

# **THE NEW COVENANT NEWS**



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# NEWS AND NOTES

## Annual Autumn Conference 2012

Arrangements have been made to hold our 2012 Autumn Conference from 6th to 9th April, at Kallista, the same venue as last year. The Conference Theme is - Risen with Christ. The Conference Text is Colossians 3:1. More details are included in this issue of the Newsletter.

## Overseas Contacts

We are pleased to hear from many brethren overseas and of the blessings they receive from reading our Newsletters and Books. Also, to hear of the work that is being done in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

In Nigeria, several Groups have put aside their differences in understanding of certain passages and are continuing to meet together on a monthly basis to try to come to a fuller understanding of the wonderful Gospel message. Also we hear that they are taking the Gospel message into the local churches.

We commend them for their display of brotherly love and pray that our Heavenly Father continues to bless them in their endeavours.

## Questions

We regularly receive requests for help to understand passages from the Bible, these come mainly from our contacts by email. We arrange to study the questions at our Sunday meetings and endeavour to provide a response for the brethren's consideration. Some more of these questions are included in this issue.

Editor

### THE NEW COVENANT NEWS

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The New Covenant News is produced by an Editor responsible to the Christian Bible Students (Melbourne). All thoughts expressed do not necessarily represent the opinions of the Group and readers are requested to heed the words : "Prove all things." (1 Thessalonians 5 : 21).

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## TASTING THE HEAVENLY GIFT

Paper given by Graeme Smith at the 2011 Conference

The first thing I must do this morning is apologise to you and your conference committee. When I volunteered to address this subject of ‘Tasting the Heavenly Gift’, I believed I knew what the term referred to, the Heavenly Gift, and I was confident that I had scriptural substantiation for what I believed.

But when I sat down to prepare the presentation, I found that that was not the case; I did not have scriptural substantiation which unequivocally identified the Heavenly Gift. So I then referred to several commentators to find what they thought about the Heavenly Gift, and I found that there is a wide variety of opinion about just what is the Heavenly Gift.

And then it occurred to me that those who were at Berea were more noble than those at Thessalonica because they searched the scriptures daily whether what the Apostle Paul told them was true. And if they had to search the scriptures to verify what the Apostle Paul told them, then so much more should you search the scriptures to verify what Graeme Smith tells you. And so then I thought, ‘What do I do now?’ I have a dilemma. I can espouse to you my understanding of the Heavenly Gift, but of course it might be completely wrong. And so I decided that perhaps the better course of action was for us to go through my thought processes and you follow me through on how I tried to unravel this subject, and maybe you can find where I’ve made mistakes. And if you do, please tell me, because I’d like to know.

Notwithstanding the fact that I don’t know exactly what the Heavenly Gift refers to, there is absolutely no doubt that the subject is very important. The gravity of the issue can be derived from the words of Hebrews chapter 6, verses 4 to 6. In the King James Version they read, ***“For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Spirit, and have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, if they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame”***. When we consider the consequences of their actions, it is easy for us to understand why it is impossible to renew them again unto repentance. The thought of them crucifying to themselves the Son of God afresh, and putting him to an open shame again, is absolutely anathema. So this subject is very important, and therefore I say we should follow it through and try to find out just what is meant by these three verses.

Of course, the critical thing is that this impossibility, to renew them again to repentance, applies only to those who have fallen away; ***“.... if they shall fall away”***. Therefore it is of some importance to determine just what it means to

fall away. Well, the concordance says that to fall away simply means to apostatise; that is to say, to totally desert. Think of Matthew chapter 12, where it says, every thing will be forgiven men except blasphemy against the Holy Spirit. And so this is a very serious matter, and perhaps does not mean that those who make a mistake, as we all do from time to time, are in danger. It doesn't apply to them. It applies only to those who totally desert what they have learnt in terms of being enlightened, tasting of the Heavenly Gift, partakers of the Holy Spirit, and so on.

And that leads us to what particular conditions are mentioned in Hebrews chapter 6. And there are five. First of all those who were once enlightened, those who tasted of the heavenly gift, those who were partakers of the Holy Spirit, those who tasted the good word of God, and those who had tasted of the powers of the world to come.

The first thing I did then was to say, well there must be other scriptures which include the expression ***"heavenly gift"***. What other scriptures do we have? Well, as it turns out, Hebrews 6:4 is the only verse in the whole Bible where the term ***"heavenly gift"*** occurs. That surprised me. Therefore we have no specific indication from the scriptures as to what the heavenly gift really is.

I then thought that we should look at the heavenly gift. What does this word "heavenly" mean? And as we were told us yesterday, heavenly simply means above the sky; celestial, is the concordance meaning. So there is no mystery about the word 'heavenly'. Gift simply means gratuity, something given to us. Again, there is no mystery about the word 'gift'. And so we have the heavenly gift – something which God has given us.

Where do we go from here? It says, who ***"..... have tasted of the heavenly gift"***, and so my thought was, is there some significance in the heavenly gift? What does the word 'the' really mean? Does it just mean a heavenly gift, or does it mean the heavenly gift? Well, the concordance says that the word 'the' is the masculine, including the feminine and neuter (so it applies to all three genders), in all their inflections, the definite article'. Therefore, when it talks about those five things: those who have been enlightened, those who have tasted of the heavenly gift; those who were made partakers of the Holy Spirit; who have tasted the good word of God; who have tasted of the powers of the world to come. Each of those five refers to something specifically: the definite article.

And it's not just talking about any one of the five. So the heavenly gift is something specific. The question is, what is it?

And then it says, ***"... tasted of the heavenly gift"***. Is there some significance in the word tasted? Again, the concordance simply says that word tasted is a primary verb, to taste, by implication, to eat. Nothing mysterious about that.

And then it says, figuratively, to experience. And there are a couple of texts which tell us that that figurative sense is one of the ways in which this Greek word is used. For example, 1 Peter 2:3; ***“If so be that you have tasted that the Lord is gracious”***. Now that’s obviously a figurative use of the word tasted. We don’t literally eat the grace of God, but we experience it. It doesn’t mean that we have to completely understand it. I mean, 2 Peter 3:18 says, ***“But grow in grace”***, which means that we can experience the grace of God, we can taste it, sample it, experience it, but that is not the end of the story. We need to grow in grace, and so when it says that we have tasted of the heavenly gift, we have experienced something of it, but we can continue to grow in our appreciation of the heavenly gift.

So then, where do we go from here? Well, the next step was to think, well, there are those five conditions. Is it possible that the final sentence, that it is impossible for those who had met those conditions and fallen away, does that apply only to those who have met all of the five conditions? Are those five conditions just individual, single, or are they cumulative, does one build upon the other? And of course, the key word then becomes the meaning of the word “and”, because the text reads ***“For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened and have tasted of the heavenly gift and were made partakers of the Holy Spirit and have tasted of the good word of God and the powers of the world to come, if they should fall away”***. So, does this passage mean that it is only when someone has met all of those five conditions that they are the subjects of this passage in scripture?

So, what does this word ‘and’ mean? Does it simply mean individually, singly, or does it mean that they are cumulative? The concordance says that the word ‘and’ has two meanings. There are two different Greek words translated as ‘and’ in these three verses. The first and the fourth occurrence of the word ‘and’ come from Strong’s #5037, ‘te’, which means a connection, in one sense, or, an addition to previous words. The second and third occurrences of the word ‘and’ are from Strong’s # 2532, ‘kai’, which is copulative or sometimes cumulative. Now, I can sort of suggest a very tenuous reason coming out of those two different words ‘and’, but frankly, the link is so tenuous that I would not be prepared to stand by it. And so as far as I’m concerned, these two words ‘and’ mean the same thing. They mean connection and copulative; they mean the same thing really; they are joining words—they are additionals. Addition to previous words and cumulative means that one builds upon the other; step A, step B, step C, and so on.

And so, to me, it is possible that these five conditions are cumulative. If this is so then, what does it mean by ***“tasting of the heavenly gift”***, case number two? It comes after number one, and number one is ‘enlightened’. Now, enlightened is the first step in any one’s Christian walk. In Ephesians 1:18

we have, ***“The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints”***. That verse to me very clearly implies that unless someone is enlightened they aren’t able to know any of those things which follow. ***“The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling”*** and so on.

We’re going to skip number two for the moment, the heavenly gift, and just see whether there’s any cumulative effect in these five conditions.

Going to number three, it talks about being partakers of the Holy Spirit, and you can say, ‘When does that occur?’ Does that occur before a person is enlightened, or does it occur after a person is enlightened? Well, 2 Corinthians 1:21 tells us, ***“Now he which stablishes us with you in Christ, and hath anointed us, is God, who hath also sealed us and given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts”***. So, here we see the Holy Spirit, and we are going to hear this morning about the Holy Spirit being a gift, which is given to us. The question is, ‘Is it possible that the Holy Spirit is given to us before we were enlightened or after we first receive some enlightenment?’ That’s the question to be answered.

Number four says the person who has ***“tasted the good word of God”***. What does the ‘good word of God’ mean in this context? When I read commentators, again I find there is a large variety of opinions. One of them can be derived from 1 Thessalonians 2:13, ***“For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe.”*** And so, again we see ***“the good word of God”***, but what does it really mean?

Some of the commentators that I have read said that it means that they have received the message of the kingdom. Some say it means they have received the gift of justification. Some say it means that they have understood the resurrection. There is a whole range of opinions amongst prominent Bible students as to what this ‘good word of God’ really means. And so once again I came to a dead end. It doesn’t really help me unequivocally say just what is ‘the good word of God’.

The fifth one is that they tasted of the powers of the world to come. What does that mean? Again we find a large variety opinions. Looking at it in the shortest term, the shortest time frame, one suggestion is that tasting of the powers of the world to come is experiencing the fellowship of their brethren to date, and, when I think about that, I believe that Ephesians 6:12 substantiates that thought. ***“For we wrestle not about flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of***

***this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.***” And don’t we? In the world at large, that is what we wrestle against. We do not wrestle against those things when we come together as an assembly of the Lord’s people. And I wouldn’t be the first person who has really been impressed with the generous love and consideration and appreciation of others which exists amongst the Lord’s people.

Another thought, though, is that tasting of the powers of the world to come means that they perhaps have been in a righteous environment. And there are certain little cells in the world where there is a very co-operative spirit pervading. Whatever it is, the idea is that if we understand the benefits and change of mind-set which the word of God gives to each one of us, then tasting of the powers of the world to come is experiencing the consequences of that influence of the Holy Spirit.

That’s all fine and good, but I still can’t be absolutely assured what ***“tasting the heavenly gift”*** really refers to. I said at the outset that when I volunteered to address this subject that I was convinced, I believed I understood what it meant. Well, I’m now going to tell you what my first assumption was, and I believe that there is still some credence for it. I understand as well that you might well find some faults in what I have to say.

In very simple terms, I believe that tasting the good word of God is tasting what our Lord Jesus Christ means to each one of us. Of course, he was a gift, as we know. John 3:16, ***“For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son”***. So Jesus is indeed a gift from God, as we had yesterday as well. No question about that. But it needs individual enlightenment to understand that. You know, when Jesus went to Caesarea Philippi he asked his disciples saying ***“Whom do men say that I, the Son of Man, am?”*** And they said, ***“Some say thou art John the Baptist, some Elias, and others Jeremias or one of the prophets”***. And they do. I mean, the Muslim community accepts that Jesus was someone special. Some of them even think that he might have been a prophet. But they don’t see him as being the Messiah. Jesus said, ***“Whom do you say I am?”*** And Peter answered, ***“Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God”***. And what did Jesus reply? ***“Blessed art thou, Simon Bar Jonah. For flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven”***. And just recently I had some experience with many people who readily acknowledge that Jesus came to earth, not actually to earth from heaven, but they believe that he existed, he lived on the earth. They believe that he was a man of great insight. They believe he was a man who taught worthy principles. But they don’t believe he was the Messiah. So, this verse to me becomes very significant. ***“Blessed are you .... for flesh and blood”*** — nothing about learning, education or anything else ***“ ... hath revealed it unto you, but my Father which is in heaven”***.

I then I think, is there is a connection between the five qualifications which need to be met. And then I started thinking about 1 Corinthians 1: 30, and is there some similarity between tasting of the heavenly gift, that is to say, tasting of Jesus, and what the apostle Paul said in 1 Corinthians 1:30. He said, ***“But of him are ye in Christ Jesus”***. Of him; that is, our enlightenment. It is God-given, not by flesh and blood. ***“.....Who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption.”*** Now, I see a cumulative progression in these four conditions. ***“.... Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom ...”***. And isn't that a wonderful thing, to be able to understand how Christ Jesus is the wisdom of God. What does it really involve to understand Christ Jesus being the wisdom of God, and therefore being the heavenly gift?

How many criticisms have you heard of the idea of the ransom sacrifice; a perfect man for a perfect man? I have heard numerous oppositions to that concept. Many people think that it is an absolutely ridiculous story. Why should I have to suffer because Adam, millennia ago, ate the fruit? Why should I have to suffer? That's one of the objections. So the whole idea of the ransom sacrifice becomes nonsense to them. And then you say, be that as it may, but that is the truth of the matter, and the issue is, God is going to resurrect the whole world of mankind because Christ is now risen. And they say, that is a ridiculous story as well. I mean, where are all the people going to fit? There won't be room for them. Where's all the food going to come from? Won't there still be wars? All of these are objections which people raise. And so, is it not one of the great benefits and privileges of understanding that Christ is the wisdom of God? And if we are able, if God has given us of his Holy Spirit, if we have been made partakers of the Holy Spirit, to understand that, then we are well on the way to appreciating that Christ, indeed, is the heavenly gift.

And so then we come to the final conclusion of those five conditions. If we had time we could go through the whole five. That is, if we have been enlightened, if we have tasted of the heavenly gift; that is, if we understand that Jesus is in fact the wisdom of God, that the whole creation, groaning and travailing in pain together, as it is now, nevertheless, in the time to come, there is a time of restitution of all things. If we understand that, it is a very great blessing. And then, the next step is being made partakers of the Holy Spirit. And what does that do? Well, the Spirit searches the deep things of God. That's what the Spirit does. And then we taste of the good word of God. We have experienced what a wonderful blessing it will be in the kingdom age when we no longer wrestle against flesh and blood. And then we taste of the powers of the world to come. We can really accept the wonderful conditions which are going to prevail in the kingdom age.

And so when we put all that together, if people fall away from that level of



understanding and personal conviction, are they then not really crucifying to themselves the Son of God afresh? What a terrible thought. But if they do that, can we not see the sense that it is impossible then to renew them again unto repentance? I believe that it is all summed up also in Hebrews chapter 10, verse 26. ***“For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sin.”*** And I suggest to you that there is considerable significance in the word ‘knowledge’ in that verse. ***“... We have received the knowledge of the truth ...”***. And ‘**knowledge**’ there is ‘epignosis’, a compound word. The prefix ‘epi’ means above, superior. Gnosis, of course, is knowledge. So, if we have received a superior knowledge, a deep knowledge, an intricate knowledge — if we have done that, then if we sin wilfully, is it not reasonable that ***“there remaineth no more sacrifice for sin”***.

And in view of that, I think that the three previous verses in Hebrews 10 are a great exhortation to us. ***“Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; .... Let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works: not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.”***  
Hebrews 10:23-25

Brethren, we are privileged to have tasted of the heavenly gift.



## QUESTIONS FROM INTERNET CONTACTS

**PLEASE RECONCILE THE GENESIS ACCOUNT OF CREATION WITH EVOLUTION.**

**Evolution** - It was noted that this is only a theory.

Nobody was there at the beginning of creation and this theory has been promulgated by the “great” minds of men. They have taken some facts and tried to put forward how they believe the world and all things were created.

They have not been able to even show one linking between any of the species, eg, they have not been able to produce an offspring by mating a cow with a horse. There is no viable proof to say that one species evolved from another.

However, they teach this theory as fact.

**Genesis Account** - It states that God is the Creator.

The record of Genesis is not against archaeological records.

The Bible does not claim to be a scientific record, but nowhere does it contravene the known facts of true science. Consider the following passage.

***“He spreads out the northern skies over empty space; he suspends the earth over nothing.  
He wraps up the waters in his clouds, yet the clouds do not burst under their weight.  
He covers the face of the full moon, spreading his clouds over it. He marks out the horizon on the face of the waters for a boundary between light and darkness.”***  
Job 26:7-10

Some ridicule the Genesis account because it states that all things were created in six days. However it does not say that the day was the twenty-four hour day that we know.

***“For a thousand years in your sight are like a day that has just gone by, or like a watch in the night.”***  
Psalm 90:4

***“With the Lord a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day.”***  
1 Peter 3:8

It is noted that Satan has always been on the outlook to entice man away from the truth of God’s word. He enticed Eve in the garden and he continues to use all means to draw true believers away from the Truth of the Bible.

***“Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. Resist him, standing firm in the faith, because you know that your brothers throughout the world are undergoing the same kind of sufferings.”***  
1 Peter 5:8-9

So we see that the theory of evolution is another of the devices that Satan has used to try to lure mankind away from believing in the words of our Heavenly Father. Evolution is only a theory and its adherents can only accept it by having a blind faith.

A Christian is required to believe - to have Faith that God is the Great Creator.

## **THE BIBLE AND CHANGES OF THE MEANING OF WORDS OVER THE YEARS. PLEASE COMMENT.**

We acknowledge that this is a problem and has been one over all ages. People hear or read words and will give a different interpretation. (I recall an exercise that was carried out by a teacher in a school lesson. He gave the first student a short message, this was to be passed on to the next student until it had gone around the whole class. The end result was completely different to the original message. He explained that there were many reasons for this. We only hear what we want to hear, we lack concentration and so say something that we feel is the message.)

Paul in his letters to the Corinthians expressed his concern that they had not

understood the message of the Gospel that he had personally given to them.

***“I appeal to you, brothers, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree with one another so that there may be no divisions among you and that you may be perfectly united in mind and thought. My brothers, some from Chloe’s household have informed me that there are quarrels among you. What I mean is this: One of you says, “I follow Paul”; another, “I follow Apollos”; another, “I follow Cephas”; still another, “I follow Christ.” Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Were you baptized into the name of Paul?”***

1 Corinthians 1:10-13

We have no copies of the original words of the Bible. All records are copies or translations of those original words.

While we acknowledge this fact, we are still in awe of the overriding hand of God in maintaining a coherent record. Words may change in their usage but we are still able to get the undeniable Truth that Our Heavenly Father wishes us to understand for our salvation.

***“Then Jesus cried out, “When a man believes in me, he does not believe in me only, but in the one who sent me. When he looks at me, he sees the one who sent me. I have come into the world as a light, so that no one who believes in me should stay in darkness.”***

John 12:44-46

***“Test everything. Hold on to the good.”***

1 Thessalonians 5:21

This is the advice of Paul, we should test or prove all things that we are told. We need to look at the Scriptures to confirm our understanding and make up our own minds as to the Truth. If a thought does not fit in with the Words of the Bible: That - Jesus Christ came as a man, suffered death on the cross, was resurrected, appeared to the disciples and many others and then ascended into heaven and is now with His Father; then we have to be very careful.

## **PLEASE EXPLAIN EZEKIAL 18: 32**

When seeking to understand a particular passage, it is worth first considering its setting, the writer and the conditions under which it was written, and to whom it was written. In this case the verse in question is the last verse in the prophecy, which could well mean that it is a conclusion or a summing up of the prophecy. The writer was the prophet Ezekiel, and as we see from chapter one of the book, he is doing so in Babylon, during the time of the captivity.

***“Now it came to pass in the thirtieth year, in the fourth month, in the fifth day of the month, as I was among the captives by the river of Chebar, that the heavens were opened, and I saw visions of God. In the fifth day of the month, which was the fifth year of king Jehoiachin’s captivity, The word of the LORD came expressly unto Ezekiel the priest, the son of Buzi, in the land of the Chaldeans by the river Chebar; and the hand of the LORD was***

***there upon him.”***

Ezekiel 1:1-3 (KJV)

Because of the nation's persistence in worshipping idols, God has used Nebuchadnezzar to punish them, not only the evil doers, but also those who have continued to worship God. Ezekiel is one example, Daniel another, also the three who refused to worship Nebuchadnezzar's image that he had set up. They all continued the true worship of God, none of them deserved to be taken captive, but because the nation had sinned all were treated the same way.

The nation only had itself to blame, they knew the consequence of idol worship; Moses had laid down the penalty in the book of Exodus.

***“Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the LORD thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me;”***

Exodus 20:5 (KJV)

This is the reason why not only the idol worshipper, were included in the captivity, but also those who had never participated in the practice.

The book of Lamentations was also written during the time of the captivity, and it also has something to say on the matter. Lamentations, it is thought, was written by the prophet Jeremiah, and is a lament over the destruction of Jerusalem, not only the city but the temple also. When Jerusalem was destroyed and the Temple desecrated, the people knew that God had given them over to the enemy. God had rejected them because of their sin and corruption. Many who had never worshiped idols knew that the fault was not theirs, but that of their forefathers, and they were suffering for what others had done. The threat God expressed in Exodus He now carried out. For this reason Jeremiah was moved to write the words we find in chapter five.

***“Our fathers have sinned, and are not; and we have borne their iniquities”.***

Lamentations 5:7 (KJV)

To understand the verse in question in Ezekiel it is necessary to understand God's actions in bringing about the captivity, that it was a fulfilment of the prophecy in Exodus, and that many who had never done wrong, suffered.

The opening verses of chapter eighteen of Ezekiel, which are part of the context of the verse under consideration, contain a question.

***“The word of the LORD came unto me again, saying, <sup>2</sup> What mean ye, that ye use this proverb concerning the land of Israel, saying, The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge?”***

Ezekiel 18:1-2 (KJV)

From the point of view of those in the captivity, the reason that they have used the proverb is that it expresses the reason why they are in the situation

that they find themselves in. The expression “*The fathers have eaten sour grapes*” is their way of acknowledging that their forefathers have worshiped idols. With the second part of the expression “*and the children’s teeth are set on edge?*” they are saying that they are the ones suffering for the actions of the forefathers, as a consequence of the Exodus prophecy.

The prophet Jeremiah also uses the same proverb at about the same time, with the same understanding, but in Jerusalem, not Babylon.

The following verses show that God is now looking for repentance in His people. If they turn from the sins they have committed, then their transgressions shall not be mentioned. God will forgive past transgressions for the sake of the repentance. However, if one who has been righteous turns to iniquity, that one will be punished, the previous righteousness that he had done will not count.

***“But if the wicked will turn from all his sins that he hath committed, and keep all my statutes, and do that which is lawful and right, he shall surely live, he shall not die. All his transgressions that he hath committed, they shall not be mentioned unto him: in his righteousness that he hath done he shall live. Have I any pleasure at all that the wicked should die? saith the Lord GOD: and not that he should return from his ways, and live? But when the righteous turneth away from his righteousness, and committeth iniquity, and doeth according to all the abominations that the wicked man doeth, shall he live? All his righteousness that he hath done shall not be mentioned: in his trespass that he hath trespassed, and in his sin that he hath sinned, in them shall he die. Yet ye say, The way of the Lord is not equal. Hear now, O house of Israel; Is not my way equal? are not your ways unequal? When a righteous man turneth away from his righteousness, and committeth iniquity, and dieth in them; for his iniquity that he hath done shall he die. Again, when the wicked man turneth away from his wickedness that he hath committed, and doeth that which is lawful and right, he shall save his soul alive. Because he considereth, and turneth away from all his transgressions that he hath committed, he shall surely live, he shall not die. Yet saith the house of Israel, The way of the Lord is not equal. O house of Israel, are not my ways equal? are not your ways unequal?”***  
Ezekiel 18:21-29 (KJV)

God is telling the people of Israel that He will no longer visit the, *iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation*, the prophecy in Exodus no longer applies. God will judge each person according to his own deeds. God is looking for people to repent and turn from their transgressions. The repentant person will not be punished.

***“Therefore I will judge you, O house of Israel, every one according to his ways, saith the Lord GOD. Repent, and turn yourselves from all your transgressions; so iniquity shall not be your ruin.”***<sup>31</sup> ***Cast away from you all***

***your transgressions, whereby ye have transgressed; and make you a new heart and a new spirit: for why will ye die, O house of Israel?"***

Ezekiel 18:30-31 (KJV)

There are four things in this paragraph that God wishes His people would do.

Repent.

Turn from all transgressions.

Cast away all transgressions

Make a new heart and a new spirit.

God is showing Himself as He is, a loving creator who is concerned for His creation. As a righteous judge God cannot condone evil, and it must be punished, and for this reason He may be seen as cruel and vindictive. Not so. God takes pleasure in repentance. He judges those who will not repent, because He must, but His preference is for all to repent of evil, and turn to Him.

This brings us to the verse that is in question.

***"For I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, saith the Lord GOD: wherefore turn yourselves, and live ye."***

Ezekiel 18:32 (KJV)

This verse is the conclusion to the prophecy; God takes no pleasure in the death of any of His people. He is however a righteous judge and must punish evil; His preference is for people to turn to Him and repent.

What was true in the Old Testament, is true in the New as we see in the following verse.

***"The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance."*** 2 Peter 3:9 (KJV)

## **THE NEW COVENANT ADVOCATES**

We are pleased to advise that the work of Brother and Sister Henninges, who produced the New Covenant Advocates over many years, have now been put into a digital format.

The issues of the "Advocates" from 1909 to 1944 were first photocopied by our dear friend, Gilbert Rice. The efforts of Jim Penton is acknowledged in following up with David and Robin Rice to locate the photocopies and having them passed on to Jeff Mezera in Aurora, Illinois. He has scanned and edited them into the electronic format.

## **A NEW BOOK ON GALATIANS**

We are pleased to advise that Russell Collins has produced another book. This one it is titled **“Notes on Paul’s Letter to the Galatians”**.

This is an in depth study of the Apostle Paul’s letter to the Church in Galatia and is one of a group of three that concentrates on the relationship of the Jews and Gentiles to the Church of Jesus Christ.

The thoughts are intended to encourage the reader to think carefully about the Apostle’s inspired words and understand their significance to all Christians today.

The Book is full of instructions, exhortations and words of advice which are still relevant to the life of Christians now in the twenty-first century.

## OLDER PUBLICATIONS

With the passage of time and continuing requests we have to report that stocks of some of our older publications are getting very low and in some cases we have no copies left.

The following books are now out of print:

Comparisons and Contrasts

The Church and Its Ceremonies

Four of the books were originally produced as editions of the New Covenant Advocates and are available from that source. These are:

The New Era	(November, 1939. Vol 27 No.4)
One God, One Lord, One Spirit	(July 1935, Vol 27 No .4)
Armageddon	(June, 1934, Vol 26 No. 3)
Seeing the Signs	(June, 1938, Vol 30 No, 3)

## MEMORIAL

The date for the annual observance of the memorial of our Lord's death, in accordance with the date corresponding to the calendar used by the Jews in our Lord's day, will be **Friday, 6th April, 2012**, after sunset.

Those who love the Lord Jesus and wish to honour Him, will keep this date in mind in obedience to His command:

***"This do in remembrance of me." Luke 22:19.***

We have arranged to hold our service during our Conference at Chestnut Hill.

An invitation is extended to all to attend.

We are now getting a few of our older publications into the pdf format in addition to the New Covenant Advocates. These include:

Bible Talks for Heart and Mind  
Christ's Promised Return  
The Church and Its Ceremonies

We are pleased that some people have scanned a few of the publications into the electronic format. The book **"Christ's Promised Return"** has been scanned by Roland Rodriguez and has now been produced as a pdf file. We appreciate his effort in producing this work.

The book "Church and Its Ceremonies" also has been scanned to pdf format and we are currently working on transferring it to a format that may be printed as a book. We will let you know when the book is available.

On a recent search of the internet I found that "Bible Talks for Heart and Mind" has been copied from a book supplied by Mr Henninges to the Cornell University in the USA and is in the pdf electronic format, as such it may be copied to your own computer.

As well as only a few copies of "Bible Talks" being available, "The New Era" is also in short supply, however it is in an edition of "The Advocates" - November, 1939 Vol 27 No. 4.

We would be pleased to hear from anyone who knows of any other of our books that have been put into the electronic format.

For a copy of any of our Books or in pdf format, please contact the Editor.

Postal: E H Shallcross, 54 Doynton Parade, Mount Waverley,  
Victoria, 3149. Australia

Email: ehshallcross@iprimus.com.au

## TRANSLATION

We recently had a request for our books in the French language. We are fortunate that through a contact in France we now have the book "The Hope of Mankind" available in French. We thank Lameth Gimel for their assistance in translating this book.

## GIFTS THAT HAVE PASSED AWAY

Paper given by Paul Brownlow at the 2011 Conference  
(1 Corinthians 13:8-12)

Given the important role played by the miraculous Holy Spirit in the establishment and sustaining of the early Church, and the attention given to it



by the New Testament writers, particularly Paul, it is remarkable that there is only one brief passage of scripture that directly predicted the disappearance of the miraculous gifts. While a circumstantial case for limiting the presence of the gifts to the lifespan of the apostles can be constructed from Christ's words in John's Gospel concerning the Comforter, and relevant parts of the Book of Acts, it is 1 Corinthians 13 that places this initial phase of the Gospel age in perspective. My designated text is 1 Corinthians 13:8, to which I have added verses 9 to 12 because they complete what is, in my opinion, a single statement, and I would like to use this opportunity to look closely at the structure and meaning of this unique and intriguing scripture.

Chapters 12 to 14 of First Corinthians are completely devoted to the miraculous gifts of the Spirit. In chapter 12 Paul listed a number of gifts and explained the logic and intent behind God's distribution of them among the congregation; however, in the final words of the chapter the fact began to emerge that the gifts were not an end in themselves:

***“But desire earnestly the greater gifts. And a still more excellent way shew I unto you.”***  
1 Corinthians 12:31 (RV)

Then begins that beautiful and well-known passage:

***“If I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am become sounding brass, or a clanging cymbal.  
And if I have the gift of prophecy, and know all mysteries and all knowledge; and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing.”***  
1 Corinthians 13:1,2 (RV)

This initial comparison places the miraculous gifts in perspective beside love, the “more excellent way”. Verses 3 to 7 expound the qualities of love, then in verse 8 the text we wish to consider begins, and here Paul made a further contrast between the enduring nature of love, and the temporary presence of the miraculous gifts.

***“Love never faileth: but whether there be prophecies, they shall be done away; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall be done away.”***  
1 Corinthians 13:8(RV)

In other words, the miraculous gifts, representatively prophecy, knowledge and tongues (or, languages), would eventually be withdrawn. I think Paul singled out these three not because they alone would cease, but because of their prominence in the Church; in fact, his instructions to the Corinthians on the effective use of these particular gifts occupy the whole of the following chapter.

### **The Gift of Tongues**

It is in 1 Corinthians 14 that Paul revealed the true significance of the gift of tongues. It was a strange gift, the possessor praising God or praying in a

foreign language, but neither composing the utterance himself nor understanding what he said. Paul had learned that some in the Corinthian church were exercising this gift in an ostentatious and self-serving way, and pointed out to them that what they said was of no value unless the hearers understood the particular language being spoken. If no one present was able to translate, Paul's instruction was that the gift should not be used. He then, quoting Isaiah 28, declaring that the tongues were principally intended as a sign to the Jews.

***“Brethren, do not be children in understanding; however, in malice be babes, but in understanding be mature.”<sup>21</sup> In the law it is written: “With men of other tongues and other lips I will speak to this people; And yet, for all that, they will not hear Me,” says the Lord.”*** 1 Corinthians 14:21,22

No other purpose is connected with this particular gift is given in Scripture.

How the tongues functioned as a sign may possibly be gleaned from events on the day of Pentecost in Acts 2, but my reason for highlighting this association between the gift of tongues and Israel is a chronological one. If it was a sign to the Jews, then that tends to tie it to the period during which Israel received preference in the Gospel ministry. The Apostles' first duty was to Israel (Acts 13:46), and even though Paul was appointed “the apostle of the Gentiles” (Rom.11:13), he was obliged to preach “to the Jew first, and also to the Greek” (Rom.1:16). So the gift of tongues was most relevant to the Apostolic era, which is a clue also to the duration of the rest of the miraculous gifts of the Spirit.

### **Partial and Complete.**

***“For we know in part, and we prophesy in part: but when that which is perfect is come, that which is in part shall be done away.”***

1 Corinthians 13:9,10 (RV)

The Greek word *meros* [Strong #3313], translated ‘part’, means a ‘division’, or ‘share’, while the word translated ‘perfect’, the Greek *teleios* [#5046], means ‘complete’. The contrast between ‘part’ and ‘perfect’ is therefore one of degree only. “That which is perfect” was not meant to imply something new and different that would replace knowledge and prophecy, but simply the full form of that which had previously been “in part”, or divided up. Paul was forecasting a time when the Church would be in full and permanent possession of the knowledge and prophecy that was necessary to it. When that time came, then “that which is in part”, that is, the miraculous communication of God’s word to the Church, would cease, its work fulfilled.

The apostles were the principal channel of truth to the Church (Acts 20:20,27; 1 Cor.2:6-13; Eph.3:3-5), and even among his peers Paul stood out for the knowledge and revelation that was given to him by Christ, which was of course commensurate with the enormous responsibility that he bore. Paul founded the church in Corinth during his second missionary journey and

initially spent eighteen months there (Acts 18:11). He would no doubt have imparted a great deal to them during his time with them, but later on through his letters he continued to add to their knowledge. Just a page or two on from the passage we are considering, 1 Corinthians 15 contains the most comprehensive prophecy of the resurrection in the New Testament: “Behold, I tell you a mystery”, Paul wrote (vs. 51), which is to say, ‘I am showing something to you which has hitherto been hidden’. And this gradual unveiling continued through the time of the Apostles until the Revelation to John, the last of the Twelve, was complete.

### **The Gift of Tongues Omitted.**

***“For we know in part, and we prophesy in part: but when that which is perfect is come, that which is in part shall be done away.”***

We notice that Paul named only prophecy and knowledge as being “in part” or incomplete at that time. In fact, they are the only gifts to which the terms ‘in part’ and ‘complete’ could properly be applied. While the gift of tongues was mentioned in verse 8, it has been omitted here because, like other miraculous signs, it would leave no enduring legacy; it would have no part in “that which is perfect”.

### **The Child and the Man.**

***“When I was a child, I spake as a child, I felt as a child, I thought as a child: now that I am become a man, I have put away childish things.”***

1 Corinthians 13:11 (RV)

Paul was a prolific user of metaphor, and in this verse he has expanded on the thought contained in verses 9 and 10, but using symbolic language. ***“When I was a child, I spake as a child, I felt as a child, I thought as a child”***, illustrates the first part of verse 9, ***“for we know in part, and we prophesy in part”***. The tenses do not agree, but that is simply due to Paul’s choice of metaphor. Childhood for Paul was long gone, but that does not imply that what this childhood condition symbolised, which was the Church’s incomplete state of knowledge and prophecy, was then past. Similarly, “now that I am become a man, I have put away childish things”, while preserving the continuity of the metaphor, doesn’t mean that “that which is perfect” had already arrived.

This is a picture, a metaphorical illustration that the gifts of the Spirit belonged to a temporary, developmental stage that the Church was going through, a kind of childhood, a period of progressive revelation of the word of God. However, at some point, like the child coming to maturity, the process would be complete, and the things appropriate to childhood would be relinquished.

It is important to understand that these verses relate to the miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit as an institution in the Church. This was not directed at individual believers, as though their particular gift would be “done away” when he or she attained a certain level of spiritual maturity. Each gift was intended for the benefit of the whole congregation, and the gifts functioned as a whole, complementing one another, as Paul’s analogy in chapter 12 to the various parts of a human body shows. The degree of miraculous assistance that the Apostolic Church received was very high, and the Church’s dependence upon it cannot be overestimated. Even the pastoral and administrative hierarchy was set in place by the Holy Spirit (Eph. 4:7-16; Rom.12:3-8), so that the change which Paul predicted was a very consequential one.

### **A Series of Contrasts**

Before going further, let us briefly review the pattern established in the previous verses. In 9 and 10, Paul contrasted the then prevailing situation with the change that was to come:

***“For we know in part, and we prophesy in part: (the Church in Paul’s day, dependent upon the miraculous Holy Spirit) but when that which is perfect is come, that which is in part shall be done away.”*** [the post-Apostolic Church, supported by the completed revelation of God’s word]

Then in verse 11 he repeated the contrast, likening this change in the Church to the development of a child into an adult:

***“When I was a child, I spake as a child, I felt as a child, I thought as a child: (the young Church, requiring miraculous assistance) now that I am become a man, I have put away childish things.”*** (the Church mature and established: independent of miraculous gifts)

Now we come to verse 12, perhaps the most challenging in this series of contrasts:

***“for now we see in a mirror, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as I also have been known.”***

This closely follows the pattern of the previous three verses, yet it is often interpreted as though Paul had changed the subject at this point. The apostle Peter said that Paul had written ***“some things hard to be understood”*** (2 Peter 3:16), and while that is no doubt true, Paul’s writing is carefully worded and laid out. His explanations are detailed and they follow logical progressions. For Paul to introduce something new here in verse 12, veiled in symbolic language and unrelated to the preceding verses, would be most uncharacteristic. My contention is that if we abandon the context at this point, that context being the Church’s future transition from knowledge in part and prophecy in part to complete knowledge and prophecy, then verse 12 becomes not just “hard to be understood”, it becomes virtually impossible

to understand.

I think we have to trust Paul here. So let's assume that 1 Corinthians 13:9 to 12 is connected by a single theme, and look optimistically at the first part of verse 12:

***“for now we see in a mirror, darkly; but then face to face:”***

This of course is another metaphor, using symbols to contrast the limited state of the Church's knowledge at the time Paul was writing, with a future in which that limitation would be removed. Translators have differed over the meaning of the Greek word *esoptron*, which is rendered 'glass' in the King James Version, but 'mirror' in most later versions. The Diaglott stays with 'glass' and substantiates the choice with this footnote:

“The *esoptrou* is to be understood of some of those transparent substances, which the ancients, in the then imperfect state of the arts, used in their windows; such as, thin plates of horn, transparent stone, ill-prepared glass, and such like; through which they saw, indeed, the objects without, but obscurely. – *Bloomfield.*”

I am inclined to think that the Diaglott and the King James Version are correct, for a couple of reasons. The primary meaning of the Greek preposition *dia* [#1223] is 'through', rather than 'in', and the words *en ainigmati* [#1722, #135], translated 'darkly', mean 'in obscurity'. Not only is a mirror a poor illustration of something which obscures one's view, but it introduces the idea of reflection, as in 2 Corinthians 3:18 where the context is quite different. The result is that the connection with the previous verses is lost.

What I believe Paul was saying was that there was an element of indistinctness or obscurity in the knowledge and prophecy among the Church at that time, which would be removed when the Gospel age revelation of God's word was complete.

### **Personal Pronouns.**

Like the change of tense in verse 11, I suggest that the different personal pronouns should not be taken into account. Paul began in verse 9 in the first person plural: ***“we know in part, and we prophesy in part”***; then changed to the singular: ***“When I was a child, I spake as a child”***; moving back to the plural in the first part of verse 12: ***“Now we see through a glass, darkly”***, etc. I think this has to be accepted as simply a feature of Paul's writing style, and we need to keep in mind that the prophecy is impersonal; it is speaking of the Church as a whole, and not of individual church members.

### **“Then shall I know..”**

The second half of verse 12 again contrasts “now” with “then”, but is not a

metaphor.

***“...now I know in part; but then shall I know even as I also have been known.”***

***“Now I know in part”*** is essentially a repetition of the first clause of verse 9, reassuring us that the same line of thought has been continued into this verse. This is now a fourth contrast between the imperfect state of knowledge and prophecy under the regime of the miraculous gifts, and a future completion of Divine revelation to the Church.

***“... but then shall I know even as I also have been known.”***

This apparently superlative knowledge has often been seen as something beyond the scope of the Gospel age, but the pattern established in the preceding verses, to which the first half of this verse conforms, tells us that it is not. Let us look again at the equivalent parts from each of Paul’s contrasts:

**A**

“For we know in part, and we prophesy in part...”

“When I was a child, I spake as a child, I felt as a child, I thought as a child...”

“Now we see through a glass, darkly...”

“now I know in part...”

**B**

“..but when that which is perfect is come, that which is in part shall be done away”

“...now that I am become a man, I have put away childish things”

“...but then face to face”

“...then shall I know even as I also have been known”

I have stressed the view, that even though Paul used the personal pronoun, ‘I’, in this final verse, this was a generalisation about the Church's future. While those of Paul’s day did know in part and prophesy in part, Paul himself did not live to see the transition take place and neither I suspect did most of those in the Corinthian church at the time this was written. If, for the purpose of argument, we substitute ‘the Church’ for the personal pronoun “I” in the final clause, it would read, “but then shall the Church know even as the Church also has been known”.

I suggest that this brings us closer to Paul’s meaning. In what way had the Church been known.

***“...ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all peoples: for all the earth is mine: and ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy***

***nation.”***

Exodus 19:5,6 (KJV)

***“Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world “***

Matthew 25:34 (RV)

***“...and that he might make known the riches of his glory upon vessels of mercy, which he afore prepared unto glory”***

Romans 9:23 (RV)

***“but we speak God’s wisdom in a mystery, even the wisdom that hath been hidden, which God foreordained before the worlds unto our glory”***

1 Corinthians 2:7 (RV)

***“even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world”***

Ephesians 1:4(RV)

It can be seen that God knew the Church long beforehand. Not only did He appoint them a place in His plan, He also knew the qualities that they would need to acquire in order to occupy that place:

***“For whom he foreknew, he also foreordained to be conformed to the image of his Son.”***

Romans 8:29 (RV)

A teaching hierarchy empowered by the Holy Spirit was established under the leadership of the apostles, for the express purpose of equipping the Church to fulfil its future role:

***And he gave some to be apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers;***

***for the perfecting of the saints, unto the work of ministering, unto the building up of the body of Christ:***

***till we all attain unto the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a full-grown man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ:***

***that we may be no longer children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, in craftiness, after the wiles of error;***

***but speaking truth in love, may grow up in all things into him, which is the head, even Christ;***

***from whom all the body fitly framed and knit together through that which every joint supplieth, according to the working in due measure of each several part, maketh the increase of the body unto the building up of itself in love.***

Ephesians 4:11-16

This description corresponds with the main points of Paul's exposition in 1 Corinthians 12 to 14 and is an explicit statement of the overall purpose of the spiritual gifts within the Church, which was to provide a basis of knowledge upon which a character of godliness could be cultivated in the followers of

Christ. Essential to this "building up" is a comprehensive awareness of God's plan, and of the Church's intended part in that plan, and it is perhaps in this sense that the Church came to "know", as it had been known by God. The goal of Christlikeness would remain throughout the age, but the inspired utterances and the miracles that bore witness to the truth would eventually cease, leaving as their legacy the word of God recorded in the writings of the Apostles.



## ANNUAL AUTUMN CONFERENCE - 2012

We are pleased to advise that we have arranged for our 2012 Autumn Conference to again be held at the Chestnut Hill Conference Lodge in Kallista from **Friday, 6th to Monday, 9th April.**

**Conference Theme: RISEN WITH CHRIST**

**Conference Text:**      ***"If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God."*** Colossians 3:1

It is intended that the papers to be given will cover topics such as:

The Need for a New Life  
Risen with Christ  
The New Life in Christ  
Resurrection Promises  
Risen from the Dead  
An Exposition of Philippians 3  
The New Life for All  
The Uniqueness of the New Life

As well as the talks there will be time allocated for Bible study, devotional sessions and classes for the children. Also there will be free time to meet with friends or just meditate in the beautiful gardens.

The time for the observance of the Memorial Supper falls within the time of the Conference and we have made the necessary arrangements to include it in our program.

The venue is set in six acres of gardens in a picturesque part of the "Dandenongs". A large proportion of the rooms have ensuite facilities



and two smaller areas have shared facilities. All linen is supplied so you only need to bring towels and toiletries. There is a limit of about forty guests, which includes day visitors, so we need to have your booking well in advance of the Conference date.

We have access to the facilities of the Centre on Friday morning, 6th April from 9 am. Allowing for check in, we expect to commence our program after morning tea.

Although we requested that applications to attend be made prior to now we do have a few vacancies if you wish to attend please contact us urgently to secure your booking.

An application form is available for any wishing to attend. As the accommodation at Chestnut Hill is limited your early response is needed to assure your place at our Conference. Please contact me if you would like more details. A Deposit should accompany your application and we request that the balance be paid by the 21st March, 2012.

The tariff is \$407.00 per person (shared), which covers accommodation and all meals. Single accommodation is available at the same price, however it is subject to availability.

The day visitor charge is \$25.00 per person (which includes one meal) and \$45.00 for two meals.

**Overseas Visitors :** We have had visitors from overseas at previous Conferences and anyone who is considering coming to Australia would be very welcome to attend.

We understand that there may be some who need financial assistance to attend and they can be catered for through our travellers fund. Anyone needing assistance should contact me. All such requests will be treated in a confidential manner.

If you would like any further information please contact me.

Harry Shallcross.

Telephone : (03) 9802 3771

email : ehshallcross@iprimus.com.au



## WHERE CAN YOU LOOK FOR COMFORT AT THIS TIME IN THE HISTORY OF MAN?

The whole world is ravaged by the effects of sin.

Atrocities are carried out in and by Christian, Jewish and Islamic communities, all in the name of God.

How this must grieve our Heavenly Father to see the continued downward trend of the human race.

We are warned of "wickedness in high places" and this is all too evident with reports in the news of the illegal and immoral acts of those in positions of trust and high office, in religious, financial and governmental organisations.

Surely the time is coming soon when God will say "Enough!"

He will bring about the end of this evil world and set up His Son, Jesus Christ, as the righteous Ruler.

That will be the time for which Jesus taught His disciples to pray.

***"Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done in earth."***

***"Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power.***

***Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes.***

***For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.***

***Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand."***

Ephesians 6:10-13 (NIV)

*"Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done in earth."*

