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Spiritual Blessings



Vol. 26 No. 4. Jul/Aug. 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 (8)

By John Hutton, Newcastle, NSW, Australia.

(Dear Reader. Due to limited space, Scripture passages are not always quoted, or quoted in full. You are urged, however, to read all the verses specified, as this will help you to follow John’s exposition. Ed.)

Before proceeding, please read Acts 9:1-31.

In our last study, we looked at some of the miracles performed in the Acts period by the Apostles and others. Acts 6 tells of other miracles performed by Stephen, who did *‘great wonders and miracles among the people’*. We read also of Philip in Acts 8:6-7. Philip apparently disappeared after his work was done with the Ethiopian eunuch (ch. 8:39).

In the last verses of ch. 9, Aeneas was healed of palsy and Tabitha (or Dorcas) was raised from the dead by Peter. In both cases, Peter used the gift that he had, and in the case of Tabitha, as with Eutychus in Acts 20:9, 10, she was in no condition to exercise faith as she was dead.

We also looked at 1 Cor. 12 to 14 where Paul dealt with problems the church had with the gifts of the Holy Ghost, especially the gift of tongues. He goes to some trouble to point out that every gift was necessary in Corinth, as it was in every other church, whatever the city was, so that the assembly might be complete. He used the human body as an illustration of a diverse unity.

We finished the last study by looking at the darker side of miracles and in 2 Thess., saw that, in the last days, Satan would use lying signs and wonders to

delude many. The result would be that *‘Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works?’* ²³ *And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity’.* (Matt. 7:21–23)

In this study, we will look at the man who, other than the Lord, is the most important one to us in the Scriptures – the Apostle Paul. If you don’t know why I say that, I’ll tell you later.

At the end of ch. 5, the Apostles were flogged and forbidden to speak in the name of Jesus, but in spite of the flogging, they immediately disobeyed. Then in ch. 6 we read of a problem that arose among the believers, who had all things in common. The Grecian widows were not getting the same service at the table as the Hebrew widows were. This resulted in stewards being appointed so that the service would be equal to both parties. One of those stewards was Stephen.

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Acts 6:8-10 reads:-

‘And Stephen, full of faith and power, did great wonders and miracles among the people. ⁹Then there arose certain of the synagogue...disputing with Stephen. ¹⁰And they were not able to resist the wisdom and the spirit by which he spake’.

Cont. page 3



President's Word

Greetings once again to all of our readers across the world. We trust that you are continuing to enjoy receiving "Spiritual Blessings" Magazine.

Annual Conference

With this issue you will find details of our 2012 Annual Conference. We encourage you to plan today to put aside your regular routine and join fellow believers around God's Word at Bethshan, Wyee on the NSW Central Coast on September 22, 23, 24.

Our Annual Conference is always a good opportunity to recharge your spiritual batteries (so to speak). Come for all or some of the time, but the earlier you let us know your plans, the easier it is for our Conference Convenor to make the appropriate arrangements with the venue. See the enclosed pamphlet for details, and please let us know your plans as soon as possible.

This year, we'd like to encourage you to stay overnight and bring the whole family. There's improved facilities at Bethshan these days, and our time there last year was a good time of Bible Study and fellowship. Plan today to join us there - you'll be glad you did.

Other Meetings

Don't forget to check page 12 for details of our regular meetings. These gatherings are all free of charge to attend, and usually include light refreshments, a time of prayer and singing, and a Bible Study. Everyone is welcome, so bring a friend, too.

Web Site

The BBFA is currently in the process of upgrading its web site. The new format will make it easier for our Committee members, who live thousands of kms apart, to upload and edit material on the site, wherever they live. While we're at it, we're also "freshening up" the look and adding new features, such as an audio page. In the meantime, our "old" site is still up and running and full of great articles,

electronic books, news, meeting details and back issues of Spiritual Blessings Magazine. Drop into www.spiritualblessings.org sometime soon!

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

David Tavender,
admin@spiritualblessings.org

Editorial

I'm happy to send out an interesting mix of articles and reports in this issue. Thanks to all who have contributed.

As well as the continuing series of studies, we have reports of several Bible Study Conferences held in places as far afield as Brisbane Qld, the Hunter Valley NSW, and Norway. It is interesting that a Rightly Divided Word is being taught in so many places around the world, the three places just mentioned being a few among many. Eveline and I have personally had the privilege of taking part in such conferences in England, New Zealand and The Philippines, as well as many places in Australia. The Lord never leaves Himself without a witness, no matter what the Dispensation may be, and my prayer is that we will be constantly alert to His guidance and ready to take speak a word in season as the opportunities arise.

The matter of the lack of response from Christians around us to Dispensational Truth is something we discuss from time to time, but I think that, in the long run, we should remember that our work is to witness as faithfully as we can, leaving the results to the Holy Spirit. Nevertheless, we rejoice that many are accepting the truth of the Mystery, and it is exciting to see the changes in people's lives and demeanour as they come into the freedom of the Truth. The Lord be praised!

Referring back to the Norway conference report, I must apologise to Jan Lilleby, who sent the report, because I was unable to use the photograph he sent with it. However, I recommend that you visit Jan's website at www.gracepano.com where you will find not only photos, but also many articles Jan has written on a variety of biblical subjects. In the meantime, folks, walk worthily of Christ our Head.

Athol Walter.

cont from Pg. 1

Because the members of that synagogue could not refute Stephen with sound argument, they did what is often done in such cases. They got angry and punished him, even though the punishment was based on lies.

Verse 11-14:-

'Then they suborned men ... ¹²And they stirred up the people, and the elders, and the scribes ... and brought him to the council, ¹³And set up false witnesses, which said, This man ceaseth not to speak blasphemous words ... ¹⁴For we have heard him say, that this Jesus of Nazareth shall destroy this place, and shall change the customs which Moses delivered us'.

These trumped up charges resulted in Stephen being stoned to death. Before his death, however, Stephen gave a marvellous summary of how God had worked out His purposes as far as Israel and the coming of the Messiah were concerned. Read it in **Acts 7:1-53**.

Then vs. 54-60 describe Stephen's death. Notice also, that ch. 8:1 says that a man called Saul was approving of Stephen's execution. So who is this Saul, who later is called Paul?

Turn to Gal. 1:14:-

'And (I) profited in the Jews' religion above many my equals in mine own nation, being more exceedingly zealous of the traditions of my fathers.'

Paul was a young man who was on his way up in his religion. In today's language, he was an 'up and comer', he 'was on the rise'. Also, he was 'exceedingly' zealous.

We find more details in Acts 22:3:-

'I am verily a man which am a Jew, born in Tarsus, a city in Cilicia, yet brought up in this city (Jerusalem) at the feet of Gamaliel, and taught according to the perfect manner of the law of the fathers, and was zealous toward God, as ye all are this day'.

And in Phil. 3: 4-6:-

'Though I might also have confidence in the flesh. If any other man thinketh that he hath whereof he might trust in the flesh, I more: ⁵Circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews; as touching the law, a Pharisee; ⁶Concerning zeal, persecuting the church; touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless'.

Paul was a Pharisee who was a Zealot. A Pharisee was one who believed in resurrection and angels, something that was refuted by the Sadducees, but what was a Zealot?

The Talmud speaks of seven classes of Pharisee. Firstly, there was the Shechemite, who was a Pharisee because of self-interest. Secondly, there was the Tumbling Pharisee, who showed his humility by always being a little lower in height than the one he was talking to or with, even if they were sitting down, 'I am very humble, you are much better than me'.

Thirdly, there was the Bleeding Pharisee, who always closed his eyes in public so that he would not outrage his modesty by looking upon a woman.

Consequently, he was always bumping into things and bleeding was the result. The fourth

class was the Mortar Pharisee, who covered his eyes with mortar for the same reason as the Bleeder but apparently did not want to bleed.

The fifth class was the Timid Pharisee, who was a Pharisee out of fear, I'm not sure why. The sixth class was the Zealot – 'tell me another duty and I will do it' and the seventh class was the Love Pharisee, who loved to be a Pharisee, perhaps because of prestige. Paul was a Zealot.

The rabbis taught that there are 248 commands and 365 prohibitions in the Law of Moses, and that if one person could, or would, obey every one of them for one day, then the Messiah would come. Who do you think would try to be the one who achieved that obedience? The Zealot! Now before we get to Paul's conversion, there is one more thing that is said about Paul that is worth looking at.

Turn to 2 Cor. 12:7-9:-

'And lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, (many think it was blindness or something like that. But Paul goes on to tell us.) the messenger of Satan to buffet me, (why was the thorn given?) lest I should be exalted above measure'.

Apparently, Paul was prone to being a 'big head'. Some say he was a member of the Sanhedrin, but the Bible does not say so and, as far as I am aware, there are no historical records to support that.

Now let us go back to **Acts 8:1:-**

‘And Saul was consenting unto his (i.e. Stephen’s) death’.

Paul was a young man climbing the ladder of his religion, he was above others of his own age in that regard, he was a zealot ever eager to impress his superiors, maybe even proud of his achievements. Yet, in spite of all of that, he was one of those who were ‘not able to resist the wisdom and the spirit by which Stephen spoke’.

This learned and capable young man had no answers to the wisdom of Stephen and, perhaps in his mind, he should have. Was that the reason that he approved of the murder of Stephen? It may well have played a part in his agreement with what done.

Stephen, however, was not the only one to suffer. Many more suffered and died at the hands of the one who had only consented to the death of Stephen. Paul refers to his persecution of believers several times in his letters,. See Gal. 1:13; 1 Cor. 15:9; Acts 22:4; 1 Tim. 1:15; Eph. 3:8. I think that what he had done never ceased to prey on his mind.

I am told that, when Paul used the word translated as ‘least than the least’ in Eph. 3:8, he was coining a new word. Literally he was saying ‘I am the leaster’! If you are the least there can be nobody under you. When he wrote that, I wonder if he had in his mind what he had done to believers all that time ago.

Finally, we get to our opening reading, **Acts 9:1–9:-**

‘And Saul, yet breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord, went unto the high priest, ²And desired of him letters to Damascus to the synagogues, that if he found any of this way, whether they were men or women, he might bring them bound unto Jerusalem’. ³*And as he journeyed, he came near Damascus: and suddenly there shined round about him a light from heaven: ⁴And he fell to the earth, and heard a voice saying unto him, Saul, Saul, ⁵And he said, Who art thou, Lord? And the Lord said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest: **it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks.** ⁶**And he trembling and astonished said, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? And the Lord said unto him,** Arise, and go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do. ⁷And the men which journeyed with him stood speechless, hearing a voice, but seeing no man. ⁸And Saul arose from the earth; and when his eyes*

were opened, he saw no man: but they led him by the hand, and brought him into Damascus. ⁹And he was three days without sight, and neither did eat nor drink’.

Whatever it was about that voice, Paul immediately knew that the one speaking must be God because he responded, ‘Who art thou, Lord?’ When a Jew called someone Lord, who was he speaking to? Jehovah! Can you imagine the shock Paul got when the voice that he recognised was God, said, ‘I am Jesus whom thou persecutest’. He must have been devastated.

It would seem that Paul had been developing a conscience about his persecution of believers, even if only from a humanitarian point of view. However that may have been, the physical encounter with the Lord on that road resulted in physical blindness for Paul. Before he was able to do anything for God, however, he had to be healed and the one chosen to do it was a bit apprehensive about it, to say the least.

“Paul ... was one of those who were not able to resist the wisdom of Stephen.”

Vs. 10-18:-

‘And there was a certain disciple at Damascus, named Ananias’. ... ‘Then Ananias answered, Lord, I have heard by many of this man, how much evil he hath done to thy saints at Jerusalem: ¹⁴And here he hath authority from the chief priests to bind all that call on thy name. ¹⁵But the Lord said unto him, Go thy way: for he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel: ¹⁶For I will shew him how great things he must suffer for my name’s sake. ¹⁷And Ananias went his way, and entered into the house; and putting his hands on him said, Brother Saul, the Lord, even Jesus, that appeared unto thee in the way as thou camest, hath sent me, that thou mightest receive thy sight, and be filled with the Holy Ghost. ¹⁸And immediately there fell from his eyes as it had been scales: and he received sight forthwith, and arose, and was baptized’.

V. 16 says that the Lord showed Paul all that he would suffer for His sake. I wonder what Paul thought as he listened to what was going to happen to him. 2 Cor. 11:23-28 gives many of the details:-

‘Are they ministers of Christ? (I speak as a fool) I am more; in labours more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft.(or as the NIV puts it, ‘been exposed to death again and again’). ²⁴Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one. ²⁵Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I

stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep; ²⁶ In journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; ²⁷ In weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness'.

After writing 2 Corinthians, Paul suffered other things which culminated in his martyrdom at Rome. As I said, I wonder how he felt when the Lord pointed all of that out to him. I also wonder how I would have felt if, after making a decision for Christ, I had been told by God something similar to Paul. If Paul had not been sure who was speaking to him, you could forgive him if he'd said, "Hang on a minute, but that doesn't sound like a good deal." But I also wonder if the zealot in Paul might have said, 'Let me at it!'. These thoughts, however, are only what I think may have happened, not what Paul's reaction actually was. However, beside those problems, there was more to come.

Verse 28:-

'Beside those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches'.

He not only had to deal with people and their problems, but also the problems that arose because of church members going their own way and not God's. You only have to read his epistles to get an idea of the extent of those problems.

If we were able to ask Paul which set of problems he found the easiest to deal with – the physical or

the people problems – I can imagine him saying, 'Give me the physical ones any day'. There I go again telling you what I think. But remember, when God has a job to be done, He chooses someone who is capable of doing it. He certainly chose the right one in Paul.

Just a few more Scriptures now before we finish.

Please turn to 2 Tim. 1:12:-

'For the which cause I also suffer these things: nevertheless I am not ashamed: for I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day'.

I know that I am taking that verse out of context, but when Paul recognised Jesus as God, he knew who he was believing in, and, also, that God is no man's debtor.

Rom. 8:18:-

'For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall

be revealed in us'.

2 Tim. 2:12:-

'... If we suffer, we shall also reign with him'.

2 Tim. 3:12:-

'Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution'.

The NIV translation of the Greek here is a little more correct when it says *'In fact, everyone who wants to live a Godly life, will suffer persecution'.*

Both say that persecution 'shall' or 'will' happen, no doubt about it. When I read that I always feel chastised, because it makes me wonder, "What have I suffered for my Lord?"

"When God has a job to be done, He chooses someone who is capable of doing it."

BBFA Annual Conference 2012

Bethshan Conference Centre, Wyee, NSW.

Sat. – Mon. 22nd. – 24th. Sept. 2012.

Two and a half days of fellowship, worship and sound Bible study.

Come for all or part of the time. See separate booking sheet in this issue.

Book Stall operates, and often has bargains and 'freebies'.

SINCERE SEEKERS AFTER GOD'S TRUTH VERY WELCOME!

Conference Reports From Near and Far

Kristiansand, Norway.

On Feb. 25th. 2012, we had again the pleasure of welcoming Jan and Margareth Lilleby to lead a seminar in Kristiansand. This time Arild Bordoy (evangelist) accompanied Jan, and gave one of the lessons. The theme for the seminar was “God, Paul and The Gentiles”.

We wished more folk had attended, but because of Winter Holidays the number was a bit limited. Those who came, nevertheless, got good teaching, and a very important topic engaged the audience. It became clearer to us than ever before, how important it is to rightly divide the Word of God. In particular, it was interesting to learn of the different groups of Gentiles in Scripture. This makes it even easier to separate the message to the Church from the message given to Israel (Jews and proselytes).

It is far from unimportant *how* we read the Word. If we do not keep the different dispensations separate, then the Bible will appear as a Book full of contradictions.

We are happy to know that there are more and more believers getting their spiritual eyes opened to the necessity of rightly dividing the Word, and in this way, are really getting to know the free and full Grace doctrine of Paul.

It may take some time to ‘get there’, but we who have been working with this can confirm that it is liberating. It gives confidence and certainty when one can read and understand the Scripture *systematically* and yet being edified.

We thank Jan Lilleby for his thorough teaching, and also Arild Bordoy who contributed in a great way both in speaking and song. We wish to have more seminars, with more people attending.

We recommend everyone to go to www.gracepano.com for a study of the articles there, and thus get help to avoid misunderstanding and confusion in these things. We all need to obtain a better understanding of the ways God has acted throughout the dispensations.

With regards, Odd Guttormsen and Jostein Gundersen, Conference Conveners.

Brisbane, Qld. June 23/24.

Saturday

The folks from down south of the border joined about 25 of us here in the sunshine state for our annual study weekend. We are grateful that Karl Edwards and David Tavender, along with their lovely wives Nadereh and Janelle, graciously gave up their time to join us in praise, study and fellowship.

We took a moment to remember our dear friend and brother in Christ, Frank Haegler, who is sorely missed by all. Alan Gallaher then gave a reading from Phil. 2:5-8 (NKJV):-

“Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross.”

May we all keep this close in mind ever and always.

David then gave the first of his 3 part study on ‘The Holy Spirit – The being and nature (who or what).’ He told us of the other names for the Holy Spirit – The Spirit of God/the Lord; My Spirit; His Spirit; The Spirit. These names are interchangeable.

Definitions of the Spirit are an intangible force and Holy (separate).

The Holy Spirit is equated with God. We delved into the term ‘Trinity’ here, and I must say that David put it quite nicely when he suggested that God is far greater than all that ‘the Trinity’ could encapsulate.

We next heard from Karl with his study – ‘Christ or Paul’. He enlightened us to what the New Testament would be like should we disregard Paul’s writings. We would lose all of Paul’s epistles. Much of Acts would be ruled out, as it concentrates a great deal on Paul, and Luke would be called into question also (see Acts 1:1 & Luke 1:3).

In 2 Peter 3:15, Peter writes of “...beloved brother Paul ...”, so that would also go. This would leave us with a very lean New Testament.

We have examples of Paul’s important teaching in the following:

1 Cor. 1:13. “Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul?”

2 Tim. 2:15. “Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.”

2 Tim. 3:16. “All Scripture *is* given by inspiration of God, and *is* profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness.”

1 Thess 2:13. “For this reason we also thank God without ceasing, because when you received the word of God which you heard from us, you welcomed *it* not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which also effectively works in you who believe.”

These instructions of Paul show that we cannot disregard his writings.

After that, we all gathered together for a lovely meal and much conversation, until security came to check on us. What rebel rousers we must have been!

Sunday

Allan again started us off by reading 1 Peter 5:6:-

“Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time.”

Karl then presented a word study on ‘Gehenna.’

He told us that Hell is an **interpretation** of Gehenna, not a **translation**. Gehenna is literally a valley in Judah, and is a clear reference to Judgment. The end of the Lord’s enemies is death and that it is connected with the future restoration of Israel.

After lunch Allan opened by reading John 13:34 & 35:-

“A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.”

David then gave part 2 of his study on ‘The Holy Spirit – Roles and Works’.

+ The Holy Spirit is the intangible arm of God interacting with mankind

+ The Spirit’s activities may differ from dispensation to dispensation.

+ The Holy Spirit had a role in creation and He is

also an enabler – endowing those He worked through with abilities beyond what was natural for them).

David’s third and final study of our weekend was on ‘The Holy Spirit – Guide/Helper, Counselor/Advocate/Paraclete’.

+ The Holy Spirit is abiding and ever present. Christ’s work was a one-off, whereas the Holy Spirit’s work is ongoing.

+ The Holy Spirit strengthens us, intercedes for us and is a revealer of truth.

We gathered for a final cuppa, said our goodbyes, and then our guests departed. I am sure I can still hear that horn honking, David!

Kind thanks must go to Rom Harper for organizing this year’s event, and to Mary Harper for organizing the venue. Thanks also to the catering staff who really excelled themselves with bountiful feasts on Saturday evening and Sunday lunch. A special thanks to all who attended from near and far, you all made our weekend a great event. We look forward to seeing you all at Bethshan in September.

Nadine Kernau.

Thornton, Hunter Valley, NSW. July 21st.

About 35 people gathered on Saturday, July 21, for a day of fellowship and study. There was a morning and afternoon study, with a lovely lunch and plenty of time for fellowship in between.

Athol Walter was the morning’s speaker, and looked at some of the major turning points in the course of God’s dealings with humanity, such as, the Fall of Adam, Noah’s Flood, the Tower of Babel and the confusion of languages, the call of Abraham, the deliverance of Israel from Egypt, Israel in their land, the ministries of John, the Lord, the Apostles, and then Paul’s revelation of the Secret after Acts.

After lunch, Peter Ward, starting from Rom. 2:23, “all have sinned and come short of the glory of God”, spoke about the ways in which God has dealt with sin in the lives of believers at different times. The swift punishment of Ananias and Sapphira in Acts 5 is typical of judgment in the Millennium, but is not the way God acts in this Dispensation of Grace.

All went away from these meetings having enjoyed fellowship and stimulating teaching from God’s Word.

The New King

By Charles Welch.

Scripture indicates that the Pharaoh who began the oppression of Israel was one of a line quite distinct from the Pharaoh under whose kindly patronage they had increased and multiplied. The word 'arose' in Exod. 1:8 is in Hebrew *kum*, and means 'stood up', denoting the standing up in the place of another who has been removed (see Dan. 2^{31, 39, 44}; 3:24, and Companion Bible). The words of Stephen in Acts 7:18 point in the same way, "there stood up another king", the word 'another' being *heteros*, meaning 'another of another kind'.

Exodus 1 also very pointedly says, "and he said unto *his* people", indicating his own special followers as distinct from the friendly Egyptians who had grown up together with the Israelites. Whether it was Ahmes, Seti or Rameses who was the oppressor of Israel, we do not know, but the character of the times and the revolutions that contributed to the enslaving of Israel are well depicted in the history of the XIXth. dynasty. Rameses I, and his son Seti I, reigned together as the first kings of the new dynasty, and it was not long before Seti succeeded to the sole kingship, at which point the new regime began in earnest.

The first three kings vainly endeavoured to expel Hittite invaders, and although Rameses II compelled the Canaanitish cities to acknowledge the rule of Egypt, he was glad, twenty years later, to conclude a treaty of peace on equal terms with "the great king of the Hittites". These enemies on Egypt's frontier made the Israelites in Goshen a source of possible danger to the Egyptians.

In the Central Saloon (of the British Museum) is a wooden statue of Seti I. One inscription tells us that "a moment of the struggle of men is dearer to him than a day of pleasure; he slays them with one stroke, and spares none among them".

Josephus tells that it was foretold to Seti I that a child would be born to the Israelites, who, if he were reared, would bring the Egyptian dominion

low. If there is truth in this story, we can perhaps understand the reason for the massacre of the Hebrew boys.

Seti, in the custom of the time, married a granddaughter of Khuenaton, which linked him with the old dynasty and gave his eldest son, Rameses II, greater chances of being respected and honoured than he himself could expect to be. This marriage also, in the person of Rameses II, succeeded in uniting the claims of the two great rival houses. Rameses was only ten or twelve years of age when he joined his father on the throne, and the sculpture and inscriptions constantly represent him as sharing the administration of the affairs of state.

Rameses II is famous as a great builder, and the demand that his buildings made for labour, together with the need to construct defensive works, caused great pressure to be put upon captives and aliens who laboured in the making of bricks and the building of cities.

When we understand the details of Egyptian architecture, the great demand for bricks becomes understandable. Had the buildings and cities been built upon the ground, the annual overflow of the Nile would have destroyed them, which made it necessary that the buildings should be erected upon raised foundations of brickwork.

The bricks were of two sorts; those made of alluvial mud of the Nile, and those of firmer clay. The Israelites, labouring in Goshen, were limited to the Nile mud, and 'straw' was absolutely essential to make this into bricks.

Several monuments of Rameses the Great may be seen in this gallery (of the Museum), the gigantic proportions of them indicating a very high pitch of engineering skill on the part of those who designed and erected them.

(Taken from a series of articles by Chas. Welch, called 'Sidelights on the Scriptures', in the Berean Expositor, vol. 8, p. 38, detailing exhibits in the British Museum which bear on the Bible.)

Whose Hope Is It Anyway? (Part 2)

By Karl Edwards, Melbourne, Victoria.

In the first part of this study we saw that even as late as Acts 28, *the hope of Israel* was one of Paul's primary concerns. As a prisoner of Rome under house arrest, he called the leaders of the Jews together and said, "... therefore I have called for you, to see you and speak with you, because for *the hope of Israel I am bound with this chain*". (Acts 28:20). Although there were many Christians in Rome at that time, he did not make any reference to *the hope of Christianity*, only the hope of Israel, because at that time *the hope of Israel* was also the hope of Christian believers.

We also saw that the *hope of Israel* focused on the kingdom rule of God coming upon this earth. This is the same kingdom that both the Lord and John the Baptist declared was at hand, a kingdom where Israel's enemies are destroyed and Messiah rules with justice and righteousness. But this is not the same hope that Paul writes about later in the epistle to the Ephesians; the Ephesian hope has the believer seated far above all in heavenly places, with Christ (Eph. 2:4-7). The Ephesian hope is a heavenly hope; the hope of Israel is an earthly hope.

In part 2 of this article we look a little further into 1 Thess. ch. 4:15-18, which is most often put forward as a *proof text* for the rapture of the church. We will see, however, that the events of this chapter are very much in line with the earthly hope of Israel. We will also see, like so many things concerning Israel's calling, that this event had been previously anticipated in the Old Testament Scriptures.

Timing is crucial

Paul provides us with a startling revelation in Acts 26. While relaying to Agrippa his experience on the road to Damascus, he says:

"... to this day I stand, witnessing both to small and great, saying *no other things than* those which the prophets and Moses said would come, that the Christ

would suffer, that He would be the first to rise from the dead, and would proclaim light to the Jewish people and to the Gentiles." **Acts 26:22.**

It is astonishing to think that Paul's teaching, up until that time, had not gone beyond that which had already been revealed through Moses and the prophets. Yet, we see the same thing in Luke 24:27 where the Lord, beginning with Moses and the prophets, revealed all things concerning Himself to the two men on the road to Emmaus. These things were written in the Old Testament the whole time, but they had not been understood until the Lord opened their eyes (v 31). Paul's ministry during the book of Acts was similar, the Old Testament Scriptures that he reasoned from in Acts 17:2, had not changed, but his understanding of them had.

"... at that time the hope of Israel was also the hope of Christian believers."

There is, however, a difference between that which had been written and that which had been hidden. Neither Moses nor the prophets knew about the mystery of the one body (Eph. 3:6), because as Paul tells us, it was hidden in God (Eph. 3:9). Neither also did Paul know about the mystery of the one body when he stood before Agrippa, because at that time, it had not yet been revealed to him. This revelation of Ephesians came sometime after Acts 28:28, sometime after Israel had been temporarily set aside, and with this new revelation came a new hope for the Church, a heavenly hope, a hope that had not been known before.

Hope in Thessalonians

To read the hope of Ephesians into the epistles of Thessalonians confuses the two hopes, and it is from such confusion that the rapture theory was able to take root. The hope of the Lord's coming is a dominant theme in Thessalonians, being mentioned no less than six times. Paul sets the tone in 1 Thess. 1:10 when he commends the Thessalonian believers because they "... turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God, and to *wait for His Son from heaven*." These believers were waiting for Christ to

return from heaven, but were they waiting for Him to come and take them back to heaven with Him? Or were they waiting for Him to come and establish His kingdom rule on the earth? Bearing in mind that Thessalonians was one of Paul's earliest epistles, there are no other writings to show that the expectancy of the disciples had changed since Acts

The idea that those who are raptured are going back to heaven with the Lord has been interjected into the text — it simply isn't there.

1:8, when they anticipated the restoration of the kingdom to Israel; nor from Acts 1:11 when the angel told them that "...this same Jesus shall come in the way that you see Him go." Or from Acts 2:29-35, where Peter talks about David's hope that Messiah would sit on his throne and make His enemies His footstool. These things constitute the hope of Israel, an earthly hope where Christ rules from the throne of David on

earth.

In fact, there is no part of the Old Testament hope of Israel that has believers returning to heaven with the Lord, and neither does such a concept exist in 1 Thess. ch. 4. This view is taken from verse 17, but a close reading of that verse will show that it says no such thing.

"Then we who are alive *and* remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord."
1 Thess. 4:17.

Read it carefully. The idea that those who are *raptured* are going to go back to heaven with Lord has been interjected into the text – it simply isn't there. The text says that they are caught up to meet Him in the air and nothing whatsoever about whether they are going up or down. The assumption is that the Lord is going to go back to heaven and so they are going to go back with Him. However, that is not what this verse says, that is a supposition based on a preconceived idea.

Does the Lord go back to heaven at this point? Comparing this verse with 2 Thess. 2:1 we see a similar thought.

"Now brethren, concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him ..."
2Thess. 2:1.

It is very difficult to say that this gathering together to Him is not the same event as being caught up to meet Him in the air, yet reading on to verse 8, we see that, at the coming of the Lord, the man of sin will be revealed, sitting in the temple of God, with lying signs and wonders, putting forth that he is God.

"...whom the Lord shall consume with the breath of His mouth and shall destroy with the brightness of His coming..." **2 Thess. 2:8.**

How will the Lord destroy this man of sin who sits in the temple if He never sets foot on earth but immediately returns to heaven? This complication is a man made one. We are given a clear picture in 2 Thess. 2:1-10 of the Lord's coming to the earth to destroy the antichrist along with His enemies, a picture which is consistent with the hope of Israel.

Trumpets, Clouds and Angels.

An important comparison can be made by taking note of the imagery used in 1 Thess. 4:15–18. Here we have the Lord descending with a shout, the voice of the archangel, a trumpet sound and clouds. There is insufficient space in this article to follow through on all these attributes in detail, but a quick comparison is made below with Matthew 24, the great 'second coming' chapter.

It is obvious that there is much commonality across these verses; despite this however, the rapture viewpoint maintains that these two sections of Scripture teach two entirely different *comings* of the Lord. While it is true that no one section of Scripture gives a complete picture of the second coming, there are many other *second coming* passages scattered throughout the Bible where one or more of these same attributes can be found.

For instance, in Revelation 1:7 we read, "**He is coming with clouds** and every eye shall see him." The prophet Daniel sees a vision in 7:13 and 14 of "one like the son of man **coming on clouds**... to whom a kingdom and dominion is given." When the **angel sounded** in Revelation 11:15, there were **loud voices in heaven** and the kingdoms of this world were given to the Lord to reign over.

Psalm 47 paints a wonderful picture of the Lord taking control of the earth, with v. 5 declaring that God went up with a **shout** and the **sound of a trumpet**. In vs. 9 and 10 He rules over the nations, and the princes of His people are **gathered together**. Then in Joshua 6:5 & 6, we have a fore-shadowing of what is to come, with Israel entering the Promised Land when the last trumpet is sounded, not to forget 1 Cor. 15:52 when the last trump shall sound and the dead will be raised.

Trumpets, clouds and angels are clearly associated with the Christ's second coming to the earth to reign, and the events described in 1 Thess. 4 fit perfectly into that mould. There is probably no Scripture, however, that captures all of the elements seen in Thessalonians as succinctly as Exodus 19. There we see a clear type of the rapture taking place at Mount Sinai.

A Type of Rapture

In Exodus 19 we find the people of Israel being made ready to hear the Lord speak to Moses. This was so that "... the people may hear when I speak with you and believe you forever." (Ex. 19:9). God was going to give Moses the Sinai covenant and He wanted the people of Israel to know that Moses had received it directly from Him. Reading from v. 16 on, we see a scene very recognizable to anyone familiar with 1Thess. 4:15-18.

"Then it came to pass on the third day, in the morning, that there were thunderings and lightnings, and a thick cloud on the mountain; and the sound of the trumpet was very loud, so that all the people who were in the camp trembled. And Moses brought the people out

of the camp to meet with God, and they stood at the foot of the mountain. Now Mount Sinai was completely in smoke, because the LORD descended upon it in fire. Its smoke ascended like the smoke of a furnace, and the whole mountain quaked greatly. And when the blast of the trumpet sounded long and became louder and louder, Moses spoke, and God answered him by voice. Then the LORD came down upon Mount Sinai, on the top of the mountain. And the LORD called Moses to the top of the mountain, and Moses went up." **Exodus 19:16-20.**

In these five verses we have all Israel **gathered together** at the foot of the mountain, there is thunder and lightning, fire, a **thick cloud** of smoke and the **sound of a trumpet** which sounded long and became louder and louder. The people came out to **meet with God** and **the Lord descended in the thick cloud** and then the **voice of God** is heard and Moses is called up the mountain. In verse 24 we see that only the select remnant of Moses and Aaron are allowed to go **up to meet the Lord**. This is a typical rapture, this is the Lord coming to His chosen people, this is the prefiguring of 1 Thess. 4:15-18. This is the hope of Israel.

Moses came back down the mountain with the Sinai covenant, which is revealed in the next chapter of Exodus. He did not stay with the Lord. So also, when Christ returns to Israel, a select remnant go up to meet Him and come back with Him to administer the new covenant, which will be written on their hearts. He will establish His throne on the earth and they will rule with Him in righteousness and justice.

This is the hope of Israel.

Quotes on Genesis

"The very idea of the history of Adam and Eve in Paradise being an allegory, or as it has been expressed, "poetry, not history", is in itself absurd and contrary to acknowledged facts. For it is acknowledged that the later part of Genesis, and the subsequent books of Scripture history are a narrative of real events, and of the lives and actions of real men and women. But where, then, does the allegorical part end and the historical part begin?"

If Adam and Eve were allegorical personages, who were the parents of the real men and women whose

history follows afterwards?"

H. Shepherd: 'Traditions of Eden', 1871.

"All that I wish to impress is that in the Book of Genesis a hint is not to be wasted but improved; and that he who expects every probable deduction from Scripture to be made out complete in all its parts before he will admit it, expects more than he will in many cases meet with, and will learn much less than he might otherwise learn."

J. C. Blunt: 'Undesigned Co-incidences in the Old and New Testaments'. 1869.

"We will never completely comprehend the infinite God with our limited understanding, but that does not limit God's ability to communicate what He wants us to know."

Fritz Ridenour, in "So What's The Difference?". p. 11.

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