100%. In my sixty five years of trusting my Lord and Saviour, He has never once failed me, in spite of the fact that I have failed Him at times! But our hope in God and in His promises to us, is rock solid because God cannot go back on His word. So, we can sing "Hoping, trusting, ever" without any doubt.

There is a strong link between faith and hope, and one verse that emphasises this is Heb. 11:1:- "Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen ..." This chapter

contains examples of people who had trusted God's word and did not waver in their hope, even though in many instances, their faithfulness cost them dearly.

Abraham is a prime example. God had promised him that he, with Sarah, would have a son, and become the father of many nations. This promise was made to Abraham, not only when Sarah was past child-bearing age, but also when Abraham could no longer father children (Heb. 11:12). Against all the evidence, however, he believed that God was able to do the impossible and fulfil His promises. We could say that Abraham hoped when the situation was, physically, hopeless.

When we consider what God has promised us in the basic matter of eternal life, to believe His word and accept the Lamb He provided, is no small act of faith. I know a number of folk who say very sincerely that they simply cannot believe the Gospel. I don't understand this, but I am so thankful that I have been able to believe.

We move now to more specific hopes, which differ from each other. These are based on promises that do not apply to all children of God at all times. To be concise, the Bible presents three different spheres of blessing for believers, and each sphere has a different hope associated with it.

The first sphere of blessing is **the Promised Land**, which was promised by God specifically to Abraham and His descendants through Isaac and Jacob. This promise has never been rescinded. It will be realized when the Lord returns and establishes His millennial Kingdom, ruling the nations of the world from Jerusalem. Consider, in this connection, Matt. 5:5, "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the land." The word earth, in this instance, is incorrect.

The second sphere of blessing is **the New Jerusalem**. This is also a part of Israel's blessings, although distinct from the Promised Land. While the New Testament says that Abraham looked for this heavenly city, there is not a word about it in the Old Testament. It appears that Abraham was prepared to forego the blessings of the Promised Land for the greater blessing of the New Jerusalem. These two spheres are distinct parts of God's purposes.

The third sphere of blessing is **the Heavenly Places where Christ is seated at God's right**

**hand, far above all principalities and powers.** This sphere is not connected in any way with the previous two. Abraham knew nothing of this hope, which belongs to the members of the Church Which Is His Body. This sphere of blessing and its related calling was never revealed anywhere in Scripture, either in type or prophecy, before it was revealed through Paul after the setting aside of Israel and her hopes, at the end of Acts. It is first mentioned in the Bible in Paul's epistles to the Ephesians and Colossians, and unfortunately, the history of Christianity from the second century on, shows that the majority of believers have missed it entirely.

Some hymns sung in churches show the confusion that exists. We 'cross the Jordan river', or we invite each other to 'Come along to Beulah', or we sing of 'walking the streets that are paved with gold'. But when did you last hear, in any main-stream Church, any hymn about being seated above all heavens, or sitting at God's right hand with Christ?

But that is, precisely, my hope. I am not a child of Abraham looking to inherit the earth. Nor am I a spiritual Israelite, hoping for a place in the New Jerusalem. Paul describes me in Eph. 2. I am a Gentile, and was, before conversion, without God and without any hope in the world. But I responded to the Gospel, and then later, to the teaching of this hope of being seated with Christ in the Heavens. There was an "Amen" to this "Gospel" in my heart and mind, and since then, the Lord has continued to reveal greater, deeper and more wonderful truths in His Word concerning this particular hope.

Why me? Apart from His love I have no answer to that, but there is certainly nothing in me that makes me deserving of such a hope. It is all according to His grace and love. Why other believers don't believe it and accept it – some even aggressively opposing it – I do not understand. The one thing I know is that this promise of sharing with the Lord in the Heavenly Places has been made to me, and as inconceivable as such a hope may seem to be, I am trusting God's Word, and I have the confirmation of the Holy Spirit both in my heart and in life's experiences.

I hope, dear Reader, that you also, have said "Amen" to this promise of God in His Word and are hopeful, that is, full of this hope of the Church which is His Body.. ❖

# What Happened to Peter?

By A. J. Harrop

(This article is reprinted from “The Babler”, a Bible study newsletter published in England some years ago by A. J. Harrop. Reference to this article was made in the article titled, “Dispensational Truth”, in the last issue of Spiritual Blessings. Subheadings have been inserted for publication here.)

***“Now as soon as it was day, there was no small stir among the soldiers, what was become of Peter.” (Acts 12:18).***

The two soldiers were there, the chains were there, the walls and the doors were there - but Peter was not! No wonder “there was no small disturbance among the soldiers over **what had become of Peter**”. That’s something of an under-statement!

Having read the story through, of course, we know quite a lot more about what happened to Peter than those poor ignorant soldiers. But after all, do we? We read of the earnest prayers going up for him, the angel coming, the light in the dungeon, the instructions given, the iron gate opening. Then Peter passes through one street, where the angel leaves him, and presently he arrives at the house where they are praying for him. I confess to a wry smile whenever I read the next part, for those good folk all believed in prayer, But when Rhoda tells them their prayers are answered, they first of all say she is mad, and then say it is his angel, and, in the meantime, Peter continues knocking. When at last they open the door they were astonished! Oh yes, I admit I should have been just as astonished myself, but I cannot help the smile all the same.

Well now, Peter is back again, and, of course, we can expect further great Pentecostal addresses, more wonderful miracles, etc. But no. He just tells them how he was delivered, tells them to go and tell James and the brethren, and then promptly disappears again! In the next verse (v. 19), we read “what was become of Peter”.

The fact of the matter is, we have come to one of the great turning points of Scripture - the scene is

changing. Peter, the Apostle of the Circumcision, is giving way to Paul, the Apostle of the Gentiles. Peter, who has been the outstanding figure in nearly all the preceding chapters of the Acts of the Apostles, is to be heard of no more, except for a passing reference to him, and a short speech made by him to the council at Jerusalem in Acts 15.

## Day of Pentecost

Let us look back now, and see what has been going on, and why this change. As we read the first two chapters of the Acts, we realize that one great change has already taken place, that is, in the attitude of the eleven disciples. Instead of being a band of beaten men, meeting behind closed doors, cowed and in fear of the Jews (John 20:19), they seem to be completely infused with new life. The resurrection and appearances of our Lord has transformed them. They are now filled with boldness and, as usual, Peter takes the lead (Acts 1:15). First of all we have the choosing of Matthias to take the place from which Judas fell, and then comes the great day, the day of Pentecost.

Again, Peter is the leader. Great crowds are surging round Jerusalem to keep the feast. Jews have come from all parts – Jews from Parthia, Mesopotamia, Cappadocia, Phrygia, Libya - a list of the places. Jews from the world over.

In this great multitude stands Peter and the other eleven apostles. Peter, his face glowing and his voice vibrant with emotion, declares that they are living in the days of prophecy, the last days (Acts 2:17), days when great events are to take place (vs. 19 and 20). He reminds them of the awful happenings of Golgotha (v. 23), but hastens on to tell them of the wondrous resurrection of our Lord (v. 31). He tells them that God’s forgiveness is extended to them in spite of all (v. 38), and bids them to “repent and be baptized ... in the name of Jesus Christ” (v. 38). “Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same

*“... when Rhoda tells them their prayers are answered, they first of all say she is mad!*

day there were added unto them about three thousand souls" (v. 41).

## After Pentecost

In ch. 3, we find Peter still to the fore, and in an acted parable, shows the Children of Israel just what might happen to them. As a nation, they were lame and helpless (v. 2). As a nation, they were to enter into the fullness of joy in worshipping and praising God, but only "in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth" (v. 6), could they be given strength. In His name, they could "[enter in] with them into the Temple, walking and leaping, and praising God" (v. 8). Again the "men of Israel" gathered round and Peter once again repeats to them the awful story of what they have done (vs. 13-16). Once more he tells them of God's loving message of forgiveness (v. 19). Times of refreshing are promised. Jesus Christ would come again (v. 20), prophecy would be fulfilled, the restitution of all things would take place, and in and through the Children of Israel "shall all the kindreds of the earth be blessed" (v. 25). There was one condition only: "REPENT" (v. 19). Did they repent?

The Pharisees and Sadducees were "grieved that they taught the people" (Acts 4:2). "They laid hands on them" (v. 3). They "commanded them not to speak at all nor teach in the name of Jesus" (v. 18). They "further threatened them" (v. 21). "The high priest rose up, and all they that were with him ... were filled with indignation, and laid their hands on the apostles" (Acts 5:17-18).

Did they repent? "They were cut to the heart, and took counsel to slay them" (v. 33). They beat them (v. 40). They "suborned men, (secretly induced men)" (Acts 6:11). They "stirred up the people" (v. 12). They "set up false witnesses" (v. 13).

Did they repent? The answer is a broken and a bloody corpse - Stephen's (Acts 8:58-60).

## Paul

We can never say that God's patience was exhausted. The limits of His long-suffering and tender mercy are beyond us. Still, the first two words of ch. 8 indicate just something of a change of attitude towards Israel as a nation. The two significant words are 'And Saul' (v. 1).

Thus Peter's work is drawing to a close. His public ministry in Jerusalem is ended. He still has service to do in Samaria, Lydda and Joppa - and then Cornelius (Acts 10), not a Jew this time, but a Gentile. Now Peter's work as Apostle to the Circumcision is over.\* Ch. 12 brings us to the words "What was become of Peter?" Peter has quietly slipped out of the story. Then, has God given up on the Children of Israel? No, not yet! So long as there is any possibility of repentance without compulsion, just so long would the door be open to them.

To our surprise, perhaps, Paul, though he is the Apostle to the Gentiles, goes to the "Jew first". However, in contrast with the restoration of the lame man in ch. 3, where the Jew was restored, Paul's first miracle condemns the Jew - Elymas the sorcerer - to blindness for a season (Acts 13:11). This is typical of that which was soon to come upon the Children of Israel if they would not repent. One might be tempted to ask what possibility was there now of the Children of Israel accepting the Lord Jesus as

their Messiah and King? Well, there was just one - through jealousy.

The Jews were very jealous of their place and position in the hands of God. They knew from their past history that they were a chosen people, an elect nation. They were well aware that they were the custodians of the oracles of God, and that to them pertained the promises and the covenants (Rom. 9:4).

Could they look on, unmoved, as they saw Gentile outsiders being admitted into close relationship with God - yea, and being grafted into the very nation of Israel by receiving Salvation in the Lord Jesus Christ? (Acts 15:11). Would they not be moved to emulate this wonderful example? Could they bear to see their privileged position as God's chosen people slipping away from them, as the Gentiles turned unto God, without their will and sanction? Would not this very thing move them to repentance - a change of mind - with regard to Jesus, the despised Nazarene?

They were not unmoved, by any means. They "were filled with envy and spake against those things which were spoken by Paul" (Acts 13:45). They "stirred up the devout and honourable women, and the chief men of the city, and raised persecution

*To our surprise, perhaps, Paul, though he is the Apostle to the Gentiles, goes to the "Jew first".*

against Paul and Barnabas” (Acts 13:50). They even “stirred up the Gentiles, and made their minds evil affected against the brethren” (Acts 14:2). They planned “to use them despitefully and to stone them” (Acts 14:5). They were again “moved with envy, took unto them certain lewd fellows of the baser sort, and gathered a company, and set all the city on an uproar” (Acts 17:5). They came to Berea also, “and stirred up the people” (Acts 17:13). They “made insurrection with one accord against Paul” (Acts 18:12). They “stirred up all the people, and laid hands on him” (Acts 21:27). They “went about to kill him” (Acts 21:31). They “banded together, and bound themselves under a curse, saying that they would neither eat nor drink till they had killed Paul” (Acts 23:12). They “came down from Jerusalem ... and laid many and grievous complaints against Paul” (Acts 25:7).

No, the Jews were not unmoved. But right down to the last chapter of the Acts of the Apostles, God, through Paul, was endeavouring to lead them to repentance. “Paul called the chief of the Jews together” (Acts 28:17). He “expounded and testified the kingdom of God, persuading them concerning Jesus ... from morning till evening” (Acts 28:23). After that, Paul repeated to them for the last time those awful words of Isaiah 6:9, 10:

“Go unto this people, and say, Hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and not perceive: For the heart of this people is waxed gross and their ears are dull of hearing and their eyes have they closed; lest they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears and understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them. Be it known therefore unto you that the salvation of God is sent unto the Gentiles, and that they will hear it” (Acts 28:25-28).

## **A Promise**

So was the patience of God exhausted? Still we cannot say that, but the door is shut anyway. The Jew is now Lo-ammi – i. e. not my people. No, the patience of God is never exhausted, for there is still a promise of the New Covenant, the promise of compulsion this time:-

“After those days saith the Lord, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people. And

they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord; for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the Lord: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more (Jeremiah 31:33-34).

Those days are yet to be fulfilled, but what a wondrous God is ours. Amen. ❖

**\*Above, the author says that, after Acts 12, “... Peter’s work as Apostle to the Circumcision is over.” It seems likely to us that Peter, in fact, wrote his two epistles to “the Circumcision” after this time, and that his ministry to Jews continued at least up until the time they were set aside at Acts 28. Nevertheless, it is undeniable that Peter almost totally disappears from the record in Acts after this point, just as the author asserts. We believe he has accurately and concisely highlighted the remarkable shift in focus from Peter’s ministry to Jews to that of Paul’s ministry to the Gentiles, from about Acts 12 onwards. This shift is an important one for the Christian believer of today to recognise, given that we currently live in a dispensation during which nationality plays no special role in God’s dealings with us (Ephesians 2:11-22).**

---

## **Editorial cont. from p. 2**

all have important parts to play. The one thing we can be sure of is that there will be no inadequacy on the Holy Spirit’s part.

It is a pleasure to have two letters from readers in this issue, and the fact that one is from The Philippines and the other from Norway, underlines our President’s point about our readers being ‘all around the world’. We are always glad to receive feedback from readers, even if there might be some disagreement.

I firmly believe that discussion, even on controversial issues, is very helpful, providing we control our natural tendencies to be combative. So if you have ever felt like writing or emailing us, please do. Your thoughts will surely help someone else in their spiritual life.

I must say a big thank you to the writers of our articles for their willingness to make the effort. Believe me, producing a study for publication is no light task. I trust you will get much from this issue. Yours in His love,

*Athol Walter*

# Amen

By Ken Evans, Brisbane, QLD.

Amen is one of the most-often used words in prayer. We end all, or almost all, prayers with the word. It is such a little word, seemingly glossed over, but what does it mean? Amen is a Hebrew word meaning truth, trustworthy, or surely. It is used 22 times in the Old Testament (twelve times in Deuteronomy 27 alone). Amen is transliterated into Greek in the New Testament, appearing 51 times in English as such, as well as translated as 'verily' or 'truly' more than 75 times. The meaning of the word used at the conclusion of prayers today is, "So be it."

Amen ought to draw our minds back into the prayer. Amen expresses our total agreement or affirmation with what has been said.

- It speaks of rejoicing in the purposes of God at Solomon's anointing in 1<sup>st</sup> Kings 1: 34-36: "*Long live King Solomon!*" ... *'Amen! May Jehovah, the God of my lord the king say so too.'*"
- During Judah's time of captivity in Babylon the Psalmist sought restoration so that the people could thank and praise God — worship Him — and recorded his prayer in Psalm 106: 47-48: "*Save us, O Jehovah our God, and gather us from among the Gentiles to give thanks to Your holy name, to triumph in Your praise. Blessed be Jehovah, God of Israel, from everlasting to everlasting. And let all the people say, 'Amen'.*"
- One of Christ's favourite sayings invoked this Amen. Between the four Gospel writers He is recorded some 60 times saying: "**Truly**, I say to you ..." A study of these reveals many of the greatest truths of Scripture.
- "**Surely** I am coming quickly.' Amen. Even so, come Lord Jesus." (Rev. 22: 20).
- Amen is even used as a metaphorical title for the risen and glorified Lord Jesus Christ in the letter to the Laodicean believers: "*These things says the Amen, the faithful and true Witness, the Head of the creation of God.*" (Rev. 3: 14). Yes, Christ truly is the Amen.

Encourage someone with a hearty 'Amen' as you talk about what the Holy Spirit has said to us in a Bible study or share something that either happened during the past week or is coming up during the next week.

Next time somebody asks if you speak Hebrew you can honestly respond with, "Amen". And that's not even mentioning, "Hallelujah", but that's another story. ❖

## Feedback From Readers

We have received messages from two readers in very different parts of the world.

**From Jan Lilleby, Norway.**

How are you all doing 'down under'? I learned from BBC-World TV that there has been quite a bit of trouble again regarding floods etc. in New South Wales. I hope you are spared any of that.

Thank you for the magazine, not the least for John Hutton's work. I am particularly hooked on to his fine article series on the Acts book. He should write a substantial book.

**Editor's Reply:** Good to hear from you again, Jan. Yes, John Hutton is doing a great study on Acts. When I showed him your comment about putting it all into a substantial book, his response was not positive, as he is not very well, and finds it very difficult to type. But I'll work on him!

Concerning the floods, we are thankful that in our area we have been spared much of it, but many parts of our eastern states have been under several meters of water. One of our early poets wrote that, in this wide brown land, we either had droughts or flooding rains. She was not fantasizing!

Our prayers are with you in your witness for the rightly divided Word of God in Norway.

**And from Edgar V. Villaflores, The Philippines.**

The Spiritual Blessings magazine is such a help in studying the Word of God, rightly divided (2 Tim. 2:15). It also helps me in teaching and preaching the Word of God in our local church because I'm an elder and a church worker at 'In Christ Grace Community Church'.

May God continue to provide for the needs of your ministry (Phil. 4:19). Just keep up the good work ... because it will never be in vain (1 Cor. 15:58; Gal. 6:9, 10).

**Edgar V. Villaflores, The Philippines.**

**Editor's Reply:** Thank you, Edgar, for your kind words of encouragement. The Lord indeed provides for and supports us, and it is a joy and a cause for thanksgiving to know that you find such help from the magazine. We pray that you also will keep up your work for the Master.

*I believe in Christianity as I believe that the sun has risen; not only because I see it, but because by it, I see everything else.*

**C. S. Lewis, quoted by John C. Lennox in "Seven Days That Divide The World", p. 103.**

## BBFA Regular Meetings

You are invited to attend

Regular Bible study meetings are held in Brisbane, Sydney, Newcastle and Maitland. Meetings include hymn singing, prayer, and a Bible study, approx. 45-60 mins. in length, followed by refreshments. Questions and comments are encouraged. Admission free. All welcome.

### Brisbane

4th. Sunday each month. 10 am. St. Augustine's College, Springfield. Co-ordinator: Rom Harper, 0412-239-907.

### 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. Baptist Retirement Home, Warabrook. For info. phone David & Janelle Tavender, (02) 4950 6708.

### Thornton:

Alternate Wednesdays, 10.am. 13 Drayton Ct. Thornton. Group Co-ordinator: Susan Hall, (02) 4028 6260.

DONATIONS. The BBFA is run on a purely voluntary basis. If you find our ministry helpful, please consider making a donation to help us cover our costs. This may be made in one of three ways:

- (1) In person at any of our meetings.
- (2) By cheque or money order payable to "BBFA".
- (3) Direct deposit online.

Our bank details:-

Account Name: "The Berean Bible Fellowship of Australia."  
BSB No: 062-821 Account No: 00904671

BOOK / CD PURCHASES. Please note that, when purchasing items online using direct deposit, the banking details are different to our regular account. Book Agency details are:-

Account Name: "BBFA Book Agency". BSB No: 062-814 Account No: 10033933

## Spiritual Blessings

is the official journal of the  
**Berean Bible Fellowship of  
Australia Inc.**

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

### **BBFA Postal Address:**

Box 3141, GLENDALE NSW 2285 AUSTRALIA. The journal is registered by Australia Post PP255003/00975.

### **The BBFA Tenets:**

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

### **The BBFA Committee:**

President: David Tavender  
Vice President: Karl Edwards  
Secretary: Janelle Tavender.  
Treasurer: Julie Milgate  
Committee members: Allan Gallaher, Susan Hall.

## Privacy Statement

The BBFA wishes to respect your privacy. If you contact us, your personal details will be treated with the strictest confidence and will not be passed on to any other organisation, company etc.

At anytime, you may request to be removed from our mailing list by contacting us at either [admin@spiritualblessings.org](mailto:admin@spiritualblessings.org) or at BBFA, PO Box 3141, Glendale NSW 2285 Australia.

Visit our web site: **[www.spiritualblessings.org](http://www.spiritualblessings.org)**



### What's there?

Great Bible study articles & charts, printable back issues of Spiritual Blessings, catalogue of our huge range of literature, tapes, etc  
**and so much more.**