

---

☆ ☆ ☆  
☆ ☆  
☆

# Spiritual Blessings

---



Vol. 26 No. 1. Jan/Feb. 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 by John Hutton, Newcastle, Australia.

## The Book Of Acts (5)

**Please read Acts 2:1-13 before going on.**

In the previous study, I suggested that the Book of Acts is a record of the second chance given to God’s people, Israel, to accept Jesus of Nazareth as their Messiah. I think that they were given a second chance as the result of the Lord’s prayer prayed on the Cross when He said ‘Father, forgive them for they know not what they do’. I also suggested that the prayer was an instruction, not a request. Judging by the Jewishness of the Acts period, it would seem that His prayer was answered.

We had a quick look at Lev. 23 and saw that Jehovah, besides the ordinary Sabbath days, decreed seven special times in the year beginning in the month of Abib – our April. These 7 special Feasts had to be kept every year from the time they entered the land.

1. Passover – fulfilled by the death of Christ on the Cross.

2. Unleavened Bread – fulfilled by the sinlessness of Christ which allowed Him to rise from the dead.

3. Firstfruits - Christ was the first to rise from the dead.

4. Feast of weeks – held on the fiftieth day after Passover or Firstfruits and was fulfilled at the Pentecost in Acts 2.

5. Trumpets – which will be fulfilled at the second coming of the Lord.

6. Day of Atonement – which will be

fulfilled with the conversion of Israel in a day. Then the New Covenant will come into operation.

7. Tabernacles or Booths – which will be fulfilled with a great gathering of Israel from the uttermost parts of the earth, each one passing under the rod to see if they are truly Israelites. They shall come from the east, they shall come from the west and sit down in the Kingdom of God.

We have not touched on the last 3 Feasts, but they are well worth looking at. Also, besides Sabbath days, every seventh year was a Sabbath and every 50<sup>th</sup> year was a Sabbath year called the Jubilee.

**Now we will look at Acts ch. 2.**

**Verse 1**

*‘And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place’.*

When the Day of Pentecost came, the Apostles and others were all gathered together in one place to celebrate the Feast of Weeks. The Lord had told them to wait in Jerusalem to be baptised with Holy

Spirit, but whether they knew that the Feast of Weeks or Pentecost was to be fulfilled on that day, and in the way it was, we are not told, but they may well have known.

**Verse 2**

*‘And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty*

### **In this Issue:**

Acts 5.....	1
Pres. Word, Editorial.....	2
A Reader’s Letter.....	6
Requirements of God’s Word.....	6
Dispensational Truth.....	10
What Is Truth?.....	11

Cont. page 3



## President's Word

Greetings once again to all readers. The New Year has begun, but it will be at least February before you read these words. The last few months have thrown up some challenges for the BBFA and

we are still "catching up" and adjusting to changes that needed to be made, especially in regards to our Fellowship in the Brisbane area.

To add to this, we are very aware that many of our friends in Queensland and northern NSW have experienced flooding once again. The water may have receded, but the after effects will be felt for quite some time. The BBFA wishes to extend its deepest sympathy to any readers who may have been affected by such events.

### Optional Subscription

This issue includes an "Optional Subscription" form. Thanks to all who have returned this form in previous years. We gladly send our magazine FREE OF CHARGE to all who ask for it, which is why the subscription is "optional". If you can't afford the "optional subscription", don't worry, you will still receive our magazine if you want it. This is just our way of providing you with an opportunity to help us should you wish to do so. The BBFA is run on a purely voluntary basis. If you would like to help towards the costs of printing, posting and administration, we invite you to either return that form with your payment, or visit our website at [www.spiritualblessings.org/donate](http://www.spiritualblessings.org/donate).

### Current Committee

Last issue, we reported the death of our long time member and friend, Frank Haegler. Frank's departure meant that, among other "holes" that have been left, our Committee was down on numbers. Then, in January, our Secretary, Karen Milford, asked to be relieved of her role. She served the BBFA very well indeed during her tenure and we are grateful that she took up the role, at a difficult time for our Committee. She and her husband, Dave, continue to be great supporters of our ministry.

We welcome Janelle Tavender back into the secretary's role of the BBFA's after a period of illness. Rom Harper has also joined the Committee and, along with Allan Gallaher, will play an important role in the BBFA's ministry in Queensland. Page 12 gives details of a new meeting venue for the Brisbane group. If you live in the Sunshine State, we urge you to get in touch and help us with any ideas you may have. Another "hole" that needed to be filled was that of our website manager, and Karl Edwards has taken up that role.

A full list of the current Committee is printed on page 12. Each of these people may be approached about issues you would like to discuss.

### Your Support

If you have been able to keep track of these changes in personnel over the last eight months, I congratulate you! Through illness, the Committee lost three of its seven members in quick succession, and this meant some reshuffling on several fronts. On one hand, there was a degree of uncertainty as adjustments had to be made; on the other hand though, it highlighted two very wonderful facts. Firstly, the God we serve knows the end from the beginning, and never changes - "from everlasting to everlasting, you are God", Psalm 90:1. Secondly, the wider body of members, friends and supporters that make up the Berean Bible Bible Fellowship of Australia is a Fellowship in the true sense of the word.

The help and support received from our members and friends in all circumstances is welcome, and really quite necessary to how the Fellowship functions. Looking to the Lord as Head of the Body, the Apostle Paul encouraged his readers to endeavour to "keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (Ephesians 4:3), and there are many ways this can be carried out. There is the exercising of a loving attitude of support and forbearance (4:2), and the Haeglers and Tavenders have been recipients of this lately (thank you once again to everyone who supported and encouraged our families during recent difficult times).

However, may I add to these the important role you play in other ways, too, such as attending our meetings, reading and passing on our magazine, making a donation, visiting our web site, offering suggestions, etc. All of these things help us to "grow up into Him who is the head - Christ - from Whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love." (4:15,16)

### Conference and Study Days

This year our Annual Conference will be held at Bethshan Conference Centre, Wyee (near Morisset, on the NSW Central Coast). Mark your diaries for September 22-24, 2012, and start making plans today to set aside time to join us there. We still are in the process of planning study days in other regions, and we will let you know the details as they come to hand.

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

David Tavender.

### **cont from Pg. 1**

wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting.  
<sup>3</sup>And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them.

Let me say that there was no wind, but there was a great sound. What was the sound like? A great rushing wind! All of us know what a great wind sounds like, so we have some idea of what the sound was like in that room. The second thing to happen was something visible. What did the visible things look like? Cloven tongues of fire! We have all seen an open fire burning so we have some idea of what appeared on the Day of Pentecost – but there was no fire.

#### **Verse 4:**

*‘And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance’.*

The term ‘Holy Ghost’ in this verse has no definite article, so they were literally filled with ‘holy spirit’, i.e. ‘power from on high’. By whom? By the Holy Spirit Himself. The power from on high was manifested by the ability to speak in other languages. We will look at other manifestations of holy spirit power in later studies.

#### **Verse 5:**

*‘And there were dwelling at Jerusalem Jews, devout men, out of every nation under heaven.’*

We are told where the people came from in verses 9-11. ‘Every nation under heaven’ does not mean the whole world, but rather, every nation where Jews lived then. These Jews were called the Dispersion.

#### **Now Deut. 16:16-17:**

*‘Three times in a year shall all thy males appear before the LORD thy God in the place which he shall choose; in the feast of unleavened bread, and in the feast of weeks, and in the feast of tabernacles: and they shall not appear before the LORD empty: <sup>17</sup>Every man shall give as he is able, according to the blessing of the LORD thy God which he hath given thee’.*

Who do you think would obey that instruction? The devout ones, wouldn’t they? On the Day of Pentecost, devout Jews of the Dispersion were in Jerusalem to celebrate the Feast of Weeks or Pentecost. Besides those who lived in Jerusalem and the devout ones of the Dispersion who had come, I’m also told that many

other Jews of the Dispersion came back to Israel to spend their last days there.

#### **Verses 6-13:**

*‘Now when this was noised abroad, the multitude came together, and were confounded, because that every man heard them speak in his own language. <sup>7</sup>And they were all amazed and marvelled, saying one to another, Behold, are not all these which speak Galileans? <sup>8</sup>And how hear we every man in our own tongue, wherein we were born? ... <sup>11</sup>we do hear them speak in our tongues the wonderful works of God. <sup>12</sup>And they were all amazed, and were in doubt, saying one to another, What meaneth this? <sup>13</sup>Others mocking said, These men are full of new wine’.*

We can understand their amazement. They all heard about the wonderful works of God from men from Galilee whom they knew could not, and should not, have been able to do such a thing. It must have been an amazing thing to hear. No wonder there was confusion among the crowd.

In verses 14-36, Peter gives an explanation of the phenomenon.

*‘But Peter, standing up with the eleven, lifted up his voice, and said unto them, Ye men of Judea, and all ye that dwell at Jerusalem, be this known unto you, and hearken to my words: <sup>15</sup>For these are not drunken, as ye suppose, seeing it is but the third hour of the day.’*

In verse 4, we are told that when the apostles received this gift from God, they spoke as the Spirit gave them utterance. The Greek word for ‘utterance’ is ‘apophthengomai’, which is not the usual word for ‘speak’. The word that is used in verse 14 when ‘Peter ... said to them’, is the same word for ‘utterance’ as in verse 2, ‘as the Spirit gave them utterance’. In actual fact, Peter was **uttering** under the influence of the Holy Spirit when he addressed the crowd in verses 14-36. He was using the gift, the power from on high, that he had been given.

How does he explain what was happening? Remember, these were Jews he was speaking to, who would not accept any explanation not based on prophesy. What does Peter, speaking under the power of the Holy Spirit, do? He quotes the prophet Joel 2:28-32.

#### **Verses 16-21:**

*'But this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel; <sup>17</sup>And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams: <sup>18</sup>And on my servants and on my handmaidens I will pour out in those days of my Spirit; and they shall prophesy: <sup>19</sup>And I will shew wonders in heaven above, and signs in the earth beneath; blood, and fire, and vapour of smoke: <sup>20</sup>The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before that great and notable day of the Lord come: <sup>21</sup>And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved'.*

Again in **verse 22 & 23**, we are left in no doubt as to whom he is speaking.

*'Ye men of Israel, hear these words; Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by **him in the midst of you**, as ye yourselves also know: <sup>23</sup>Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain: <sup>24</sup>Whom God hath raised up, having loosed the pains of death: because it was not possible that he should be holden of it'.*

When we get onto miracles and signs, we will look at verse 22 again. In the last study, I pointed out that when Peter is speaking to Jews and referring to the death of Christ, he accuses them of killing Him as we just read in verse 23. When he is speaking to Gentiles in chapter 10 he does not accuse them, i.e. the Gentiles, of killing the Lord, but accuses his own nation.

He accuses Israel of killing the Lord, in spite of the fact that He had been *'delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God'*.

**1 Peter 18-20.** *'Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; <sup>19</sup>But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot: <sup>20</sup>Who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you'.*

God knows the beginning from the end. Because

of that knowledge, He is able to prophesy with absolute certainty. When Satan sinned and one third of the heavenly beings thought that he was right in doing so, it must have been decided and agreed to by both parties, i.e. God and Satan, that Satan would be condemned if a being in a lesser form than he, would be tested, learn obedience, refrain from sinning and be faithful to God, even paying the price for that obedience by dying a horrible death. Then, not only would Satan know that his condemnation was just, but it would be seen by both sides to be just.

Before the foundation of the world, it was decided that the obedience, even if that obedience meant the unwarranted death of Jesus of Nazareth, truly and properly God and truly and properly man, was sufficient to justify God and condemn Satan.

Even if the whole world had repented when Christ came and become obedient to God there and then, Christ would still have had to die to prove the justice of God in His condemnation of original sin, and I'm now talking about Satan's sin, not the sin of Adam.

**Back to Acts 2.** In verses 25-28, Peter quotes a Psalm of David (Psalm 16:8-11).

*'For David speaketh concerning him, I foresaw the Lord always before my face, for he is on my right hand, that I should not be moved: <sup>26</sup>Therefore did my heart rejoice, and my tongue was glad; moreover also my flesh shall rest in hope: <sup>27</sup>Because thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption. <sup>28</sup>Thou hast made known to me the ways of life; thou shalt make me full of joy with thy countenance'.*

Peter points out that when David says, *'Because thou wilt not leave my soul in hell ( i.e. the grave) , neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption'*. He could not be speaking about himself. Why not?

### **Verse 29**

*'Men and brethren, let me freely speak unto you of the patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried, and his sepulchre is with us unto this day.*

David's sepulchre was there for all to see. You can exhume the body if you like, Peter is saying, and you will find that David's body has suffered corruption. If David, a man after God's own heart, had died and gone to heaven, then the Lord could not have been

the firstfruits from the dead, could He?

Even if David had gone somewhere, he couldn't have gone to heaven, could he?

**John 3:13:** *'And no man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of man which is in heaven'.*

**Verse 30.** *'Therefore being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him, that of the fruit of his loins, according to the flesh, he would raise up Christ to sit on his throne; <sup>31</sup>He seeing this before spake of the resurrection of Christ, that his soul was not left in hell, neither his flesh did see corruption. <sup>32</sup>This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses. <sup>33</sup>Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear. <sup>34</sup>For David is not ascended into the heavens: but he saith himself, The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, <sup>35</sup>Until I make thy foes thy footstool. <sup>36</sup>Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ.*

Peter preached the Gospel to them and verse 37 tells us that they were pricked in their hearts and asked what they should do. I wonder why they were pricked in their hearts. Was it because they recognised that they were sinners? When I was convicted of sin as a young man and realised that I was a sinner, I certainly felt pricked in my heart. I wonder, however, whether they were pricked in their hearts because they realised whom they had killed? Whatever it was, about three thousand of them believed and were baptised.

We will look at verses 38-41 in a later study, but several interesting things happen in verses 44 & 45.

*'And all that believed were together, and had all things common'.*

Think carefully here. Those who believed must have all been Jews, otherwise, based on Peter's reaction to Cornelius (ch. 10), they could not have had things in common with people who were considered by them to be common and unclean, could they?

**Verse 45:** *'And sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need'.*

Why did they sell their possessions? Note that the Apostles didn't tell them that they were wrong to do it. To put this into perspective, please turn to Matt. 10:23.

*'But when they persecute you in this city, flee ye into another: for verily I say unto you, Ye shall not have gone over the cities of Israel, till the Son of man be come'.*

The Lord is referring here to the work the Apostles would have to do, and He says that they *'shall not have gone over the cities of Israel, till the Son of man be come'.*

If the Lord said that to you, you would expect His quick return, wouldn't you?

**Now Acts 3:19-20:** *'Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord; <sup>20</sup>And he shall send Jesus Christ, which before was preached unto you'.*

Note: 'Repent and He will send Christ, even Jesus'.

**Now Rom. 13:11-12.** (Don't forget that Romans is the last epistle written during the Acts period.)

*'And do this, understanding the present time. The hour has come for you to wake up from your slumber, because our salvation is nearer now than when we first believed. <sup>12</sup>The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness'.*

**And 1 Peter 4:7:** *'But the end of all things is at hand: be ye therefore sober, and watch unto prayer'.*

**Also Rev: 3:11:** *'Behold, I come quickly: hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown'.*

**Rev. 22:12:** *'And, behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be'.*

Who is speaking here?

**Verse 13:** *'I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last'.*

It is Christ!

Now I have a question to ask. Is 2000 years quick?

Why didn't He come quickly when so much Scripture says that He would? Something must have happened, something must have changed, mustn't it? We will get to the change in a later study.

We are told that Peter said and did many other things that are not recorded in Acts 2. He must have said the same thing in ch. 2 as he did in ch. 3, 'Repent and He will send Jesus'.

If the believers in ch. 2 expected the very quick return of Christ, what good was there in having possessions. They would not need them. They were Jews and when the Kingdom was set up, all of their needs would be met by the Gentiles.

**Back to Acts 2:47**, the last phrase: '*And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved.*'

The words 'to the church' and 'should' do not occur in the Greek. The NIV gets it right when it says '*And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved*'.

To be continued. ❖

---

## A Reader's Letter.

Dear Friends in Christ,

As usual I was excited to receive Spiritual Blessings, and, as usual, I was not disappointed. Your handling of the Scriptures is so refreshing.

I am pleased that your annual conference was so successful. May your witness continue to be faithful to the truth, and, with the blessing of our God, be ever more fruitful.

Be assured our God is working His Purpose out – assuredly every knee will bow to our Saviour God.

Yours waiting,

Roger Barnett. Willingdon. East Sussex. UK.

In Reply:

Dear Roger,

Thank you for taking the time to write. We appreciate your kind words, and are very glad that you find our magazine helpful.

God certainly is working out His purpose, and it is very humbling to have evidences of that even in our own lives.

Yours in His love and grace,

Athol Walter.

## What God's Word Requires

By Dr. E. W. Bullinger

God's blessed Word comes before us with various titles, and each title which God has given brings with it its own corresponding responsibility to our hearts. If it is called "the engrafted Word", as it is in James 1:21, we are to receive it. "... *receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls*". That comes first.

Then it is called in Titus 1:9, "the faithful Word", and as the faithful Word, it is our duty and privilege too, to hold it fast—"holding fast the faithful word". Just because it is faithful we can hold it fast for our soul's peace and our heart's comfort and strength.

Then in Phil. 2:16, it is called "the Word of life". What is our duty to it as the word of life, the life-giving word? Our duty is to hold it forth; "*holding forth the Word of life*", so that others may receive that life which it reveals, and that new life, eternal life, spiritual life, which it imparts.

But then it is called in 2 Tim. 2:15, "the Word of truth"; and with regard to the Word of truth our duty is to rightly divide it. You see how these responsibilities are divinely perfect. We are not told to divide "the faithful word". We have to hold it fast. That is all. And we are not told to hold fast "the Word of life". We are told to hold it forth that others may enjoy the life which it brought to us. And that which concerns us as to the "Word of truth" is the right division of it.

The right division of the Word applies to its outward form ... but the right division of the inward truth is of infinitely greater importance. Just because it is "the Word of TRUTH" it is important, and I believe that just in proportion as we rightly divide it, in that proportion shall we arrive at the "truth". ... It is only in that measure in which we divide it rightly that we can approach the truth.

...This precept is especially addressed to God's workmen. If we wish to stand before Him "unashamed" of our service for Him, then we must "rightly Divide the Word of Truth".

(The above article is made up of excerpts from "Selected Writings, ch. entitled "Rightly Dividing the Word of Truth", pp. 33-37, by Dr. E. W. Bullinger, It is slightly emended in several places to keep the flow of the author's thought.)

---

# Dispensational Truth

By A. J. Harrop

“Dispensational Truth! What on earth is that? Never heard of such a thing!” That is the impression some people convey to you when you mention Dispensational Truth or Rightly Dividing the Word.

Curiously enough, most of them are already carrying it out up to a point and do not know it. Supposing you ask them, “Are you proposing to take a young bullock for sacrifice this time? or a pair of turtle doves? or a heifer or a lamb?” They would either think you were “pulling their legs” or had said good-bye to your wits. If they took you at all seriously they would reply: “But we do not have to do those things nowadays; we live in New Testament times. The one Sacrifice has been offered — our Lord Jesus Christ — and those old sacrifices were all fulfilled in Him.” Good. So you have begun to rightly divide — or, at any rate, to divide the Word of Truth. You have begun to recognise that there are different dispensations, that is to say, differing periods of time in the Word of God in which differing regulations are in force.

Well, now, if we are to be obedient to the Word of God, it is essential for us to discover when the dispensation (or Administration) in which we live commenced, and what are the regulations concerning it. Another thing which it is desirable to discover is what our hopes are with regard to it?

## Beginning of the Lord’s Ministry

So, then, supposing we date the commencement of this dispensation at the commencement of our Lord’s earthly ministry, what do we find? Consider Matthew 5, for instance, just a verse or two here and there. Verse 5: “Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.” I wonder how many Christian people are expecting through meekness to “inherit the earth.” We are told elsewhere to set our affection “on things above, not on things on the earth” (Colossians 3:2). Then verse 19 — our Lord has been speaking of keeping the law (verse 17), and He goes on: “Whosoever, therefore, shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven.” It seems to me some will be very low down

in the kingdom, having taught for years that there is no need to keep the Sabbath (Saturday), but to keep — more or less, mostly less — Sunday instead. If we, personally, do not work on Sunday, we nevertheless allow our “menservants and our maidservants” — or, at any rate, our wives to do a bit, also the electric light and gas companies and transport services. It suits us that way. Then go on to verse 42: “Give to him that asketh thee, and from him that would borrow of thee turn not thou away.” Well, if it was generally known that Christian people were carrying that out, we should soon have nothing left but loin cloths — someone might even borrow that! No, we do not carry that out — it would not suit us that way. Maybe after all, those things are instructions which do not belong to us.

## The Crucifixion

Suppose, then, we commence our dispensation at the crucifixion. What instructions are given after that? Now, after the crucifixion and resurrection, there are not very many. The last two verses of Matthew’s Gospel say: “Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you.” Most Christian organisations make some pretence of carrying that out up to a point, but what are the “all things whatsoever I have commanded you?” They must include the “giving to him that asketh thee,” and the other things to which we have referred earlier.

Turn now to Mark’s Gospel. At the end of Mark we have several verses. Sometimes they are left in, sometimes they are left out. The trouble is that Christian organisations do not know what to do with them. After giving similar instructions to Matthew 28:20, Mark 16:17,18 goes on to say: “And these signs shall follow them that believe: in My name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; 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.” You see what the difficulty is? These signs do not now follow them that believe. I would challenge any Christian to “drink any deadly thing” and prove it. So, perhaps, we were wrong in fixing the commencement of our dispensation at the crucifixion.

## **Pentecost**

Well, now, the next great event is Pentecost. Ah! now, most Christians will say, “That’s it! That is the commencement of our dispensation. When the Holy Spirit came down as He did in Acts 2:2-4, that was the commencement of the Church, the Church of this dispensation.” I was taught that myself at one time. Again let us look into it. The scene is Jerusalem — significant to start with. Peter addresses the crowd as “Ye men of Israel” (Acts 2:22). He does not mention Gentiles. Peter goes on to quote Psalm 16:8-11 (Acts 2:25-28). What would Gentiles know of Psalm 16:8-11? Who, then, were those “Parthians and Medes and dwellers in Mesopotamia,” etc.? They were Jews and proselytes. It says so. Jerusalem would be full of such folk because of the feast. Peter had no idea that Pentecost was the beginning of the Church, or he would not have needed a vision when he was sent to Cornelius. In fact, even after the stoning of Stephen, we read (Acts 11:19), “Now, they which were scattered abroad ... travelled as far as ... preaching the word to NONE but unto the Jews only.” Obviously, the Church of this dispensation had not started then. Marvellous as it may seem, God was giving Israel another chance!

Did you ever read the parable of the fig tree — the one in Luke 13:6-10? During three years the fig tree bore no fruit — “Cut it down.” Verses 8 and 9: “And he answering said unto him, Lord, let it alone this year also, till I shall dig about it and dung it, and, if it bear fruit, well; and if not — after that thou shalt cut it down.” Well, what do you make of it? During the three years of our Lord’s ministry the fig tree (Israel) bore no fruit — “Cut it down.” Our Lord’s plea was “Give it one more chance.”

At Pentecost (Acts 2), the ‘one more chance’ came: Peter and the Apostles were digging and manuring. The cutting down was postponed, but in the end it had to come, and that was at Acts 28 — read the last few verses of that chapter. Before we get there, however, we must consider further the story of the Acts of the Apostles.

## **Acts**

At Pentecost, Peter says, in order to explain the unusual happenings which were going on: “But this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel.” (Gentiles knew nothing about the prophet Joel). “I

will show you wonders in heaven above, and signs in the earth beneath: blood, and fire, and vapour of smoke; the sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before that great and notable day of the Lord come.” Curious! Those words do not seem to fit there. But still, we have met them before somewhere. Matthew 24:29-30: “The sun shall be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, ... and then shall appear the sign of the Son of Man in heaven, ... and they shall see the Son of Man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.”

They come again in the Revelation. They refer to the tremendous happenings which are to take place at the Second Coming of our Lord — when He shall come in “power and great glory” to set up His kingdom upon earth with Jerusalem as its centre. Peter was expecting this. It was Israel’s chance. “Repent ye, therefore, and be converted, ... and He shall send [again] Jesus Christ which before was preached unto you” (Acts 3:19-20).

All these great happenings were just held back, as it were, waiting the repentance of Israel. Many encouraging signs were given. They were speaking with tongues, in accordance with Mark 16. “And many wonders and signs were done by the Apostles” (Acts 2:43). Then, again, a new society, with a new constitution, was formed in their midst.

“And all that believed were together and had all things common; and sold their possessions and goods and parted them to all men, as every man had need” (Acts 2:44-45).

Those were the days when they could “give to him that asketh thee, and from him that would borrow of thee turn not thou away” (Matthew 5:42). Such things will be possible again at the “coming of the Lord” during the millennial kingdom. All those momentous happenings were just preliminary foreshadowings of that great day. So you see the Church of this dispensation did not begin at Pentecost. We must move still further on.

## **Cornelius**

The next possibility is Cornelius. By the way, the Grecians mentioned in Acts 6 were “Hellenistes” or Greek-speaking Jews, not Gentiles. But Cornelius and his friends were Gentiles. If Cornelius himself could be considered a proselyte on account of his devotion (Acts 10:2), yet his “kinsmen and near



friends”(verse 24) were certainly Gentiles. Peter was staggered. If he had not had the vision recorded in verses 11-17, he would never have come. It just shows how the Children of Israel had grown to consider God as their national monopoly. Instead of which, God’s design was to use the Jew to proclaim His grace and salvation throughout the world. Peter, to whom was given the “keys of the kingdom” (Matthew 16:19), was driven at last to open the door.

Was this, then, the beginning of the Church of this dispensation? No! no! These Gentiles were entering in to partake of Israel’s blessing. As Paul wrote later, they were partaking “of the root and fatness of the olive tree” (Romans 11:17). The Jews were still God’s people at that time. The olive tree represented Israel. So, then, we must draw on a bit further if we are to discover the commencement of our dispensation. After the story of Cornelius we find that Peter drops right out of the picture. \*

### **Paul’s Ministry**

Paul has begun his work. At Antioch to start with (Acts 11:26) — not Jerusalem now. The centre has moved out. Then come the missionary journeys. We notice that wherever he goes, Paul always goes first to the synagogue. It is still the Jew first, and through the Jew to the Gentile. There is, however, a difference. These Gentiles were uncircumcised and Paul did not insist that they should be circumcised, or carry out any of the other rites and ceremonies concerned with the Law of Moses.

To clarify this matter, Paul goes up to Jerusalem to tell his doctrine to James and the other Apostles (see Acts 15). The result of this visit is that a double code of instructions is issued. For the Gentile: “that they abstain from pollutions of idols, and from fornication, and from things strangled and from blood,” and that is all (Acts 15:20). For the Jews there was the synagogue. “For Moses of old time hath in every city them that preach him, being read in the synagogues every sabbath day” (Acts 15:21).

Is this, then, the Church of our dispensation coming in? No, not yet. There is no dual code nowadays, neither do we obey some of those Gentile regulations, short as they are. You see, the effect of that great influx of Gentile believers might either have meant that the national repentance of the Jew was hastened, or that they hardened their hearts. They

could have been “moved to emulation” — or spurned Christianity with hatred. That was their last opportunity. They made a fatal choice — they hardened their hearts.

It is interesting to notice that at Corinth, Paul leaves the synagogue and enters into the house of one named Justus, “whose house joined hard to the synagogue” (Acts 18:7). It is as though — in spite of the separation which seemed inevitable — God (through Paul) was still holding on to the Jew. Anyway, there is no complete separation yet. The next chapter (19) brings us to Ephesus. Here we read (Conybeare): “For three months Paul continued to speak boldly in the synagogue, ... and in the end the Apostle’s doctrine was publicly calumniated by the Jews, ... on this he openly separated himself ... and the Christian Church at Ephesus became a distinct body,” the headquarters being the school of Tyrannus. So the separation grows wider.

Now, in chapter 20, a great break takes place. Paul (an orthodox Jew still) must be at Jerusalem for the Feast of Pentecost (verse 16). It is a strikingly sad and sorrowful passage (vv.16-38). It says in verses 22 and 23: “And now, behold, I go bound in the Spirit unto Jerusalem not knowing the things that shall befall me there, save that the Holy Ghost witnesseth in every city, saying that bonds and afflictions abide me.”

Verse 25: “And now, behold, I know that ye all, among whom I have gone preaching the kingdom of God, shall see my face no more.” Verse 38: “Sorrowing most of all ... that they should see his face no more.” Again at Caesarea (chapter 21) there is the same sad parting note (verse 13): “Paul answered, What mean ye to weep and to break mine heart? for I am ready, not to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus.” At Jerusalem we know that the whole venom and hatred of orthodox Judaism was vented against Paul, and the outcome is Paul’s appeal to Rome.

Rome was the great centre of the world in those days, and the last outpost of organised Judaism. That was why Paul said, “I must also see Rome” (Acts 19:21). All that happened when Paul arrived in Rome, is covered in sixteen verses (Acts 28:16-31). “After three days, Paul called the chief of the Jews together” (verse 17). Still the Jew first — the Jew first. Paul

says: "Because that for the hope of Israel I am bound with this chain" (verse 20). The hope of Israel — the only hope, and the last hope. "And when they agreed not" (verse 25), Paul uttered these very solemn words (vv.25-28):

"Well spake the Holy Ghost by Esaias the prophet unto our fathers, saying, 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."

### After Acts

Well, that is the end. So far as the Jew is concerned, the olive tree is cut down. For close on 2,000 years God has had no dealings with the Jews as a nation. They have been scattered all over the world, as He said they would be (Deuteronomy 32:26).

So what next? I suppose most of us know what comes next. It is the wide-open door, the beginning of a new dispensation. To Paul has been entrusted a further message, of which he tells us in the Epistles to the Ephesians, Philippians and Colossians.

In Ephesians 2 it says (vv.11-13): "Wherefore, remember that ye being in time past Gentiles in the flesh, ... that at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world: but now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ." So, no longer has the Jew the favoured place. No longer is the Gentile dependent upon the Children of Israel for his knowledge of God. He, as a Gentile, is "made nigh by the blood of Christ." Now the door is wide open, the new dispensation has commenced.

What regulations have we, then, for the new era? Well, we shall not expect to find them in the Old

Testament, nor yet in the Acts of the Apostles, nor in the Epistles to the Corinthians. But if we "walk worthily" in accordance with Ephesians, chapters 4, 5 and 6; "press towards the mark" in accordance with Philippians 3:14; "seek those things which are above" in accordance with Colossians 3:1; and "hold fast the form of sound words" in accordance with 2 Timothy 1:13 we shall have as much as we can manage without trying to tune our lives to accord with the regulations of dispensations which do not apply to us. Instead of being grafted on to the olive tree, we are now the Church of the One Body in Christ (Colossians 1:18).

Also, we have special promises to look forward to, which were not revealed before. The Old Testament reveals a promise made to Israel as a

kingdom upon earth, its centre to be Jerusalem and its King the coming Messiah. That promise will be fulfilled. Its inhabitants will be the Children of Israel in resurrection, and those upon earth who will repent as one man and receive our Lord at His second coming, these will cry out in that day: "Lo, this is our God, we have waited for Him and He will save us" (Isaiah 25:9). Then a further promise was given to Abraham and to his seed — the promise of a heavenly city. "For he looked for

a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God" (Hebrews 11:10). "But now they desire a better country, that is an heavenly; wherefore, God is not ashamed to be called their God, for He hath prepared for them a city" (Hebrews 11:16).

Hebrews speaks of "a better hope", "a better resurrection", "a better covenant", "better promises", and so on. There is, however, reserved for the Church of the One Body an even more glorious hope. Humanly speaking it is still a "hope." In God's sight, however, it is an established fact, for it says (Ephesians 2:4-6): "But God ... hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus." Those "heavenly places" are "far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only

*Now blest in heavenly places  
In Christ at God's right hand;  
And filled with all His fulness  
Complete in Him to stand.  
Sing to the praise and glory  
Of Him who thus hath shown  
Such gracious love and mercy  
To call us for His own."*

(From Berean Hymns; words by F. Bartlett)

in this world, but also in that which is to come” (Ephesians 1:21).

(From a now out-of-print pamphlet titled “Dispensational Truth” by A. J. Harrop. Subheadings having been inserted.)

\* On the subject of Peter’s role in Acts, A. J. Harrop published another article titled, “What Happened To Peter?”. We will publish this article in the next issue of SB. It will also be available on our website soon. ❖

## What Is Truth?

By Athol Walter.

“What is truth?” This was the response of Pilate to some statements of the Lord, when he, Pilate, was questioning Christ. The cynicism in Pilate’s words is obvious, even though we have not heard him utter them. I suspect that Pilate’s cynical response was the result of the failure of the Greek and other philosophers to provide satisfactory answers to life’s deep questions.

Truth, what constitutes it, as well as where it is to be found, is still a hotly debated question today, and one thing that Bible believers should be grateful for, is that they stand on the sure foundation of biblical truth.

Dispensationalists, of whatever shade, are, unreservedly, believers in the full inspiration of the Bible. The Bible not only contains God’s Words, but all of it is God’s Word and words. There is, however, an important distinction to be made regarding truth.

One of our favourite sayings goes like this: “While all the Bible is for us, not all the Bible is about us.” This statement will make sense once it is recognised that there are different kinds of truth in the Bible.

Firstly, there is **Doctrinal Truth**. This includes Scriptural teaching that transcends dispensational boundaries. It covers such things as the being and nature of God, and the fact that “all have sinned and come short of the glory of God”. That is true of Adam after he fell, Noah, Abraham, Moses, Peter, Paul, and you and me.

The abiding truth of these things allows us to look at characters and events in past dispensations and see examples of timeless truths such as the Substitutionary Sacrifice of the Lamb of God, but that does not mean that the rules and regulations of the Mosaic Law apply to believers today. So we move to

the second category of truth which is:-

**Dispensational Truth.** This term covers any teaching of Scripture that applies to a particular Dispensation or Administration of God. Examples abound, and even the most ardent opponent of Dispensational teaching nevertheless practises dispensational discrimination. While it is gloriously and unchangeably true that we are delivered from sin by the sacrifice of God’s Lamb, no Christian today brings an unblemished lamb to church on Good Friday to have it sacrificed by a priest.

Dispensational Truth takes note of the changes that have been introduced by God at different times throughout human history, the most noteworthy being the choosing of Abraham to father a special nation and then the giving of the Law to that people. But that dispensation was suspended in New Testament times, and does not apply to believers in this Dispensation of the Grace of God. So, by applying the test of Dispensational Truth – i. e. by correctly apportioning the Word of Truth (2 Tim. 2:15) – we are enabled to live a worthy life according to the Dispensation in which the Lord has placed us. So we come to the third kind of Truth:-

**Practical Truth.** It is only by applying Dispensational Truth to Doctrinal Truth – by asking, “Does this part of God’s Word apply to me?” – can we know what is true for us today. So, for example, I don’t need to have my sons circumcised, or build an altar of uncut stones to offer animal sacrifices, for the types and shadows have passed, and “in Christ” I am complete. The rules of earlier dispensations no longer apply.

This does not mean that I can let my sinful nature rule my life. Certainly not! God demands that all His children, no matter what their dispensation, be kind, honest, hospitable, forgiving, cheerful and faithful, to name just some attributes. It is a Doctrinal Truth that we must still fight against the ‘lusts of the flesh’, and we are charged to keep these things under control. We know only too well from experience, how vigilant we must be in this regard. We also know, however, that we can do all these things through the strength of the Lord Jesus Christ.

It is the assertion of Dispensationalists that only by recognising Dispensational Truth **and applying it**, can we walk worthy of our high calling in Christ Jesus. ❖

*"For some people, thinking is a difficult and uncomfortable exercise, especially when it involves the critical reappraisal of firmly held prejudices and convictions, or challenges the current consensus of opinion."*

F. F. Bruce, General Intro. to "Hard Sayings Of The Bible", p. 19.

## 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 Cres. 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  
Comm. members: Allan Gallaher,  
Susan Hall, Rom Harper..

## 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.**