

# Michael & Sylvia Penny in Australia and New Zealand September and October 2010

## Australia – New South Wales

We left home at 8.00 a.m. on Sunday and our son drove us to Heathrow airport. Some 27 hours later we were met at Sydney airport by Peter and Anne Ward and it was 8.00 p.m. their time. We spent an enjoyable evening reminiscing over our previous visit four years ago before retiring for the night.

The next day we were taken to Clem and Julie Milgate's in Thornton to stay with them for a few days and to complete our recover from jet lag. On Wednesday morning we went to Lorn, not to take a Bible Study but to listen to an excellent one given by David Tavender on Isaiah 45. The next morning we went to Glendale, to Koorong Christian Bookshop, which was the biggest and best we have seen outside of the USA. That evening Mike gave a study on the *Three Divisions of the Old Testament and the Three Divisions of the New*. Friday was a relaxing day with a walk around the lovely Lake Macquire and early Saturday morning we left for Camp Toukley, for the annual conference of the Berean Bible Fellowship of Australia (BBFA), and Julie Milgate is its treasurer.

There Mike gave a series of studies on the letter of James. The first study on the Saturday was on *James, the Man* and the effect Christ's resurrection had on him. The next was on the date of writing and background of the letter, where it was suggested that the letter of James may have been *the* first New Testament document written. The final two studies that day were a verse by verse exposition of James chapter 1. On Saturday there was the AGM of the BBFA, followed by three more studies on James chapters 2, 3 and 4.

On the Saturday evening Mike ran a family evening with songs for children and adults, and puzzles for both, all centred around the theme *Who is Jesus?* On the Monday morning there were two more studies on the difficult James chapter 5, and the whole weekend was brought to a close by a short study giving a summary of *James: The Man and the Letter*. (These studies are available of CDs or an MP3 from [www.obt.org.uk](http://www.obt.org.uk) )



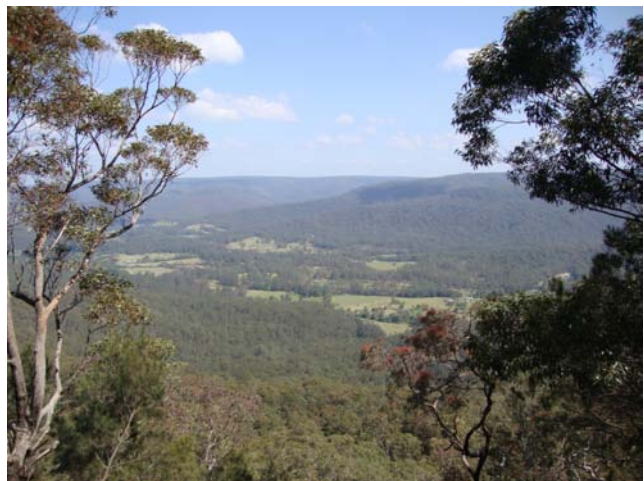
After lunch everyone departed and we were driven to Sydney, to again stay with Peter and Anne Ward. There Mike spoke at St. Mary's Anglican Church in Cabarita on the subject of *Acquiring the Mind of Christ*.

Wednesday was relatively free and we went into Sydney on the catamaran down the Parramatta River, visiting The Rocks (the oldest area of the city), the iconic Sydney Harbour Bridge (overlooking the even more iconic Sydney Opera House), viewing the suburbs and surrounding area from the City Tower, and walking through the Royal Botanic Gardens which, in the Australian spring, were in full bloom with beautiful blossoms and flowers.

A two hour drive took us back up to the Newcastle area to stay with David and Janelle Tavender. David is the President of the BBFA, the organisation which sponsored the speaking tour of Australia and New Zealand, and Janelle is its secretary. Mike took at Study at Edgeworth on the Thursday evening on *Paul's Changed Attitude*. On the Friday morning we had a phone call from Paul Catling of Radio 101FM in Brisbane who had quite a discussion with Mike and said he would be advertising the meetings in the Brisbane area on his Sunday evening radio program, and planned to be at the Friday evening meetings in that area.

Later we went into the Watagans National Park, part of the Great Divide. There we walked through a forest of gum trees to Gap Creek Falls and back to a picnic area where we were joined by a tame wild wallaby that came within three feet of us, tempted by a stream of cashew and macadamia nuts.

On the Saturday there was a day's conference at Thornton Salvation Army on *The Will of God in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, a very important issue for all Christians in all parts of the world, and those who attended were most appreciative. We returned the next day for the Sunday morning service where Mike gave the sermon, after which we went to stay with Athol and Eveline Walter. They took us to see John Hutton, a former president of the BBFA, now in a home suffering from motor-neurone disease and for whom prayer would be much appreciated.



Later we enjoyed a walk along Newcastle's break-water where we witnessed a spectacular sunset. Following the evening meal, Sylvia took a study giving an overview of the book of Job and followed through two of its main themes; patience (endurance and perseverance) and suffering.

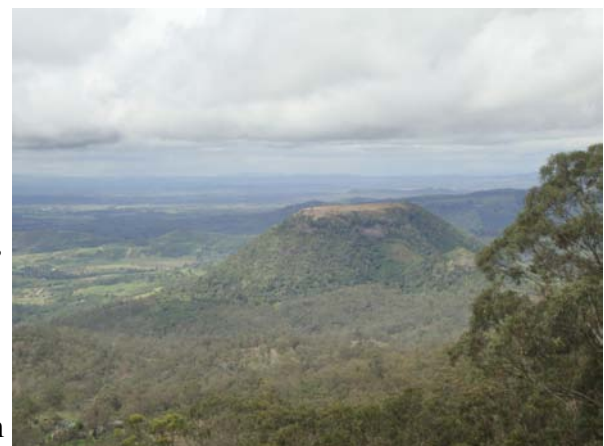
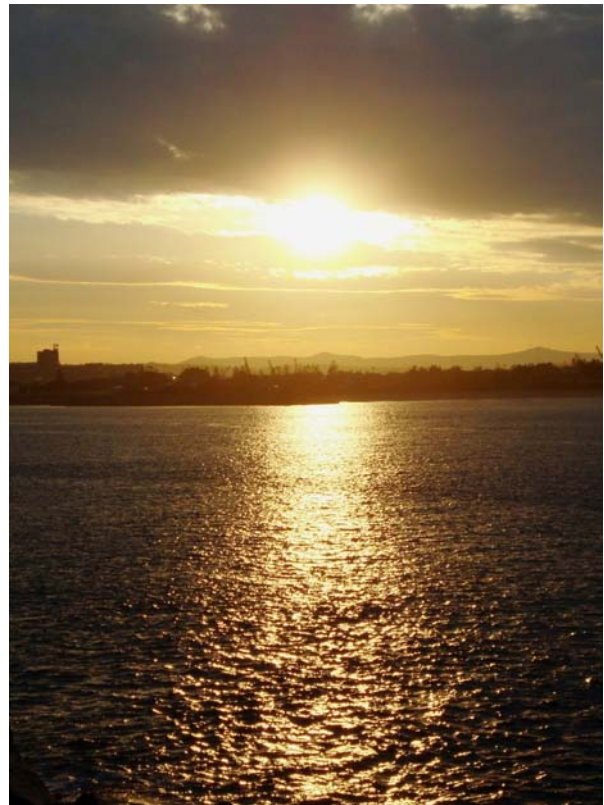
The next day we drove down to the Gosford area where we had an enjoyable afternoon at Terrigal, one of Australia's lovely beaches. There the phone went and it was another radio station and Mike did a phone interview there and then, surrounded by sun-bathing people eating ice creams. Later we continued the journey to Kincumber for the last study in New South Wales, where Mike gave an overview of the New Testament.

## Queensland

The next morning we were on the plane to Brisbane, where we were met by Mary and Rom Harper, with whom we stayed for a few days. We visited the massive Wivenhoe Dam, built after the destructive floods of 1974 which destroyed much of Brisbane. It serves to control the Brisbane River and protect the city from another such catastrophe while, at the same time, being a reservoir. We had a lovely picnic in one of the beautiful areas on its banks.

That evening we went to Sunnybank, a suburb on the south of Brisbane, where we had two studies on *Approaching the Bible Systematically*. On the Saturday morning we went west to Toowoomba, a city in the mountains which form part of the Great Divide which stretches down the east coast of Australia from northern Queensland down to Victoria. There we first visited the Queen's Park Gardens, which had just finished its spring flower show, and Picnic Point lookout point, overlooking Table Top Mountain. After lunch we had an afternoon conference on *Understanding Paul and his Letters*, which generated many questions.

On the Sunday afternoon it was down to Nerang, south of Brisbane, part of the sun-kissed Gold Coast, except for us it rained all day! There we had a conference on *The Will of God in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*. On Monday evening it we went to New Beith Forest, part of Greenbank south west of Brisbane, for an evening study on *Unity in Christ*. All the meetings in this area had been organised by Frank Haegler who is vice-president of the BBFA.



## Tasmania

On Tuesday morning it was a 4.00 a.m. breakfast, followed by a drive to the airport to catch the 7.30 a.m. plane to Tasmania. Arriving at Brisbane airport by 6.30 we soon discovered a fault had developed on the plane's hydraulic system when it landed and it took them nearly five hours to repair the landing gear. We eventually arrived in Launceston in Tasmania amidst glorious afternoon sunshine and Kirsty Young met us and drove us to Penquin, to stay with Grace and David Spicer and their family. We had an informal study at Kirsty Young's that evening on the origin of evil and then a couple of days relaxation visiting parts of northern Tasmania, including a coastal path, a Emu rhododendron garden where the flowers were in full bloom, a walk through a tree fern forest, a cheese factory and, Sylvia's favourite, a chocolate factory.

On the Friday evening we had two studies on *How the Bible came to us*, which dealt with such issues as who wrote it, when was it written, how do we know it is true? We also discussed what was the value of the Apocrypha and other Jewish writings, as well as the writings of other early Christians. Between the two meetings we enjoyed fellowship over a meal, and afterwards we drove to Burnie, another town on the north coast of Tasmania, which has built nesting 'shelters' for Fairy Penguins. There, in the red flashlights, we saw a number of these intriguing little birds.

The Saturday meetings gave an introduction to applying right division to the whole Bible, and on the Sunday right division was applied in detail to the New Testament.

## New Zealand

On Monday afternoon we left Tasmania and Australia, flying to Auckland in New Zealand, where we were met by Graeme Abbott (the OBT agent for New Zealand) and his wife Maree, with whom we were to stay for most of our time in New Zealand. On Tuesday evening we had a fellowship time with the *Search and See* group in which Mike gave them the history and an update on the work of the OBT.

On Wednesday morning Mike and Graeme were up very early, as Mike was scheduled to appear on Rhema Radio in Auckland at 10.00 a.m.; Rhema is an associate of UCB and is the largest Christian Broadcaster in New Zealand. Leaving the Hamilton area at 7.00 a.m. they arrived in good time and for the hour long programme in which Mike answered questions on the Bible from callers who telephoned in from all parts of New Zealand. This was the first time Rhema radio had done anything like this for over 20 years and the first time the programme host, Peter Shaw, and the programme producer had been involved in such an interactive production. As it was Mike did well fielding questions from Genesis to Revelation, with no notice of what was coming and no time to look up the references. If you would like to hear this programme a copy is available from the OBT website ([www.obt.org.uk](http://www.obt.org.uk)).



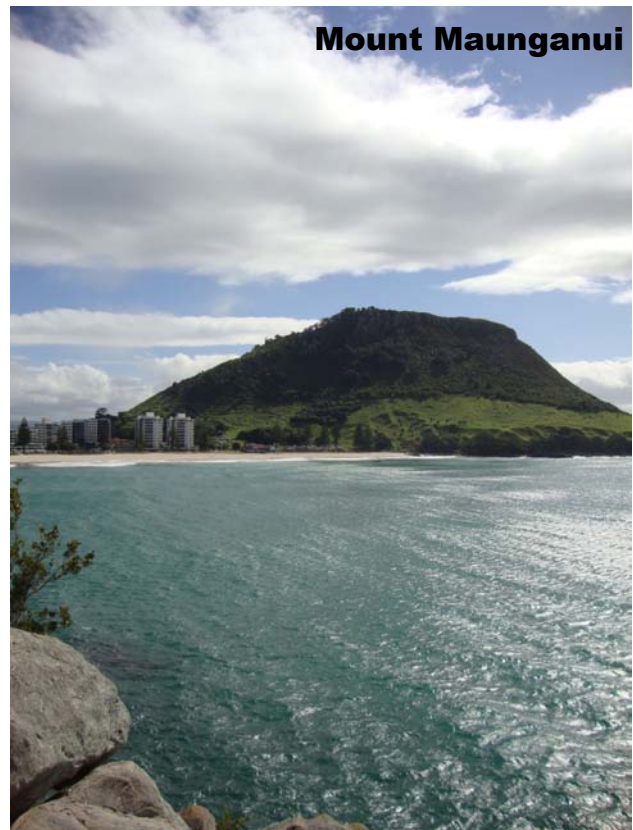
## Lake Taupo



Wednesday and Thursday evenings Mike gave two studies to the *Search and See* group with the title *Who is Jesus?* During the day on the Thursday we visited the famous Waitomo Glowworm Caves, and on the Friday went down to beautiful Lake Taupo, the largest inland lake in Australasia and possibly the largest in the world formed in the crater of an extinct volcano. It nestles amongst the mountains of New Zealand's north island and the back drop to our view was the snow covered peaks of Mt Tongariro (1968 m) and Mt Ngauruhoe (2287 m).

The centre for activity for the weekend was Fairfield Baptist Church in Hamilton. On the Friday evening Mike gave a study on the will of God in the Old Testament for the ordinary Israelites; i.e. those who were not judges, or kings or prophets. This was followed by three studies on the Saturday; the first two considered the will of God for Jewish and Gentile Christians in New Testament times, looking at what was common and what was different. The last study applied what we had learnt to the situation of 21<sup>st</sup> Century Christians living in a secular society.

## Mount Maunganui



During the Sunday morning service at Fairfield Baptist Church Mike gave a short account of the history and work of the Open Bible Trust, and then gave the sermon, a study on the opening eighteen verses of Paul's letter to the Philippians.

After lunch we drove to Mount Maunganui in the beautiful Bay of Plenty, where we enjoyed a 48 hour break with Graeme and Maree Abbott. We returned to the Hamilton area on Tuesday afternoon and for the next four evenings Mike gave four studies dealing with *A systematic Approach to Prophecy*, which generated a lot of questions. Also, on the Thursday, we moved to stay with Steven and Rosalie Griffiths. Steven's father, Val Griffiths, wrote *My Search for Truth* which is published by the OBT.

We experienced some disappointing weather throughout our trip but during the last four days in New Zealand there was not a cloud in the sky. On the Friday we enjoyed some exercise walking through the Karangahake Gorge, part of the Kaimai-Mamaku Forest Park. There were no studies on our last Saturday in New Zealand as it was the Labour Day weekend holiday. We drove to Auckland to visit the Botanical Gardens and then took in a Harbour Cruise, followed by a drive round the Auckland beaches. On the Sunday, our last full day in New Zealand, Mike gave the sermons at the 8.00 a.m. and 9.30 a.m. services of Holy Trinity Anglican Church; one taken from Philippians 2 and the other from Philippians 3. Then we went west to Raglan, to walk the full length of its beach, popular with surfers.

On Monday we were up relatively early to pack and to be driven back to Auckland airport. We departed at 12.30 p.m. on Monday to be met by our son at Heathrow airport some 30 hours later!

## **Thank you**

We would like to thank all those who helped finance the speaking tour, those who arranged meetings, and all those who provided hospitality and transport. We also thank the Lord for safe journeys and His enabling strength. We pray that those who attended the studies were helped and encouraged; that their appreciation of the Lord Jesus Christ grew and their understanding of the Scriptures increased.

