The Revelation of Jesus Christ

Introduction to the study of Revelation: 1.1 HERMENEUTICAL PRINCIPLES OF REVELATION

INTRODUCTION TO REVELATION

1.1 HERMENEUTICAL PRINCIPLES OF REVELATION

1.2 THE BREACH PRINCIPLE IN REVELATION

THE BREACH PRINCIPLE AND DANIEL'S IMAGE

1.3 THE CASE FOR AN EARLY DATE OF REVELATION

NOTES ON THE DATING OF REVELATION: THE EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS WRITTEN TO THE HEBREWS AT EPHESUS, A SECONDARY CONCLUSION

1.4 THE STRUCTURE OF REVELATION

HERMENEUTICAL PRINCIPLES OF REVELATION

'which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy spirit teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual'. (1Cor 2:13)

(Interpreting spiritual truths with spiritual language – Amplified New Testament, i.e. interpreting scripture with scripture.)

Anyone who sets out to expound scripture must needs be governed, guided and controlled by certain basic principles of interpretation. This is especially so when it comes to interpreting and expounding those portions of scripture that have to do with historical and prophetical things. If these principles are not used and followed properly, then the scriptures (and here we speak more particularly of the book of Revelation) can be made to say anything that the expositor wants it to say.

Revelation has approximately 348 or more quotations, references or allusions in its chapters from the Old Testament. The New Testament also has at least 48 instances, which are quoted or alluded to in Revelation. This must dictate our approach to the book, indeed we can speak of 'fresh Revelation context' and 'woven Revelation context'. 'Fresh context' is where completely new material is introduced and 'woven context' weaves together numerous things from previous books of the Bible, whether Old or New Testament. One of the oldest and most highly regarded adages of hermeneutics is: 'Scripture interprets Scripture'. This communicates to us that the Bible, to a large degree, is self-explanatory. This underscores the value of the context principle as the first principle of hermeneutics.

A further amplification of the context principle would be to say that a part could never be understood without the whole. This balances the burden of exegesis which contends that the whole cannot be understood without knowing the meaning of its parts. This paradox has been referred to by interpreters as the 'hermeneutic circle' which rotates from part to whole, and from whole to part.

The 'context principle' is the 'principle of all principles' for interpreting the word of God. The interpretation of a word, a verse, a passage, a chapter, a book, a testament – all must be done within the context circles. Any interpretation that contradicts any other part of scripture is not sound hermeneutics.

The context principle can be subdivided into a group of principles, which are all interrelated.

(1) The first mention principle

(2) The comparative mention principle

(3) The progressive mention principle

(4) The complete mention principle

These four together constitute the 'context principle' the most important of all hermeneutic principles. The next group of principles here are referred to as the Theological Group. They are as follows:

(1) The election principle

(2) The covenant principle

(3) The ethnic–division principle

(4) The chronometrical principle

(5) The breach principle

(6) The Christ–centric principle

(7) The moral principle

These principles are grouped together because they each arise out of the interpretation of the purposes of God as revealed in Scripture. The principles all assume the practice of allowing the whole of God's revealed purpose to effect the interpretation of the parts of His revelation. In using these principles, the interpreter will be causing the interpreted whole to affect the interpretation of its individual parts. The third group of principles is spoken of as the Figures of Speech Group. They are as follows:

(1) The symbolic principle

(2) The numerical principle

(3) The typical principle

(4) The parabolic principle

(5) The allegorical principle

Any reader of Revelation will soon discover that it has numerous symbols woven throughout its chapters. Symbolic objects, creatures, actions, numbers, names, colours, directions and place are part of the language of Revelation. It is impossible to interpret Revelation without a proper understanding of that which is symbolic in the book. This specialised group of principles may be grouped together because they deal with figures of speech or extensions of them. Of course, these do not comprise the entire figures of speech group used in scripture. These are included as principles due to their prominence in scripture, and the difficulties that they present in interpretation. Also, the interpreter realises that he cannot interpret the Book of Revelation without using some of these principles.

In this group each of them use symbols. There are symbols used in types, parables and allegories. These symbolic elements have to be interpreted first in order to properly interpret the literary style of the passage of Scripture in which they may be used.

Rather than define and explain each of these guiding hermeneutic principles, it will suffice to demonstrate how eccentric an interpretation can become without them. For this purpose we will use the continuous historic interpretation, which by its very premise is riddled with inconsistencies.

Example (1) Taken from Christadelphian Studies, a supplement to logos magazine.

'In scripture, one day prophetically represents one year (Ezek.4:5). One day is also typical of one thousand years (Psa.90:4). If (a) one day equals (b) one year and (a) one day equals (c) one thousand years, then (b) one year also equals (c) one thousand years. In other words, if a=b and a=c, then b=c. This is elementary logic."

This may well be 'elementary logic, but only if you are working on an algebra problem, NOT for interpreting scripture!

The substitution of years for days is a fundamental question as Graham Pearce concedes in his book; The Revelation – which interpretation. He devotes a complete chapter to justifying the substitution of 1260 years for 1260 days. Arguing that Revelation is a book of symbol,he states: 'It is not permissible to arbitrarily select some items and make them literal when the basis of the book is symbol'.

In this we would all agree, we cannot arbitrarily decide whether something is symbolic or literal. It is the context which decides. (The first hermeneutic principle) The whole Bible is a book of symbol and often we automatically conclude whether something is meant literally or symbolically without even conscious acknow-ledgement.

The context of the1260 days, 3½ years or 42 months is that of the witnesses, whose ministry is based on that of Jesus Christ, the Faithful Witness (Rev.1:5) and that of Elijah whose ministry was also 3½ years. (James 5:17 compare Rev.11:6; for further reading see chapter 11 of this book). The context demands that 1260 days = 3½ years. When something is obviously symbolic (like the holy city that G.P. uses as an example) it is stated as such, 'coming down from God out of heaven' (Rev.21:1); the measurements for the holy city could never be mistaken as literal, for the context discounts this. To take a verse out of context (Ps.90:4 a Psalm of Moses) and use it as a general principle of interpretation is utterly absurd.

In context the verse means that God is timeless, whereas Moses, who knew he was going to die shortly (and not enter the land) could ask God to:

'teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts to wisdom'. (Ps.90: 12)

If we follow this reductio ad absurdum how do we know that 1260 days = 1260 years and not for example 1,260,000 years? (a day = a thousand years – Ps.90:4). Or do we assert (as Graham Pearce says) that the 'decorum of the symbol' would not stand for such a long time period. This is a classy way of saying if it doesn't fit, we won't use it!

Example (2)'"The man child, who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron' (Rev.12:5). This is understood to be Constantine, the man-child, as the champion of the Christians defeats his pagan rivals, and is the sole ruler in the 'heaven' of the Roman world. The context of this quote, which is from Ps.2:9 demands that it can only be used of Christ (or by proxy, of his ecclesia – see

Rev.2:27) especially since this Psalm was extensively quoted by the apostles during their witnessing campaign in the first century. (Acts 4: 26-27 note the words thy holy child Jesus = man child). Have our senses become so dulled with dogma that we no longer recognise passages that speak of our Lord?

‘I am the good shepherd, and know my sheep and am known of mine.’ (John 10:14)

This is no longer exegesis but exit Jesus. If proper hermeneutic principles are not adhered to we no longer have a valid interpretation.

1.2 THE BREACH PRINCIPLE IN REVELATION

INTRODUCTION TO REVELATION

1.2 THE BREACH PRINCIPLE IN REVELATION

'ye shall know my breach of promise. I the Lord have said, I will surely do it to all this evil congregation, that are gathered together against me: in this wilderness they shall be consumed, and there they shall die.' (Num.14:34,35)

THE BREACH PRINCIPLE

Another hermeneutic principle that should be used, with care, in the interpretation of the Book of Revelation is the Breach Principle. This principle is not a common one amongst expositors. However, some expositors do use it, though not under this designation.

Because this principle will be 'new' to many interpreters, a larger amount of this chapter will be given to its development before its application, where appropriate, to the Book of Revelation.

A. Definition

The Breach Principle is that principle by which the interpretation of a certain verse or passage in Scripture is aided by a consideration of certain breaches, either breaches of promise or breaches of time.

B. Amplification

Following on, we consider the definition of the word 'breach' as in Webster's Dictionary and in its use in the Bible, especially the Old Testament words.

1. Webster's Dictionary

According to Webster's Dictionary, a 'breach' is: 'a state of being broken; a rupture; a break; a gap; a hole or an opening, as in a wall or fence, made by breaking or parting. An interruption of continuity; a blank space; a break or interruption in friendly relations.

In common language, other phrases are used which speak of a 'breach in human relationships'. These phrases are defined as:

(a) Breach of faith - a failure to keep faith

(b) Breach of privilege - an act in violation of rules, order, privileges or dignity of a legislative body

(c) Breach of promise - failure to fulfil a promise

(d) Breach of the peace - a violation of the public peace

(e) Breach of trust - a violation by fraud or omission of any duty imposed on a person in a position of trust.

2. Old Testament Hebrew

There are at least seven Hebrew words, which speak of a breach, and such are translated by a wide variety of English words. Such can only be dealt with in brief here:

(a) Begeq: meaning 'a gap or leak (in a building or a ship); fissure or rent'.

It is translated “breaches” (2 Kgs.12: 4-8) and “calkers” (Ezek.27: 9,27).

(b) Baqa: meaning ‘to cleave; generally to rend, break, rupture or open; to break through or into’. It is translated ‘make a breach’ (Isa.7:6; 22:9); ‘break’ (Gen.7:11; Isa.58:8); ‘cleave’ (Num.16:31; Amos 6:11); ‘divide’ (Ex.14:16,21; Ps.78:13); ‘rend’ (Josh.9:4; Job 26:8), and ‘tear’ (Hos.13:8).

(c) Miphrats: meaning ‘a break (in the shore); a haven’. It is translated ‘breaches’ (Judg.5:17).

(d) Parats: meaning ‘to break out, break through, break down, make a breach in, break into, break open, break up. It is translated ‘make a breach’ (1 Chron.13:11; 15:13), and ‘break’(Ex.19:22,24), and ‘breach’ (Ps.106:29).

(e) Perets: meaning ‘a break (lit, or fig); bursting forth, a breach’. It is translated ‘breach’ (Gen.38:29; Amos 9:11); ‘breaking forth’ (Job 30:14; Ps.14:4 ‘gap’ (Ezek.13:5; 22:30).

(f) Sheber: meaning ‘a fracture, figuratively a ruin; a breaking; breach; crushing’. It is translated ‘breach’ (Ps.60:2;Isa.30:26); ‘breaking’ (Isa.30:13,14); ‘broken’ (Lev.21:19) and ‘destruction’ (Prov.16:18; Isa.1:28).

(g) Tenuwah: meaning ‘alienation; by implication, enmity; opposition. The root word means ‘to hinder, restrain, frustrate, forbid, dissuade, refuse’. It is translated ‘breach of promise’ (Num.14:34), and ‘occasion’ (Job 33:10).

A perusal of these words provides the basic meaning of a division or gap. As already mentioned, some expositors use this principle under the designation of ‘the gap theory’ when interpreting various passages in the Bible.

C. Illustration

Examples in Scripture of the Breach Principle fall into two basic classifications. These have to be properly distinguished. These two classifications are

(1) Breaches of Promise, and (2) Breaches of Time.

1. Breaches of Promise

It must be kept in mind that God keeps His promises. These are two immutable things concerning God; that He is His own person and His own word. It is impossible for God to lie (Heb.6:13-20). However, there are ‘breaches of promises’ which are caused by unbelief and disobedience on the part of man. It is never the fault of God, but the fault is on the part of man. These examples show the truth of these things.

(a) Breach of Promise Concerning Entering Canaan

God had promised the land of Canaan to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and their seed (Gen.15: 13-21; 22:16-18; 28:13-15; Ps.105: 8-12; Ex.3:15-17). However, the first generation of Israel experienced God’s breach of promise for forty years in the wilderness when they rejected the land of promise through unbelief.

It was not that God broke His promise, but He did postpone the fulfilment of it for forty years until the new generation entered Canaan land (Num.14: 26-38). This ‘breach of promise’, speaks of the ‘altering of God’s purpose’, or ‘the revoking of His promise’ (Amp.,O.T) UNBELIEF was the cause of this forty year breach-period in the wilderness. The wilderness was never God’s perfect

will, but He permitted it because of their unbelief and disobedience to His word (Hebrews Chapters 3-4)

(b) Breach of Promise Concerning Dominion in Canaan

God promised Abraham, Isaac and Jacob that their seed would also have dominion in the land over the Canaanites (Gen.15: 18-21; 22:16-18; 24:60). They were to possess the gate of their enemies. This promise was confirmed to the nation through Moses (Deut.28:14; 30:1-20), and Joshua (Josh.1:1-9; 21:43-45). All was dependent upon faith and obedience to the law of the Lord.

However, the historical books of the Old Testament, from Judges onward, show Israel's unbelief and disobedience to the word of the Lord. Servitude's and various captivities mark their history until both Israel and Judah were cast out of the land and subjugated by their enemies.

Where was God's promise of dominion? Israel knew God's breach of promise time and again. The root cause was the sin of disobedience and unbelief. Time, for them, was lost as they served their enemies. The conquerors became the conquered!

(c) Breach of Promise Concerning Occupancy of Canaan

God promised Abraham, Isaac and Jacob that their seed would inherit the land of Canaan, have dominion over their enemies, and also that their seed would possess the land for 'an everlasting possession' (Gen.17: 8; 48:4).

Biblical history as well as secular history has shown that Israel has only ever, ever possessed the land for several hundred years. As a nation, Israel has been absent for more time outside the land than in it. What of God's promise of 'everlasting possession?'

Again, the breach of promise is experienced because of Israel's unbelief and disobedience to God's laws for living in the land. All has to do with covenant promises of the Abrahamic Covenant. There, God promised the land for an everlasting possession. However, under the Mosaic and Palestinian Covenants. God laid out the conditions for keeping the land as an everlasting possession. Israel was to keep the sabbaths of the land every seventh year, plus the jubilee year, which was every fiftieth year (Lev.25:1-22). If they failed to do this, then the people, the cities, the sanctuaries and the land would be brought to desolation (Lev.26:14-46; 18:24-30; 20:22-26; Deut.28: 56-68). All such came to pass.

The House of Israel was carried captive to Assyria about BC 721. The House of Judah was carried into Babylonian Captivity about BC 606, and this for a period of seventy years (Jer.25: 12; 29:10; Dan.9: 2). The House of Judah was, at the conclusion of the seventy years, restored to the land unto the first coming of Messiah. However, after the rejection and crucifixion of their long promised Messiah, in A.D.70 the Romans desolated the people, the cities, the temple and the land.

Jewry has been desolate ever since. From AD 1917 onwards, a remnant has been returning to the land amidst constant turmoil, and all this according to the prophecy of the Lord Jesus (Lk.19: 41-44; 21:20-24).

Israel's history in and out of the land has been the result of their unbelief and their disobedience; not the fault of the promise of God. Jewry has experienced God's breach of promise! Time for them, out of the land, has been lost time!

(d) Breach of Promise Concerning the Sceptre

Israel has also experienced God's breach of promise concerning kingship. The word to Jacob's son, Judah, was that the sceptre would not depart until Shiloh came (Gen.49:8-12).

David was the first king of the tribe of Judah over all Israel. God confirmed the covenant of kingship to David that he would never lack a man to sit on his throne (2 Samuel 7; Psalm 89). This is spoken of as the Davidic Covenant.

From David to Zedekiah, there was an unbroken dynasty of Davidic kings reigning over Judah. But, when Zedekiah was dethroned, about 600 years before Christ, there came about a breach, a gap, in the throne of David. Jewry has never had a Davidic king reigning over it from about BC 600 until this day, almost 2600 years! What of the promises of God? What of the promise of the sceptre of Judah? When Christ was born, He was promised the throne of David (Num.24:17;Lk.1:30-33). The 600 years from Zedekiah to Christ provides another example of the breach of promise. Again, the promise of God was not at fault. It was again the unbelief and the disobedience of Israel and Judah that caused to them the breach of promise of the kingship!

2. Breaches of Time

It is important to understand the distinction between 'breaches of promise' and the 'breaches of time'. The 'breaches of promise' are caused by man's unbelief and disobedience; two sides of the same coin, so to speak. The 'breaches of time' are caused by God's outworking of His plan and purpose as revealed to and through the prophets.

God Himself is the great I AM (Ex.3:14-15). Time past, time present and time future are one eternal present to God. God is not bound by time, but He does work in time. Time is simply a fragment of eternity in which God is working out His purposes in creation and redemption. Man is, however, a creature of time.

When God revealed His purposes to and through the prophets, they were caught up in what has been spoken of as 'the prophetic perspective'. They would see things from the Eternal's point of view. As a result of this, they would sometimes group together certain passages of Scripture, prophetic events, and include the past, the present and the future. They saw things from God's eternal present.

The Old Testament prophets did not always understand their own utterances concerning the coming of Christ. They searched what was meant by their prophecies. They tried to discover the time of fulfilment of the Spirit's utterances through them when He spoke of the 'sufferings of Christ and the glory that should follow'. It was revealed to them that their prophetic words were not just for their generation but also for future generations (1 Pet.1:10-12).

The historical fulfilment of some prophecies has proved that there is 'a time gap', or 'a breach of time' involved in their fulfilment. This is especially so concerning the events pertaining to the first and second comings of Christ. It is this 'time element' that makes the interpretation of prophecy so difficult.

Following, we note several brief examples of prophetic 'breaches of time'.

(a) The Pre-existence, Birth and Crucifixion of Christ

In Mic.5:1-2 we have a remarkable prophecy pertaining to Christ's first coming. In these verses three important facts are woven together. No "time element" is mentioned. The facts run

together as if they were to be fulfilled all at one and the same time. However, the historical fulfilment of such shows that there was really a “breach of time” in fulfilment.

(1) Messiah’s Pre-existence

The Ruler in Israel had His goings forth from of old, from everlasting, from the days of eternity. This is the eternal purpose of God, expressed in the covenants granted to the patriarchs, before the nation even existed (see 'Before he was Born' by A. Perry).

(2) Messiah’s birth

The Ruler would come out of Bethlehem of Judah. This is a reference to the virgin birth (Matt.2:1-6).

(3) Messiah’s Crucifixion

The ruler of Israel was to be smitten with a rod on the cheek. This was fulfilled at Christ’s crucifixion, about 34 years after His virgin birth (Matt.27:30).

These truths, these prophetic facts, cover TIME! From eternity, to Micah’s prophetic word (about BC 620), then Christ’s virgin birth at Bethlehem (BC 4), and then Messiah’s crucifixion (AD 30), about 34 years later - all is covered in TIME! In other words, ‘breach of time’ is seen in the fulfilment of this Messianic prophecy, though this could not be seen when Micah uttered the prophecy. History and time proved the prophecy!

(b) The Day of the Lord

Many times, in the Old Testament, the prophets use the expression ‘the day of the Lord’. It is used to speak of, sometimes, a local ‘day of the Lord’, judgement falling on Israel or Judah. Most of the time, it is used to refer to either the first or more especially the second coming of the Lord. A study of the details in the verses surrounding this expression will help to determine whether it speaks of the first coming or the second coming of Christ.

An example of ‘the day’ of Christ’s first and second coming is found in the prophet Malachi.

(1) Messiah’s First Coming

Mal.3:1-2 speaks of Christ’s first coming as ‘the messenger of the covenant’ which was preceded by John the Baptist’s ministry (Mk.1:2). This is spoken of as ‘the day of His coming’, when he would, ‘suddenly come to his temple’- it had a literal fulfilment in the cleansing of the temple. It also has a future fulfilment when he will suddenly come into his ‘spiritual temple’. History proved this to be Christ’s first coming.

(2) Messiah’s Second Coming

Mal.4:1 speaks of Christ’s second coming. It is spoken of as ‘the day that cometh’ and it is a day of judgement on the wicked. This is also preceded by an Elijah’s mission similar to that of the Baptist; time will prove this to be the Christ’s second coming.

As we consider these references, between Mal.3:1-2 and Mal.4:1 there is indeed a ‘breach of time’, and this is seen in the first and second comings of Christ. Once again we see a breach of time involved in the expression, ‘the day of the Lord’, in prophetic fulfilment as God allows His plan and purpose to be worked out in the earth.

(c) The First and Second Comings of Christ

One other example will be sufficient before applying the breach principle to some passages in the Book of Revelation. A comparison of Isaiah 61:1-2 with Luke 4:16-21 implies the first and second comings of Christ. This being so, we have another example of the breach principle.

(1) Messiah's First Coming

Jesus in the synagogue of Nazareth was given the scroll of Isaiah. He opened it and began to read Isa.61:1-2. However, he stopped reading at the clause, 'the acceptable year of the Lord', closed the book and sat down.

The Gospels show the historic fulfilment of the clauses he read, verses 1-2. The Spirit of the Lord anointed Jesus at his baptism in Jordan. His ongoing ministry showed how he preached the Gospel to the poor, healed the broken-hearted, proclaimed liberty to the captives, opened the prison door to those who were bound, and proclaimed the acceptable year of the Lord (Read 2 Cor.6:2 and Isa.49:8 also).

(2) Messiah's Second Coming

The next clause of the same passage speaks of 'the day of vengeance of our God' (Isa.61:2b). Undoubtedly the reason Jesus did not read that clause then was because, in His first coming, there was no vengeance in his heart. On the cross, he asked his Father to forgive his crucifiers. However, it is the second coming that 'the day of vengeance of our God' finds fulfilment. The student should read Isa.63:4 with 2 Thess.1:7-9 along with Rev.6:9-17. Each of these verses and passages speak of the Lord's coming 'with vengeance in his heart'.

Here once again, we have an implied 'breach of time'. Though the details of the prophecy are woven together in a couple of verses in Isaiah, the details of history show there is a gap - a breach of time - in fulfilment of certain clauses. Though the prophet spoke of these two events in the same passage, history confirms that these clauses actually reach from the first coming to the second coming - a breach of time in their realisation.

D. Demonstration

The expositor must use this principle with great caution due to its limited relevance in interpreting scripture. It is obvious also that this principle must be used along with other principles.

The writer believes that there are several examples in the Book of Revelation where the breach principle should be applied. Each of these examples involves a 'time period' which has to be interpreted.

1. Christ's Second Coming

As John received the Revelation on Patmos, Jesus told him on several occasions, 'Behold, I come quickly', and 'the time is at hand' (Rev.1:3; 22:10,12,20). Revelation is actually the book of Christ's second coming. 'Behold, He cometh' is the theme of the book (Rev.1:7; 2:25; 3:11; 22:5,20).

There was certainly some misunderstanding among the apostles and even the believers at Thessalonica about Christ's coming. In John 21:20-25, when Jesus talked to Peter about John, he said, 'If I will that he tarry till I come', the saying went abroad that John would not die but live to the second coming of Jesus. They did not understand that there would be some 'time period'

before Jesus returned. He had taught this in the parables of the kingdom, but they still had not comprehended this (note the Parable of the Kingdom in Lk.19:11-27).

The early ecclesia thought He would come 'quickly' - that is, in their time. The believers in Thessalonica were concerned for their fellow Christians who had died; they feared they would miss out on the second coming of Jesus. Paul had to write to them to clarify and correct those views. Paul told them that certain events were to take place, in time, before Jesus came again. Before Christ came, there would be a great apostasy, and the man of sin (the antichrist) would be revealed. However, all this would take place 'in his time'. The believers who had died in faith would not miss out on the Lord's coming. They would be raised first, and the living believers would be caught up together with them to meet the Lord in the air (2 Thess.3:6-15; 2:1-12; 1 Thess.4: 13-18; 5:11). Then all would be with the Lord forever.

Almost nineteen centuries of time have passed since Jesus said, 'I come quickly', and 'the time is at hand', and Jesus has not yet returned.

This age has certainly become a breach of time between the first coming and the second coming. But it is not 'lost time' or wasted time, as far as God is concerned. For in this period of time, he is building his ecclesia, composed of believing Jews and Gentiles, building them together as one body in Christ (1 Cor.12:13; Eph.2:19-22).

2. The Three and One Half Year Period

We find there are certain 'time periods' in the Book of Revelation that need to be properly interpreted. One of the most controversial of the 'time periods' that are found in Revelation is the period of three and one-half years, found in Revelation chapters 11,12,13. This three and one-half years period is spoken of as forty two months, 1260 days, and time, times and half a time (Rev.11:2,3;12:6,14; 13:5).

In seeking to understand and interpret this time period, the Chronometric Principle and the Breach Principle, along with other hermeneutic principles need to be used.

What is this three and one-half year time period in which the beast reigns in the

world-system, persecuting the saints and seeing his name, mark and number enforced on the peoples of the world? Is there any other time period like this in

Scripture? Is there any other period like this that seems to await fulfilment? The answer is in the affirmative.

Using the Comparative Mention principle, along with the Chronometric and Breach principles, in Daniel and Revelation (twin eschatological books), we find what, the writer believes, is the answer. Let us consider these twin books and this time period that is used in both of them. Let us seek to discover if there is a 'breach of time' in the fulfilment of such.

(a) The Book of Daniel

In Dan.9:24-27, we have the notable and controversial 'Seventy Sevens prophecy'.

A comparison of Daniel chpt.7, Daniel chpt.9, and Daniel chpt.12 provides us with the following facts:

(1) Dan.7:25 speaks of the little horn who makes war with the saints for a time, times and half a time; that is, three and one-half years. This period of time is revealed to Daniel before he received the Seventy Sevens prophecy!

(2) Dan.9:24-27 shows us the overall view of the Seventy Sevens, or 490 years of time relative to Judah and the Messiah's manifestation. In the same manner as Israel celebrated a 'Great Jubilee' every 49 years, even so the 490 years extend until the kingdom, for the kingdom represents the 'Great Jubilee'. How can 490 years span a period of 2,500 years? The prophecy is meant to contain 'breaches of time', this is why it is segmented (7x7 + 62x7 + 1x7) and has clearly defined starting and terminal events. The prophecy could have been completely fulfilled in the first century, but because of unbelief and disobedience there exists a 'breach of time' between the 62 heptade and the last 'seven'. Or twice three and one-half years. See digression 11.1 page 15.

(3) Dan.12:5-11 speaks of 'the time of the end', and in verses 7-9 it speaks of a time, times and half a time. Daniel heard this, but he understood it not. The word came to him that the explanation of this time period, of time, times and half a time was sealed up and closed to 'the time of the end'.

We may ask, is there any other book in the Bible that speaks of a similar period of time? Is there a time period like this, which seems to be unfulfilled? The answer is seen in the Book of Revelation.

(b) The Book of Revelation

When we come to the Book of Revelation, we discover that there are five given references to a period of time of three and one-half years.

(1) Rev.11:2 speaks of a time period of 42 months when the holy city is trodden under foot of the Gentiles.

(2) Rev.11:3 tells of the two witnesses who prophesy for a period of 1260 days. This is a period of three and one half years.

(3) Rev.12:6 speaks of a woman who is preserved in the wilderness for a period of 1260 days. Again, it is a period of three and one half years.

(4) Rev.12:14 tells us that this woman is preserved from the face of the

serpent for a time, times and half a time; or, three and one half years.

(5) Rev.13:5 mentions a similar period of time, 42 months, in which the beast makes war with the saints and overcomes them.

It is worthy of much consideration that, in Revelation Chapter 10, John is told to 'eat the little open book', and then prophesy to many people. This is a little open book, not a sealed book, as in Daniel 12. The moment John eats the little book, and begins to prophesy , he immediately takes up the language of Daniel from Daniel Chapter 7. He speaks of the beast that makes war with the saints, and John also speaks of the same time period.

THE BREACH PRINCIPLE AND DANIEL'S IMAGE.

'But, beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. 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 Pet. 3:8,9)

Before we examine the implications of the breach principle and Daniel's image, we will describe briefly the orthodox interpretation of Daniel's image. Daniel's image in chapter 2 (and the beasts of chapter 7) are successive empires. Commencing with the Babylonian and following through the Medo–Persian and Greek Seleucie empires we arrive at the iron of Rome, which in turn disintegrates into a weak confederation of iron and clay (feet and ten toes).

The orthodox protestant interpretation records how the once united Roman Empire became divided into ten parts by the barbarians who penetrated its borders and settled within its dominions. Brother Thomas lists the ten as follows; the Huns, Vandals, Visgoths, Burgundians, Gepidae, Lombards, Franks, Suevi, Alans and Barbarians. These ten eventually constituted the 'Holy Roman Empire', which in modern times finds its counterpart in the Roman Catholic Church and the European union, established under the, 'treaty of Rome'. Christ will destroy these at his return.

Although this interpretation seems plausible, closer examination reveals elements that are deeply unsatisfactory. All Bible students would agree with the analysis up to the Roman Empire, but it is here that interpretations diverge, for orthodoxy fails to answer some important questions.

The successive empires all have one common denominator, they all possessed the land of Israel among their dominions and are only of importance in relationship to the divine purpose with the Jews. There were many other empires extant in other parts of the world, and concurrent with those of the image, yet they are not mentioned, as they are irrelevant to God's purpose with the Jews. Rome is only of import in that, after the invasion of Pompeii, Judea became a client state in B.C.63. Rome never possessed Babylon within its empire, nor used it as a capitol (unlike the other powers), the inclusion of Rome is not due to her 'world dominance', but to her possession of Judea. After the ejection of the Jews from the land, Rome ceased to play a role. The way this problem is circumvented by orthodoxy is to emphasise how Rome who, now unable to dominate Judea with her military machine, morphs into a spiritual and political entity that corrupts and persecutes the Christians (God's new people) throughout the long centuries.

This is a largely artificial interpretation, for scripture teaches that the ecclesias were already corrupt towards the close of the first century (c.a. A.D.65., see Rev.2:18-29). Individuals within these ecclesias were exhorted to endure, but as a whole they were corrupt, the notable exception being Philladelphia. The situation that had developed, commenced some years earlier (A.D.45-55?) under the abuses of the 'man of lawlessness' (2Thess.2: 3-13, 2 Cor.11: 1-20). God thought it fit to remove both the Jews from the land and the spirit gifts from the ecclesias in A.D. 66-73.

The first question that must be answered is as follows;

If neither the Jews, nor the truth existed in an ecclesiastical form for nearly 2,000 years, just whom has the Roman Church been persecuting?

The epistles make it apparent that the apostles and the first century believers expected the advent within their own lifetime. (Acts.1:6; 1 Thess.4:15)

The second and third questions that must be answered are:

How could the apostles be so mistaken?

What implications does this have for Daniel's image?

Another facet, often overlooked because of the obsessive focus on Rome, is that the whole image (not just Rome) is standing when smitten by the stone. Revelation presents us with a composite beast. The fourth question to be answered is then;

If the stone smites the feet of the image, 'in the days of these (10) kings' (Dan.2:44) how can the image be represented as standing fully complete?

The Babylonian empire lasted from Nebuchadnezzar until the Persian defeat (605-539 B.C.) under Cyrus. The country remained under Persian rule from 539-332 B.C.; then it was under Alexander the Great until 323 B.C. The Greek Seleucidae ruled Babylon from 312-171 B.C; they were succeeded by the Parthians (Arsacid dynasty), from 171 B.C. to A.D. 226. Judea itself was caught between the Egyptian Greek empire (Ptolomies) and the Syrian Greek empire (Seleucidae), these are the two mountains of brass of Zech 6:1. Eventually Judea was annexed to Syria, and remained under Antiochus Epiphanes and his dynasty from 200-63 B.C. The period under Antiochus led to persecution and the Maccabee revolt. After B.C. 63 it was under Roman domination until A.D. 73 (first Jewish revolt) with a further flare up under Bar–Kochba (second Jewish revolt 132-135 ½ A.D.) after which Judea ceased to exist as the Jewish homeland for nearly 2,000 years. We arrive then at the following conclusion; the Babylonian head existed 66 years, the Medo-Persian breast and arms 207 years, the Greek belly and thighs either 141 (Greek control of Babylon) or 269 years (Greek control of Babylon and Israel) and the Roman legs 1,937 years and still growing? The last question is then;

Why are the legs totally disproportionate (about six times longer) with the rest of the body?

To ask these questions is to expose the inadequacies of the orthodox interpretation. The present author will offer an alternative interpretation that answers all the above anomalies. In order to do this, we have to understand the political and historical background to the first century.

Since the defeat of the Syrian governor Crassus, who in 53 B.C. attempted to conquer Parthia, the Romans retained an irrational fear of the Parthians. Rome and Parthia agreed mutual spheres of influence in A.D. 1 on an island in the Euphrates. The Euphrates continued to be the frontier between Rome and Parthia from the battle of Mount Gindarus (the defeat of Antony in 36 B.C.) until the invasion of Parthia by Trajan in 115 A.D. Trajan installed a client king in Cestiphon (near Babylon) but Cestiphon was lost again in 117A.D. On Trajan's death Hadrian gave up the newly annexed eastern territories. In 132-135½ A.D. Hadrian sparked the second Jewish

revolt by founding a colonia in Jerusalem. This revolt was led by Bar-Kochba and supported by Parthian Jews (one million Jews lived in Babylonia). The irrational Roman fear of the Parthians was not shared by the Palestinian Jews, who during the Jewish war (66-73 A.D.) had rather hoped that the Parthian king, Vologaeses I, would come to their aid against the Romans (Jos.J.W. 2.389), but this hope did not materialise. Having examined the background, let us now turn to the questions.

The answer to all the questions is that the whole of Daniel's image should have been standing in the first century. This very nearly happened. It took the might of four Roman legions, doubled in number by the contingents supplied by loyal allies to crush the Jewish revolt. (Jos. J.W. 3.4.2 and 5.1.6) Even this disproportionate force would probably not have been successful if the Jews had

been united in their resistance. Imagine if the Jewish revolt had been successful (i.e., if God had allowed it to succeed). It is entirely plausible that the following situation would have existed at the close of the first century:

(1) The initially successful Jewish revolt triggers an opportunistic regional revolt against Rome. The newly independent nations make treaties with each other and a re-alignment of power occurs between former Roman provinces (iron –Judea, Syria etc.) and Parthian provinces. (Clay-Armenia etc.)

(2) Jerusalem (the Harlot) controls 'ten kings' temporarily, "but they shall not cleave one to another" (Dan.2:43) and they shall, "burn her utterly with fire" (Rev.17:16). [It is possibly at this stage that the temple would have been destroyed instead of at A.D. 70, thus fulfilling Christ's prophecy.]

(3) These 'ten kings' give their power to the 'beast', who is none other than the Parthian empire. She comes from the Euphrates (Rev.9:14; 16:12) and has all the characteristics of Daniel's image, for, she is, 'like a leopard (Greek Seleucid), and his feet were as the feet of a bear (Medo-Persia), and his mouth as the mouth of a lion (Babylonian)'. (Rev 13:2)

We have then the ancient empire of Babylon restored, this was the head that was wounded to death (Rev 13:3 cp. Isa.46: 1,2; 47:1-3; Jer.50: 26; 51:37)

An indication that the above scenario is not implausible is found in the example of the Bar-Kochba revolt, which was supported by the Parthian Jews. Bar-Kochba was a false Jewish Messiah, who persecuted the Christians and therefore typified 'the man of sin'; his revolt lasted 3½ years!

The failure of the orthodox interpretation is the inability to grasp the 'breach principle', as detailed earlier. The constructed scenario outlined above explains why first century believers expected the second advent during their lifetime. The apostles and particularly Paul had already received 'revelations' concerning the Lord's return,

well in advance of the book of Revelation. (1 Cor.12:1-5) Revelation was a last appeal to the ecclesias, the kingdom could (should?) have been established in the first century, but;

'To whom sware he that they should not enter into his rest, but to them that believed not?' So we see that they could not enter because of unbelief. (Heb 3:18,19) 'As I have sworn in my wrath, they should not enter into my rest: although the works were finished from the foundation of the world.' (Heb 4:3 R.V.) This leaves a large portion of Revelation unfulfilled because of the unbelief of our first century brethren. God moves in mysterious ways, the unbelief of the Jews allowed salvation to be extended to the Gentiles, and the unbelief of (some) of our first century brethren allowed salvation to be extended to us. Even unbelief cannot deter the ultimate fulfilment of God's purpose; it can however prevent us from entering into his rest.

Lastly, we should not be surprised that Revelation continues from the trumpets, the seals being fulfilled from A.D. 31-73. The 'breach of promise' occurs between the seals and trumpets. They could only be fulfilled once the nation was back in the land (the present situation), and will culminate in the erection of Daniel's 'image' (Rev. chpt.13 see especially the image of the beast in 13:15), which is symbolic for the 'kingdom of men' a parody of the eschaton, and encompassing the same geographical region. (Egypt to Assyria; Isa.19:22-25)

1.3 THE CASE FOR AN EARLY DATE OF REVELATION

'The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him, to show unto his servants things which must shortly come to pass'. (Rev.1:1).

Not only H.A.Whittaker1 but also others including J.Robinson have remarked on themes, idiom and eschatology that are strikingly similar and unique to the Book of Revelation from which they were taken:

In both, the false teachers are accused of the error of Balaam (Jude 11; 2 Pet.2:15; Rev.2:14), which in Revelation is closely associated with the teaching of the Nicolaitans (2:6,15). In both Christians are described as being lured into immorality (2 Peter 2:14,18; 3:17; Rev.2:20), into contaminating their clothing (Jude 23; Rev.2: 13). There is the same contrast between the true and the false (Jude 8;2 Pet.1: 2,16; Rev.2:17,24). The heretical teachers are claiming to be shepherds and apostles of Christ's flock (Jude 11; Rev.2:2), and there is a similar appeal to the teaching of the true apostles (Jude 17, 2 Peter 1:12; 3:1; Rev.3:3), who are the foundation of the church and its faith (Jude 3; Rev.21:14). The eschatological symbolism too shows remarkable parallels, with the day of Christ being likened not only, as in the common Christian tradition, to the thief (2 Pet.3:10; Rev.3:3; 16:15) but uniquely in these two documents to the morning star (2 Pet.1:19; Rev.2:28; 22:16). In both, the existing heavens and earth disappear (2 Pet.3: 10; Rev.6: 14; 16:20; 20:11) to be replaced by new (2 Peter 3:13; Rev.21:1); in both, the fallen angels are chained in the depths of hell (Jude 6; 2 Pet.2:4; Rev.20:1-3,7), and appeal is made to the theme of a thousand years (2 Pet.3: 8; Rev.20:2-7).2

A schematic overview of the similarities between Hebrews and 1 and 2 Peter might be given as follows:

HEBREWS

REVELATION

The word of God (4:12) (=Jesus v.13).

The word of God (=Jesus 19:13).

....is sharper than a two-edged sword (4:12).

....with a sharp two-edged sword (1:16; 19:15).

The city which hath (the: RV) foundations, whose builder and maker is God (11:10).

The wall of the city (of God) had 12 foundations (21:14).

And this whole sequence from chapter12:

Mount Zion

Heavenly Jerusalem

The city of the living God

An innumerable company of angels

The general assembly

Written in heaven

God the judge of all

Jesus the mediator of a new covenant

The blood of sprinkling

The Lamb on Mount Zion (14:1).

New Jerusalem out of heaven (21:2).

The God of the living creatures (4:6).

The voice of many angels (5:11).

The 144,000 sealed out of Israel (ch.7& 14).

Written in the Lamb's book of life (13:8;

21:27).

The dead standing before God to be judged (20:12).

A lamb as it had been slain (5:5,6).

Thou hast redeemed us to God by thy blood (5:9).

Him that spoke from heaven

Revelation is the only message of Jesus spoken from heaven!

Let us serve God

They serve him day and night in his Temple (7:15)

I PETER

REVELATION

Things angels desired to look into (1:12).

Angel: "Who is worthy to open the book?" (5:12).

Faith... gold tried in the fire (1:7).

Buy gold tried in the fire (3:18).

Living stones (2:5).

City with 12 foundations, and in them the names of the apostles (21:14).

A royal priesthood (2:9).

Kings and priests (5:10; 1:6).

Redeemed with the precious blood of Christ as of a lamb (1:19).

A Lamb as it had been slain...Thou hast redeemed us (5:6,9).

The foundation of the world (1:20).

The foundation of the world (13:8).

To him be glory and dominion for ever and ever (5:11).

To him be glory and dominion for ever and ever (1:6).

Babylon (5:13).

Babylon the Great (17:15).

II PETER

REVELATION

A more sure word of prophecy, whereunto ye do well to take heed (1:19).

The apocalypse of Jesus Christ (1:1).

Holy men of God spake as they were moved of the Holy Spirit (1:21).

.....he sent and signified it by his angel unto his servant John (1:1).

The day star (1:19).

The bright and morning star (2:28, 22:16).

False prophets (2:1).

The false prophet (16:13; 19:20).

Angels.... cast down to hell (2:14).

Satan.... cast into a bottomless pit (20:1-3).

The way of Balaam (2:15).

The doctrine of Balaam (2:14).

A thousand years (3:8).

A thousand years (20:3,5,6).

A thief in the night (3:10).

I will come as a thief (3:3; 16:15).

The heavens pass away (3:10).

The heaven fled away (20:11; 21:1).

We, according to his promise (where?) look for a new heavens and earth (3:13).

A new heaven and a new earth (21:2).

Several scholars have shown that the two epistles of Peter and the epistle to the Hebrews bear a remarkable correspondence with the book of Revelation. If this is correct then Revelation must have been written prior to AD 70. The majority of critics opt for an early dating of Hebrews (about AD 68). 1 On the other hand many of the critics argue that the epistles of Peter were not written by Peter (especially 2 Peter); however the evidence for a late dating of the epistles is subjective and can be safely discounted – the traditional viewpoint holds that both epistles were written by

the apostle Peter himself, this then narrows the margin of writing down to sometime before Peter's death in Rome (dated between AD 64 and AD 68).

The epistle to the Hebrews was written to a Jewish community; the theme of the epistle is to encourage them to remember the former days, when their love, faith and patience in Christ was strong (6:10). These Jewish Christians are being exhorted to remain in Christ and not to return to Judaism; the epistle stresses the superiority of Christ's sacrifice (9:23) and Christ's priesthood (7:7) and warns them that the Temple and ritualistic worship would soon be destroyed: 'Yet once more will I make to tremble not the earth only, but also the heaven. And this word yet once more signifieth the removing of those things that have been made that those things which are not shaken may remain' (Heb.12:26,27. See Hag.2: 6,14,15,22).

It has been suggested that Hebrews 12 and 2 Peter are not referring to the passing away of the Mosaic system, but rather to the return of Christ, which still lies in the future. We will address this argument in the style of a question and answer segment.

QUESTION 1:

'The removing of the things that are shaken' (Heb.12:27) does not refer to the removing of the Mosaic dispensation. The words 'yet once more' imply finality (i.e. God will remove one more time). This suggests that this verse is as yet unfulfilled and had no immediate meaning to the first century Hebrews to whom it was written. 'Him that speaketh from heaven' is referring to the voice of God, (Ex.19:18) for it is the Sinai experience which is extensively described in Hebrews 12 and it is therefore not referring to Jesus' warning from heaven (the Revelation given to John).

ANSWER:

The words 'yet once more' do not necessarily imply finality. 'For God speaketh once, yea twice, yet man regardeth it not' (Job 33:14 RV). The words can also be read in the sense of 'one more time'. The removing of the things that are shaken implies the removing of the kingdom of Israel, to be replaced with, 'a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed' (Dan.2:44). God had warned the nation that he would, remove the diadem, and take off the crown....overturn,overturn,overturn (3x) (Ezek.21:26). This had a short-term fulfilment in the three invasions of Nebuchadnezzar, and a long-term fulfilment in BC 586, AD 70 and the future (AD?).

The true test of a prophet is the fulfilment of his words; Jesus predicted the demise of the Mosaic system and exhorted his disciples that with faith they would be able to say, "to this mountain (Temple mount) remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove". The argument is even more forceful when it is realised that Jesus spoke these words after healing the lunatic, symbolic of the nation possessed with a devil (Mtt.17:14-20). Revelation informs us that God did indeed remove the mountain (in answer to the prayer of faith?) - for, 'a great mountain was cast into the sea' (Rev.8:8).

The kingdom was removed from Israel in AD 70 but not immediately replaced with the kingdom of God for now is the time of the Gentiles. The stone (Christ) that smote the feet of the image will grow into a mountain, replacing the mountain that was removed.

The language used in Hebrews ch.12 and in the second epistle of Peter reflects the removal of the Mosaic system (typical fulfilment) for they reflect the language of Stephen's speech in Acts ch.7:

STEPHENS SPEECH

HEBREWS 12 (+ 2 PETER)

“This Moses whom they refused, saying, who made thee a ruler and a judge?” (v.35).

“A prophet (Jesus) shall the Lord your God raise up (from the dead) unto you of your brethren, like unto me; (Moses) him shall ye hear” (v.37).

“…to whom our fathers would not obey, but thrust him from them, and in their hearts turned back again into Egypt” (v.39).

“For if they escaped not who refused him that spake on earth” (12:25).

“Him that speaketh from heaven (12:25).

….hath in these last days spoken to us by his son (Heb.1:1). Hear ye him” (Lk. 9:35, 2 Pet 1:17).

“…if we turn away from him” (12:25).

2 Peter 2:20-22: “For if after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein, and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning. (See Mtt.12:45 = Jewish nation.) For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them. But it is happened unto them according to the true proverb, The dog is turned to his own vomit again; and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire.”

“As for this Moses, which brought us out of the land of Egypt, we wot not what is become of him” (v.40).

“In the last days mockers shall come with mockery…..saying where is the promise of his coming?”(2 Pet 3:4).

“I see the heavens opened and the son of man standing on the right hand of God (v.55) - Stephen saw Jesus asking for his inheritance”(Ps.2:8).

“Wherefore we receive a kingdom that cannot be moved” (v.28).

The parallels between Stephen’s speech, Hebrews 12 and 2 Peter are not coincidental, for Stephen (like his Lord) was put on trial because ‘This man ceaseth not to speak blasphemous words against this holy place, and the law: For we have heard him say, that this Jesus of Nazareth shall destroy this place, and shall change the customs which Moses delivered us’ (Acts 6:13-14). Stephen argued that God had always revealed himself outside the land; to Abraham in Mesopotamia (7:2) to Moses in the bush (v.30) and on Mt Sinai (v.38); to our fathers in the tabernacle in the wilderness (v.44). Although Solomon built Him an house (v.47), God does not dwell in a house made with hands (v.48). The whole power and force of Stephen’s argument is that the Mosaic system would disappear, for Jesus had built, ‘a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices’ (1 Pet.2:5). It was therefore appropriate that both Hebrews and the Petrine epistles use the same theme.

The voice that warneth from heaven (Heb.12: 25) is in the first instance the voice of God, but it is also that of Jesus, who speaks in God’s name:“God……hath in these last days spoken to us by his son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things” (Heb.1:1).

(The last days of the Mosaic dispensation - Jesus, firstbegotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth = heir of all things Rev.1:5).

The writer to the Hebrews wants us to draw a contrast between Sinai and Zion, between the voice of God to Moses and the voice of Jesus to us, for we are now commanded by God to listen to Jesus; 'hear ye him' (Lk.9:35). Jesus was the fulfilment of the law and the prophets, that is why the transfiguration account emphasises that, 'when the voice (of God) was past Jesus was found alone' (Lk.9:36). Both Moses (the law) and Elijah (the prophets) had disappeared. Once again we find that Hebrews and 2 Peter stress the same point.

EXODUS 19

HEBREWS 12

2 PETER1(transfiguration)

Mt. Sinai (v.18).

Mt Sinai (v.18).

The holy mount (v.18).

God answers Moses by a voice (v.19).

Him (God) that warneth from heaven (v.25).

This voice (God's) which came from heaven we heard (v.18).

Whole mount quaked greatly (v.18).

Voice shook the earth (v.26).

The people feared (20:19).

Moses feared (v.21).

The disciples feared (Lk. 9:35).

A thick cloud (v.9,16).

Tempest [storm clouds?] (v.21).

A cloud (Lk. 9:34).

"See that ye refuse not him that speaketh"[Jesus] (v.25 cp. Heb. 1:1).

"This is my beloved son in whom I am well pleased (v.17), hear ye him" [Jesus] (Lk. 9:34).

The whole thrust of the argument in Hebrews is that the Levitical dispensation had been replaced by Christ's sacrifice. It was a last appeal to the Jews not to turn back to the Mosaic system, for soon (AD 70) it would be removed in its totality. The writer urges them to listen to Jesus' warning from heaven (Revelation).

The second epistle of Peter follows a similar theme, and is also a late epistle, written shortly before Peter's death (1:14). It is very appropriate that Peter in the same chapter should refer to the 'prophecy of Scripture' given to 'men of God (=John) moved by the Holy Spirit' (1:21; cp. Rev.1:10), for had not Jesus himself linked the death of Peter with John receiving the revelation of his coming? (John 21:18-24).

‘It is generally agreed that Hebrews was written near, but not after, the destruction of Jerusalem. The writer throughout speaks of the Levitical ritual as still in force’ (Angus). ‘It is impossible to suppose that a writer wishing to demonstrate the evanescent nature of the Levitical dispensation and writing after the temple service had been discontinued, should not have pointed to that event as strengthening his argument’ (Marcus Dods). If outside commentators can grasp this point, why can’t we?

QUESTION 2:

Isn’t Revelation borrowing from Hebrews and 1st and 2nd of Peter, as it borrows from almost every other book in the Bible?

ANSWER:

This argument is contrived, for all revelation is progressive. The Bible is the story of God manifestation. He reveals himself in the same way as he teaches us, ‘precept upon precept, line upon line; here a little, and there a little’. God’s revelation is in shadow and type until Christ ‘for it pleased the Father that in him should all the fullness dwell’ (Col.1:19), but the revelation is still incomplete for he will be manifest in a multitude.

In a similar way the prophecies are progressive, each contributing to the following prophecy until the picture is complete. The ‘man of sin’ prophecy for example follows this same developmental pattern:

1. Isa.14: 4-15 (=king of Babylon = first fulfilment).

2. Dan.8:9-27 (= Antiochus Epiphanies = first fulfilment).

3. 2 Thess.2: 3-12 (= Paul’s enemy in the first century ecclesia = first fulfilment).

4. Rev.13:11-18 = THE FULL REVELATION.

To this list we might add Judas who, as the ‘son of perdition’ (John.17:12; 2 Thess.2:3) was also a type of the man of sin, who comes out of the household of faith.

In the above example the man of sin in Rev.13:11-18 is not borrowing from the other prophecies; it is building on them. It adds new perspective to the vision in language and idiom that is unique to the book of Revelation. Similarly, we can be sure that Hebrews, 1 and 2 Peter are quoting Revelation because they often introduce matters

which have received no mention whatever in their context but which are fully explained in Revelation. A good example of this is the message to the ecclesia at Ephesus:

Revelation 2:1-7

‘Unto the angel of the church of Ephesus write; These things saith he that holdeth the seven stars in his right hand, who walketh in the midst (God walking amongst the trees in the garden) of the seven golden candlesticks; (= trees) I know thy works, and thy labour, and thy patience, and how thou canst not bear them which are evil: and thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars: And hast borne, and hast patience, and for my name's sake hast laboured, and hast not fainted. Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love (Adam). Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, (fall from grace) and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick (= tree of life, cp. Ex.25:31-39) out of his place, except thou repent. But

this thou hast, that thou hatest the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God' (Eden).

This message belongs naturally in Revelation and is based on Adam and Eves' fall from grace. It is also extensively quoted in Hebrews:

HEBREWS written c. AD 67

REVELATION Ch. 2 EPHESUS

"But call to remembrance the former days, in which after ye were illuminated ye endured a great fight of afflictions" (Heb.10:32).

"Remember from whence thou art fallen…will remove thy lampstands (illumination) ….I know thy works and thy labour" (v. 1-7).

HEBREWS written c. AD 67

REVELATION Ch.2 EPHESUS

"God is not unrighteous to forget your work and the love, which ye showed towards his name" (Heb.6:10).

"I know thy works and thy labour and thy patience"(v.2).

"That ye wax not weary fainting in your souls"(Heb.12:3).

"And hast borne, and hast patience and for my names sake hast laboured and hast not fainted"(v.3).

"That no man fall after the same example of disobedience" (Heb.4:11, cp. 6:6).

"Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen" (v.5).

"…how much more shall we not escape, who turn away from him that warneth from heaven"(Heb.12:26).

"Revelation is the only message from Jesus spoken from heaven to the ecclesias."

"And this word, yet once more signifieth the removing of those things that are shaken" (Heb.12:27).

"I will remove thy lampstand…." (v.5) (= spirit gifts + the Temple).

To suggest that Revelation is 'borrowing' from Hebrews contradicts the evidence, for it is Revelation that draws the comparisons with the fall from grace, and it is Revelation that is the natural home for this text, to suggest otherwise is to do violence to any sort of meaningful interpretation - it is well and truly putting the horse behind the cart.

The inevitable conclusion is that Hebrews is quoting from Revelation and that therefore Revelation has an early date. 1

While there is no evidence that Paul himself wrote an apocalypse, he claims to have been the recipient of revelatory visions or ecstatic experiences (Gal.1:11-17; 1 Cor.9: 1; 15:18. See Acts 9:9-19; 16:9; 18:9-10; 22:6-11, 17-21; 26:12-18; 27:23-24).

In Gal.1:12 he speaks of his Damascus Road experience as an apocalypse (revelation) from Jesus Christ, and in 2 Cor.12:1 he speaks of 'visions and revelations (apocalypses) of the Lord' which are presumably his own experience. It is likely that Paul is the man of whom he speaks, who experienced the journey to the third heaven where he heard unspeakable things (2 Cor.12:1-10).

There are four relatively extensive scenarios in the Pauline letters, three of which centre on the parousia of Jesus (1 Thess.4:13-18; 2 Thess.1:5-12; 1 Cor.15:51-57) and the so-called 'Pauline apocalypse' which centres on the coming of the eschatological antagonist (man of sin) in 2 Thess.2:1-12. There are also shorter scenarios in 1 Thess.1:9-10; 3:13; 5:23.

It is apparent then that Paul had received some form of revelation probably while he was away in Arabia (Gal.1:7: was he at Sinai for 40 days?). The question remains to be asked: Why would the apostle Paul receive an apocalypse of the Lord's parousia prior to A.D. 70 if it had no relevance whatsoever to the first century believers? It is clear that the first century believers and even Paul himself expected the return of their Lord before A.D. 70 – but that was dependent on the repentance of the nation, and the nation did not repent.

One of Paul's outstanding prophecies is that of the man of sin – although there are many points of contact between Paul's passages and the Olivet prophecy 1 the style and language of Paul's writings shows that he had received an independent vision.

The similarities between the 'Pauline revelation' and the Olivet prophecy/Revelation are explained by the Holy Spirit, the common factor in all 'apocalypses'. In 2 Thess. Paul assures the believers that the parousia is not yet at hand because the last event before the Lord's 'revelation' is the 'revelation' of the man of sin. Paul says that his readers know "what restrains, so that he may be revealed in his own time" (2 Thess.2:6).'What restrains' is neuter (to katechon) in verse 6, but 'he who restrains' in verse 7 is masculine (ho katechon). The commentators have all sorts of suggestions2 but the present writer thinks that 'what restrains' (neuter) is the abyss mentioned in Rev.9:13 and 'he who restrains' is the angel of the abyss (who has the keys) whose name is Abaddon/Appollyon (= the destroyer, Rev.9:11). Paul warns that the man of sin would come out of the household (2 Thess.2:4) and would perform signs: 'Whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders' (2 Thess.2:9). This particular person is probably the same one that Paul refers to in 2 Cor.11:13,14:

'For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ. And no marvel for even Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light'.

Suffice to say then that Paul received an independent 'revelation' prior to A.D. 70, this 'revelation' has many similarities with the Olivet prophecy and the book of Revelation, and like them it had a typical fulfillment in the first century (for the mystery of iniquity doth already work; 2 Thess.2:7) but awaits its true fulfillment sometime in the near future.

CAN REVELATION BE DATED FROM CHAPTER 17:9-11?

'And here is the mind which hath wisdom. The seven heads are seven mountains, on which the woman sitteth. And there are seven kings: five are fallen, and one is, and the other is not yet come; and when he cometh he must continue a short while. And the beast that was, and is not, even he is the eighth, and is of the seven, and goeth into perdition.'.

There is every evidence that Rev.17:9,10 dates the book of Revelation to the reign of Nero. This is discussed in Digression 12.1 (A TALE OF TWO CITIES – JERUSALEM VERSUS ROME).

EXTERNAL EVIDENCE: THE TESTIMONY OF IRENAEUS

Irenaeus who was a native of Asia Minor, claims to have known Polycarp who was a disciple of John. In circa A.D.180 he wrote the following with regard to the name of the beast in Rev.13:18:

'If it had been necessary that his name should be publicly proclaimed at the present season, it would have been uttered by him who saw the Apocalypse. For it was seen no such long time ago, but almost in our own generation, at the end of the reign of Domitian'.

We have various options when assessing this passage and we will examine each of them, they are as follows:

1) The translation of the passage is faulty; 'it was seen' actually means he (John) was

seen (still alive) at the end of Domitian's reign.

2) The translation is correct but Irenaeus was confused and therefore his testimony is

incorrect.

3) The translation is correct and the testimony is valid – Revelation was written by

John during Domitian's reign.

ANALYSIS:

1) The reading of John into the passage (instead of 'it') is very dubious. The passage

is twice quoted by Eusebuis, who supplies us with the original Greek. The Greek is much more naturally taken to refer to the Apocalypse (it) than to the person (he). Moreover the Latin translation (visum) is definitely against the person – it should be 'visa'. 'Visum' would have to refer to the name of the beast.1 If this is correct (and this seems likely to the present writer) then the translation should read as follows:

If it had been necessary that his name (THE BEAST) should be publicly proclaimed at the present season, it would have been uttered by him (JOHN) who saw the Apocalypse. For it (THE BEAST) was seen no such long time ago, but almost in our generation, at the end of the reign of Domitian (A.D. 81 – A.D. 96).

If this is correct Irenaeus was not referring to John or the Apocalypse but to the beast. In this context it is interesting to note that about A.D. 88/89 a third pseudo - Nero - again made his appearance amongst the Parthians and threatened the Roman Empire (See digression 12.1 page 8). Another alternative is that it is a reference to the gigantic statue of the Emperor Domitian that was erected at the temple at Ephesus.

If the translation is correct in stating that the Apocalypse was given during the reign of Domitian, this still does not rule out a date before A.D. 70! Domitian was the younger son of Vespasian, and Titus was the elder. In December of 69 Vespasian was acclaimed Emperor. But for the first half of 70 he was occupied in Alexandria, while his elder son Titus engaged upon the siege of Jerusalem. His younger son Domitian, the sole representative of the family in Rome, accepted the name of Caesar and the imperial residence and was invested with full consular authority, his name being placed at the head of all dispatches and edicts. As Josephus puts it, he was ruler until his father should come, and for over six months with the backing of the army chief Mucianus, his writ ran.

His ambitions and abuse of power was so great, that his father Vespasian, wrote the following to him from Alexandria:

'I am much obliged to you, my son, for letting me still be Emperor and for not having yet deposed me.'

It is clear therefore, that Domitian had the full powers of the Emperor, and that he reigned temporarily in place of his father between A.D. 69 – A.D. 70. It is quite possible that Irenaeus confused this interregnum with his later reign (A.D. 81 – A.D. 96). However, the present writer believes that A.D. 69 – 70 is still too late a date for the writing of the Apocalypse.

2) Assuming that Irenaeus' testimony is correct, we are still left with the problem of

how to interpret the weight of inspired scriptural evidence that contradicts his statement. The present writer has not seen that done to his satisfaction as yet.

CONCLUSION:

The testimony of Irenaeus, although strong, has no means of being tested for its reliability or its accuracy; by contrast the testimony of scripture is inspired, and provided the interpretation thereof is along scriptural principles it indicates an early date for the apocalypse. The present writer will always prefer the testimony of scripture to that of the 'early church fathers'. Nevertheless option 1) is a textually valid interpretation that harmonises both history and scripture, and option 2) shows that even if the testimony is accepted at face value it does not preclude a date before 70. As far as the reliability of Irenaeus is concerned, it must be remembered that he twice states that John lived to the reign of Trajan (A.D. 98 – 117) and this does not relate very well to the early church legend that upon his release, John went on horseback searching for one of his disciples who had gone astray (John would have been nearly 100 years old!).

THE OLIVET PROPHECY AND THE COMING OF THE LORD JESUS CHRIST

The Olivet prophecy, like all prophecy, has a typical short-term fulfilment and a long- term true fulfilment:'Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words will not pass away' (Mtt.24: 35).

The earth (= the nation of Israel) did 'pass away' as did the 'heavens"'(= the Jewish ecclesia). The Lord warned his saints to flee Jerusalem when they saw it, "compassed about with armies" (Lk.21:20). Nero's death and the ensuing trouble over his succession caused the general Vespasian to withdraw his troops and break the siege. The Jews saw this as a victory, but the (obedient) saints heeded Christ's words and fled from Jerusalem and Judea. Vespasian went to Rome to be crowned Caesar, in the meanwhile his son Titus was dispatched to finish the siege. Therefore the 'heaven' (ecclesia) and 'earth' (nation) ceased to exist in the land after A.D. 70 – but Christ's words will not pass away.

In order for this to be true the heaven and the earth have to be established again – Christ himself emphasises this: 'Now learn the parable of the fig tree' (Mtt.24:32). In other words the nation has to be re-established in the land – this has already happened (1948, but the tree has as yet not put forth its leaves), but we are still awaiting the re-establishment of a Jewish ecclesia in Israel: 'signs in the sun and the moon, and in the stars' (Lk.21:25). 'And a great sign was seen in heaven; a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars… travailing in birth to be delivered' (Rev.12:1,2; cp.John.16: 21).

‘Verily I say unto you, this generation shall not pass away till all these things be fulfilled’ (Mtt.24:34). The Lord was not referring to the generation of his day, but to the future generation that would see the establishment of the nation and the birth of the ecclesia in Israel. The Psalmist says: ‘This is the generation of them that seek after him, that seek thy face, O God of Jacob’.

‘Lift up your heads, O ye gates (i.e., those that sit in the gate – the watchman), And lift up your heads ye everlasting (ancient) doors; And the king of glory shall come in’ (Ps.24:6,7). In the Lord’s words the generation that sees these things occurring are told to ‘lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh’ (Lk.21:28). ‘He is nigh even at the door’” (Mtt.24:32).

The generation that heard the Lord’s preaching and saw his miracles did not repent ‘the tribes of the earth (Israel) did not mourn’ (Mtt.24: 30). It was a generation of vipers (Mtt.12:34), an evil and adulterous generation (Mtt.12:39), a faithless and perverse generation (Mtt.17:17). ‘Verily I say unto you all these things (the blood of the righteous) shall come upon this generation’ (Mtt.23:36), until they were able to say ‘Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord’ (Mtt.23:39).

Therefore the Lord came in judgement in A.D. 70:

‘Henceforth ye shall see the Son of Man sitting on the right hand of power and coming in the clouds of heaven’ (the words of Jesus to the high priest [Mtt.26:64]at

his trial, quoted from Dan.7:13). These words must have been fulfilled in the first century, otherwise Christ would have been declared a false prophet; it is no coincidence therefore that Revelation opens with the same words:

‘Look he is coming with the clouds of heaven, and every eye shall see him; and all the peoples of the earth will mourn for him. So shall it be! Amen’ (Rev.1:7). This verse is a composite verse quoting from Dan.7:13 and Zech.12:10-14. The context in

Daniel is the Lord Jesus Christ being received into the presence of Yahweh after his resurrection – the themes that sum up the chapter are dominion and judgement. Opposed to this the theme of the Zechariah quote is repentance. The nation refused to repent and was therefore destroyed in A.D. 70. It is very probable that the high priest, like the martyr Stephen, saw a vision of Christ – but this time coming in judgement. As the Son of God, Jesus sent his army – 12 legions of angels (controlling human affairs) against Jerusalem. As a prophet, Jesus had to be proven right – so in the sense of bringing judgement (in order to induce repentance) Jesus did ‘come’ in A.D. 70 and Jerusalem was destroyed by the Romans as he had predicted in Mtt.22:1-7.

CONCLUSION:

The close correspondence between the seals and the Olivet prophecy show that Revelation had a typical fulfilment in A.D. 70 – the Lord did ‘come in judgement’. This requires Revelation to be written prior to A.D. 70 otherwise the references to the Olivet prophecy would be pointless. However the present writer is not advancing a preterits view, for the true fulfilment (conditional on repentance) is still in the future.

DIGRESSION ON THE OLIVET PROPHECY: [Mtt.24; Mk.13; Lk.21; Lk.17]

(A comparison between the Gospels, the Olivet prophecy and the seals.)

WHITE HORSE (1st seal) (v.1)

Conquest.

“And this Gospel shall be preached in all the world for a testimony unto all nations; and then shall the end come” (Mtt.24:14, cp. Acts 1:8; 9:15).

RED HORSE (2nd seal) (v.3,4)

“…power to take peace from the earth and that they should kill one another: and there was given unto him a great sword.”

“Think not that I am come to send peace, but a sword. For I am come to set a man at variance against his father…”(Mtt.10: 34-35).

“…and ye shall be betrayed by parents, and brethren…”(Lk.21:16).

BLACK HORSE (3rd seal) (v.5,6)

Famine…..

“…and there shall be famines” (Mtt.24:17; Mk.13:8).

PALE HORSE (4th seal) (v.7,8)

Death and hades….

“…nation shall rise against nation (Mtt.24:7), famines and pestilence (Lk.21:11; Mk.13:8), fall by the edge of the sword…Jerusalem trodden down of the Gentiles” (Lk.21:24).

SLAIN UNDER THE ALTAR (5th seal) (v.9-11)

HOW LONG?

“But before all these things they shall lay their hands on you…persecute you…some of you shall they cause to be put to death…In your patience ye shall win your souls” (Lk.21: 15-17).

“But he that shall endure to the end, the same shall be saved” (Mtt.24: 13).

SIXTH SEAL (v.12)

A great earthquake.

“There shall be great earthquakes” (Lk.21: 11).

Sun and moon as blood (v.12).

And the stars of heaven fell to earth (v.12).

“But immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light.

…and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heaven shall be shaken” (Mtt.24:29, see Acts 2:20). “And thou Capernaum which art exalted to heaven, shall be thrust down to hell” (Lk.10: 15, cp. v.18).

REVELATION

GOSPELS

FIG TREE (v.13)

AD 70: Lk.23:31; 13:6-9; Mk.11:14.1948:Mtt.24:32

Shaken of a mighty wind (v.13).

"...and the rain descended and the floods came (cp. Lk.17:27) and the winds blew, and smote upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall thereof" (Mtt.7:27, cp. 23:38; 24:2).

Heaven and earth departed as a scroll (of the law) when it is rolled together (v.14).

"Heaven and earth shall pass away but my words shall not pass away" (Mtt.24: 35).

Every mountain and island moved out of their place (v.14).

"...ye shall not only do this which is done in the fig tree, but also if ye shall say unto this mountain (= the Temple mount, Mt Zion), be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea; it shall be done" (Mtt.21:21; 17:20).

And the kings of the earth...(v.15).

See Acts 4:25-27.

Fall on us...(v.16).

"Daughters of Jerusalem weep not for me... For, behold, the days are coming...then shall they begin to say to the mountains, Fall on us; and to the hills, cover us" (Lk.23: 30).

The great day of his wrath... (v.17).

Who is able to stand...(v.17).

"...these are the days of vengeance that all things which are written may be fulfilled" (Lk.21:22).

"Wrath upon his people" (Lk.21: 23).

"Watch ye therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that come to pass, and to stand before the son of man" (Lk.21:36)

NOTE: Even the lamentable state of the ecclesias is mentioned in Mtt.24:9-13: "Then shall ye be handed over to be (1) persecuted and put to death, and you will be hated by all nations because of me. At that time (2) many will turn away from the faith (3) and will betray each other, (4) and many false prophets will appear and deceive many people. (5) Because of the increase of wickedness, (6) the love of most will grow cold, (7) he who stand firm to the end will be saved".

(1) SMYRNA – Persecuted

(2) EPHESUS – Fallen

(3) PERGAMOS – Betrayal (Balaam)

(4) THYATIRA – Jezebel (prophetess)

(5) SARDIS – Dead, defiled garments

(6) LAODICEA – Neither cold nor hot.

(7) PHILADELPHIA – Thou hast kept the word of my patience

The following chronological reconstruction is tentatively offered:

A.D. 57/58 – EPHESIANS: Written by Paul to the ecclesia at Ephesus during his imprisonment at Caesarea (Acts 24:27; 25:4), he praises their faith and love and prays for their enlightenment by the Holy Spirit1 – his audience is predominately Gentile.

Banishment of John to Patmos.2

A.D. 54 – Nero ascends the throne.

A.D. 64 –The great fire of Rome.

A.D. 64 – REVELATION: Given to the apostle John by the Lord Jesus Christ who warns the Ephesians that their spirit gifts would be removed. (The removal of the lampstand is probably an indication to the Judaizers that their lampstand = the Temple would also be removed.)3

A.D. 64 – The death of Paul.4

A.D 65 – Start of the persecution under Nero.5

A.D. 65 and start of A.D. 66 – 1 and 2 Peter. Death of Peter.

Early in A.D. 66 – HEBREWS: Written (by Barnabas?) to the Ephesians; the last ditch appeal to the Jewish section of the ecclesia: 'How much more shall we not escape, who turn away from him that warneth from heaven' (Jesus Christ's Revelation).6

A.D. 66½ - Start of the Jewish war (3½ years). Many Jewish Christians fall away after the death of Paul and Peter, and return to Judaism in support of their fellow Jews in the war against Roman oppression.

A.D. 68 – Nero commits suicide.

A.D. 70 – Removal of the lampstand – Temple destroyed and spirit gifts withdrawn from those who had fallen away.

CONCLUSION:

Those who argue for a late date of Revelation do so against the grain of the internal evidence, usually for the purpose of imposing a continuous historical interpretation. In so doing they ignore one of the most cataclysmic events in the history of the Jewish nation (and early ecclesia) thus robbing Scriptures of much of their power.

NOTES ON THE DATING OF REVELATION

THE EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS WRITTEN TO THE HEBREWS AT EPHESUS

(A SECONDARY CONCLUSION)

A secondary conclusion is that the epistle to the Hebrews was written to the Hebrews at Ephesus. (Otherwise why does the author bother using these quotes to reinforce his argument?) The secondary conclusion is merely a logical consequence, and of no influence on our primary conclusion, that Hebrews quotes Revelation, giving it a date pre A.D. 70.

It is, however, interesting to examine the question of the authorship and destination of Hebrews as a separate issue.

The proposal suggested here is that Hebrews was written by Barnabas and that the destination of the epistle was the Hebrews at Ephesus.

The reason why Barnabas is writing to the Hebrews at Ephesus is because the apostle Paul is dead. In writing his epistle, it would be natural for Barnabas to base his exhortations on Paul's earlier epistle to the Ephesians (written ca. A.D. 57/58) and on the warning to Ephesus received in Revelation (ca. A.D. 64).

Hebrews written by Barnabas ?

Barnabas was a Cypriot Jew and a Levite, he was also a rich man, a property owner and probably a businessman. We are told in Acts (4:34-36) that he sold all his wealth and laid it at the feet of the apostles. It has been suggested that he was given the name Barnabas 'son of exhortation' (instead of son of the law ?) because he responded to the exhortation directed at him by Jesus. He was the rich young man of Matt.19:16-19 who had kept all these things from his youth up - from his bar mitzvah! (See Studies in the Gospels, H.A.W., p. 521.)

The letter to the Hebrews is written by someone very familiar with Levitical ritual, who was not himself counted among them that heard the gospel firsthand (Heb.2:3,4). The metaphors used in Hebrews are those of a landowner - businessman; God is a wage-payer (11:6), men must render an account (13:17), coming into an inheritance (1:2,14; 6:12,17; 9:15; 11:7; 12:17), that would bring you no profit (only here13:17), do not live for money (13:5), making the same calculation (10:35). The apostle Paul's metaphors are all drawn from the law and the law courts. Furthermore Paul is not mentioned in this letter, and Timothy has been in prison (13:23). This imprisonment is not mentioned in 1 and 2 Timothy or in Philippians and must therefore be dated after Paul's trial in Rome.

The conclusion seems to be that the apostle Paul had been executed, and therefore Barnabas, who was familiar with Paul's work and was also somewhat of a 'trouble-shooter' in the early ecclesia (Acts 9:26-30; 11:22-30; 15:22-39) undertook to progress the apostle's work.

As a Levite, who had sold his goods, Barnabas was well placed to exhort his fellow Hebrews:

ACTS 4 :34 –36

Barnabas (= son of exhortation).

Suffer the word of exhortation (13:22).

A Levite.

"If therefore perfection were by the Levitical priesthood what further need was there that another priest should rise after the order of Melchizedek, and not be called after the order of Aaron?" (7:11).

"Levi hath no portion or inheritance with his brethren; the Lord is his inheritance" (Deut.10:9).

"....coming into or possessing an inheritance" (1:2,14; 6:12,17; 9:15; 11:7; 12:17).

Brought the money and laid it at the apostles feet.

"Be free from the love of money" (RV Heb.13:5).

Was Barnabas referring to Paul's Ephesian Epistle?

EPHESIANS written ca. AD 58 HEBREWS written ca. AD 67

For he is our peace....

“King of Salem, which is king of Peace” (Heb.7:2).

“Who hath made both (Jew/Gentile one and brake down the middle wall of partition (between God and man) having abolished in his flesh…”

“By a new and living way which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say his flesh…”(Heb.9:10).

“The enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances” (Ephesians 2:14,15).

“Carnal ordinances, imposed until the time of reformation” (Heb.10:20).

“Wherefore I also, after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus, and love unto all the saints…”

“God is not unrighteous to forget your work and the love, which ye showed towards his name” (Heb.6:10).

“Cease not to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers; that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him; the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know…” (Ephesians 1:15-18).

“But call to remembrance the former days, in which after ye were illuminated (enlightened by the spirit)…” (Heb.10:32).

EPHESIANS ch.1

HEBREWS ch.2

PSALM 8

The Father of glory (v.17).

To usward who believe, according to the working of the (strength RV) of his mighty power (v.19).

The heavenly places, far above principality, and power, and might, and dominion (v.21).

And have put all things (in subjection RV) under his feet (v.22).

That filleth all in all (v.23).

Hebrews 2:5-8:

“For unto the angels hath he not put in subjection the world to come, whereof we speak. But one in a certain place testified, saying, What is man, that thou art mindful of him? or the son of man, that thou visitest him? Thou madest him a little lower than the angels; thou crownedst him with glory and honour, and didst set him over the works of thy hands: Thou hast put all things in subjection under his feet. For in that he put all in subjection under him, he left nothing that is not put under him. But now we see not yet all things put under him.”

Thy glory (toward thy son) (v.1).

Ordained strength (v.2).

Thy glory above the heavens (v.1).

Madest him to have dominion (v.6).

Thou hast put all things under his feet (v.6).

In all the earth (v.1,9).

It is interesting to observe that Psalm 110 is brought together with Psalm 8 in Eph.1:20,22. Psalm 110 is also twice quoted in Heb.1:3,13. Psalm 8 and 110 were also used together by Paul in 1 Cor.15:27.

The theme of the epistle to the Hebrews is the superiority of the new covenant over the old – it was a warning to those Jews, who because of the pressure of outward trial and opposition were in danger of falling away. The Gentile was a stranger to the covenants of promise while the law existed (Eph.2:12) but the Jew also could not inherit those promises (Heb.11:39) until the law had been fulfilled and abolished.

Note the similarities between the themes:

EPHESIANS (GENTILE)

HEBREWS (JEWS)

Saved through faith… not of works that man should glory (2:8).

Salvation by faith (Hebrews chapter 11).

Strangers from the covenants of promise (2:12).

Strangers and pilgrims (11:9,13).

No more strangers and sojourners but fellow citizens (2:19).

He hath prepared them a city (11:16).

Ephesians was written to a Gentile audience (Eph.2:11; 3:6-9). Hebrews was written to a Jewish: such expressions as 'The fathers' (Heb.1:1), 'Your fathers' (3:9), 'seed of Abraham' (2:16) and the language of 13:9-15 witnesses to this

Another recurring theme in Ephesians is that of the 'heavenly places' or 'heavenly things' – it is used five times in Ephesians and only three times elsewhere. Two of the occurrences are in Hebrews. Once in John 31:2:

'(The priests) who serve that which is a copy and shadow of the heavenly things' (Heb.8:5).

'It was necessary therefore that the copies of the things in the heavens should be cleansed with these; but heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these' (Heb.9:23).

The Pauline themes of boldness of access, and sonship are also concepts upon which the author to the Hebrews expands:

'In whom we have boldness and access in confidence through faith in him' (Eph.3:12).

'But Christ as a son over his house; whose house we are, if we hold fast our boldness…' (Heb.3:16).

'Let us draw near with boldness unto the throne of grace' (Heb.4:16).

'Having therefore boldness to enter into the holy place…cast not away therefore your boldness, which hath great recompense of reward' (Heb.10:19,35)

Whereas Paul makes the Ephesians aware of the privilege of being 'foreordained unto the adoption as sons through Jesus Christ' (Eph.1:5), the author to the Hebrews reminds them that with sonship comes responsibility and chastisement for wrongdoing (Heb.12:5,6).

THE BACKGROUND OF THE EPHESIAN ECCLESIA IN RELATION TO HEBREWS

The conversion of the disciples of John the Baptist which occurred in Acts 19 may explain some of the problems facing the Ephesian congregation. These disciples had not heard of Jesus Christ nor had they received the Holy Spirit. They were obviously awaiting the Messiah, yet steeped under the rituals of the law. When the apostle Paul arrived at Ephesus he baptised them in the name of the Lord Jesus and they received the Holy Spirit.

Bearing this background in mind it is notable that the author to the Hebrews admonishes his audience – 'not to lay again the foundation of repentance from dead works' (6:1), 'for those that fall away it is impossible to renew them again to repentance' (6:6). Does the author mean to indicate the Baptism of John – which Paul refers to as the baptism of repentance (Acts 19:4)? Were the former disciples of John the Baptist in danger of falling back to the righteousness of the law – and therefore make repentance again, impossible?

'For as touching those who were once enlightened and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Spirit…it is impossible to renew them again unto repentance (Heb.6:4-6).

Luke continues his narrative in Acts 19 (13-17) by relating an incident that occurred at Ephesus. The incident that Luke describes is an acted parable and is closely connected with the baptism of repentance preached by John.

In Luke's account we are told of a Jewish priest called Sceva, and his seven devotees who, while using the names of Jesus and Paul in an attempt to exorcise an evil spirit, are not acknowledged by their patient. In fact two of the exorcists are overcome and flee the house naked and wounded. The connecting clue with John's baptism is the word 'evil spirit' which is only used here and in Lk.11:26 (parallel account Mtt.12:45).

'The unclean spirit when he is gone out of a man, passeth through waterless places, seeking rest; and finding none, he saith I will turn back unto my house whence I came out. And when he is come he findeth it swept and garnished. Then goeth he, and taketh to him seven other spirits more evil than himself; and they enter in and dwell there; and the last state of that man becometh worse than the first' (Lk.11:25,26).

The meaning of the parable is indicated by the words: 'Even so shall it be to this wicked generation' – John the Baptist's mission exorcised the 'evil spirit' in Israel; but then, instead of taking Jesus as the rightful occupant of the house, the nation refused to have him. So the parable prophesied invasion by seven other 'evil spirits' so that the last state of the nation must inevitably be much worse than the first. This happened. The next forty years after Jesus told this parable saw such a drastic moral decline in Jewry that national overthrow became inevitable. The use in this parable of 'evil spirit' (as against 'unclean spirit' everywhere else) is thus explained. The phrase puts emphasis on the meaning of the parable (or type) in Acts 19. The sequence of significant events is truly remarkable:

a) Sceva means 'a prepared vessel' (a vessel fit for destruction?, see Rom.9:22,

Acts 9:15).

b) A chief priest.

c) Jesus and Paul approved by the Gentile hitherto under the domination of an evil spirit.

d) The representative of temple Jewry, devotees of an ungodly cult, flee out of the house, naked and wounded (cp. John 12:31).

e) In particular, two of them (like Jannes and Jambres) who associate themselves with the name of Jesus (like the subversive Judaists in the early ecclesia) are exposed as impostors; and of course the other five lose all influence.

f) Holy books, worth five myriads of pieces of silver are discarded in favour of the books of the gospel.

g) The narrative ends with the words (v.21) 'after these things were fulfilled', which suggests that the above is to be read as a kind of prophecy. (Annas, his five sons and brother-in-law Caiaphas, were all priests prior to A.D. 70).

h) In contrast to this we have the 12 former disciples of John the Baptist now baptised into Jesus and filled with the Holy Spirit – they represent the new Israel.

So, like the nation of Israel, the Jewish members of the Ephesian congregation were now faced with either accepting John the Baptist's work as preparatory for the Messiah – Jesus Christ - or rejecting Jesus as the Messiah. In which case John's work was in vain and ultimately their nationalism and zeal for the law (which were often one and the same) would lead to the destruction of the nation and the Temple.

The situation within the community described in the epistle to the Hebrews (10:32-34) is one of persecution and difficulty, but not of martyrdom for 12:4 states that they had 'not yet resisted unto blood' in the cause of Christ: 'Remember the days gone by, when, newly enlightened1 you met the challenge of great sufferings and held firm. Some of you were abused and tormented to make a public show, while others stood loyally by those who were so treated. For indeed you shared the sufferings of the prisoners, and you cheerfully expected the seizure of your possessions, knowing that you possessed something better and lasting' (Heb.10:32-34).

It is noteworthy that although they were made a public show 'a gazingstock' (AV), they were not subjected to loss of life. The Greek word used here is THEATRIZO and signifies to make a spectacle, from which we get our word theatre. In this context it is interesting to note the riot at Ephesus which took place in the magnificent theatre of that city (Acts 19:31). In the past the community had loyally stood by their fellow Christians, but now they had to be reminded of their solidarity:

'Remember those in prison as if you were with them; and those who are being maltreated, for like them you are still in the world' (Heb.13:3).

The author is looking back to a period of persecution but not martyrdom.

1.4 THE STRUCTURE OF REVELATION

'Prepare the work without, And make it ready for thyself in the field; And afterwards build thine house.' (Prov.24:27)

There are many different structures given by various expositors of the apocalpse.1 Some of them have good commendation; others are not worth too much consideration. Of course, an expositors view and school of interpretation will determine his structure of the book, as does this present author's view. Nevertheless, Revelation poses a problem because it seems to have more than one determining element for the structure.

Both Nick Lunn Alpha and Omega and H.A.W. Revelation, a Biblical Approach draw attention to feast days in their expositions, but neither arrange these chronologically. If this is done then we obtain a remarkable timetable of feast days.

REVELATION CHAPTER 5: PASSOVER (Pesah)

The language of chapter 5:9-10 is that of the Passover, with the 'Lamb standing as it had been slain' in the midst of the throne (5:6). The Lamb opens the seals – the seals are probably a reference to being, 'purchased unto God by thy blood' (5:9) The blood was a token (Ex.12:13) of redemption (i.e., a sign).2 The lack of a token was also a sign of destruction for those who did not participate in the ceremony.

REVELATION CHAPTER 7: TABERNACLES (Succoth)

Alfred Edersheim has the following to say: 3

"The most joyous of all festive seasons in Israel was the 'Feast of Tabernacles'. It fell at a time of year when the hearts of the people would naturally be full of thankfulness, gladness and expectancy. All crops had been long stored; and now all fruits were also gathered; the vintage past, the land only awaited the softening and refreshment of the 'latter rain' to prepare it for the next crop. But that was not all. As they looked around on the goodly land, the fruits of which had just enriched them, they must have remembered that by miraculous intervention the Lord their God had brought them to this land, and given it to them, and that he ever claimed it as peculiarly his own."

To celebrate the ingathering of the harvest and the goodness of God's blessing in delivering them from the bondage of Egypt and giving them the land, the people built booths or tabernacles. (Ex.23:16; 34:22) The agricultural aspect of the feast saw the addition of a water-drawing ceremony from the pool of Siloam,4 in celebration of the 'latter rain.'5 Water from the pool of Siloam was ceremonially carried to the temple, along with palm and willow branches, where thanks to God was offered for its life giving properties and for the harvest it had caused. The feast of Tabernacles also symbolised the kingdom age, and this explains why the disciples wished to build booths after their vision of the kingdom (transfiguration Lk 9:33) and also why the general population wielded palm branches 6 when Christ entered Jerusalem (Mtt 21:8,9). The prophet Zechariah foretold the celebration of Tabernacles in the kingdom7 (Zech.14:16-20). This is reflected in the Septuagint translation, 'Feast of Completion' (eorte sunteleias) in Ex. 23:16. The Feast of Tabernacles followed closely after the Day of Atonement (5 days later). It took place in the seventh month (start of the Jewish New Year)8 lasted seven days, and had the number seven impressed upon its characteristic sacrifices.9

It was called : (1) The Feast of Ingathering (Ex.23:16)

(2) The Feast of Tabernacles (Lev.23:34; 43)

(3) he Feast of Completion (LXX Ex.23:16)

(4) The Feast (I Kgs.8:2; 2 Chron.5:3; 8:8,9)

(5) The Feast of Yahweh (so literally Lev.23:39)

It was associated with (a) harvest (b) rainfall – waterpouring (c) the outpouring of spirit

(d) booths (e) the eschaton (kingdom age).

Revelation chapter 7 recounts the final harvest after the sealing. The 144,000 who represent the, 'ingathering' have 'palms in their hands' (7:9) "neither shall they, thirst any more; neither the sun light on them, nor any heat." (7:16) The saints are now protected from the elements by 'Yahweh's Tabernacle', for God will, "spread his Tabernacle over them." (R.V. 7:15) These are all allusions to the feast of Tabernacles.

REVELATION CHAPTER 8 AND 9. THE DAY OF ATONEMENT (Yom Kippur)

The Day of Atonement is intimately connected with the Feast of Tabernacles, and took place on the tenth day of the seventh month at the start of the Jewish New Year. This was the only occasion when the High Priest was permitted to enter the Most Holy place, carrying a bowl of blood to make atonement for Israel. First he had to offer incense on the golden altar so that smoke filled the Tabernacle. Then he could pass through the veil and sprinkle blood before the mercy seat seven times (Lev.16:31). The introduction to the trumpet section (Rev.8:1-6) is full of detail that belongs to the Day of Atonement ritual. The following examples are culled from Revelation; A Biblical Approach by H.A.W.10

(a) 'Silence in heaven' The allusion is to, 'the whole multitude of the people praying without' at the time of the High Priest's entering into the sanctuary - c.p. Ps.65: 1 (a Psalm for the Day of Atonement); Hab.2:20.

(b) 'Silence in heaven about the space of half an hour'. It is only in reference to the period that the High Priest was in the sanctuary that this detail makes sense.

(c) 'Another angel…having a golden censer'. According to some authorities, it was only on the Day of Atonement that a golden censer was used.

(d) 'There was given unto him much incense'. It is also asserted that an extra large quantity of incense was used on the Day of Atonement – doubtless because of Lev.16:12,13 which required that the High Priest enter into the Holy of Holies clothed (so to speak) in a dense cloud of incense.

(e) 'That he should offer it…upon the golden altar which is before the throne'. That the altar of incense, normally separated from the Holy of Holies by the veil, should be spoken of as 'before the throne' probably implies that the veil has been penetrated – which things took place only on the Day of Atonement.

(f) The sounding of seven trumpets (v.6) by especially appointed priests (cp. 1 Chron.15:24; 2 Chron.29:25-28) was an integral part of the recognised ceremonial for the Day of Atonement.

(g) On the Day of Atonement the High Priest also read from the Law in the hearing of all the people, as he stood at the east gate of the priests court. To this might correspond the angel of Rev.10:2 with the little book which he imparts to John.

(h) Chapter 7:3, 'the sealing of God's servants'. The Jews had a strange tradition, the meaning of which is not quite clear, that on the Day of Atonement every Jew is sealed in one of three books – the book of life (Rev.5:1?), the book of death,11or another book which was to be opened on the following Day of Atonement.

REVELATION CHAPTER 11 - THE FEAST OF DEDICATION AND THE FEAST OF PURIM (Hanukkah, Purim)

The 'Feast of Dedication' or the 'Feast of Lights' (Hanukkah) was a post-Mosaic feast instituted by Judas Maccabeaus in 164 B.C., when after the recovery of Jewish independence from the Syro-Grecian domination, the Temple of Jerusalem was solemnly purified (the old polluted altar removed) its stones put on a separate place on the Temple mount, and the worship of the Lord restored. The feast commenced on the 25th of Chislev (December), and lasted for eight days. Edersheim has the following to say, "From the hesitating language of Josephus, we infer that even in this time the real origin of illuminating the Temple was unknown. Tradition, indeed, has it that when in the restored Temple the sacred candlestick was to be lit, only one flagon of oil, sealed with the signet of the high-priest, was found to feed the lamps. This, then, was pure oil, but the supply was barely sufficient for one day – when, lo, by a miracle, the oil increased and the flagon remained filled for eight days, in memory of which it was ordered to illuminate for the same space of time the Temple and private houses.12 The synagogue reading for the feast of Dedication (Hanukkah) was Numbers chapter 7 read over eight days. Numbers chpt.7 tells of the dedication of the tabernacle, when gifts totalling 2,520 shekels (2x1260) were donated by the tribes. The first Sabbath reading during Hanukkah was Zech.2:14-4:7. The themes of both readings have application to witnessing and dedicating the Temple (1260days and candlesticks). This is essentially the theme of Revelation chapter 11, the dedication (measuring) of the Temple of God (11:1) accomplished by the two witnesses (candlesticks or lampstands) miraculously sustained by the pure oil (Holy spirit) from God. (See chapter 11 of this book)

THE FEAST OF PURIM (Purim)

The name 'purim' was derived from the 'lot', which Haman cast in connection with his wicked desire (Esther 3:7.) Purim was kept with great merriment and rejoicing, when relations were wont to send gifts one to another. Edersheim comments that it is chiefly marked by boisterous and uproarious merrymaking, even beyond the limits of propriety. The feast celebrated the Jews victory over their enemies. Rev.11:10, is a definite reference to this feast:

'And they that dwell on the earth shall rejoice over them (the witnesses); and they shall send gifts one to another; because these two prophets tormented them that dwelt on the earth'. (Compare Esther 9:19,22)

We should also take note that, 'These two prophets tormented them that dwelt on the earth', this must coincide with a similar period of torment by the locust-scorpions of 9:5 – clearly this five-month period must be parallel with the witnessing. (Chapter 10 and 11 are parenthetical.) The time period between Atonement/Tabernacles (Atonement 10th of Tishri, Tabernacles 15th of Tishri), and Purim 15th of Adar, is exactly five months.13

CHAPTER 12: PENTECOST (Feast of weeks or sevens: Shabuah) AND PASSOVER

The Passover was the feast that celebrated the deliverance from Egypt and Pentecost the giving of the law 49 days (7x7) later at Sinai. Passover was also the occasion when the first wave loaf (Jesus Christ) was offered to God. This was made from barley harvested from the Ashes valley across the Kedron. The barley was thrashed in the Temple (originally a threshing floor) finely sieved and baked with oil. Frankincense was put upon it, then the loaf was waved before the Lord, and a handful taken out and burned on the altar; the remainder belonged to the priest. The ritual of reaping the barley is very significant. In order to bring out all that was distinctive in the ceremony, they first asked of the bystanders three times each of these questions: 'Has the sun gone down?' 'With this sickle?' 'Into this basket?' 'On this Sabbath (or first Passover day)?' – and lastly, 'shall I reap?'14 the resulting loaf was waved on the 16th of Nisan.

Pentecost is inseparable from Passover, and is determined by the date of that feast. Originally an agricultural festival, this came to be a celebration of the law given at Sinai. From an agricultural standpoint, Pentecost was a feast of 'first-fruits' (Num.28:26). When two wave loaves (from the barley and corn harvests) were presented to the Lord.15 The imagery of Revelation chapter 12 is based on the Exodus deliverance (see chapter 12 of this book). Once again, we have reference to the, 'blood of the Lamb' (12:11) and to the, 'man child caught up to God and his throne'(12:5) reflecting the nation of Israel's experience at Mt.Sinai, which occurred at Pentecost. (See Digression - The Seventy Sevens prophesy: note 4.)

REVELATION CHAPTER 14: TABERNACLES (Succoth)

Although the first half of the chapter has allusions to Pentecost, so continuing the motif of chapter 12, the latter half of the chapter concentrates on the 'ingathering of the harvest' (14:14-20). The Feast of Tabernacles was the time of the first fruits of the vintage and of the oil. (Ex.23; 16; Lev.23; 34; Deut.16:13) We have two harvests in Revelation chapter 14 one is the vintage, but the other is not defined, only that it is, 'reaped with a sickle.' (More on this in chapter 14 of this book.)

REVELATION CHAPTER 15 AND 16 - ATONEMENT AND PASSOVER.

The theme of Tabernacles and Atonement from the previous chapter is continued into chapter 15 (both feasts are intimately linked). In verse five however, we witness a reversal of the liturgy practised on the Day of Atonement (Lev.16). The angels do not come forth to pronounce the priestly blessing upon the people, but rather to punish. Atonement can no longer be obtained by means of the blood of animals, or even the blood of the Lamb; now only the shedding of the sinners' own blood will suffice. The earth can only be sanctified and cleansed from its iniquity through the pouring out of the seven vials, imitating the ritual of Lev.16:19. On the day of Atonement, the High priest discarded his ceremonial garb, and wore only 'white linen' (cp.the angels in v.6 – white linen and golden girdles). The sanctuary was filled with an immense cloud of incense (cp.15: 1) and, 'there shall be no man in the tabernacle' when the High Priest is making atonement (Lev.16:17) – compare 15:8, 'no man was able to enter into the temple, till the seven plagues of the seven angels should be finished,' (R.V.) This signifies that the saints are not able to enter the Holy of Holies (receive immortality) until the vials are poured out (see 16:17). The introduction to chapter 15 also uses the language of Passover deliverance; they sing the song of Moses and the Lamb (15:3). Psalm 118 was literally 'the song of the Lamb'. It, with Psalm117 perhaps, was very probably the hymn sung by the Lord and his disciples at the Last Supper (Mtt.26:30), for it was part of the Paschal Hallel. Amongst connections with the sacrificial work of the Lord we also have reference in this Psalm to, 'All nations compassed me about, but in the name of the Lord will I destroy them'. The resemblance with Revelation 15 is

unmistakable. ‘All nations shall come and worship before thee; for thy judgements are made manifest’ (see chapter 12 of this book, pages 6-8) for connections between Passover deliverance and Revelation chapter 15).

In summary then, Revelation 15 introduces the vials in terms of atonement retribution (not forgiveness) – the pouring out of the vials are based on the Feast of Atonement. Passover language is also appropriate, for the saints are delivered during the penultimate vial - ‘behold I come as a thief’ 16:14-16. Just as in Egypt, the salvation of one group of people contrasted with the death of another.

REVELATION CHAPTER 19-PASSOVER.

Victory against the nations is anticipated in chapter 15, a detailed programme is unveiled in chapter 16 and the final battle of 16:14-16 is enlarged upon in chapter 19. Chapter 19 is therefore parallel with the penultimate vial. The victory of chapter 19 is done in the language and liturgy of the Passover. The vintage was trodden in chpt.14, produces the ‘wine’ that is poured out of the vials or cups of chpt.16. This is, ‘the cup of the fierceness of his wrath’ (16:19), an obvious contrast with ’the cup of blessing’, an integral feature of the Passover meal. This is the ‘great day of God Almighty’ (16:14), also called ‘the great supper of God’ (19:17) and is the time of the ‘marriage of the Lamb’(19:7 cp.16:15 – I come as a thief) and the, ‘marriage supper of the Lamb’(19:9). Jesus begins his ministry with a marriage supper (John chpt.2) and also ends his ministry with a marriage supper, both in the first century (the Last Supper) and the future – but this time an occasion of joy.

The nations drink the cup of wrath, but the saints drink the covenant symbol, new with him in his kingdom (Mtt.26: 29). This is the ‘new Passover’ instituted on, and fulfilling the typology of, the ‘old Passover.’ It is therefore appropriate that the Passover Psalms are alluded to – the great ‘Hallel’, which compromised Psalm 113-118, was recited at the Passover. Each first line was repeated till the end of Psalm 118, and the people responded to the rest.

The questions that must be answered are the following;

(a) Is the 3½ -year period literal or figurative?

(b) Is it realistic to presume that all these events will commence or end on Jewish feast days?

(c) No one knows when Christ will return, surely this programme allows you to calculate a date for the Second Advent?

Now follows an attempt to answer these difficult and important questions:

(a) Before we investigate this question, it is worth examining the work done by Aileen Guilding in her book, ‘The Fourth Gospel and Jewish worship.’ In this cogently argued and studious book, she examines the relationship between the ancient Jewish lectionary system and John’s gospel. Unlike today, the Bible - or more accurately that portion known as the Pentateuch (Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy) - was not readily available to everyone. Apart from the fact that literacy was limited, few copies existed. The Pentateuch was read aloud in the synagogue every Sabbath. This was done over a three and a half year period known as the triennial cycle.19 Her argument is that John’s gospel was specifically written for the purpose of worship, ‘a plan of the gospel for three and a half lectionary years’ (pg.47). The events in John’s gospel are all structured around feast days (like Revelation) and she shows that many of the discourses recorded in his gospel actually match the reading for the Sabbath in the Jewish

lectionary system. This is not as strange as it seems, for Jesus (the word made flesh) often used the occasion of the Sabbath to demonstrate miracles or for exposition, it would be natural for him to base that on the current reading. Besides the Torah, the Jews also read the Haftarah (prophets) and a Psalm (150 Psalms cover three years). She comments that, "the Johanine 'chronology' is determined by liturgical rather than historical considerations" (pg.47). This may explain why, for example, John places the clearing of the Temple (John 2:13-25) at the first Passover, whereas others place it later in his ministry. Whether or not we agree with this analysis, it would make sense for our first century brethren, to read a portion of John's gospel alongside the Sabbath Torah reading – especially if the gospel reading highlighted the true meaning of the Torah lesson. We can imagine then, how this might be done, particularly on special occasions (see the comparisons that she offers between John 14 and the Jewish readings for the new year on page 87). It seems then, that the spirit continued to use this mechanism for structuring Revelation. The answer to our question is that Revelation has probably been constructed the way it has for liturgical reasons i.e., it was meant to be read over a cycle of three and a half years of Sabbaths. We can imagine, for example, Revelation chpt.5 being read at the feast of the Passover alongside the Torah Passover readings. The question now becomes; are both John's gospel and Revelation structured this way for purely liturgical purposes? Is this period literal? The ministry of the Lord (and the Baptist?) was three and a half years, as was the ministry of Elijah. This is the only example that we have, interpreting scripture with scripture, we have no other option but to accept this period as literal. Strong (scriptural) arguments must be brought forward to show otherwise, the present author is still waiting to be persuaded differently.

(b) Is it realistic to presume that all these events will commence or end on Jewish feast days? Scripture associates the Passover with the nation's deliverance from Egypt, with the deliverance of Hezekiah from the Assyrian (see chpt.12 pg.5) and with our deliverance, which lest we forget, was also at a Passover. Other feasts (fasts) are always associated with clamity, the post-Mosaic fast on the 9th of Ab (5th month). This is the day before the Temple was burned by Nebuchadnezzar's army (Jer.52:12 cp. Ezk.40:1; 2Kgs.25:8), it is also the day when Herod's Temple fell, for according to Josephus, 'it was on the tenth day of the month of Ab, upon which it was formerly burnt by the King of Babylon' (B.J.W.vi.4.5.). The Jews also associate the fall of Bether, the centre of the Bar Kochba rebellion, with the 9th of Ab. Some of these associations are probably legendary, but for whatever reason they all focus on the 9th of Ab. 20 The fast of the fifth month was already kept in the time of Zechariah (8:19), probably originating during the Babylonian captivity. In more modern times the nation of Israel was attacked on a feast day – the 'Yom Kippur war' of 1973, the enemy no doubt benefiting from the nation's unpreparedness. Once again, scripture demands that we must take the feast days and the fast days in a literal sense.

(c) No one knows when Christ will return, surely this programme allows you to calculate a date for the Second Advent?

'but of that day and the hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, neither the Son(R.V.), but my Father only.' (Mtt.24:36)

This is only applicable before our Lord was glorified, now he has a status above the angels, for he bears the name of his Father. In Acts 1:7 he told his disciples, in answer to the question, 'Wilt thou at this time restore the Kingdom to Israel? It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power.'21 This implies that Jesus now knew the times and seasons (a reference to feast days) that the Father had appointed (R.V.mg.). Indeed, he must

have known, for some thirty odd years later (A.D. 64), he, 'shewed his servants things which must shortly come to pass.' (Rev 1:1) This was in response to another question from his servants, 'How long?' (Rev.6:9) – How long do we need to endure this persecution? (by Nero and the Jews)22 Jesus revealed the sequence of events to his servants in the book of Revelation in a far more comprehensive manner than that of the Olivet prophecy. The first century believers would conclude that judgement on their Jewish contemporaries (and Rome) was imminent, but because of disobedience the breach of promise was activated for an indeterminate period, thus delaying the eschaton. However, once the prophetic timetable has been reactivated (at the trumpets), it should be possible for our generation to follow the events that build up to the return of Christ, it should therefore be possible to determine the terminal date of the prophecy. The commencement of these events (and therefore the termination) can only be determined by watching Israel, Bible in hand. Even then few will understand the implications of these events, and they will happen quickly.

'None of the wicked will understand; but they that be wise shall understand' (R.V. Dan.12:10)

To summarise

Before the resurrection Jesus did not know the date of his return. After the resurrection Jesus did know the date of his return, however, he did not tell his disciples for fear of discouraging them – they assumed he would return within their lifetime. Later (during the Nero persecution and after the deaths of Paul and Peter) the prayer, 'how long?' was answered by the giving of the book of Revelation. The believers now knew that, although judgement was imminent (shortly come to pass), the kingdom itself would be delayed for an indeterminate period because of disobedience. The 'breach of promise' ends at the trumpet section, which is contemporary with our generation. It is only this generation that will be able to fully understand the significance of end time events, for they will be alive when they occur. Once the commencement date has been determined it should be possible to sequence the events and times leading up to the return of Christ.

NOTES

1 Revelation, H.A.W., p.55.

2 Re-dating the New Testament, J. Robinson, p.227.

NOTES

1 Sir Isaac Newton in his work on Revelation. H.AWhittaker, Revelation, p.55; J.Robinson, R.N.T. pg. 227.

NOTES

1 See notes on the dating of Revelation.

NOTES

1 Time of the end H.A.W. p. 51.

2 See The Dictionary of Paul and his letters (1993), IVP, p.593.

3 Satan is restrained in the Abyss in Rev.20:3, cp. Dan.9: 24, to finish transgression. RV mg =

to restrain transgression (sin/iniquity).

NOTES

1 R.N.T., J. Robinson. See his footnote, p.221- 222

2 Hist. 65.2.3; cf Tacitus, Hist. 4.51; Suetonius, Dom.I.

NOTES

1 Initially the disciples of John the Baptist received the Holy Spirit when Paul laid his hands upon them (Acts 19:6), but recent converts (made during Paul's imprisonment) would not yet have received the spirit.

2 John's banishment to Patmos has not been dated; the most probable option is banishment under Nero Claudius Caesar, although the present author prefers banishment under Claudius Nero Caesar (see Acts 18:2). This may well explain why John was spared the persecution under Nero. For a full discussion see section 2 (External evidence).

3 Did removal of the spirit gifts coincide with the destruction of the Temple? Can the situation at Ephesus have deteriorated so rapidly? (64 – 57 = 7 years). For a discussion see section 3 (The situation in the early ecclesias).

4 A.D.Norris supposes that Peter is writing to the believers in Asia because Paul is already dead,Acts and Epistles, p.717. J. Robinson states the following: 'Paul as a Roman citizen was executed (beheaded), strongly suggesting that this was a result of a separate judicial action, not of mass violence such as Tacitus describes (Neronian persecution)". R.N.T. p.142 – although he favours Paul's death being somewhat later than Peter's (p.149). Peter was crucified during the Neronian persecution. Tradition says that he was crucified upside down as he thought himself not worthy to die the same way as his Lord. Cp. John 21:18, Tertullian scorp 15; Praescript 36 Adv. Marc.4.5. Acta Petra 37f; Origen apud; Euseb He 3.1.2.

5 For a full and lucid discussion regarding the date of the fire and the start of the persecution see R.N.T. p.144-146: The author demonstrates that the persecution is to be dated in the spring of 65, a year after the fire.

6 J. Robinson makes a strong case (based on Edmunson) for the dating of Hebrews after the death of Peter – see the Quo Vadis legend. R.N.T.p.214.

NOTES

1 Illuminated; Gr. photizo, Hebrews 6:4 uses the same word. Although most commentators refer the enlightenment or illumination to the baptism of the individual, it is apparent that both Hebrews and Revelation are referring to the spirit gifts, with which the early converts were endowed immediately after baptism. Those individuals who had partaken of the Holy Spirit and fallen away could not be restored. On a symbolic level, the Jewish nation had their lampstand removed (depicted on Titus' victory arch) and the Temple ceased to be a lamp to the rest of the world (see Mtt.5: 14). See also the warning given in Lk.11: 33-36.

1 The overriding structure of Revelation is dictated by the number seven. A simplified diagram of the structure shows that after every sixth element, another series of seven unfolds (7x7):

7 lAMPSTANDS

123456

7 SEALS

123456

7 TRUMPETS

123456

7 SIGNS

123456

7 THUNDERS

123456

7 VIALS

123456

7 VISIONS

Furthermore, the seals and trumpets are subdivided into 4+3. The seven signs are in chapter 12 and 13 (the woman, dragon, man-child, Michael, seed of the woman, the beast from the abyss, the two-horned beast like a lamb). The seven thunders are to be found in chapter 14, they are the thundering voice of God and his angels. (see chapter 14 of this book). The seven visions are those of chapters 19-21 (rider on a white horse, the warring armies, the thousand years, the great white throne, the judgement, the New heaven and earth, the glory of the holy city). The reason for the 7x7 structure is obviously because the kingdom is the great Jubilee year (this corresponds with Daniel's vision of 70x7=490). The book of Revelation also has a symmetrical structure, where one half of the book reflects the events of the second half (signs section):

FIRST HALF (trumpets)

SECOND HALF (signs section)

Chapters 6 -11

Chapters 12 - 19

Chpts. 6 – 8:1 – The seven seals

Chpts. 12 – 14 – the seven fold visions

(1) - Israel remnant sealed

(1) - Israel sealed in the forehead

(2) - The rejoicing redeemed

(2) - Blessedness of saints (chpt.14)

Chpts. 8-9 – The seven trumpets

Chpts. 15,16 – The seven vials

(1) - on the earth

(1) - on the earth

(2) - on the sea

(2) - on the sea

(3) - on the rivers

(3) - on the rivers

(4) - sun etc.

(4) - sun

(5) - darkness, scourge

(5) - darkness, scourge

(6) - Euphrates: army

(6) - Euphrates: kings

Parenthetical (chpts.10-11)

Parenthetical:

- Rainbow angel proclamation

- Frog like spirits stir to war

- Death + resurrection of witnesses

- Christ's proclamation

(7) - Christ takes kingdoms

(7) – Armageddon and its aftermath

Another structural element, is described by E.W.Bullinger in the Companion Bible, this shows that there are seven visions ' in heaven' and seven visions 'on earth' making fourteen visions in total. Heaven and earth are brought together in the final vision (New heavens and earth). Revelation is the book of ultimates, and within the Bible itself, Revelation is the reversal of the process began at the creation of heaven and earth with the fall of man. If Genesis is paradise lost, Revelation is paradise restored.

We have already observed that the 'signs' section and the 'trumpet' section, are in some way complementary. Peter Watkins has the following to say in Exploring the Apocalypse (pg 147):

"Careful reading reveals that the contents of the 'signs' section run parallel with the 'trumpet' section. Both sections cover the same prophetic ground, but with different emphasis. Thus they complement each other, and together give us a more comprehensive picture of things that must be hereafter."

The present author believes this to be the correct approach. Although Revelation 'unfolds' consecutively certain chapters run parallel. This structure is known as progressive parallelism (see chapter 8 pg.16). The progressive parallel chapters have two major 'keys' in them, these being: the element of time : witnessing 1260 days, the woman in the wilderness 1260 days (or three and a half years) and the beast who reigns for a similar period of time (42 months). Such

confirm the thought that some of these chapters run parallel; or, in other words, they progress together.

In summary

(1) The expositor of Revelation should have a sound structure, discerning what is unfolding and what is progressive and what runs parallel.

(2) The expositor should understand the 'time element' in Revelation as this is a great key to a proper exposition of the book.

(3) The expositor should understand whether the vision concerns things in heaven or things on earth.

---

2 The blood painted on the doorposts and lintel had the configuration of the letter H in the Hebrew language. H(pronounced kh) this was the letter missing from Abram's name in Genesis 15 when he received the covenant promise four hundred and thirty years previously, on the passover night! The Hebrew word for token is 'ô wth (tv> X) and the Hebrew for seal is khô wthâ m (Mtv> Ho) note the extra letter kh, both words, token – seal, are very similar.

---

3 The Temple its ministry & services as they were at the time of Jesus Christ. Pages 268-287.

---

4 This is the ceremony that Jesus used as an opportunity for preaching in John 7:37-41 it was the last day of Tabernacles (see v 2). For an excellent exposition see H.A.W. Gospels pgs. 379-390.

---

5 The 'former' and 'latter' rain are referred to in Joel's prophecy:

'Be glad ye children of Zion, and rejoice in the Lord your God: for he hath given you the former rain moderately (R.V. mg. For righteousness), and he will cause to come down for you the rain, the former rain, and the latter rain (R.V. mg. a teacher of righteousness) in the first month.' (Joel 2:23).

The latter rain, was the spring rain in April, which was the first month (Nisan) the month of the Passover feast, where the sheaf of the first fruits of the barley harvest was presented in the form of a wave loaf (Lev 23:10-14).

The former rain, or early rains, was the start of the winter season at Tabernacles; this was the feast of ingathering some seven months after Passover. This represents the final or full harvest. The former and latter rains are types of the outpouring of the spirit. The context of Joel 2:28-32 demands this interpretation. The outpouring of the spirit in the first century happened at Pentecost when teachers of righteousness (the apostles) went forth on a spirit directed

preaching mission. This mission is described in Acts chpt.2 where Peter quotes directly from the prophet Joel.

We have then:

PASSOVER - CHRIST: founding of the ecclesia: wave loaf.

PENTECOST - APOSTLES: harvesting of the ecclesia: two loaves (Jew/Gentile)

TABERNACLES - CHRIST AND WITNESSES: full harvest at the end.

The 'rain' is then symbolic of 'spirit gifts' as Jesus made apparent at the ceremony of water pouring on the last day of Tabernacles. (John 7:37-41) Before the ingathering there will be a spirit gifted preaching mission (= the witnesses = the teachers of righteousness) to the nation. Furthermore, whereas the prophets had the spirit moderately, Christ had the spirit without measure after his Passover resurrection.

Once the kingdom is established spirit gifted teachers of righteousness will go forth from the throne of God to accomplish his work. This is also represented in the Language of Tabernacles:

'a pure river of water of life,.....proceeding out of the throne of God.....bearing twelve manner of fruits.....for the healing of the nations'. (Rev.22:1-2)

This river of spirit gifted 'teachers of righteousness' will heal the nations and, unlike Tabernacles, the harvest will not be limited to one season but will bear fruit continually all year round!

---

6 While palm fronds were symbols of victory throughout the ancient world; in Egypt they symbolised length of life and life after death, in Judaism they could also suggest the Feast of Tabernacles. The historian Plutarch and his friends puzzle over the fact that the palm frond is awarded to victors at all athletic festivals. This practice was borrowed by the Romans, ca. 292 B.C., to reward victors in the Roman games; Vergil refers to palmae, pretium victoribus, 'palms the prize of the victor'. After 293 B.C. Roman generals wore the toga palmata when celebrating a triumph. According to I Macc.13:51, palms were carried in Simon the Hasmonean's victorious entry into Jerusalem:

'The Jews entered it [the citadel of Jerusalem] with praise and palm fronds, and with harps and symbols and stringed instruments, and with hymns and songs, because a great enemy had been crushed and removed from Israel.'

According to Edersheim, the Sadducees understood the commandment to, 'take you on the first day the fruit of your goodly trees, branches of palm trees....etc.,' (Lev.23:40) to apply to the construction materials of the booths, while the Pharisees applied it to what the worshippers were to carry in their hands. (ibid. pg. 273-275) Even more curious, is the mention of Jacob celebrating, 'Succoth':

'And Jacob journeyed to Succoth, and built him an house, and made booths for his cattle: therefore the name of the place is called Succoth. [= booths]' (Gen 33:17)

This happened after Jacob was delivered from his confrontation with Esau, and is therefore a kingdom cameo. The unusual aspect is that Succoth was a Mosaic feast, but here we have Jacob celebrating a form of Succoth. Aileen Guilding, proposes in her book The fourth Gospel

and Jewish worship (pg.37), that in a triennial reading cycle of the Pentateuch, practised by Jews on every Sabbath, the reading of Genesis 33:17 would fall on the Feast of Tabernacles in the first year of the reading cycle, and the reading of Deut.11:33 would be read in the third year of the cycle, again at Tabernacles. (Deut.33:13 promises rainfall and fruitfulness for obedience.)

This is a remarkable 'coincidence'. However, the present author believes - rather than projecting the feast backwards for liturgical reasons - the feast very probably had pre Mosaic origins (like many of the feasts). Harvest feasts, after all, are very old and were celebrated by many ancient peoples. The more likely scenario is that these feasts were 'adopted' by God and given their true meaning. This also explains why Tabernacles is associated with so many different themes.

---

7 The Feast of Tabernacles, together with the, 'New Passover' are probably the only two feasts to be kept in the eschaton. They will not be sacrificial in nature, for no shedding of blood is necessary. The feasts will be memorial feasts, kept with great rejoicing and thanksgiving.

---

8 The month Nisan (Passover) was the beginning of months (Ex.12:2) as directed by God after the Egyptian deliverance, the Jews however, celebrate the New Year at Tishri, the seventh month. This custom was probably adopted from the Babylonians after the seventy years exile. We can suppose then that the religious year started in Nisan and the civil New Year in Tishri, just ten days before Atonement.

---

9 Edersheim, ibid. pg. 276.

---

10 Ibid. ,pgs.104,105.

---

11 Rev 20:12.

---

12 Edersheim.,ibid. pg. 235

The present author believes that the origins of this post-Mosaic feast are far earlier than Judas Maccabeus. The feast probably originated at the inauguration of the temple after the exile – which explains the similarity of the festal arrangements with Zech.4:2,3. It would be natural for Judas Maccabeus to adopt this festival, and re-institute it. It would not be the first time that political activity had been legitimised by religion.

---

13 On the evening of the 13th of Adar, or rather on the beginning of the 14th, the book of Esther, or the Megillah ('the roll', as it is called par excellence), was publicly read as also on the afternoon of the 14th day, except in ancient walled cities, where it was read on the 15th. In Jerusalem, therefore, it would be read on the evening of the 13th and on the 15th – always provided the day fell not on a Sabbath, on which the Megillah was not allowed to be read. (see Edersheim pg.332) Significantly the witnesses are killed in Jerusalem.(11:8) [see chapter 8 & 9, page13 - fifth and sixth trumpet for a comparison between the torment caused by the witnesses and that caused by the locusts.]

---

14 The ritual of reaping at Pentecost, as described by Edersheim, is reminiscent of Revelation chapter 14. It is as if in mimicry of this ritual that the angels encourage and question the Son of man.

'Thrust in thy sickle and reap' (14:15)

'Thrust in thy sickle, and gather the clusters of the vine of the earth' (14:18)

We can almost imagine the same repitior:

Angel: 'Has the sun gone down yet?'

Son of man: 'Yes, the sun and the air are darkened' (9:2)

Angel: 'Thrust in your sickle and reap'

Son of man: 'With this sickle?' (14:14)

'Into this winepress?' (14:19)

'On this Sabbath?' (14:13 rest from their labours)

and lastly; 'Shall I reap?'

---

15 The two wave loaves, are symbolic of the first fruits of the two harvests, Jew and Gentile, reaped in the first century at Pentecost. (Acts.chpt.2)

---

16 See note 5 for the Tabernacles allusions woven into the texts. See also Isa.25:6-8:

'And in this mountain shall the Lord of Hosts make unto all peoples a feast of fat things, a feast of wines on the lees, of fat things full of marrow, of wines on the lees well refined....the Lord will wipe away tears from all faces.'

This is the Feast of Tabernacles, when death is finally 'swallowed up' (cp.Isa.25:7; Rev.20:14; 21:4). The dedication of Solomon's Temple was in the seventh month (1Kgs.8:2), when the house was filled with the

shekinah glory (v.10) and the people celebrate a Feast of Tabernacles lasting twice the proscribed time. (v.65) Sending the people home after the second seven. (v.66)

17 Revelation is obviously meant to have a ‘ 3½ year structure’, in keeping with the symbolism of the book, this does not however mean that we have a strictly consecutive interpretation. The Apocalypse accommodates more than one structure in order to teach us different lessons.

---

18 If we calculate backwards using defective years, (354days) and inserting a leap year (385days) the commencement of the witnessing ministry is the day after the 25th of Elul. This is not a feast day, but the day when,

‘the wall (of Jerusalem) was finished’(Neh 6:15)

The building of the walls is prophetically significant for it is the commencement of building which determines the departure date of one of the ‘segments’ of Daniel’s ‘seventy sevens’ prophecy:

‘the commandment to restore and build Jerusalem’ (Dan.9:25)

From this, the date of the birth of Messiah can be determined. (See digression 11.1 the Seventy Sevens Prophecy: building the walls of Jerusalem pg.10, 11). The foundations and walls of the city have already been built by Christ (the faithful witness) and his apostles (the first century witnesses):

‘And the walls of the city had twelve foundations and in them the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb’ (Rev.21:4)

There is however, still the matter of measuring the temple (11:1); this is done by the Lord’s future witnesses who can only accomplish their work because the, ‘wall is already finished.’. Counting forwards, and commencing 3½ days (18½ day of Adar) after Purim, when the witnesses are resurrected, brings us to the Day of Atonement! (either the 9½ day, or the 10½ day of the seventh month). This is either just before or just after the Day of Atonement (depending on whether defective years of 353 or 354 days are used). This cannot be coincidental.

6. ---

19 The encyclopaedia Judaica comments as follows: Triennial Cycle, term denoting the custom according to which the weekly Pentateuchal readings on Sabbaths are completed in a three-year cycle. The triennial cycle was practised in Palestine and in Egypt as late as A.D.1170, whereas in Babylonia the reading of the Pentateuch was completed in one year, from Tishri to Tishri. The latter became the accepted traditional custom the world over (Meg.29b; Maim.Yad, Tefillah, 13:1).

The masoretic text of the Pentateuch has 154 divisions, known as Sedarim. According to other traditions, however, the Pentateuch consists of 161 and even 175 portions (Sof.16: 10); the Yemenites divide the Pentateuch into 167. It has been suggested that the 154 – division correspond to the minimum number of Sabbaths in the triennial cycle and 161 to the maximum. The difference is due to the occurrence of festivals on Sabbaths when the regular Pentateuch portions were suspended by special Pentateuch readings appropriate to the festivals. The 175-division stems from the practice of completing the reading of the whole Pentateuch within a cycle of three and a half years (twice within seven years).

Aileen Guilding observes the following:

“Further, it is striking that the two New Testament passages which tell of the Lord’s birth, Revelation 12 and Luke 2, seem to depend on Genesis 37, Leviticus 12, and Isaiah 66, all of which are lectionary readings for Tabernacles (2nd and 3rd Sabbaths in Tishri – this is only slightly out from our table – author). Luke 2 combines ‘Mary kept all these sayings pondering them in her heart’ (compare Gen.37:11) with a reference to the law of circumcision as it is given in Lev.12. In Rev.12 the mention of the sun, moon, and stars recalls Joseph’s dream. In Rev.12:4 the dragon waits to devour the woman’s child. In Genesis 37 Jacob says when he sees Joseph’s blood stained coat, ‘An evil beast has devoured him, “a wild beast has snatched away Joseph.” (pg. 100, 101) The present author would state that such correspondence are not coincidental, however the theme for Rev.12 is that of Passover – Pentecost, and Exodus delivery from Egypt (birth of a nation, birth of the Lord, etc), this could well be explained by a reading cycle beginning in Tishri (at Gen.1:1) this would make the above, Passover readings, instead of Tabernacle readings. It is quite possible that both lectionary cycles were practised, one by the diaspora, and one by Erez Israel.

This is an immensely interesting and fruitful field for study, which will no doubt reward the brother or sister who has time and patience to devote to the theme. The triennial cycle has obviously influenced the structure of the Gospels and Revelation amongst others. The Sabbath readings also determined and structured the Lord’s preaching and healing ministry – for he was ‘the word made flesh.’. The triennial cycle probably stems from the Babylonian exile, and must have been in existence at least 280 years before Christ, for the LXX already has the Gen.33:17 reference to booths, a Tabernacles reading in the Nisan cycle. On page 63,64 are two further tables, the current table for yearly scriptural readings on the Sabbath, and a table for the readings on feast days. Although the last two tables are (relatively) modern, it must be remembered that the ordinary Sabbath reading was either supplemented or displaced by special readings on Sabbath feast days. The current table of feast day readings no doubt reflects very old traditions.

---

20 According to Jewish tradition the fortress was betrayed to the Romans by a Samaritan, who showed them access to a secret entrance. This happened on the 9th of Ab, which is possible, for the Romans may have viewed this as an auspicious date.

---

21 To instruct them that they must yet wait another 2,000 years would have been a major disillusionment.

Chapter 1

“ Of a truth it is, that your God is the God of gods, and a Lord of kings, and a revealer of secrets, seeing that thou couldest reveal this secret.”

(Dan.2:47)

“The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him, to shew unto his servants things which must shortly come to pass; and he sent and signified it by his angel unto his servant John: Who bare record of the word of God, and of the testimony of Jesus Christ, and of all things that he saw. ” (Rev.1:1-2)

The book of Revelation begins and ends with the same words, for 1:1 and 22:6 are doublets.

REVELATION 1:1 REVELATION 22:6

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

These sayings are faithful and true

which God

And the Lord, the God of the spirits of the prophets

gave

sent

to him (Jesus)

his angel

to shew

to shew

unto his servants

unto his servants

things which shortly must come to pass

the things which must shortly come to pass (R.V.)

Many have debated the meaning of the phrase, “must shortly come to pass.” The most natural way of understanding this, is that the return was imminent in the first century. The issue has, never the less became clouded by the meaning of the word ‘shortly’ the Greek tachu and it’s kindred tacheos. These words carry the sense of soon, quickly or suddenly. In many passages the words convey the suddenness or unexpectedness of the return (Mk.13: 35-36; Lk.21: 34; 1 Thess.5: 2-3; Mtt.24: 44,50; Rev.16: 15), in others, the word is translated ‘quickly.’ To Pergamum Christ says, “I am coming to you quickly (soon)” (2:16), while to Sardis he says, “I will come as a thief” (3:3) – both these passages carry different meanings, but a comparison of all the relevant sayings indicates that the advent would happen soon and also be unexpected (for some).

We have already observed that Rev.1:1 and Rev.22:6 are doublets, there are also other phrases that unite both chapters.

REVELATION 1 REVELATION 22

must shortly come to pass (v.1) must shortly come to pass (v.6)

the time is at hand (v.3) the time is at hand (v.10)

God- Alpha and Omega (v.8) Jesus- Alpha and Omega (v.13)

and keep the things which are written which keep the sayings of this book (v.9)

therein (v.3)

He sent and signified it by his angel (v.1) I Jesus have sent mine angel to testify

Send it unto the seven ecclesias (v.11) unto you these things for the ecclesias

(v.16)

The beginning and the ending of Revelation stress the same important message to the reader – that the return of Christ was imminent and would happen soon, within the lifetime of the reader.

“He that is unjust, let him be unjust still: and he that is righteous let him be righteous still: and he that is holy let him be holy still. Behold I come quickly (soon) and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be.” (Rev.22:11,12)

The meaning is unambiguous, the saints would be recompensed, whether they continued with righteous or wicked behaviour – the Lord would return soon, to dispense judgment and reward accordingly. The phrase, “I come quickly (soon)” is repeated three times in chapter 22 (v.7,12,20) in order to stress the immanence of the advent and to encourage the saints to remain steadfast.

The orthodox interpretation interprets the phrase, “must shortly come to pass” as licence to suggest a continuously unfolding historical fulfilment, beginning in the first century and enduring two millennia until the eventual advent. Such an approach does violence to any meaningful interpretation of scripture – it was clearly not understood in this manner by our first century brethren, who expected the events surrounding the advent to happen soon.

Not only did the apostle Paul and others expect the advent within their lifetime (1 Thess.4:15) but opponents of the truth openly mocked when it did not materialise.

“Saying, Where is the promise of his coming? For since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation.” (1 Pet.3:4)

While it may be argued that the Lord did ‘come in judgment’ in A.D. 70 the expectation of the believers was the establishment of the kingdom. The only possible explanation for this conundrum is that God deferred his promise. This ‘breach of promise’ has been extensively handled in my Introduction to Revelation and is also eloquently treated in H.A.W.’s Revelation pages 259-273.

The remaining question to be answered is, ‘Why did God defer his promise?’ It was postponed because of unbelief and disobedience. We must not, however, fall into the trap of laying the blame solely on the nation of Israel. It was only ever expected that a remnant of the nation would repent. A more serious portion of the blame lay at the door of the ecclesias some of whom had become utterly corrupted. The author to the Hebrews, writing after the book of Revelation had been circulated, clearly understood the implication of the warnings:

“As I have sworn in my wrath, They shall not enter into my rest: although the works were finished from the foundation of the world.” (Heb.4:3)

The deferment of Gods promise, has however the benefit that you and I, may also share in that promise.

“The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to you-ward (R.V.), not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.” (2 Pet. 3: 9)

What men perceive, as slackness is in actuality an extension of grace, what men perceive as a long postponement is nothing to God, who is ageless and timeless. The promise is sure, for the works were finished from the foundation of the world – it has been deferred for two thousand years allowing many more to come to repentance.

Never the less, the stark lesson of Revelation still stands – it is the attitude of the believers, individually and ecclesially that determines both the timing and the consequences of the second advent.

In our Bible, the book is inappropriately entitled, The Revelation of St. John the divine – for it is the REVELATION OF JESUS CHRIST. This revelation was given to Christ by God himself 1 – God is the ultimate source of Revelation (apokalupsis) and Christ is both the agent and the embodiment of divine manifestation. We note the sevenfold chain of transmission: 1. God 2. Christ 3. his angel 4. John 5. the messenger to the ecclesia (send it- 1:1) 6. the ecclesia and finally 7. the reader hearer and keeper of the message. (= the individual believer)

To shew his servant – the word servant is used to refer to Moses (15:3) to John himself (1:1) to prophets (10:7; 11:18), but most frequently to believers generally. (1:1[2x]; 2:20; 7:3; 19:2,5; 22:3,6)

The book of Revelation is therefore not for general circulation and consumption. It is intended only for the servants of God. “none of the wicked shall understand; but the wise shall understand.” (Dan.12: 10) It is a revelation or ‘uncovering’ (apokalupsis), for, “of a truth your God is the God of gods, and a Lord of kings, and a revealer of secrets.” (Dan.2:47) It was signified (semaino) by his (Jesus’s) angel unto his servant John. The verb – signified, means to indicate clearly, it occurs only here in Revelation and appears to be in tension with the symbolic and enigmatic character of much of what follows.

It is interesting to note that John uses the same verb three times in his gospel, twice in the context of Jesus ‘signifying (indicating)’ by what death he would die (John 12:33, 18:32) i.e., Jesus predicted his death by using the phrase “lifted up” as an ambiguous description of his impending crucifixion. Although he signified (indicated clearly) the people did not understand. “How sayest thou, the Son of man must be lifted up?” (John 12: 34) John comments on this by quoting Isaiah, “He hath blinded their eyes, and hardened their heart; that they should not see with their eyes, nor understand with their heart, And be converted, and I should heal them.” (v.40)

Should we draw a similar conclusion from the use of the word signify i.e., Revelation is indicated clearly, but only to those who have not hardened their hearts?

Who bare witness of the word of God, and of the testimony of Jesus Christ – the ‘word’ and the ‘testimony of Jesus Christ’ are themes that run through the Fourth Gospel and epistles.

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the word was God.” (John 1:1)

“That which was from the beginning which, we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled of the word of life. (1John 1:1) 2

This is a tautology, for essentially the phrase testimony (witness) of the word and testimony (witness) of Jesus, mean the same thing, for Jesus is in effect the word of God – for his name is called the WORD OF GOD – Rev.19: 13.

Revelation was given to John the apostle, the same John who wrote the fourth gospel and the epistles. Although many commentaries acknowledge striking similarities between the five Johannine writings, they also acknowledge striking differences and so attribute them to different authors. It is claimed that the gospel and epistle are written in flawless Greek, free from barbarism, solecism, or vulgarism; whereas the Apocalypse was written in inaccurate Greek, full of barbarous idioms and solecisms. R. H. Charles argued persuasively that Johns Greek, for all it’s idiosyncrasy, is not ungrammatical but has a grammar of it’s own, unparalleled in any other ancient writing, but none the less real and consistent, the hybrid grammar of a man thinking in Hebrew while he wrote in Greek. Some argue that because of the difference in Greek, the Apocalypse represents an earlier development and the gospel and epistles, with the more exact Greek a later development. This will not do, the present author believes that the Apocalypse was written after the gospel and epistles – for the Apocalypse often alludes to them.

A simple explanation will suffice to elucidate this so-called ‘problem.’ The Revelation was written in exile, John may even have been under house arrest (like Paul) or possibly incarcerated. However, when the gospel and the epistles were written, he was at liberty and he no doubt had assistance from other brethren who aided the recording and redaction process, this would explain stylistic differences. The compilation of the synoptic gospels is a complex and mysterious process – the gospel of Mark is essentially Peters account of his Lord’s ministry, and Mark is itself used as the basis for both Matthew and Luke. There is therefore, no reason to suppose that the Apocalypse came from a different hand than the fourth gospel or epistles.

We can safely assume then, that John wrote his gospel long before he received the Apocalypse. It should not surprise us then, to find parallels between the last chapter of his gospel and the very first chapter of Revelation.

JOHN 21 REVELATION 1

If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? (v.21)

I was in the Spirit on the Lords day. (v.10)

The disciple who Jesus loved. (v.20)

Unto him that loved us.(v.5)

And there are also many…which should be written everyone, I suppose that even the world itself….would not contain the books that should be written. (v.25)

What thou seest, write in a book. (v.11)

This is the disciple that beareth witness (R.V.) of these things, and wrote these things: and we know that his (= Jesus?) witness is true.

Who bare witness (R.V.) of the word of God, and of the testimony (witness) of Jesus Christ, and of all the things that he saw. (v.2)

The faithful witness. (v.5)

“Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein: for the time is at hand.” (Rev.1:3)

Those that hear the word of God and keep it are blessed. The word of God, is Christ himself. The disciples had experienced this on the transfiguration mount; “This is my beloved Son, hear ye him.” (Lk.9:35) The Hebrews were instructed not to turn away from “him that warneth from heaven” (Heb.12:25) [Christ and the book of Revelation], and Peter also refers to the voice that they heard on the holy mount, but adds, “We have a more sure word of prophecy [the book of Revelation] whereunto ye do well that ye take heed…” (2 Pet.1: 18-21) John is no doubt referring to the words of Jesus in Lk.11:28;

“But he (Jesus) said, Yea rather, blessed are they that hear the word of God, and keep it.”

We have a number of other parallels in Luke chapter 11.

REVELATION 1

LUKE 11

Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things that are written therein. (v.3)

Blessed are they that hear the word of God and keep it. (v.28)

Seven spirits (angels) before the throne. (v.4)

Contrast – seven unclean spirits invited into the house. (v.24-26)

The resurrected Christ – I was dead, and behold I am alive for evermore. (v.12-19)1

The sign of Jonah the prophet. (v.29-32)

The seven golden candelsticks. (v.12,13,20)

The parable of the lighted candelstick. (v.33-36)

Unlike the citizens of Nineveh who responded to the sign of the prophet Jonah – the Jews remained in unbelief. John the Baptist and Jesus had cleansed the house, but the Jews in their unwillingness to hear the risen Christ (i.e. Revelation) would substitute the unclean spirit with seven worse spirits (complete madness) and the last condition of the nation (A.D. 70) would be far worse then at the commencement of his ministry.

There are seven blessings in all throughout the Apocalypse, the other six being:

“Blessed are the dead who die in Christ from now on” (14:13)

“Blessed is he who watches and keeps his garments that he might not walk naked and expose his shame” (16: 15)

“Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb” (19:9)

“Blessed and holy is he who has part in the first resurrection” (20: 6)

“Blessed is he who keeps the words of the prophecy of this book” (22: 7)

“Blessed are those who wash their robes that they may have the right to the tree of life and enter the city through the gates” (22: 14)

The book of Revelation is essentially a “prophecy” and the blessing is suited to those who keep the words of the prophecy. In what sense should we understand this? These are those who keep their garments (i.e., do not deny Christ by worshipping the beast), as a consequence they have “washed their robes and made them white in his blood” (i.e., undergone martyrdom like their Lord). Their refusal to worship the beast means that although they are persecuted and killed, they are blessed, in that they have part in the first resurrection.

All those who refuse to bow down to the image of the beast, whether in a literal sense (Dan.3: 18) or metaphorical, will have part in the first resurrection. These blessings are valid for all generations but carry special meaning for those who endured the great tribulation in the first century and the great tribulation at the time of the end.

The book of Revelation was read and heard and intended to be kept. This indicates that it was read aloud at the ecclesias to which it was distributed. There is an interesting parallel in an inscription of Sardis (which may refer to the opening of a Torah scroll) where verbs for reading and obeying occur together: “Having found and having broken open, read and observe.”

As suggested in the introduction to Revelation, the structure of the book, combined with the Jewish lectionary system for reading the Pentateuch, make a 3½ year reading cycle of Revelation very likely. We can suppose that after initially being read aloud in one sitting, the book of Revelation would have become part of the regular Sabbath liturgy for the feast days – which combined with a Pentateuch and gospel reading would have been completed (like the Pentateuch was) over a 3½ year cycle of Sabbaths.

Revelation was circulated approximately in A.D. 65 and would then have been read aloud twice during this period – covering the Nero persecution, the start of the Jewish war and the fall of Jerusalem and Massada. I have no doubt that key readings in Revelation coincided with dramatic historical events, proving and reinforcing the veracity of the prophet – Jesus Christ. (this no doubt contributed to Jewish antagonism towards the ‘Christians’) Some scholars have suggested that 1: 4 – 8 reflects a liturgical dialogue – the following schema has been proposed.

Lector:

Grace to you and peace from him who is and who was and who is to come, and from the seven spirits who are before his throne, and from Jesus Christ the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler of kings on earth.

Assembly:

To him who loves us and has freed us by his blood, and made us a kingdom, priests to his God and Father. To him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.

Lector:

Behold, he is coming with the clouds and every eye will see him, every one who pierced him; and all tribes of the earth will wail on account of him.

Assembly:

Even so. Amen.

Lector:

I am the Alpha and the Omega, -says the Lord God- who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty.

THE EPISTOLARY INTRODUCTION

“John to the seven churches which are in Asia: Grace be unto you, and peace, from him which is, and which was, and which is to come; and from the seven Spirits which are before his throne” (Rev.1:4)

The author of Revelation tells us four times that his name is John. (1:1,4,9; 22: 8) The name John is a Greek transliteration of the Hebrew name Yohanan a theophoric name meaning Yahweh is (or has been) gracious, it is fitting therefore that he opens with the salutation grace and peace (from him which is – was – will come see pg.14). The epistle is addressed to seven ecclesias in Asia – probably because they were in a close vicinity to Patmos (within 60 miles) and also because they were leading ecclesias in their particular district. The reasons were however not just pragmatic, the seven represent the seven branched candelabra or lampstand. This is a clear indication that the Jews were about to be rejected (as a nation) because of their unbelief. The seven spirits are the seven archangels, who are also called seven stars (Rev.1:20)1 – these are the eyes of Zech. 3: 9 and 4: 10 who are not actually engraven upon the stone, but rather watching it closely (fixed on it).

TITLES OF CHRIST

“And from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, and the first begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth. Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood” (Rev.1:5)

These are not random titles, there is a logical progression. Having been a faithful witness Jesus Christ was raised from the dead and exalted to rule at God’s right hand. The imagery is drawn from Psalm 89 where the faithful witness in the heaven is not the moon but the, “rainbow covenant” a symbol of Gods covenant mercy.

Verse 5 Psalm 89

And from Jesus Christ who is the faithful witness

It shall be established for ever as the moon,

and as a faithful witness in the heaven.

[the rainbow] (v.37)

The firstborn of the dead

Also I will make him my firstborn. (v.27)

The ruler of the kings of the earth

the highest of the kings of the earth (v.27b)

Note verse 18:

I am the first and the last: I am he that liveth

and was dead; and behold, I am alive for

evermore, and have the keys of hell and

death. Amen

What man is he that liveth, and shall not

see death? Shall he deliver his soul from the

hand of the grave? (v.48)

The introduction to the epistle to the Hebrews (written after Revelation) is also based on the exaltation of Christ.

HEBREWS 1

REVELATION 1

Hath in these last days spoken to us by his Son (v.1)

The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him to shew his servants. (v.1)

Appointed heir of all things (v.2)

The firstborn of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth. (v.5)

Who being the brightness of his glory and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power. (v.3)

Who bare witness of the word of God. (v.2)

(verse 10-12 quoting Psalm 102: 25-27)

And, Thou, Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the earth; and the heavens are the works of thine hands: They shall perish; but thou remainest; and they all shall wax old as doth a garment; And as a vesture shalt thou fold them up, and they shall be changed: but thou art the same, and thy years shall not fail.)

I am the first and the last (v.17)

Christ superior to the angels, for they are ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for the sake of them who shall be heirs of salvation. (v.14)

The mystery of the seven stars in my right hand….are the angels of the seven ecclesias

Note how Hebrews quotes Ps.102: 25-27 – the Lord Jesus Christ was the beginning of the new creation the firstborn from the dead – he is therefore before all things1 and in him all things hold together. (R.V.mg. Col. 1: 17,18) The heavens shall perish but thou (Christ) remainest, this echoes Mtt.24: 35 “Heaven and earth shall pass away but my words shall not pass away.” The old Mosaic dispensation was about to pass away, Jesus was the first of a new heavens and earth (21:1) and the last of the old creation for he was the fulfilment of the law and the prophets. (Mtt.5: 17) He is therefore the first and the last. (1:17) The beginning and the end. The structure of verse 5 emphasises not only the titles of Christ but also his achievements.1

Witness

Firstborn

Ruler

who

loved us

loosed us

by his blood

This is a doxology of praise, which is again progressive in it's description of his work. Alternative readings for this verse read "loves" instead of "loved" and "washed us" instead of loosed us (lousanti). The reading "loosed us" and "loved us" (past tense) is preferable for suits the context of the next verse which is Exodus deliverance.

THE EXODUS DELIVERANCE

"And hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen." (Rev.1:6)

The theme for this verse (and the previous one) is of Exodus deliverance.

REVELATION 1 THE EXODUS

Loosed us from our sins by his blood. (R.V.)

The blood of the passover Lamb

Hath made us to be a kingdom of priests unto God and his Father (R.V.)

Ye shall be a peculiar treasure, ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and a holy nation.

(Ex 19:6)

I am the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty. (v.8)

What shall I say unto them? (when they ask what his name is)

I AM THAT I AM (Ex.3: 14)

The Hebrew phrase kingdom of priests mamleket kohanî m can be understood as a 'royalty of priests' or 'kings [who are] priests, i.e., 'priestlike kings' to mention just two options. The phrase is rendered idiomatically by the LXX as a 'royal priesthood' which is cited in 1 Pet.2: 9 – this is the Melchizedek priesthood. Christ was the priest after the order of Melchizedek (Heb.7: 21) in a similar fashion his followers were called to be a nation of king priests. To, "offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ." (1 Pet.2: 5) This is no longer the Aaronic priesthood limited to a particular tribe or family, but a better covenant (Heb 7: 22) – "a new covenant, he hath made the first old. Now that which decayeth and waxeth old is ready to vanish away." (Heb.8: 13)

THE PROMISED ADVENT

"Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him. Even so, Amen." (Rev. 1:7)

This verse is a combined paraphrase from Dan.7: 13, “behold, with the clouds of heaven there came one like a son of man”, and Zech.12: 10, “they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for an only son.”

This chapter has many allusions to the prophecy of Daniel, this should not surprise us for the vision given to Daniel was sealed unto the time of the end (Dan.12 :9) – John is about to become the recipient of that vision in similar terms and through the agency of the same angel.

DANIEL REVELATION 1

There is a God in heaven that revealeth secrets. (2:28)

The Revelation of Jesus Christ that God gave unto him. (v.1)

Gabriel makes this man to understand the vision. (8:16)

And he sent and signified it by his angel. (v.1)

Blessed is he that waiteth. (12:12)

Blessed is he that readeth. (v.3)

Oman, greatly beloved (10: 19)

The disciple (John) who Jesus loved. (John 21:20)

I praised and honoured him that liveth for ever and ever. (4: 34)

To him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. (v.6)

There came with the clouds of heaven one like the Son of man. (7:13)

Behold, he cometh with clouds. (v.7)

One like unto the son of man. (v.13)

A man clothed in linen, whose loins were girded with pure gold of Uphaz. (10:5)

Clothed with a garment down to the foot, and girt about the breast with a golden girdle. (v.13)

His body also was like the beryl and his face as the appearance of lightning, and his eyes as lamps of fire, and his arms and his feet like in colour to polished brass, and the voice of his words like the voice of a multitude. (10:6)

His head and his hairs were white like wool, as white as snow; and his eyes were as a flame of fire. And his feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace: and his voice as the sound of many waters. (v.14,15)

Then was I fallen into a deep sleep on my face, with my face toward the ground. (10: 9)

I fell at his feet as dead. (v.17)

And behold a hand touched me. (10: 9)

And he laid his right hand upon me. (v.17)

Fear not (10:12)

Fear not (v.17)

Behold he is coming with clouds - the glory departed in a cloud and will return in like manner. (Acts.1:9) The cloud (nephele) is not a cloud (nephos) of witnesses as in Heb 12: 1, but represents the Shekinah glory. The glory of the Lord appeared to ancient Israel in a cloud and fire.1 Ezekiel saw the glory depart eastwards from the temple mount and ascend the mount of Olives (Ezek.11: 23) In his vision of the new temple it returned by exactly the same route (43: 2-5). This parallels the glory of God (Jesus Christ) which departed and will return by the same route. (Zech.14: 14, Mtt.16: 27)

This cloud will be proceeded by the forerunner, who as a type of Elijah, will witness to the people that the 3½ year drought is about to end.

“And said to his servant, Go up now, look toward the sea. And he went up, and looked, and said, There is nothing. And he said, Go again seven times. And it came to pass at the seventh time, that he said, Behold, there ariseth a little cloud out of the sea, like a man's hand. And he said, Go up, say unto Ahab, Prepare thy chariot, and get thee down, that the rain stop thee not. And it came to pass in the mean while, that the heaven was black with clouds and wind, and there was a great rain. And Ahab rode, and went to Jezreel. And the hand of the LORD was on Elijah; and he girded up his loins, and ran before Ahab to the entrance of Jezreel.” (1 Kgs.18:43-46)

The cloud that accompanies the Lord’s return represents the shekinah glory, it does not represent the saints, but does include the angels, “when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels.” (Mk.8: 38 see also Jude 14,15) Despite the misreading of passages such as 1 Thess.4: 171, Mk.13: 26,27 makes perfectly clear that his coming “in the clouds” precedes the ingathering of the saints and must therefore be distinct from it.

The return of Christ will be proceeded by the manifestation of the man of sin, his return will not be done in secret,2 but will be obvious to all and will catch many unawares. He will return to the Jewish nation and will be seen by “every eye” and “all tribes of the land.” All those who pierced him (= the Jews not the Romans) will mourn over him, for they will receive the “spirit of grace and supplications” (Zech.12: 10) – this is the same spirit that caused Jacob to weep and make supplication to the angel. (Hos. 12: 4; Jer.31: 9) This is the, “time of Jacobs trouble” (Jer.30: 7) when Jacob overcame (his old nature – not the angel) and acknowledged that all his wrestling to obtain the blessing had been in vain, for he was wrestling God, not his fellowman. Jacob was renamed Israel, which means God is prince (God is ruler – i.e., God rules in my life) 3

This already indicates to us that Revelation concerns the Jewish people and those in covenant relationship with them, and not the history of the Roman Empire and the Catholic church.

The quote in Zechariah that describes the mourning is unusual in that it switches the pronoun: “they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him.”

The prophet is no doubt alluding to the incident in Gen.45, when Joseph revealed himself to his brethren. It is notable that it is Joseph that does all the weeping (not his brethren with the exception of Benjamin who was guiltless in this affair) – in fact they were terrified. Even after the death of their father, Joseph had to reassure them that he did not harbour thoughts of revenge. (Gen.50: 15-21) In the future however, they will look upon Christ who is in his Fathers glory, and will mourn for him. The him could represent Christ in the days of his flesh, but more probably represents the heavenly Father.

Just as Jacob had lost his firstborn and favourite son, Joseph (by his favourite wife Rachel), so now because of the duplicity of Jesus’ brethren, the heavenly Father had lost his firstborn. The

people will mourn for the grief they have caused their Father – “and be in bitterness for Him (their Father) as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn.” This is a beautiful picture of the Jews identifying with their Father in the loss of his beloved son (and their beloved brother).

We also take note of the fact that all of the tribes mourn – Zechariah informs us that every family apart will mourn. (12: 12-14) This may well indicate that each family has a different aspect to mourn.

§ The house of David (representing royalty) – that they rejected their promised king

§ The house of Nathan (representing the prophets) – “And it shall come to pass in that day, that the prophets shall be ashamed every one of his vision, when he hath prophesied; neither shall they wear a hairy garment to deceive; but he shall say, I am no prophet.” (Zech.13: 4,5)1

§ The house of Levi – Simeon and Levi, ‘slew a man in their anger’. The scribes and the priests both from these tribes, bear a large portion of responsibility, for they were supposed to guide the nation to the Messiah.

§ The house of Shimei 2 – He represents all those who despise the Lord’s anointed.

No doubt the prophet Zechariah had Absalom’s rebellion in mind, when the true king was rejected and cursed by Shimei. (see 2 Sam. Chpt. 15 and 16) He was of Saul's family, a Benjamite the son of Gera, which had lost the throne. When he saw David, with his attendants, descending the east slope of the Mount of Olives, while Absalom was in possession of Jerusalem, he thought it safe to insult the fallen king, which he did in gross language. David went up the Mount of Olives weeping (15: 30) as Christ did in Gethsemane – ‘with exceeding sorrow’, but when Christ returns to the same location it will be the Israelites that weep. David forgave Shimei, who was afterwards put to death for disobeying a command of Solomon. (1 Kgs. 2: 44 – 46) In Absalom’s rebellion, all the constituents of Zechariah’s prophecy, those of the house of David, Levites, Nathan and Shimei were all forced to show their allegiance. According to the prophet this will be like the mourning of Hadadrimmon in the valley of Megiddon. (Zech.12: 11) where even the prophet Jeremiah lamented the loss of the righteous king Josiah. (2 Chron.35:25)

Everyone that remains (i.e., those purged) will mourn, every family apart, and their wives apart. (Zech.12: 14)

This mirrors what happens currently at the wailing wall, where men and women worship separately. But now they will no longer mourn the loss of a temple, a heap of stone representing the old, “heavens and earth that passed away” but they will mourn for what they have done to their Father and his beloved son.

THE ALPHA AND OMEGA

“I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty.” (Rev.1:8)

As we have indicated earlier, this continues the Exodus motif of 3:4 – I AM THAT I AM – the Hebrew transliteration, eyeh asher eyeh 1is paraphrased as the A W the one who is, was, and is to come. God is also called the Almighty. In the Hebrew this is rendered as El Shaddai (Almighty God) or Yahweh Tsvaoth (Lord of Hosts). Our Greek New Testament renders this as pantokrator (all –ruling, omnipotent), but in the light of the Exodus motif, it is more likely that the title bears the Hebrew sense of El Shaddai, as this is how God revealed himself to the patriarchs and to Moses just before the Exodus experience. (Ex.6: 2,3)2

THE EXILE TO PATMOS

“I John, who also am your brother, and companion in tribulation, and in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ, was in the isle that is called Patmos, for the word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus Christ.” (Rev.1:9)

I have already treated the banishment of John to Patmos and the dating of Revelation in my introduction to Revelation (pg.33). The external evidence is confusing and often contradictory. According to the tradition in Epiphanus, John left Patmos when he was over 90 years old during the reign of Claudius Caesar (A.D. 51-54). This is clearly impossible for if John were 20 years old at the crucifixion (A.D. 30) he would have been 40-50 years old during the reign of Claudius. The confusion results from the similarity between the names of the emperors Claudius Nero Caesar and Nero Claudius Caesar (A.D.54-68). Eusebius states quite clearly that the emperor was Domitian (A.D. 81-96) and quotes Irenaeus to the effect that John survived until the reign of Trajan (A.D. 98-117), making him 90-100 years old. In another place Eusebius mentions that “Peter was crucified head downwards at Rome, Paul beheaded, and John exiled to an Island”, giving the impression that these events occurred in close temporal proximity, and that as a consequence Revelation has an early date. By no stretch of the imagination can the ‘church fathers’ be cited as reliable witnesses. It is far better to rely on the internal evidence from scripture, which overwhelmingly supports an early date. Let us rather consider the traditions and ascertain where they complement the scriptural evidence.

(1.) The apostle John is closely linked with Ephesus by early church tradition, in fact the “house of Mary” can still be viewed there today.

(2.) According to the Syriac apocryphal “History of John the Son of Zebedee” :

After these things, when the Gospel was increasing by the hands of the Apostles, Nero, the unclean and impure and wicked king, heard all that had happened at Ephesus. And he sent and took all that the procurator had, and imprisoned him; and laid hold of St. John and drove him into exile; and passed sentence on the city that it should be laid waste.

The angel of the Lord then appeared to Nero and frightened him into releasing John, and Nero thereafter did not dare to interfere with the affairs of the province of Asia.

The last location where John can be reliably placed is at the ‘council of Jerusalem’ until we meet him again at Patmos in Rev.1: 9. The intervening years are not documented and therefore what follows is supposition, but it fits the facts as far as we can know them.

After the council of Jerusalem, John journeyed to Rome. Rome had a large Jewish population where preaching could be continued without hindrance. His brother had died in the Herodian persecution a few years earlier and he may have been concerned for the safety of Mary. The preaching of the gospel in Rome caused much friction amongst the Jews and Claudius issued an edict banishing the Jews from Rome, and in particular exiling John to Patmos. (This Claudius was mistaken for Nero by early writers) John arranged for the brethren in Ephesus, the provincial capital, to care for Mary during his exile. (Patmos is in close proximity to Ephesus)

John received and circulated Revelation before the Nero persecution in A.D. 65 and before the Jewish war of A.D.66½ . He remained in exile during the Nero persecution. John was liberated, or more probably killed by Domitian, who ruled in place of his father Vespasian for six months (A.D. 70) – this accounts for the confusion of Eusebius.

The author acknowledges that the above is theoretical, but those who rely on the testimony of the 'church fathers' are also on uncertain ground – the only certainty is the internal evidence from scripture itself, which if approached with integrity, demands an early date.

Partaker with you in the Tribulation and in the kingdom and the patience of Jesus Christ – John is a fellow sufferer with his brethren (because of his witnessing) and the words that he hears and the visions that he sees are effectual for himself as well as his readers.

THE LORD'S DAY

"I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and heard behind me a great voice, as of a trumpet" (Rev.1:10)

John was in the spirit, this expression occurs in 4: 2; 17: 3 and 21: 10 where fresh visionary settings are introduced. First John is in Patmos (1: 9) then transported to heaven (4: 2) where he remains for most of the Apocalypse, but later he is carried away into the wilderness (17: 3) and finally to a great mountain (21: 10), Ezekiel had similar experiences. (Ezek.3: 14, 8: 3, 11: 1, 24)

On the Lord's day (kyriakon deipnon) – this is the only New Testament occurrence. It has been suggested that this is the Sabbath or the Day of Atonement or the Day of the Lord. (i.e., in 'that day' Zech.12: 3,6,9,11 and 13: 1,2,4 and 14: 1,4,6,8,9,13,20)

The present author believes the last suggestion to be correct – it is the great day of the Lord's second coming (1 Thess.5:2). The day of the Lord is to be understood, not as a single day, but as a series of eschatological events that culminate in the return of Christ. It is an expression often used by the prophet Joel; "for the day of the Lord cometh, for it is nigh at hand; a day of darkness and gloominess, a day of clouds and thick darkness…." (Joel 2: 1b,2a)

"For the day of the Lord is great and terrible; and who can abide it?" (Joel 2:11 see also 2:31 and 1:15)

Who can abide it? Is alluded to in the sixth seal - who is able to stand ? (6:17), concerning the judgment of the Jewish nation in the first century (see chapt.6 pg.16) This confirms that the day of the Lord or the Lord's day is not a single day but as we have already expressed, the "eschatological day" – because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by the man whom he hath ordained. (Acts 17: 31)

This understanding compliments the comparison with John 21:21 that we have already examined on page 5.

Heard behind me a great voice, as of a trumpet – the theme of Joel is continued:

"Blow ye the trumpet in Zion, and sound an alarm in my holy mountain: let all the inhabitants of the land tremble: for the day of the Lord cometh." (2:1)

Here, however, it is not a trumpet that heralds impending judgment, but the voice of God. This is the same trumpet like voice (deep and resonating) that revealed the ten commandments. (Ex. 19: 13,16) The voice of the actual vision was, "like the sound of many waters." (1: 15)

John heard the voice behind him – the correspondence between Rev. chpt.1 and Isa.chpt.30 have already been noted by H.A.W. in his Revelation pg.8. The best of these allusions can be compared as follows:

ISAIAH 30 REVELATION 1

Children that will not hear the word of the Lord (v.9)

Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein. (v.3)

Write it before them in a table, and note it in a book. (v.8)

Write in a book. (v.11,19)

Thine ears shall hear a word behind thee saying, This is the way walk ye in it. (v.21)

Heard behind me a great voice. (v.10)

Bread of adversity and the water of affliction, yet shall not thy teacher be hidden anymore, but thine eyes shall see thy teacher. (R.V.mg. singular = the teacher=Christ, the teacher of righteousness)

John exiled to Patmos, his brethren persecuted.(v.9)

- every eye shall see him. (v.7)

Like all the prophets, John identifies himself with (and in some ways personifies) his people. The powerful point behind these allusions is that the people of Israel were walking in the wrong direction, for they heard the voice behind them, they did not want to hear the word of the Lord pronounce judgment on them:

“which say to the seers, See not; and to the prophets, prophesy not unto us right things, speak unto us smooth things, prophesy deceits: get you out of the way, turn aside out of the path, cause the Holy One of Israel to cease before us.” (Isa.30: 10,11)

THE COMISSION TO WRITE

“Saying, I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last: and, What thou seest, write in a book, and send it unto the seven churches which are in Asia; unto Ephesus, and unto Smyrna, and unto Pergamos, and unto Thyatira, and unto Sardis, and unto Philadelphia, and unto Laodicea.” (Rev.1:11)

The visions were to be recorded in a book and sent to seven gentile ecclesias a sign of the imminent casting away of the Jews. Despite this, the gentile ecclesias had no reason for vainglory for they also received admonishment. The mixed Jewish – Greek congregations also contained brethren who would rather hear “smooth things.”

THE SEVEN GOLDEN CANDELSTICKS

“And I turned to see the voice that spake with me. And being turned, I saw seven golden candlesticks” (Rev.1:12)

I turned to see the voice – This is a metonymy, John didn’t see the voice but the speaker. The angel that John saw caused him to fall down as dead (v.17). Like the prophet Daniel, John was metaphorically raised from the dead and told not to fear. The natural response of man when in the divine presence is one of awe, dread and fear, but John was reassured – the message to follow, for the faithful, was one of hope and consolation.

John saw seven golden candlesticks or lampstands. Unlike the Menorah (Ex.25: 31) these are seven separate lamps.

“And in the midst of the seven candlesticks one like unto the Son of man, clothed with a garment down to the foot, and girt about the paps with a golden girdle.” (Rev.1:13)

In the midst of the seven separate lamps is the Lord Jesus Christ – he forms as it were the central stem that unifies the seven individual lights and turns them into a Menorah.

The Menorah is always represented as occupying a two-dimensional plane, when it should actually be three-dimensional space, for it represents a tree. With branches, bowls, knops and flowers (Ex.25: 31-40) it represented a tree of life. The tree of life was in the midst of the garden (Gen.2: 9) and the Lord God (his angel) walked in the garden for, “they heard the voice of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day” (Gen.3: 8) In similar fashion Christ walks in the midst of his ecclesias and John hears the voice and sees Christ.

He is clothed with the garments that the High Priest wore on the Day of Atonement (Lev.16: 4,32) on all other occasions he wore the breastplate, the Ephod, the robe of the Ephod (blue) and the mitre (turban). Underneath all this he wore a plain white linen robe in common with other priests. Although the colour of the robe is not mentioned in this verse, we can assume it is white and that the vesture is plain, for the description is similar to Rev.15: 6 another atonement passage. In that verse the angels come out of the heavenly temple and initiate judgments on the earth. (instead of the priestly blessing of Num.6: 24-27) Here Christ is still in the heavenly temple making atonement for our sins and attending the lamp. When he returns, he will pronounce the blessing – even life for evermore.

ONE LIKE UNTO THE SON OF MAN

“His head and his hairs were white like wool, as white as snow; and his eyes were as a flame of fire; And his feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace; and his voice as the sound of many waters. And he had in his right hand seven stars: and out of his mouth went a sharp two-edged sword: and his countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength.” (Rev.1:14-16)

His head and hear were white like wool, as white as snow – In the Greek text it divides into a neat seven-fold structure, further expressing the perfection of Christ. The appearance of the hair is one of the features not derived from Dan.10:5-61, but rather from Dan.7: 9. There it is speaking of “the Ancient of Days”, i.e., God the Father. This confirms that the vision John beheld signified more than a mere angel. The risen Christ shares in the glory of his Father (John 12:41,17: 5).

his eyes were like a flame of fire - Such a description of the eyes here expresses the penetrating judgment of Christ, able to discern the thoughts and intents of man (c.p. Ps.11: 4, Prov.15: 3). When writing to the ecclesia at Thyatira, having introduced himself as “the Son of God who has eyes like a flame of fire” (2: 18), Christ then states, “I am he who searches mind and heart, and I will give to each of you according to your works” (2: 23). At his return when “he judges in righteousness”, the fiery eyes are once again mentioned (19: 11f)

his feet were like burnished brass as if refined in a furnace – The word translated “refined” (pepyromenes) literally means “fired.” This last clause has no counterpart in Dan.10: 6. The significance of this is surely that Christ himself has passed through the refining fire of judgment (Heb.2: 10, 5: 8f), of which he is now the Master. This, of course, would not be true of the angel.

his voice like the sound of many waters – To express the magnitude of the divine voice, it is often described in terms of waters, thunder or a multitude. In places we find more than one of these:

The voice of the Lord is upon the waters; the God of glory thunders, the Lord, upon many waters. The voice of the Lord is full of majesty." (Ps.29: 3f)

in his right hand he had seven stars – The nature of these seven stars, which were seven angels, is discussed under 1: 20. Being in Christ's right hand obviously denotes his authority over them – thus he is able to address them in the stern manner found in the following letters, yet it also expresses care and protection. Even though some of these ecclesias are severely rebuked, their Master has not abandoned them.

Out of his mouth came a sharp two – edged sword – This is the sword of Rev.19: 5; "out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword that with it he should smite the nations." The tongue has the shape of a two –edged sword and Christ, who is styled "the word of God" in the same passage, will subdue his enemies by this word.1 One should also recognise the continuation of the Genesis motif. It was the cherubim, with the flaming sword, which kept the way to the tree of life. (Gen.3: 24) The writer to the Hebrews comments on this as follows:

"For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight: but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do." (Heb.4:12-13)

In this passage we find that the word of God and the two edged sword are again associated – this is based on the Eden scenario – two edged sword (flaming cherubim sword) dividing joints an marrow (burnt offering brought to the sanctuary in Eden) all things naked and open (Adam and Eve naked and ashamed).

The emphasis is on the penetrating nature of the sword (tongue) and the eyes of the immortal Christ.

his face was like the sun shining in it's strength – The vision radiated the dazzling brilliance of the sun. This is the language of physical glory. As the chief of the celestial bodies, the sun declared the glory of God above all others (Ps.19: 1, 4-6). John had beheld this glory before on the Mount of Transfiguration (Mtt.17: 2, Lk.9: 32, 2 Pet.1: 17). The righteous also shall shine with the same glory at the resurrection (Mtt.13: 43, Jud.5: 31, c.p. Dan.12: 2).

THE KEYS OF HELL AND DEATH

"And when I saw him, I fell at his feet as dead. And he laid his right hand upon me, saying unto me, Fear not; I am the first and the last: I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death." (Rev.1:17-18)

The titles enumerated here, demonstrate that this is a vision of the risen Christ. He is the first and the last – the, "author and finisher of our faith" (Heb.12: 2) The word author (archegos) means pioneer or originator, and finisher (teleiotes) means perfecter. Jesus is the first in that he is the originator of faith in that he himself displayed it in the steadfast endurance of sufferings (Heb.12: 3). But he is also the perfector of faith as well as it's originator. This may mean simply that in him faith is seen to perfection; He is the first and the last, so far as faith is concerned.

It is fitting that John "died" when he saw the vision, for the vision concerns the victory of Christ over death, as a consequence of his faith he now has the keys of the grave. In order to

demonstrate this he laid his right hand on me – the hand of blessing and metaphorically raised John from the dead. (c.p. 10: 10 and Ezek.2: 2 "he touched me and set me upright" Dan.8: 18)

Christ conquered sin and death, as a result of which he entered into the same quality of life as possessed by the Father. The Greek for "I am alive for evermore" is repeated in 4: 9, but there of the Lord God Almighty. John had written earlier, "For as the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son to have life in himself." (John 5: 26). But that is only half the picture – not only was Christ bestowed with eternal life, but also with the authority to give it to others. He became "the resurrection and the life" (John 5: 21). In symbol he does this for John here – a mere token of the reality that is to take place at his return (Rev.22: 12), when he will grant those who conquer "to eat of the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God."(Rev.2: 7)

I have the keys of hell and death- Jesus has the keys of hell and death; for he possesses the, "gate of his enemies" , as promised to his ancestor Abraham. (Gen.22: 17) Even the gates of hades would not prevail against his ecclesia:

"And I say unto thee, that thou art Peter (Petros – a little stone), and upon this rock (Petra) I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." (Mtt.16: 18)

The rock, was the faith displayed by Peter in his Lord (v.16), this faith in Christ as the Messiah the son of God, demonstrated in baptism (burial with him) would result in resurrection to newness of life. Those who maintain a faithful walk in obedience to Christ will literally be raised from the dead and given eternal life.

It is interesting to note, that after this great statement of faith by Peter, the Lord gave him the, "keys to the kingdom of heaven." (v.19) This meant, that like his Lord, he would have the authority (guided by the Holy Spirit) to make life and death decisions as he did in the case of Ananias and Sapphira in Acts chapter 5. (this power was only granted to Peter after the Lord's resurrection)

In conclusion – Jesus now has the power to open and no one can shut but also the power to shut and no one can open. (Rev.3: 7)

WAS, IS, ARE TO COME

"Write the things which thou hast seen, and the things which are, and the things which shall be hereafter" (Rev.1:19)

Many expositors are reluctant to apply the reference frame of this verse to the past. The problem is that John uses the past tense (aorist) to express visions or actions that are in the present, or even in the future.1

The case presented by various commentaries can be summarised as follows- the things which thou hast seen could refer to the vision of the, 'one like the son of man' in v.12-20, yet since John is still 'within' the vision when he writes in v.19 this would seem artificial. In v.19 John is using the tripatriate prophecy formula known as the "epistolary aorist" i.e., while the visions he was about to record were yet to be seen by him, from the standpoint of the reader they belong to the past. The things thou hast seen is a reference to v.11, "what thou seest write in a book", the conclusion drawn from this, is that the verse should be understood as; Write what you see, namely the events of the present and the future.

On page 15 of his Revelation H.A.W. has the following to say – at the time John wrote them down the visions were all past. (hast seen) He then refers to v.2 – "who bare record.....of the things which he saw."

Unfortunately neither of these explanations are satisfactory, for when John wrote them down all the visions were in the past. (he wrote them after he saw them), yet he is also instructed to, "write the things, which are, and the things, which shall be hereafter." H.A.W. circumvents this problem by giving, "the things which are" the reading, "what things they are" (i.e., what they mean). To paraphrase H.A.W.; Write the visions you saw, namely (the meaning of), future events.

The failure of these expositions, is to recognise the reference to the tripatriate covenant title in the previous verses. For example verse 17:

I am he that liveth -the things which are - present

I was dead -hast seen - past

I am alive for evermore -which shall be hereafter -future

The instructions to John are based on the covenant name of God; was, is, will be. The activity of God cannot be limited to any single temporal plane, for he is outside of the space time continuum, for he is eternal.

In similar fashion, those who dichotomise Revelation into exclusively preterist or futurist expositions are limiting the word of God. The visions that John has relayed to us concern events in the past, (in his) present, and in the future. The problem facing the expositor, is determining which events are past, present and future. Sometimes this is clearly indicated, i.e., "five are fallen, one is, the other is not yet come." (17: 10) At other times the delineation is ambiguous.

By the things which are we are probably to understand the circumstances of the seven ecclesias in the following two chapters, plus the heavenly scene1 of chapter 4, where John is informed that, the "things which must be hereafter", will be revealed to him (4: 1). However, before the future revelation unfolds, we see a vision of the Lamb, that had been slain (5: 6) and wast slain (5: 9), clearly indicating that the vision commences shortly after the Passover resurrection of Jesus, when he was given the sealed book. (and not 66 years later in A.D. 96).

[see chapter five for further exposition]

THE MYSTERY OF THE SEVEN STARS

"The mystery of the seven stars which thou sawest in my right hand, and the seven golden candlesticks. The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches: and the seven candlesticks which thou sawest are the seven churches." (Rev.1:20)

The word "mystery" here simply means the interpretation of these details. It is used again in this sense in 17: 7. In the Greek "which you saw" we find the identical form of the verb, eides, as in the preceding verse, confirming that it is the vision of the son of man being referred to there.

Jesus Christ controls the destiny of the seven ecclesias because he controls the angels, who are, "ministering spirits sent forth to minister to those who shall be heirs of salvation" (Heb.1: 14) Each ecclessia has it's own angel,2 and the seven epistles that follow are not addressed to the angels but for the angel.ie.,

For (on behalf of) the angel of the ecclesia at Ephesus write.....

The seven lampstands are the seven ecclesias – Note that the ecclesias are no more than lampstands, not the lamps. Of themselves they have no light. In Zechariah 4 the lampstand of Israel was fed with oil from the two anointed. The light of the ecclesias can only come from Christ who is in their midst.

REVELATION CHAPTER 1

Gen Zech Mk Rev

Acts.1: 9

11

Acts 17:31

18

2 Chron.35: 25

14

Col. 1:17,18

10

1 Cor.10:1,2

12

Dan.2:47

1, 4

Dan.7: 9

21

Dan.7: 13

11

Dan.8: 18

23

Dan.10: 6

21

Dan.12: 2

22

Dan.12 :9

11

Dan.12: 10

4

Deut.31: 14

12

Ex.1:20

15

Ex.3:4

14

Ex.4: 15

14

Ex.6:2,3

14

Ex.6:4

15

Ex.13:21,22

11

Ex. 19:13,16

19

Ex.25:31

20

Ex.25:31-40

20

Ezek.2:2

23

Ezek.3:14

18

Ezek.11:23

11

Scripture_index

Gen.3:8

20

Gen.3:24

22

Gen.4:1

14

Gen.17:1

15

Gen.22:17

23

Gen.45:27,28

12

Gen.50:15-21

13

Heb.1:14

25

Heb.2:10

21

Heb.4:3

3

Heb.4:12-13

22

Heb.7:21

10

Heb 7:22

11

Heb.8:13

11

Heb.12:2

22

Heb.12:3

22

Heb.12:25

6

Hos.12: 4

12

Isa.30:10,11

19

Jer.31:9

12

Job38:31

8

Joel 2:11

18

John 1:1

4

John 1:30

9

John 5:21

23

John 5:26

23

John 12:33

4

John 12:34

4

John 12:41

21

John 21:21

18

1John 1:1

4

Josh.1:5

14

Jud.5:31

22

Jude 14,15

12

1 Kgs. 2: 44 – 46

13

1 Kgs.18:43-46

12

Lev.16: 4,32

20

Lk.9: 32

22

Lk.9:35

6

Lk.11:28

6

Lk.21:34

2

NOTES

1 There are several parallels in the Fourth Gospel although expressed differently. (N.S.R.V.): "I have made known to you everything that I have heard from my Father." (15:15 see also 1:18; 8:28; 12:49-50; 14:10; 17: 8,14)

2 The disciples had handled the Word (Jesus) from the beginning (of his ministry) – this is not the language of pre-existence. Literally, In beginning was the Word (Jesus) and the Word (Jesus) was with (Greek: Godwards – moving towards God) THE GOD (the Greek has the definite article) and god (divine) was the Word. This means that Jesus's whole life and ministry was directed towards God and that Jesus was divine – no Christadelphian should have a problem with this.)

NOTES

1 The angel who represents the glory of the risen Christ in Revelation 1:12-19 has white skin and white hair like wool (v.14) – it has been remarked that Jonah, who was dead for three days in the belly of the whale, would have been bleached white by the gastric juices (this has happened in documented cases), which would help account for the sudden conversion of Nineveh.

NOTES

1 The angels are also called 'stars' see digression 12.2. Revelation contains (sometimes oblique) references to the Zodiac signs. It must be remembered that the calendar and specifically the feast days and seasons were regulated by the moon and possibly by the Zodiac signs. The seven stars are the Pleiades referred to by Job (38:31) and commonly known as the seven sisters or seven virgins. We also have an allusion to Leo – the lion of the tribe of Judah

(Rev.5:5) Virgio – the woman with a crown of twelve stars (Rev.12: 1) The day of Atonement occurred when the constellation Libra (weighing scales) rises heliacally. Bullinger remarks in his appendix of the 'witness of the stars' (pg.200) that the Akkadian name for this sign stands for an Altar. Revelation chapter 8 (based on the day of atonement) features the 'heavenly altar' (8: 3). The next sign is Scorpio – the scorpion and we find this in 9:1-3 and Sagittarius the half man-horse (see 9:9,17) known as Nergal by the ancients – the giant king of war. Are the two witnesses represented by Gemini – the twins? And the outpouring of vials by Aquarius the water pourer?

This is speculative and we should be careful not to become prognosticators like the ancient Babylonians. Even so, the purpose of God is written in the stars, and they do feature as regulators of the feast days. We are also aware that Jesus specifies, "the sign of the Son of man in heaven" (Mtt.24: 30) and this is probably a repeat appearance of his, "birth star" (Mtt.2: 1) according to Dr Molnar (The star of Bethlehem: The legacy of the Magi – Rutgers University Press) this was caused by a lunar eclipse of the planet Jupiter (then thought to be a star) in the constellation of Aires (the Ram) this occurred on April 17th 6 B.C. Judea is represented on a Roman coin dated A.D.6 as a ram (Aires) gazing at a star. (the coin was minted to celebrate the annexation of Judea)

NOTES

1 See John 1:30; After me cometh a man which is preferred before me, for he was first in regard of me. (R.V.mg.) Jesus was the near kinsmen redeemer not John the Baptist. See Ruth 4:4

NOTES

1 The similarities between Titus and Revelation are interesting – both are based on the Exodus motif but are obviously not dependent on each other.

REVELATION 1:5-6

TITUS 2:14

To him who loved us

Who gave himself for us

and freed us from our sins

to redeem us from all iniquity

by his blood

iniquity

and made us a kingdom

and to purify for himself

priests to his God and Father

who are zealous for good deeds

NOTES

1 Ex.13 :21,22 ; 14 :19,20,24 ; 16 :10 ; 19 : 16-19 ; 20-18 ; 24 :15-19 ; 33 :18-21 with 34 :4-7 ; 40 :34 –38 ; Num. 10 :34 ; 12 :5,10 ; 14 :9 mg.10,14,21,22 ; Deut.31: 14,15 ; Ps. 105:39 ; 1 Cor.10 :1,2.

NOTES

1 The passages in Thessalonians also make a distinction: (1) The Lord descends from heaven with a shout (2) we which are alive and remain shall be caught up in clouds to meet the Lord. First the Lord returns with clouds then the saints are caught up in clouds.

---

2 Mtt. 24: 23-27.

---

3 The meaning Prince with God is wrong , in similar fashion Daniel means: God is judge and not judge with God. Note that in Gen.45: 27,28 when Jacob receives news that his son Joseph is alive, his spirit revived and Israel said , it is enough. In the space of two verses his name changes from Jacob to Israel, from unbelief (v.26) to faith (v.28).

NOTES

1 The A.V. has ‘rough garment’ – the hairy garment is in mimicry of that worn by Elijah and John the Baptist – who were both forerunners. This verse is about the false prophets (witnesses) of Rev.13: 13, whose ministry apes that of the true witnesses (forerunners) of chapter 11.

---

2 The LXX has Simeon, who is the brother of Levi, but in the light of the mention of David and Nathan, Shimei is more probably correct.

NOTES

1 Unlike most (or all?) names, the name of God is not a noun but a verb. Strongs transliterates Eyeh as hâ yâ [1961] as the Hebrew has no vowels. It is a word that describes existence and comes from the root word hâ vâ [1933] to breathe or to exist, i.e. TO BE (if you breathe you exist). For example, the name of Eve means: mother of the living or literally mother of the breathing châ vâ [2332]. The name of God is not pronounced it is breathed – try the following open your mouth and inhale deeply (YAH) now exhale (VAH). Every living creature pronounces the name of God every day of its existence. He is a God of the living (breathing) not of the dead. Strictly speaking the Hebrew has no past or future tenses, but simply a perfect for completed actions (usually past) and an imperfect for incomplete actions (usually future). The verb eyeh (or hâ yâ) - to be – is imperfect, and in the vast majority of its other occurrences is translated ‘I will be’ (Ex. 4: 15, Jos.1: 5). However, because of its sense of incompletion, the imperfect can be used to describe continuous activity in the past present and future. Therefore Eyeh asher [834] Eyeh means;

I was who I was, I am who I am, I will be who I will be.

The Greek Septuagint, having no tense comparable to the Hebrew imperfect, used the closest available (the present continuous participle) and rendered the divine name as ho on , ‘the being

one.' Moffat translates the divine name as 'the Eternal.' This gives the sense of the self-existing God, who transcends both time and space. He is the AW. As H.A.W. points out (Revelation pg.5) this is the equivalent of the AT (Aleph and Taw) of the Hebrew alphabet (first and last letters). The Hebrew word tx (AT) is found in Gen.4: 1 where Eve declares: "I have gotten a man even (AT) Yahveh" this is the equivalent of AW is, was, will be. In this instance Eve thought that she had given birth to the Messiah. Revelation applies this title to God in 1: 8 and 21: 6, but also to Christ in 1: 17 and 22: 3 – Jesus Christ now has the name above every name.

---

2 "And God spake unto Moses, and said unto him, I am the Lord (Yahveh) and I appeared unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob, by the name of God Almighty (El Shaddai), but by my name Yahveh was I not known to them."

This verse has been used by bible critics to assert that the name Yahveh was not known to the patriarchs. In turn this helps to underpin the use of the divine names as a criterion for source analysis – the 'document hypothesis', under this theory the earlier mentions of Yahveh name are the work of the redactor who compiled Genesis from various sources. J = Yahwist source E = Elohist source P = Priestly source. Using a 'cut and paste' method he compiled the book from his various sources, but when he inserted the incidents from his J source, he forgot to edit Ex.6 : 2,3 thus revealing that the patriarchs did not actually know God by the Yahveh name. When hermeneutic principles are not properly applied we end up with the sort of absurd explanation offered by the critics. The context of Ex.6; 2,3 is found in the previous chapter (5: 2) Pharaoh said; "who is the Lord (Yahveh), that I should obey his voice to let Israel go? I know not the Lord (Yahveh) neither will I let Israel go." Moses's and the peoples accusation was as follows: "For since I came to Pharaoh to speak in thy name (Yahveh) he hath done evil to this people; neither hast thou delivered thy people at all." Exodus 6 :3 should read as follows: "And God spoke to Moses and said to him, I am Yahveh. And I appeared to Abraham to Isaac and to Jacob as El Shaddai, and my name Yahveh did I not myself reveal unto them (also)?" The form of this verse is now as a rhetorical question. Moses and the people were being castigated for their lack of faith. Pharaoh may well have been ignorant of Yahveh – amongst the plethora of gods – but Moses, who complained that speaking in Yahveh's name (acting as his agent) brought evil upon them, should have known better. God had revealed himself to the patriarchs as El Shaddai. This title carries a double meaning and plays on the Hebrew for breast (shad) suggesting fecundity – but sometimes the opposite (shadad) - to destroy. Although the etymology is uncertain, in all passages it refers to fertility or destruction, and in some passages both themes are present. In Genesis however it is exclusively used for emphasising fertility or blessing: "El Shaddai (God Almighty) bless thee, and make thee fruitful, and multiply thee, that thou mayest be a multitude of people." (28: 3) [see also Gen.17: 1,48: 3,35: 11,43:14, and especially 49: 25 note, 'blessings of the breast'] God kept his promise to the patriarchs, for despite the rigours of Egyptian bondage the people "multiplied and waxed very mighty" (Ex.1: 20) This is the fulfilment of the El Shaddai title. Moses is being castigated, and reminded that God keeps faith with his covenant: You complain that bad things happen to you whenever you use my covenant name - Yahveh, and that I have not delivered you at all. Well, I revealed myself to the patriarchs as a God of blessing and fruitfulness (El Shaddai) didn't I? – and I have kept my promise and made this people great – but I also revealed my covenant name to the patriarchs (Yahveh) – the one who is, was and will be? Do you think that I will let this people die in Egypt when I have inextricably linked them to my covenant name? I was the God of Abraham, I am the God of Abraham and I will be the God of

Abraham. (Yahveh Elohey avotheychem – he who was, is and will be the God of your fathers) "And I established my covenant with them, to give them the land of Canaan, the land of their travels, in which they travelled." (Ex. 6:4) God had blessed them and he would also be manifest in them.

NOTES

1 see page 11 of this chapter for a comparison between Daniel and Revelation.

NOTES

1 There may be an analogy with the creative work done by God in Genesis: God said……and it was so – i.e., the divine word goes forth and the creative work is completed by the angels. In similar fashion the sword that subdues the nations are the commands of Christ to the angels, who accomplish the work.

NOTES

1 There are several instances in Revelation in which the aorist indicative has a future meaning (10: 7; 11: 2,10 ; 15: 1; 21: 4) The aorist is then used as a future 'proleptic' sense, or it is used like the Hebrew perfect which presented future events as though they had already occurred.

NOTES

1 The heavenly sanctuary is an ever present reality and must fall under the things that are, for it represents the glory of God over his creation and continuos divine care for his people.

---

2 In their expositions, H.A.W. (pg.16) and N.Lunn. (pg.63) discuss various alternatives, but they both come to the conclusion that 'aggelos' means angel in the sense of a ministering spirit and not a human messenger. The present author concurs with this.

Prelude to Chapters 2 & 3

SEVEN LAMPSTANDS A MESSAGE FOR TODAY

" WHAT THOU SEEST WRITE"

Wherefore gird up the loins of your minds, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

INTRODUCTION

These real letters afford us concrete insight into the condition of each of the seven ecclesias of Asia Minor. Commendations, admonitions, warnings culminate each time in the promise of eternal life. All the letters have the same basic theme in common; that the resurrected Lord is present in his ecclesia, that he takes charge, he admonishes and guides, and he stands by her in times of difficulty and he ultimately rewards her loyalty with life eternal.

Eternal life, the judgment of God and the victory of the saints are major themes of Revelation. These themes run throughout the book. John reminds us that judgment begins with the household of God. To each of the seven ecclesias Jesus says I know your works and then gives the proper commendation or rebuke. Peter wrote as he was preparing Christians for the suffering ahead, "For the time is come that judgment must begin at the household of God: and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God?" It is time that we, the ecclesia of the last days begin to look at ourselves and judge ourselves, for if we do not, then God will.

Apart from the four Gospels, the books of the New Testament were written in the form of epistles to individuals, or to ecclesias, or to the body of Christ as a whole. But like all scriptures, they have a message for believers in Christ throughout all generations and especially those who live at the time of his return.

Paul wrote nine epistles to seven ecclesias and three to two of his companions in labour, and no one has any difficulty applying the eternal truths to twenty first century life. The same is true of the epistles of Peter and John and of all the writings of the New Testament. The person who reads or preaches from these scriptures in this modern age is just as much challenged by their message, as were those to whom they were originally sent.

But only one book in the New Testament bears the name of Jesus Christ as its author and begins with seven epistles addressed to seven ecclesias in Asia Minor. Should not reason and logic place this book and these epistles of Jesus on the same basis as all the others of the New Testament, giving them an application, which transcends time and place? In fact it would seem most natural and reasonable for the epistles written by Christ and without which the canon of Scripture would not be complete, to receive as much attention as those written by His apostles. However, the Apocalypse and its introductory epistles to the ecclesias of Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamos, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, and Laodicea, constitute a neglected portion of the New Testament.

In the light of this amazing fact the writer is constrained to say to the members of the modern ecclesia; "My brethren, these things ought not so to be." Many are earnestly trying to change this situation (especially noticed in the amount of books written by Brethren in the last quarter of the 20-Century and the increase in discussion groups and classes being held on prophecy). Whilst we thank God for this it still behoves each of us not to neglect these chapters if we are to meet

without fear and trembling him who holds the seven stars in his right hand, because the message of Revelation 2& 3 is a message for the end time ecclesia.

End-time language

Notice the end-time language found throughout the letters to the seven Ecclesias:

Ephesus: repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly. (2:5)

Pergamos: Repent; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will fight against them with the sword of my mouth. (2:16)

Thyatira: Behold, I will cast her [Jezebel] into a bed, and them that commit adultery with her into great tribulation, except they repent of their deeds. But that which ye have already hold fast till I come. (2:22, 25)

Sardis: If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come on thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee. (3:3)

Philadelphia: Because thou hast kept the word of My patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth. Behold, I come quickly. (3:10-11)

Laodicea: Behold, I stand at the door, and knock. (3:20)

Rev.2& 3 is primarily speaking of the state of the ecclesias before AD 70. However is it not also a prophecy of the end time condition of the ecclesia?

A message for the last generation

Revelation is essentially a last-day book, written especially for the last generation. It therefore contains the instruction most needed by the ecclesia of the last days. Its purpose is to prepare Gods people for the closing crisis of human history and the return of our Lord. This book should therefore be of special interest to us. I come quickly is said three times in Chapter 22. All the prophecies and revelations of the book climax in the return of our Lord. The book therefore demands our careful study especially because we stress the proximity of the Second Advent more than any other denomination.

Although this last book is called a revelation, it is also declared to be a prophecy. In the first chapter the writer uses the expression, the words of this prophecy, and in the last chapter he refers to what he has written as the prophecy of this book, the book of this prophecy, and the words of the prophecy of this book. Prophecy is history written in advance (not secular history but Jewish salvic history: HAW visions in Daniel chapter 1). Revelation speaks of the events and condition of the Jewish nation and the ecclesia of Christ in the last days. It is imperative therefore to examine Rev.2& 3 for we claim to be the true ecclesia of Christ, the only people of God surrounded by a sea of false Christianity. Who then is Rev.2& 3 directed at? Those who hold to apostolic faith or false Christianity?

Agape

Unto Him that loved us, or loveth us (R.V.). The love of Christ is not in the past tense, but continuous. The act of dying for us did not extinguish His affection. His work did not end at the cross. Of course the crucifixion was the greatest of all demonstrations of that undying love. Consider Gods attitude: “can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have

compassion on the son of her womb? Yea, they may forget thee, yet will I not forget thee. Behold I have graven thee on the palms of my hands."(Isa.49:15,16). If this then is Gods attitude, how can Christ forget the travail of his soul? Love is the very essence of Gods character and the proof is Christ's death - this is the corner stone of the ecclesia. The apostle says, "he that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love"(1 John 4:8). We should more fervently love Him, for we are the supreme objects of His love, and He craves our love in return. It is a tragedy when love is not reciprocated. No wonder Christ is grieved when the objects of His love relax their love for Him. Hence the warnings in Rev. 2& 3.

We are not only loved, and freed from our sins, but we are promised that we shall become kings and priests reigning with him. Let the world despise and ridicule our hopes and beliefs as they may. There is not a believer in Christ, however obscure or humble, who may not rejoice in the fact that we are associated with a power which the potencies of hell cannot withstand, and that we are on the way to possess an eternal priesthood and dominion. Therefore beloved of the Lord take heed, our nature is an overwhelming nature. We are on the brink of the Kingdom let us not make the mistake of thinking that we stand, we must take heed lest we fall. Just look at our Brothers and Sisters in Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamos, Thyatira, Sardis and Laodicea. There is much for us to consider and learn from their example. We who are at the border of the Promised Land must not be separated from the love of Christ which passeth all understanding.

He knew what was in man, even more so now!

Later Jesus said, "I am He which searcheth the reins and hearts" (Rev 2:23). Jesus discerns the thoughts and motives that give birth to words and actions. He knows all men and what is in man (John 2:25). He is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. He has all-penetrating intelligence and knowledge. He has the power to read all secrets, and nothing can be concealed from him. His flaming eyes search all hearts and bring all secret and hidden things to light. They penetrate the darkest and uttermost depths of the soul and light up sins most secret hiding places. Christ's eyes flash fire (Rev.1:14) as He beholds iniquity in the ecclesias for which He is an intercessor. They burn with holy indignation against all wrong. "For His eyes are upon the ways of man, and He seeth all his goings. There is no darkness, nor shadow of death, where the workers of iniquity may hide themselves" (Job 34:21,22). "Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in His sight: but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of Him with whom we have to do" (Heb. 4:13). These eyes of fire do not merely look through the hypocrite and sinner, but consume him and his sins together. His eyes also light up with pleasure as He beholds the development of a godly character: For, "the eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to shew Himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect toward Him" (2 Chron.16:9).

The Seven Ecclesias

It is evident that the seven named were chosen as representatives of all the ecclesias of that generation. Seven is the sacred number of the Scriptures, and especially of the Apocalypse. Numbers in the Scriptures are as significant and important as words. The Bible contains a divine arithmetic as well as a divine message. Since the creation, when the weekly cycle of seven days was instituted to divide time, seven has been a sacred number. The seven ecclesias are used to represent the whole body of Christ in its entirety at the time of the end. For this reason Rev.2& 3 is more relevant than any of the other epistles of the New Testament. They are a specific warning to us at the time of the end. Why should the seven epistles of Christ to the ecclesias of

Asia be localised and confined to the first century any more than the epistles of Paul to local ecclesias of the same period?

The seven letters of Christ to the ecclesias of Asia represent a complete gospel message to the body of Christ. They are not merely historical portraits of the ecclesia, but prophetic of conditions in the ecclesia at the time of the end. Seven times the command is repeated to hear the instruction contained in them. And yet no other portion of the Bible receives so little study. They are of equal importance with the other epistles of the New Testament yet they have not received a tithe of the attention, even though they were written under Christ's direct command.

Although the book of Revelation was directed at seven distinct historical ecclesias, the evidence is conclusive that it was written especially for the ecclesia of the last period. Its chief purpose is to prepare the remnant at the time of the end for the revealing of Christ at His Second Coming. The study of the Revelation of Jesus Christ supplies an appropriate corrective influence.

Sevenfold Division

Each of these seven letters is divided into seven parts, indicating that it contains a perfect and complete message to the ecclesia and period to which it applies, containing all the warnings, reproofs, counsels, and promises necessary for correction. These divisions are:

1. The greeting, which names the recipient, or the ecclesia addressed.

2. A title of the risen Christ taken from chapter1.

3. A section headed I know-description of the spiritual condition that was praiseworthy, or commendable (except in the case of Laodicea).

4. The things to be reproved, censured, or condemned (not in the case of Smyrna and Philadelphia).

5. A warning and an exhortation beginning with He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says and to repent in view of the need.

6. The appeal to hear.

7. The promised reward to him or those who overcome

In the four last letters the order of 6 & 7 is reversed.

A further pattern is to seen in the arrangement:

Ecclesias 1& 7 (Ephesus & Laodicea) are in grave danger.

Ecclesias 2 & 6 (Smyrna & Philadelphia) are in excellent shape.

Ecclesias 3 & 4 & 5 (Pergamum, Thyatira, and Sardis) are middling, neither very good or very bad.

In the first three letters the appeal precedes the promised reward and in the last four it follows, Smyrna and Philadelphia are given no reproof and Sardis and Laodicea receive no praise.

Of course, as previously mentioned the seven letters are not meant only for the seven ecclesias addressed. The seven are addressed to the body of Christ of all ages. The situations and struggles described in the seven letters characterise every ecclesia and every believer. We all share the marks of these ecclesias, both good and bad, to a certain extent.

Meaning of the names

In the Bible, names have great significance.

Ephesus: Desirable; having relaxed let go; full purposed.

Smyrna: Death, or myrrh, a pleasant odour.

Pergamos: High and exalted, union through marriage.

Thyatira: Sacrifice of nearest and dearest, odour of affliction, a daughter.

Sardis: That which is left, those escaping.

Philadelphia: Brotherly love, faithful remnant.

Laodicea: Judgment of the people, righteous judgment, people's rights

Apostasy in the household of faith

The theme of the seven letters is the developing apostasy in the Ecclesia. Ephesus, of which Timothy was bishop, had left thy first love, as Paul said in 2Tim.1:15, "All they which are in Asia be turned away from me." Smyrna had not only left its first love, but some in it claimed to be spiritual Jews and were following commandments and traditions of men. In Pergamos, doctrinal heresies of Balaam and the Nicolaitanes were arising, which divided some into clergy and laity. Thyatira shows that some had reached the depths of Satan, as Jezebel reigned supreme. In Sardis, another phase of apostasy reveals itself, as the truth barely survives, in name only. Each letter to each Ecclesia ends with the warning message, the solemn exhortation to hear what the Spirit is saying (present tense) to the Ecclesias.

One company of Philadelphia falsely claim to be spiritual Jews. They say they have received the Apostolic Truth, but actually reject the Saviour, and are the Synagogue (Ecclesia) of Satan. Another part of Philadelphia has kept His word of patience. They are given an open door to proclaim His message. As a result, Christ will keep them out of the coming tribulation.

The Epistle to the Laodiceans shows that it has hopelessly departed from the truth. Apostasy is at its height. There is no faithful company within it. The door is shut and the Lord is on the outside. However, there is hope for His sheep, for they hear His voice and He will come in and sup with them. In the last days, as it was in Mal.3:16-17, only a few think on His mighty name.

The Saviour foresaw how the departure from His truth would increase. Therefore, He sent messages by John to warn these Ecclesias, and us, "to hear what the Spirit saith unto the Ecclesias." The New Testament is full of predictions that the first century ecclesia would largely fall away from the revealed truth, (Acts 20:29-30; 2Tim.4:3,4; 2 Thess.2:3; Tit.1:16; 2 Pet.2:2; Jude 3,19; 1John 2:18-19; 2 John 7; 3 John 9-10) the messages to the seven ecclesias continue this theme.

Ephesus: Found false apostles to be liars, but didn't give up. In later period, there was a general leaving their first love of the truth.

Smyrna: Faced tribulation 10 days, some cast into prison. They recognised the blasphemy of those of the Synagogue of Satan.

Pergamos: Lived where Satan's seat was, Antipas was martyred, wrestled with false doctrines of Balaam and the Nicolaitanes.

Thyatira: Allowed Jezebel to teach and seduce true believers to commit fornication; some went into the depths of Satan.

Sardis: Almost died out, except for the true name.

Philadelphia: Had to face those of the Synagogue of Satan, and those trying to shut the open door before it.

Laodicea: A lukewarm, compromising, ecclesia about which there was nothing good to say.

Down throughout its history, the true ecclesia has always wrestled against false teachers.

Christianity around us, today, has woefully degenerated. The Lord Jesus calls to us who say that we are the household of God. We must hear what the Spirit is saying to the Ecclesias, what Christ is saying to his people in the last days. So perverse are men's thoughts, that the average person, in spite of Christ's seven-fold warning, persists in reading these admonitions as if they said Let him hear what the Church saith, instead of the original inspired message, Let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the Ecclesias. (Bullinger)

Doctrinal departure

In the October 1898 issue of Things to Come, Dr. Bullinger continues to expound his views on the letters to the Churches. He explains how what the Spirit says to the Churches is covered in the Apostle Paul's Seven Church Epistles: Romans, Corinthians (1 and 2), Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, and Thessalonians (1 and 2). Seven is the number of spiritual perfection. It was not chance, but divine design, that as John addressed seven Churches in Asia, so also did Paul write letters to seven Churches, giving the Spirit's teaching to the churches. Paul's other Epistles (Timothy, Titus, Philemon), were not addressed to specific Churches. James, Peter, John and Jude were general Epistles.

The message of the seven Epistles written by Paul is similar to the messages to the seven Ecclesias of Revelation. The theme is doctrinal departure. In fact, departure from the teachings of Paul was the first step to general apostasy from the truth. The Spirit is saying to the Ecclesias that we ought to take heed and not turn away from the Truth of the Almighty. We must hold fast to the faithful Word. "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the Churches", means that every true believer of every time should apply this message to him or her self, and be attentive to the direction and words of the Holy Spirit written text.

Continuous historic

Many theologians believe that Revelation 2& 3 represent seven era of Christendom, which begin in the first century with apostolic times and end in this age where the Laodicean spirit and attitude is dominant. (If that's the case and we live in the Laodicean period may the Lord help us. See Revelation A Biblical Approach, HAW why this approach is flawed.)

If this is the case where has the true ecclesia been for the last 2,000 years? Religious history gives the story of apostate, fallen Churches in minute detail, but where can believers of the true gospel be found? You will find some who hold certain doctrines with which we agree yet even they and their associates held damnable heresies. Finding true believers in the pages of history is more difficult than finding the proverbial needle in a haystack.

Furthermore when Paul preached the gospel in Ephesus, his ministry continued in Asia for the space of two years (Acts 19:10) and the Word of God grew mightily and prevailed, and that all

they which dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus. And yet, at the close of his ministry, and of his life, he writes his last Epistle to Timothy, when he says, “I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand This thou knowest that all they that be in Asia have turned away from me” (2 Tim.1:15).

This turning away could not have been merely personal, but must have included his teaching also. For in chapter 2:18, he speaks of those “who concerning the truth have erred.” In chapter 3: 8, he speaks of those who “resist the truth.” In chapter 4: 4, he speaks of those who “turn away their ears from the truth” and are “turned unto fables.”

It was Gods truth and teaching from which they had all “turned away” (Paraphrase of Bullinger). This was going on in Paul’s lifetime and we still insist on scouring through 2000 years of history to find believers who shared the same doctrines as us.

It is far more profitable to consider these letters as addressed to the true (maybe the only way to look at them) body of Christ, with its wheat and tares, strengths and weaknesses, at the time of the end. The seven ecclesias are representative of the kinds of triumphs, trials, and failures common to all ecclesias and servants of the Master.

The Book of Revelation is prophetic. Prophecy is dual. That means, prophetic patterns repeat themselves. And so it is with the seven epistles. Seven literal ecclesias existed at the time when John wrote Revelation pre AD70. Traits of these seven ecclesias will exist in these last days. Different individuals and ecclesias will exhibit these characteristics to one degree or another.

The body in the last days

The body of Christ is not an organisation, but individual believers who are experiencing the same problems, trials, successes, and attitudes as ALL SEVEN of the ecclesias of Asia in the First Century A.D. Some are in their first love. Others have left their first love, and need to repent and do the first works, like the Ephesian ecclesia. Some are corrupt and in others evil dwells, just like the Thyatira ecclesia. Some are almost asleep spiritually, like Sardis. But a few have not defiled their garments. Some are excited about having a part of walking through the open door given to the ecclesia, and are like Philadelphia. And there are others who are lukewarm, like the Laodiceans, needing to repent and to be zealous for the Work. Let God make the determination of each individual and ecclesia. Time and again in the letters to the seven ecclesias, Jesus tells the ecclesias to Hold Fast!

Hold Fast

Ephesus Loveless

Smyrna Persecuted

Pergamos Compromising

Thyatira Corrupt

Sardis Dying

Philadelphia Revived

Laodicea Lukewarm (no praise)

Ephesus: thou hast left thy first love repent, and do the first works (2:4-5).

Pergamos: thou holdest fast My name, and hast not denied My faith (2:13).

Thyatira: But that which ye have already hold fast till I come (2:25).

Sardis: Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die hold fast, and repent (3:2-3).

Philadelphia: hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown (3:11).

These verses tell us that one of the themes of Christ's message to the seven ecclesias was to hold fast to the truth and not water it down. This is a message for today. This counsel of Christ applies to each of us personally, our family and our ecclesia.

Brothers and Sisters note very carefully that in the seven letters, there is NO command or even a hint that the ecclesia is to challenge or change the world, its governments or its leaders. Every bit of counsel is for the ecclesia to be a witness to the watching world no matter what they might do to the servants of Christ. Jesus will come one day to deal with the world, its governments and its leaders, we must look at ourselves. Every warning, struggle, temptation, promise and victory in the seven epistles will play a part in the ecclesia of the last days.

Removal of the lightstand

Each of the seven ecclesias is like a light stand. The ecclesia is to illuminate in the world, (Mat 5:14-16) [originally Gods plan for the city of Jerusalem]. If an ecclesia does not do this, it is good for nothing, and the Jesus removes the candlestick. Ephesus lost its first love, so Jesus removed its candlestick. Ephesus today is in ruins. And so it is with Laodicea, the ecclesia for which there was nothing good to say.

When John wrote Revelation before AD70 the Ephesian ecclesia had sadly departed from the truth. Many had already apostatised, and more would soon. Only a zealous few would hold fast to essential truths. The time of the twelve Apostles and the big push of spreading the gospel message was over. Apostasy and corruption were firmly entrenched. We must not close our eyes to what came to pass in the lifetime of the Apostles.

To him that overcometh

In contrast it is very encouraging to read the seven messages to the ecclesias and note that those who overcome are promised great rewards:

Ephesus: Eat of the tree of life, 2:7.

Smyrna: Crown of life, not hurt by second death, 2:10-11.

Pergamos: Eat of hidden Manna, receive white stone with new name, 2:17.

Thyatira: Power over nations, ruler ship with rod of iron, morning star, 2:26-28.

Sardis: Clothed in white raiment, name not blotted out of the Book of Life, name confessed before the Father and His angels, 3:5.

Philadelphia: Spared from hour of temptation to come on all world; pillar in God's Temple and will remain there; write on him, name of God, name of city of God, new name, 3:10-12.

Laodicea: Sit on Christ's throne with Him, 3:21.

The Seven Stars

Jesus identifies Himself as “He that holdeth the seven stars in His right hand.”

Timothy was the minister, of the ecclesia of Ephesus at that time, for according to tradition he was martyred at Ephesus. The right hand is the symbol of power and authority (Isa.41:10,13). Of those who follow Him Jesus said: “I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand” (John 10:28).

The word ecclesia means a company who have been called out of or from among. It is an assembly of those who have been called out of the world and from among unbelievers and then sent back into the world as Christ's ambassadors. The ecclesia of Ephesus was composed of the Christians of that city, who had been called out of Judaism and heathenism by the gospel.

In each of the introductions to the seven epistles, Christ identifies Himself by one of the sevenfold description given of Him in the introductory vision in Revelation chapter one. The seven different descriptions of our Lord contained in the second and third chapters are combined in one chapter. Also that part of the imagery of the introductory vision is selected which is most appropriate to the needs of the particular ecclesia addressed and the nature of the message sent to it.

The Lampstands of Gold

Christ is the supreme head of the ecclesia. He is seen walking among the seven golden candlesticks, or lampstands. The golden lampstands indicate the high estimation in which Christ holds His ecclesia. It is the apple of His eye, the object of Christ's supreme regard. Nothing on earth is as dear to Christ as His ecclesia, which is represented as His body, and His wife, or bride. Jesus is seen in vision walking about in the midst of the seven lampstands of gold, indicating His ceaseless service and unwearied activity and vigilance on behalf of His people. His work, that of a priest, is evident from the description of His garments in chapter one.

In the OT, one of the duties of the priests was to keep the lamps trimmed and burning. So Christ is seen in the garments of a priest, walking among His ecclesias, speaking messages of warning and reproof, His eyes seeing everything, and with His right hand upholding His messengers, who preach His Word. Supplied with the heavenly oil, the ecclesias shed a celestial radiance in the midst of terrestrial darkness.

Smyrna

“AND UNTO the angel of the church in Smyrna write; These things saith the first and the last, which was dead, and is alive; I know thy works, and tribulation, and poverty, (but thou art rich) and I know the blasphemy of them which say they are Jews, and are not, but are the synagogue of Satan. Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days: be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death” (Rev.2:8-11).

SMYRNA

Smyrna was the next city and ecclesia of importance in the province of Asia, and was the nearest to Ephesus, being about forty miles to the north. For this reason the ecclesia of Smyrna was the second of the seven to receive the Apocalypse. It was the loveliest of all the cities and was sometimes called the ornament of Asia, the crown of Asia (because Smyrna geographically was shaped in the form of a crest and looked like a crown) or sometimes the flower of Asia. Beautiful situated it stood at the end of a road that journeyed westward across the lands of Lydia and Phrygia. It had a small land locked harbour in the very heart of the city, making it one of the safest harbours. Smyrna had been a Greek colony as far back as 1000BC. It was invaded and destroyed by the Lydians and for 400 years there was no city at all. The city was rebuilt in 200BC and so it had experienced death and had literally been brought back to life. It is undoubtedly because of Smyrnas historical past, Christ refers to himself as, He who was dead and has come back to life. There was also a large population of Jews in the city who were not only numerous but influential and who did everything they could to hurt the ecclesia.

Smyrna is synonymous with myrrh, one of the principle products of the city. This was a sweet perfume the fragrance of which is released by crushing. It is very bitter to the taste but has a fragrant odour, and the more the plant is crushed and bruised the greater the fragrance. The name Smyrna may therefore, indicate suffering and persecution which lead to a blessing. Smyrna would be crushed by cruel persecutions, but as a result of her sufferings would be anointed for a death and burial that would end in resurrection and renewal of life. Life was difficult for a Christian in Smyrna because they had to live constantly between two extremes. There was within the ecclesia a rich and loving fellowship that warmed their hearts and strengthened their faith. But outside, in the city they faced continuous cruel and persistent hostility. But notice how the Lord introduces himself to them.

First and last, dead and alive

In the introduction to this epistle Christ identifies Himself as the first and the last, which was dead, and is alive. He is the Lord of beginnings, the First. With him began remission, reconciliation and Divine acceptance. He is the first to rise from the dead, the beginning of a New Creation in which the saved participate. The New Covenant owes its effectiveness to him. He is why our faith began, our love of God and desire to dwell in the kingdom were founded in Jesus. He is also the Last. What he begins is brought to culmination in Him. He is why it is said of God He who begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ (Phil.1:6).

This introduction is also well suited to an ecclesia that has passed through bitter persecution. To the ecclesia of martyrs was sent a message of good cheer from the One who had triumphed over death and the grave, and had the keys of the tomb in His keeping. By His death and resurrection, Jesus had robbed death of its sting and the grave of its victory. In identifying

Himself, Jesus uses the attributes that would bring courage and support to His people during persecution and martyrdom. If they would be faithful unto death, they would be given a crown of life.

The ecclesia of Smyrna would be crushed but not permanently killed. There would come a new life more glorious than the first. The severe trials would prove a blessing in disguise. Jesus intimates that this was true in His own experience, for He too had been persecuted and slain, but now he is alive for evermore. It was persecution and suffering that made manifest the beauty of the character of Christ and made Him a worthy example of patience under tribulation (John 15:18-20; 1 Pet.2:20-23).

Tribulation and poverty

“Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the Lord delivers him out of them all” (Ps.34:19). Jesus declared that He was fully acquainted with the tribulation and poverty of His people, but He said they were rich in spiritual things. The poverty was doubtless the result of their tribulation, which often ended in death. Their earthly possessions had been confiscated. They had suffered the spoiling of their goods. Jesus assured them that He fully sympathised with them in their tribulation and poverty because of His own experience. The original word for tribulation means to be in straits. It is distress resulting from being hard pressed, or hemmed in on every side.

Persecution for the sake of righteousness has always been a blessing in disguise. The fiery trial is the purifying instrument of love and grace rather than the weapon of torture. “Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you: but rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ’s sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy. If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye; for the spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you: on their part he is evil spoken of, but on your part he is glorified” (1Pet.4: 2,14).

“Has God not chosen the poor of this world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom which he promised to those who love him?” (James 2:5). Prosperity in this world is not a sure sign of the blessing of God. Like the Hebrew believers (Heb. 10:34), they had no doubt experienced the plundering of their goods. The city of Smyrna was noted for its wealth but the saints of God did not share in it. The conflict between the passing world and the eternal one was experienced in the ecclesia at Smyrna. The world heaped no praise upon this ecclesia. Its members were not held in high regard. In this fair city highly regarded by men, the saints of the Most High God suffered tribulation and became poor. For though a just man fall seven times, he riseth up again (Prov.14:14).

Jesus comforted the ecclesia with the assurance that their poverty in temporal things could not rob them of their spiritual riches. But thou art rich is His message to them. They were rich in grace and faith, and had laid up treasure in heaven (Rom.8:32,1 Tim.6:18-19, James 2:5, Matt.6:20). The ecclesia of Smyrna was characterised by material poverty but Christ saw their real possessions and they were rich in abundance, for they were rich in spiritual things. The wealth they had was recognised in heaven. There are eternal treasures that enhance the worth of those who possess them. There are heavenly riches that enhance our lives in this world, sustaining us when all else fails. Rich indeed is the ecclesia that like Christ has food to eat of which others do not know.

At this point we must ask ourselves, what are we noted for? We the ecclesia of the last days, are we noted for material wealth and spiritual weakness? Of course regarding material things this is a generalisation especially when we consider the predicament of some of our brothers and sisters in the third world. Nevertheless the question must be asked that as a body we have been richly blessed materially, but do we seek the Fathers blessing for the spiritual wealth which only will save us from temptation, trial and tribulation in these last days? Spiritual riches constitute the true wealth, which alone will endure. The Old and New Testaments show that many of the wealthiest in material things are moral paupers and spiritual bankrupts.

Smyrna was a rich-poor ecclesia and Laodicea a poor-rich ecclesia. It is far better to be poor in the estimation of the world and rich in spiritual things than to be rich in ones own esteem and the worlds, but poverty stricken in the sight of Christ. Persecution and physical suffering usually bring material poverty, but they also have a tendency to increase spiritual riches. The ecclesia at Smyrna was rich toward God having obtained and maintained heavenly resources. While they could not barter for worldly goods they were rich in heavenly commodities.

When Jesus says I know your tribulation it means infinitely more than an awareness of it. He beholds the suffering ecclesia with a mind to sustain and uphold it. He will not allow His people to be tempted above what they are able to bear. He will grant them power to stand when others are falling. He will sustain and nourish them. The ecclesia at Smyrna continued to stand in the face of tribulation because of their Lord.

I know the blasphemy

Jesus identifies some of the oppressors of his people. He charges them with blasphemy because they have dared to identify themselves with the God of heaven. They had put a holy name to an unholy thing and the Lord had seen it. Many have suffered attacks from those wearing the name of the Lord. It started with Cain killing Abel. It continued in the persecutions Moses endured from the very people he was leading. The prophets were all opposed by their own people. The Lord himself was killed by the Jews he came to save. With remarkable consistency, the people of God have experienced opposition from those claiming to be of God. Not a single abuse had gone unnoticed by God.

And so Christ had knowledge of those false disciples who claimed to be Jews, but were of the synagogue of Satan. Although we know from the scriptures that the Jews in general joined the Gentiles in hating and persecuting Christians, the term Jew is here used to depict the Disciples of Christ. The term is sometimes used in the Scriptures to represent the true people of God in contrast with the Gentiles, or unconverted (Rom.2:28,29; Rev.2:9; 3:9).

The false brethren were not really members of the ecclesia of Christ even though their names were enrolled on the ecclesial register. They were of the synagogue of Satan. Synagogue and church (ekklesia) are virtually synonymous terms, meaning congregation, assembly, or called out ones. Ancient Israel is called the church in the wilderness in Acts 7:38, and the congregation of the Lord in the Old Testament Scriptures. The Christian ecclesia is called a synagogue in the marginal reading of James 2:2. Satan, the great deceiver and imitator, has an ecclesia, or synagogue. There are but two ecclesias, and they are rivals. Between them there is no neutral ground. All who are not of the ecclesia of Christ are of the synagogue of Satan. The apostasy that had begun through the loss of love in the Ephesian ecclesia continued to develop, and false apostles and disciples multiplied. The mystery of iniquity was working in the congregation of the Lord.

Them which say they are Jews

The Lord particularly identifies those who say they are Jews. These were the people who had been given every spiritual advantage. Of them it is written who are Israelites to whom pertain the adoption, the glory, the covenants the giving of the law, the service of God and the promises. Yet In spite of these remarkable blessings, they not only rejected Christ themselves, but aggressively opposed those receiving him. To them Christ crucified became a stumbling block (1Cor.1:23). Paul vividly describes their intrusion on the early ecclesia. “For you brethren became imitators of the churches of God, which are in Judea in Jesus Christ. For you also suffered the same things from your own countrymen, just as they did from the Judeans, who killed both the lord Jesus and their own prophets, and have persecuted us, and they do not please God and are contrary to all men, forbidding us to speak to the Gentiles that they may be saved, so as to fill up the measure of their sins, but the wrath has come upon them to the uttermost” (1Thess.2:14-16).

Now they prove obstacles to the believers at Smyrna, aggressive in their opposition to the Gospel. The synagogue of Satan is Christ’s assessment of those Jews who made life difficult for the ecclesia at Smyrna.

Persecutions

In verse 10 future trials are predicted, including imprisonment. Jesus said, “And ye shall have tribulation ten days: be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.” In love and mercy He foretells what is coming, and promises deliverance. Regarding the experience of Paul, Jesus said: “I will shew him how great things he must suffer for My name's sake” (Acts 9:16). Christ never entices recruits for His cause by promises of an easy task and a pleasant life.

In Smyrna the persecution of the saints is traced to the agency of the devil, the great adversary. The devil cast some into prison that they may be tried. The persecution was a temptation from the false accuser to cause them to become discouraged and give up their faith and hope. Although the Lord permits temptations to come to us from the enemy in order to test our powers of endurance and to separate the chaff from the wheat. If we take the right attitude, what the devil designs for our ruin will result in his defeat, our good, and Gods glory.

For ten prophetic days the persecution was to continue, and during this time the ecclesia would be put under pressure and given the third degree of torture. The ten days of trial (see Dan.1:12) mentioned in the Smyrnean letter represent a period that would test Gods people to the limit of their endurance both in severity and duration. But the encouraging thing is that the Lord determined the limits. The test could not endure beyond the predetermined limit. No force or power on earth could make this last eleven days. Christians were to pass through a complete baptism of suffering and martyrdom with the assurance of the fullness of Christ’s love and sympathy and the promise of a crown of life as the reward of loyalty and steadfastness.

Crown of Life

The reward offered the ecclesia of Smyrna was not only a crown of life, but the voice of the Spirit adds the promise, He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death. Be faithful to the end even if you have to die, and then I will give you the victors wreath of life, is one translation. The promise is not alone to those who maintain their faithfulness to the end of life in a natural sense, but especially to the persecuted when death was the price of their loyalty. The reward is for those upon whom the enemy inflicts his worst tortures, ending even in death itself. The

recompense for faithfulness even unto martyrdom is a crown of life. Elsewhere, Christians are promised a crown of glory, a crown of righteousness, and a crown of rejoicing. The crown of our text is not a crown of royalty but rather a victor's wreath. Smyrna was noted for its athletic contests, when garlands of victory were given to the successful contestants.

To the ecclesia of martyrs Jesus declared Himself to be the One who had also suffered martyrdom, but was again alive, with a life that would never end. His death was a triumph, and all who are faithful unto death will be given the crown of everlasting life. Nero lost his crown and Paul his head. But Paul died a victor, with the promise of a crown of righteousness and a part in the Paradise restored because he remained faithful even unto martyrdom, and a crown of life and glory awaits him at the resurrection of the just.

Those who maintain their loyalty unto the first death will escape the second death, which will be eternal and from which there will be no resurrection. We need not be too much concerned about the first death, which is temporary and comes to all alike, provided we have maintained that union with the Life-giver by which we can escape the second death.

The candlestick of the ecclesia of Smyrna was not removed. Smyrna and Philadelphia are the only two (witnesses) of the seven that received no reproof or condemnation. The Christians of Smyrna needed encouragement. There were things that needed to be corrected, but they had about all they could stand without reproof. The fires of persecution had purified the ecclesia, and much of the lost love and works had been regained. Tribulation may also play an important part in the purification of the ecclesia in preparation for his Second Coming. Of The faithful in Smyrna it can be said: "These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb" (Rev.7:13,14).

He who overcomes shall not be hurt of the second death. Again a glorious promise is given to build the confidence of the hearers. The promise assumes a vital interest in the world to come. It will have no meaning to those who are not engaged in the fight of faith. It is for those who have taken their cross daily and are running with patience the race that is set before them. It is a promise to obtain. It is spoken of suffering saints, some of whom might be called to lay down their lives because of their testimony. This is the first time the phrase second death is used. It is not defined till later, but the sense of it's meaning is apparent. If we are born twice, we will only die once. The first death is common to all but the second death is a complete separation of the individual from God Almighty.

Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation or distress or persecution or famine or nakedness or peril or sword?

Members of the body of Christ have always suffered the reprisals of an unbelieving world. Whilst this has taken different forms, it has always revealed a contrast between those who believe in God and those who do not. It has always confirmed that those who live by faith are not of this world, and do not fit into its patterns. The ecclesia at Smyrna stands as a constant source of consolation to everyone who has suffered for righteousness sake. When the struggle becomes intense, and holding our ground is about all we can do, the Lord speaks comfortably to us. He does not lay upon us burdens we cannot bear, but exhorts us to keep the faith. We will not be asked to endure anything beyond our capacity, and in it all, the Lord Jesus will be with us. Our responsibility is to give fear no place in our hearts. We are also to look at our afflictions as short and brief only for a moment. Soon we shall be with the Lord and all adversity behind us.

Until then, our afflictions will be the occasion for Divine consolation, when hope shines more brightly.

Nay, in all things we are more than conquers through him that loved us. For I am persuaded, that neither death nor life nor angels nor principalities nor powers nor things present nor things to come nor height nor depth nor any other creature shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Thyatira

“AND UNTO the angel of the church in Thyatira, write; These things saith the Son of God, who has His eyes like unto a flame of fire, and His feet are like fine brass; I know thy works, and charity, and service, and faith, and thy patience, and thy works; and the last to be more than the first. Notwithstanding I have a few things against thee, because thou sufferest that woman Jezebel, which calleth herself a prophetess, to teach and to seduce My servants to commit fornication, and to eat things sacrificed unto idols. And I gave her space to repent of her fornication; and she repented not. Behold, I will cast her into a bed, and them that commit adultery with her into great tribulation, except they repent of their deeds. And I will kill her children with death; and all the churches shall know that I am He which search the reins and hearts: and I will give unto every one of you according to your works. But unto you I say, and unto the rest in Thyatira, as many as have not this doctrine, and which have not known the depths of Satan, as they speak; I will put upon you none other burden. But that which ye have already held fast till I come.

And he that overcometh, and keepeth My works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron; as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers: even as I received of My Father. And I will give him the morning star. He that hath an ear let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches” (Rev.2:18-29).

City Of Thyatira

Thyatira was located about thirty-five miles Southeast of Pergamos. It was a small garrison city, built on the plains with no natural fortifications, and was captured, destroyed, and rebuilt many times. The name is said to signify sweet savour of labour, or sacrifice of contrition. One author says that the name indicates weakness made strong and others give the meaning as never weary of sacrifice.

Thyatira at the time of this epistle was an important manufacturing city, its citizens being mostly poor and humble labourers, just the opposite of those in Pergamos. The workmen of Thyatira were organised into labour unions, or guilds. The two leading industries were the manufacture of instruments of brass, bronze, and other metals, and the manufacture and dyeing of cloth, especially of the royal purple. Homer speaks of the dyeing of red and purple cloth as being characteristic of the city. Over in Philippi of Macedonia the apostle Paul brought the gospel to a certain woman named Lydia, a seller of purple, of the city of Thyatira (Acts16:12-14). It is believed that the ecclesia of Thyatira owed its origin to the labours of Lydia after she returned home.

Eyes like fire feet like brass

Christ introduced Himself to the ecclesia in Thyatira as the Son of God, who hath His eyes like unto a flame of fire, and His feet are like fine brass. This language was very familiar to a people who worked in foundries with their flaming furnaces, where fine brass, bronze, and other metals were manufactured into all sorts of implements. Jesus travelled everywhere and saw everything. Nothing escaped His piercing, penetrating gaze, and there was a great deal to see that made His eyes blaze with righteous indignation. His eyes searched the reins and hearts of all who professed His name. He saw through the facades, the disguises, the postures and pretensions of his people. His feet trod down His enemies and broke them into pieces like a potter's vessel. The symbols represent the Son of God as searching out every evil deed, and trampling in judgment the workers of iniquity.

This is the only time the title the Son of God is used in the seven epistles or in the entire book. It appears that symbolic Jezebel representing false religion was usurping the authority of the Son of God. The backslidden and apostatised ecclesia failed to recognise His priestly service and sovereign authority, and assumed prerogatives that belonged alone to the Son of God. To Thyatira was sent the longest of the seven letters.

That Woman Jezebel

Some believe that Thyatira is equivalent to thygatira, meaning a daughter indicating feminine oppression by a woman who claimed to be a prophetess but was leading the ecclesia into apostasy; and that this false prophetess was an adulteress. Of the Jezebel of this prophecy one writer concludes: This woman was not a real prophetess, but a false one with loud claims and loose living. One is puzzled to know how such a woman had so much shrewdness and sex appeal as to lead astray the servants of God in the ecclesia.

Spiritual Jezebel was the tempter to the eclessia of Thyatira, as was literal Jezebel to Ahab and Israel of old. Jezebel was the daughter of Ethbaal, king of Sidon, who married Ahab, king of Israel. She brought with her the pagan religion of the Phoenicians and led all Israel into idolatry. We are told that as the result of his marriage with this heathen woman, “Ahab did sell himself to work wickedness and did very abominably in following idols” (1 Kgs.21:25, 26.). Ethbaal was not only king of Sidon but also priest of Astarte, and Jezebel was probably a priestess and prophetess of Baal worship.

Jezebel soon became the dominant power over the king and kingdom of Israel. Her will was supreme. She hated the prophets of God and persecuted them. To supplant the worship of God she imported 850 prophets of Baal, and made that false system the supreme religion supported and enforced by the state. From the time of Jezebel's marriage to Ahab the apostasy of Israel became general, and finally assumed such proportions that all but seven thousand of the millions of Israel were bowing their knees to Baal.

The Scarlet Woman

The symbolic woman of Revelation 17 is doubtless identical with the Jezebel of this letter. There she is pictured as being arrayed in purple and scarlet colour, and decked with gold and precious stones and pearls, having a golden cup in her hand full of abominations and filthiness of her fornication. She is said to be drunken with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus. In her forehead was a name written, MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH.

Purple and scarlet were the predominant colours manufactured in Thyatira. Both of these symbolic women are declared to be harlots, being guilty of spiritual fornication. Jehu told Joram, the son of Jezebel, that there could be no peace “so long as the whoredoms of thy mother Jezebel and her witchcraft’s are so many” (2 Kgs.9:22). Whether or not the ecclesia was deceived by a literal woman who claimed prophetic gifts, Jezebel certainly is an appropriate symbol of the false religious system that dominated Israel of the Old Testament

Spiritual Jezebel calleth herself a prophetess. This is the claim of the ecclesia of which she is symbolic. The office of a prophetess being a religious one proves that the Jezebel of our prophecy is symbolic of a false religious system introduced into the ecclesia.

Jezebel was swift to shed the blood of the prophets of God. During her persecutions the seven thousand of Israel who did not worship Baal, had to flee to the mountains and hide in the caves

of the earth. A price was set on the head of Elijah, the great prophet of ancient Israel. This period during which Jezebel dominated the earth was likewise a time of persecution for the people of God.

The undisputed role of Jezebel continued three and a half years, which was a time of spiritual drought and darkness of Israel's history. It ended in a reformation led by Elijah, Elisha, Jehu, and others. Spiritual Jezebel ruled the world and persecuted the saints for three and half-prophetic years, a time of spiritual drought and darkness. During this time Gods loyal people had to flee to the mountains and remain in hiding. Many suffered martyrdom because they refused to join the great majority in doing obeisance to an apostate power.

Unfaithfulness to God is called fornication because throughout the Scriptures the covenant relation between God and His people is represented by marriage. Christ represented Himself as the Bridegroom and His ecclesia as the Bride. Any transgression would therefore be a form of spiritual adultery, harlotry, or fornication. This would especially be true of any union between the ecclesia and the world.

Opportunity to Repent

An opportunity was given spiritual Jezebel to repent of her fornication; and she repented not. Through Elijah, Jezebel was warned and threatened and given ample opportunity to repent before she met her doom. Jezebel is threatened with judgment if she does not repent and reform. “I will cast her upon a bed of sickness, and I will severely afflict those who commit adultery with her. I will lay her on a sickbed, and bring her paramour into sore distress.” The bed of sin would become the bed of sickness and suffering. The place of her sins would become the place of her punishments. This is the fate of all harlots and adulterers. Disease and suffering are the reward of their immorality. Jezebel is charged with spiritual adultery.

The weapons of Jezebel were turned upon her own head. Elijah the prophet said to her: “In the place where dogs licked the blood of Naboth shall dogs lick thy blood, even thine” (1 Kgs.21:19). Jezebel was so eaten by ravenous dogs that “they found no more of her than the skull, and the feet, and the palms of her hands”(2 Kgs.9:35). In Revelation 19:17,18, we are told that modern Jezebel, or Babylon, will be devoured by birds and beasts of prey. The fate of Jezebel was foretold by His servant, Elijah and the fate of her antitype was predicted by His servant, John.

The Jezebel Family

And I will kill her children with death, is the judgment threatened upon the family of Jezebel. Ahaziah, Jezebels son, became a cripple from a fall, and spent the remainder of his life on a bed of anguish and affliction. The entire family was finally exterminated, as the Lord decreed. The two sons who became kings were slain, and the servants of Jehu “took the king's sons, and slew seventy persons, and put their heads in baskets, and sent them unto him to Jezreel.”

Spiritual Jezebel and her family will also be utterly destroyed. I will kill her children with pestilence, is the note in the Revised Version. The judgments upon Jezebel would reveal the fact that the One who searcheth the reins and hearts and gives to every one according to his works is indeed the Son of God.

The Reformation

It is believed that a reformation is referred to in verse 19, where a change for the better is to take place. “I know that of late you have toiled harder than you did at first” and “I know that your life

of late has been better than it was at first" are other translations. "But to you I say, to the rest that are in Thyatira" (R.V.), indicates that the remainder of the epistle is addressed to those who espoused the cause of change, and have not known "the deep things of Satan" (R.V.).

None other burden was to be laid upon the faithful of this ecclesia except to keep themselves unspotted from, and to continually protest against, the Jezebel abominations. Abstinence from those evil things that are forbidden is called a burden in the decree of the Jerusalem council recorded in (Acts15:28,29). Only hold fast to that you have received until I come, is the admonition given.

Till I come includes the promise of his return, which would soon follow the reign of spiritual Jezebel. Paul declared that the falling away would end with a great reformation and the coming of Christ (2 Thess.2:3-8). This is the first of the seven epistles that mentions the return of Christ. Does this indicate that Thyatira is symbolic of ecclesial life near to the time of his return? God's people were to hold so fast to what they had of sound doctrine and spiritual experience that none could wrest it from them, till the coming of Christ would bring an end to the long and painful struggle between truth and falsehood.

The Promised Reward

Jesus declared that the overcomer who keepeth My works unto the end would be given power over the nations, which he would rule with a rod of iron, and that He would give them the morning star. He who conquers and is careful to live My life to the end or who obeys My commands to the very end or who lays to heart what I enjoin, are different translations. The works of Christ are here contrasted with the works of Jezebel. To the disciples, Jesus said of the one who would believe on Him: "The works that I do shall he do also." The works of Christ are such as He can approve of, works that are in harmony with His Word and law.

Unto the end is doubtless a reference to the end of the race we must run, or the end of the world (Matt.24:13,14; Rev.3:10,11). It is not the beginning but the end of the race that determines the prize. To conquer is not enough; the victorious experience must be maintained to the end of the conflict. "I will give him authority over the nations," is the promise to those who get the victory over sin. The tables will turn, and the saints who have been persecuted pilgrims and strangers in this world will inherit and rule over the earth, as was God's purpose in the beginning when He gave the dominion to Adam. The power and authority of Christ will be shared with His victorious saints, who constitute His bride (Matt.19:27,28; Rev.3:21).

Verse 27 is a quotation from Psalms 2:9, which is a prophecy of the Messiah. The Hebrew word for break is rendered rule in the Greek Septuagint. It literally means shepherd. "Shall be their shepherd" is the rendering in the Septuagint. Rod is better rendered sceptre as in Hebrews 1:8. The rule of Christ will be as absolute as that of a shepherd over his sheep, or a potter over the vessels he makes and then breaks in pieces in order to make better vessels. The breaking in pieces as the vessels of a potter is a reference to the destruction of the wicked, an event that must precede the absolute and everlasting reign of Christ as the Shepherd of His people (Dan.2:32-45).

The new order of things must be preceded by the breaking up of the old. The Master Potter breaks the old so He can reconstruct the new. Christ breaks in pieces all the wicked so that He will restore the kingdom of David with Himself as the King of kings and Lord of lords. The statement, "As I received of My Father," is doubtless also taken from Psalms 2:7-9. Satan offered the throne and kingdom of this world to Christ, but He spurned the offer because of the

conditions imposed (Luke 4:5-8); the Father appointed the cross as the only pathway to the crown.

The Morning Star

“I will grant him to see the Morning star” was the climax of the promise. Star in Revelation is symbolic of one in authority. Christ promises to share not only His throne but also His kingly authority and glory. He will clothe His servants with the glory of the brightness of the stars (Dan.12:3; Matt.13:43). The redeemed will reflect the glory and brightness of Christ, and shine with Him in the kingdom. Jesus is the royal Star that arose out of Jacob. He is the bright and morning Star who is to reign over the throne of David forever (Num.24:17; Matt.2:2; 2 Pet.1:19).

The promise of the morning star indicates that a night, or period of darkness, was coming to a close. The morning star is the sign and promise of greater light. It does not disperse the darkness but is a sign that the soon-rising sun will scatter the darkness of night and usher in the dawn of day, which will be followed by the perfect day of glory.

Laodicea

“AND UNTO the angel of the church of the Laodiceans, write; These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God; I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot. So then because thou are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of My mouth. Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked: I counsel thee to buy of Me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see. As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent. Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear My voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with Me. To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with Me in My throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with My Father in His throne. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches” (Rev.3:14-22).

The message of Christ to the Laodiceans is most strikingly significant in the setting of the history of the city of Laodicea. The city was located about 100 miles directly east of Ephesus. Laodicea was part of a tri-city area, closely associated with the cities of Colossae (to which the letter to the Colossians was written), and Hierapolis. The city was located on the Lycus River, and was distinguished from no less than six other cities by the same name by being designated Laodicea on the Lycus. East of the city was a pass through the mountains called The Gate of Phrygia, of which Laodicea was the gatekeeper.

A Wealthy City

Laodicea was noted throughout the Roman province of Asia for its wealth, commercial activities and its medical practise. As the banking centre of Asia, it was the most prosperous of the seven cities. Many large and beautiful homes were built in this city, the ruins of which are still visible today. No doubt Christians owned some of these. The city had large markets controlled mostly by the Jews, of whom there were 7,500 besides women and children at the time the epistle was written. So wealthy were the citizens that when the city was destroyed by an earthquake in A.D. 60, they refused the help offered by the imperial Roman government and rebuilt at their own expense. This example of self-sufficiency was so rare that it made the city famous. Because of their situation Christ’s statement regarding the pride of spiritual wealth on the part of the ecclesial members is full of meaning. He spoke to the rich merchants and bankers of this wealthy commercial city in their own language.

The city was also noted for the manufacture of black cloth produced from a particular breed of black sheep raised around this area. The wool was glossy black and of a soft texture almost like silk and it became famous throughout the whole region. Black garments were almost universally worn by the Laodiceans, and they were very proud of them. Christ advised the Christians of the city to buy of Him white raiment, which represented the beautiful robe of His own righteousness. The people of Laodicea were familiar with the white toga worn by Roman citizens and officials. To be privileged to wear this white garment was esteemed a high honour. To the Romans it was symbolic of victory, and to the Christians it represented purity of character through the imputed and imparted righteousness of Christ.

Noted Health Resort

In connection with the Temple of Karu was a renowned school of medicine. This temple was one of two hundred throughout the Greek and Roman world dedicated to Aesculapius, the Greek god of medicine and the pagan counterfeit of the Messiah. He was known as " The Great Physician." In this temple was made the famous Phrygian eye salve, called collyrium, which was sold in all parts of the then-known world. This gives forceful meaning to the counsel of the Great Physician, who advised the spiritually blind Laodiceans to buy eye salve of Him that they might have spiritual vision.

Also near the city were a number of hot, cold, and lukewarm springs, and especially the latter. Most of these waters contained minerals with supposed healing properties. Thousands of sick people journeyed to Laodicea to be physically benefited by the eye salve, the mineral water, and the hot and lukewarm baths. Although the water was pleasing to the body for bathing, most of it was nauseous to those who drank. This makes very appropriate the language used by Christ in this epistle. He declared that because the Christians of Laodicea were lukewarm in their affections, He was about to spew, or vomit, them out of His mouth.

Proud and self-satisfied

The boast, “I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing,” has in it not only a ring of independence but also a spirit of insolence and arrogance. The citizens wanted the world to know that their mercantile city at the meeting place of three important highways was no pauper. The inhabitants were noted for their skill in manufacturing and dyeing garments, rich in colour and exquisite in texture. In extravagant fashions and fine apparel the city was the Paris of its time.

Laodicea was also famous as a pleasure resort for the physically strong and prosperous, and a health resort for the sick. The magnificent stadium, which was twelve years in building, had an arena nine hundred feet in length, in whose basin a modern ocean liner could easily anchor. There were at least two, and probably three, theatres, one of them with seats of polished marble with bases carved in the form of a lion's feet. Its gymnasium was a work of art, containing chambers and porticoes and baths. There was also a library with reading rooms. The city had a remarkable water system in which pure water was brought from the hills through a stone aqueduct, the ruins of which are still visible.

The Ecclesia

The ecclesia in Laodicea was doubtless established by some of Paul’s fellow labourers during his three years stay in Ephesus, when “all they which dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus” (Acts19:10). According to (Col.2:1), it seems that Paul never visited Laodicea and the other ecclesias in that vicinity. He did send the Laodiceans a letter, and asked that it be read also to the Colossian ecclesia, which was near by. He also gave instructions to read his letter to the Colossians to the Christians in Laodicea (see Col.4:13-16). Many believe that the Laodicean letter referred to was not one that has been lost, but his Ephesian epistle, which he desired should be read in all the ecclesias of the province. There has been considerable conjecture over this so-called lost epistle of Paul.

The Laodicean message is a sad comment on believers in Christ. The last of the seven letters of Christ applies to the militant in the last generation. Laodicea is made up of two Greek words, Laos meaning people, and dika, or dikee, meaning righteous judgment. It therefore means the judging of the people, or the judgment of the people.

The Introduction

To the Laodiceans, Jesus introduces Himself as “the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God.” This is the only instance in the Scriptures where Amen is used as a personal name. He was first of all the “Amen”, the Lord wanted his ecclesia to see him in this capacity. Amen is a Hebrew word that has been transferred without change into the various languages into which the Bible has been translated and in the New Testament it is often rendered Verily, Verily. It indicates Jesus is saying something important. So when you see this word in the gospels pay attention. The root idea carries the meaning of firmness, solidity, or stability. It is rendered truth in Isaiah 65:16. It means the True One. Jesus is the Amen. Paul says of Him, “For all the promises of God in Him are yea, and in Him amen, unto the glory of God by us” (2 Cor.1:20).

Regardless of the number of promises of God to man, they all have their confirmation in Christ, and through Him they meet their fulfilment in us. Christ is the spokesman of God, who not only speaks the word or the truth, but He is Himself the Word and the Truth. He is the Amen. Therefore the message of the Amen comes to us with absolute authority and finality. It is the last word, the final word. “God who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in times past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son” (Heb.1:2).

Coming at the close of a prayer, Amen indicates the end or the last. It indicates that the Laodicean message finishes Christs appeals to His people, and that there is no more to be said. It is the last of the seven epistles to His body, and therefore constitutes His final appeal before probation closes. No other image will follow. The divine Amen will never speak again. Those who reject the Laodicean message will never hear another divine call to repentance and salvation.

Not only is this message the last call to repentance, but like its divine Author it is faithful and true. It is a true picture of the spiritual condition of God's remnant people in the last generation. It is an appropriate introduction of the last of the seven epistles, because it ends with a divine confirmation of the whole. Amen literally means, It is fixed and cannot be changed. The eternal certainties of Christ's message to His people are sealed with the stamp of His unchangeable authority. Amen is rendered verily, or verily, verily, twenty-five times in the Gospel of John. Jesus often said, Amen.

Jesus is also the faithful and true witness. This is said to be the Greek equivalent of the Hebrew Amen. There are four requisites of a faithful and true witness.

First, he must be an eyewitness and speak from personal knowledge.

Second, he must be competent to relate what he knows.

Third, he must be willing to bear testimony to the facts. There must be no misrepresentation or exaggeration.

Fourthly, if necessary he must give his life.

Man often testifies of what he thinks he knows, but Christ speaks from absolute knowledge. Jesus said to the Jews: “Verily, verily, I say unto thee, We speak that we do know, and testify that we have seen; and ye receive not our witness” (John 3:11).

Jesus never glosses over or whitewashes conditions to make them appear better than they really are. When He speaks, we ought to listen, for on our attitude toward His testimony depends our eternal destiny. True witnesses are very scarce in this generation. The ninth

commandment is almost universally transgressed (sometimes even in the ecclesia?) The Laodicean message is true, for these are the words of the Unchanging One. The ecclesia may change, but Christ is always the same, “yesterday, and to day, and for ever.” The ecclesia has compromised with the world, but Christ looks upon compromise with the same hostility as he does in the Ephesian, Pergamos, and Sardian ecclesias.

Amen also has the meaning of It is true, or So be it. What Jesus says, is true and dependable. He is the divine Amen personalised. He places His own personal guarantee on the truths He proclaims.

Message of the Creator

Christ also introduces Himself as the beginning of the creation of God. Christ the Creator (John 1:1-3, 10, 14; Eph.3:9; Col.1:13-16; Heb.1:1-3,10). In the Laodicean message the Creator bears witness to the spiritual condition of the ecclesia, and as the Creator-Redeemer He has the power to renew spiritual life and to restore to the favour of God. Jesus is the origin, the beginning of Gods creation, both physical and spiritual. We often forget that the Genesis record has no meaning or relevance without Christ’s redemptive work.

Therefore this introduction is also appropriate, because the modern world is saturated with the evolution theory of the beginning of life and matter. It is a rebuke and challenge to the modern learned philosophy that denies the Genesis record of creation. In this faithless and sceptical generation, when even many professed Christians give the glory and honour of creation to the creature rather than to the Creator, Christ sends a searching message to His ecclesia, with the announcement that He is the Creator and Lord of Gods new creation. He intimates that the mighty power that created and upholds the worlds can now through him uphold the modern Laodiceans who accept His counsel. In Him there is complete victory even over the spirit of self-deception and Pharisaism. He is abundantly able to cleanse from the terrible sin of lukewarmness, self-complacency, and worldly conformity. In the letter to the Colossians the apostle emphasises Jesus link with creation 1:15,1,18 and then asks for the epistle to be read to the Laodiceans (Col.4:16). It seems the Laodiceans needed to know the truth about how to relate to Gods new creation in Jesus Christ.

A Severe Indictment

The Laodicean message is a terrible indictment on those who say they are Christ’s. Christ’s professed people have lost the love and devotion of the Philadelphians and have become lukewarm in their affection. The members are not dead cold and untouched by spiritual life, neither are they fervently hot with apostolic love and zeal.

The spiritual life of the ecclesia had become tepid like most of the natural springs in the local vicinity. They were suffering from what someone has well called “the leukaemia of non-commitment”. His love is so fervent that the half-hearted response of the ecclesia is disgusting to Him. He would prefer that the affections of His bride be either frigid or fervid. Frigidity would be preferable to lukewarmness. Christ’s statement is in the form of a wish, it is in reality a regret. Even Sardis had a few faithful souls who were commended, but in Laodicea there seems to be nothing commendable, for Jesus gives no praise whatever. Philadelphia received no reproof, and Laodicea no commendation.

The coldness the Master prefers to lukewarmness is that of the heathen who has never been touched by spiritual life. It does not mean negatively cold, but icy cold, having never been

heated or mixed with the hot. Christ prefers that Laodiceans be Christians or pagans rather than a compromise between the two. There is more hope for those who have never been warmed by the gospel than those who were once fervid and then cooled off to a lukewarm state. This is indicated by many scriptures, including Hebrews 6:4-6; 2 Peter 2:15-22.

The lukewarm state seems to indicate someone who has tasted the gift and of the powers of the world to come, who has been a subject of Divine grace, but in whom that grace has failed to kindle more than the feeblest spark. The publicans and harlots were cold, the Apostles hot. The Scribes and Pharisees were lukewarm. But note it was the publicans and harlots that came to Christ.

Lukewarmness is a compromise between hot and cold. The water from the hot springs near Laodicea soon mingled with the cold water and became lukewarm and nauseating to the taste. Lukewarm water is a mixture of cold and hot water and symbolically stands for the mixture of religion and worldliness, which was utterly nauseating to Jesus Christ.

The ecclesia in its lukewarm state is divided between Christ and the world. It is too religious to entirely cast off the name of Christ, and too worldly to take a firm and united stand for Him. There is much pretension but little genuine Christianity. Works are plentiful, but faith is scarce, profession is abundant, but there is little spiritual life to correspond. Worldly pleasure and riotous living practised in the heart of individuals is closely associated with the Lords supper. The ecclesia is partly cold and partly hot. This compromise with the world has cooled the fervent love and devotion of the Philadelphian state.

The Threat

To strengthen His severe warning and appeal, Jesus threatens to spew the lukewarm out of His mouth unless they repent. “I am about to vomit you out of my mouth” (I am about to spit you out of my mouth -NIV) and I am ready to, or I have it in mind to, is the meaning of the text. It implies that the threat may not and need not be executed. Repentance will prevent the threatened judgment. Christ’s dealings with us depend in part upon our attitude towards Him and His message. His statement, “as many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent,” shows clearly that His intention is not final. It is a threat rather than a pronouncement.

Christ demanded that the Laodiceans be fervent Christians or none at all. There is no middle ground or neutral position that is acceptable to Him. The sickening lukewarmness of modern Christians is so nauseating to our Lord that it produces in Him feelings of disgust and loathing. The threat is of a final and absolute rejection unless His message is accepted and His counsel acted upon. This is no idle threat. The execution has already begun for many individuals. The spewing out will take place during the shaking or purging time, when the ecclesia is cleansed and prepared for the coming of the Bridegroom. The Laodicean message should be considered as an appeal of love, mercy and compassion rather than threatened judgments of certain doom. It is the love message of the great Lover.

Cure

We must not forget that the city of Laodicea was a health resort to which sick people came from near and far to be healed. It was therefore the temporary abode of persons suffering from all sorts of diseases. They came to have their vision restored by the famous Phrygian eye salve. To drink of the lukewarm mineral water with its reputed healing properties. To bathe in the hot springs with their remedial virtues, or to be healed by magic in the Temple of Aesculapius, the

Greek god of medicine, who was known as The Great Physician. It was claimed that no disease was too difficult for this pagan counterfeit of the Messiah to heal. It is because of this historic background that Jesus describes the Laodicean ecclesia as suffering from a serious spiritual illness and introduces Himself as the Great Physician with a complete healing remedy.

A Sick Ecclesia

“I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot. So then because thou are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of My mouth. Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked.”

This is the Great Physicians diagnosis of the spiritual disease of the modern ecclesia. The ecclesia of the Laodiceans is not only lukewarm in zeal and devotion but also spiritually sick. There is still some life, but the terrible Laodicean illness has left them sluggish and only semiconscious. And worst of all she knows not her danger. There was something wrong with their self-image (v 17) they thought they were rich, but they were really poor. Death is certain unless the offered remedy is applied, but the Laodiceans approach the tomb boasting of their spiritual health, riches, and prosperity. The disease that is sapping the life of modern Christendom is similar to that which afflicted ancient Israel (Isa.1:4-6).

The prophet Jeremiah shed so many tears over .the wounds, and bruises, and putrefying sores of backslidden Israel that he was known as the weeping prophet. Message after message was sent to sin-sick Israel offering a complete remedy. Finally the Great Physician Himself visited His people and made a final appeal, and because it was rejected He wept over the city and nation and then died of a broken heart. In the words of the prophet He expressed His astonishment because His remedy was not accepted: “For the hurt of the daughter of My people am I hurt; I am black; astonishment hath taken hold on Me. Is there no balm in Gilead; is there no physician there? why then is not the health of the daughter of My people recovered?” (Jer.8:21,22). But Israel’s sin finally reached the fatal stage. Because there were no healing medicines her bruise was declared incurable (Jer.30:13,12). The nation of Israel had to be spewed out of the mouth of her Lord.

The Laodicean message presents a warning to the modern ecclesia. It is the testimony of the faithful and true Witness, who never makes a mistake and never exaggerates. The remedy must be applied soon or it will be too late, because the disease will reach the incurable stage. The condition is alarming, and calls for an alarm message.

The Laodicean message is comparable to His final plea to ancient Israel as He wept over the doomed city. It would be difficult to find language strong enough to expose the folly of the Laodiceans, who imagine they are spiritually wealthy and in need of nothing, when they are actually wretched, miserable, poor, blind, lukewarm, and fit only to be spewed out of the mouth of Christ as an object of loathing. Is it not time for some modern weeping prophets who are capable of grasping the seriousness of the situation to awaken the ecclesia from her blissful dream of self-satisfaction? Would not the many tears of such speakers be like the tears of Jesus over His beloved city, Jerusalem?

Christ found nothing praiseworthy in Laodicea. To Him she is an object of pity. The condition of Laodicea was the opposite of that of Smyrna, which was poverty stricken in material things but rich spiritually. Laodicea was rich in material things but bankrupt spiritually. Jesus made no complaint of Laodiceas doctrines. The ecclesia was not deceived by the teachings of the

Nicolaitans, Balaam, or Jezebel. Her great light and opportunity for service make her more responsible than any other ecclesia and the judgment is pronounced accordingly (Matt.11:20-24). The Bible does not contain a more scathing rebuke than is given the Laodiceans, whose boasting is similar to that of Ephraim who feedeth on wind in that he said, “Yet I am become rich, I have found me out substance: in all my labours they shall find none iniquity in me that were sin” (See Hos.12:1,8).

There can be no greater sin than self-deception. It seems that only drunken or insane persons could boast of wealth, health, and prosperity when they are wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked. Self-conceit is one of the most difficult sins, if not the most difficult sin, to conquer. One writer has said: There is nothing so offensive to God, or so dangerous to the human soul, as pride and self-sufficiency. Of all sins it is the most hopeless, the most incurable. Yet this is the sin of the Laodiceans.

There is no stronger delusion than that which makes men believe that they are righteous and accepted of God, while at the same time they are sinning against Him, and are in a deplorable spiritual condition. A lukewarm state naturally leads to self-sufficiency. The very first step toward the kingdom of heaven is recognition of ones spiritual poverty. The attitude of the Pharisee and that of the publican in the temple represent the difference in a person before and after he receives a vision of his true spiritual state. His boasting changes to the cry of, “God, be merciful to me a sinner.”

The transformation of the character of Saul from a proud and boastful Pharisee to a humble and contrite Christian apostle is an illustration of what Christ desires to do for the members of the Laodicean ecclesia. After Paul had been transformed by the vision of the glorified Christ, what a contrast there was between his attitude toward his spiritual state and that of proud Laodicea. Hear him crying out in great agony of spirit, “O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?” Even though he lived one of the most noble of all lives he was constantly concerned lest he should himself be a castaway. In contrast think of the poor self-deceived and self-satisfied Laodiceans, boasting in words and looks and actions that they have need of nothing. Christ first sets forth the ecclesias estimate of herself, and then He reveals the terrible reality. The difference is as great as that of the Pharisee and the publican in the temple, the one thanking God for his virtues and the other begging for mercy because of his sins.

A Hard task

It is not enough for a physician to correctly diagnose the patient’s disease. The knowledge of danger and of a sure remedy will never cure a sick person unless he accepts the doctor’s verdict and applies the suggested remedy. Many persons are sick and do not know it, and when told they do not believe it. It is often a difficult task to convince the patient that his life depends upon obedience to the physicians counsel.

This is the chief difficulty with the modern ecclesia. Is she sick with a disease that will eventually prove fatal, but she does not know it? “And knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked,” is the verdict of the Great Physician.

Without doubt it is compromise that turns something lukewarm. The most difficult thing about the Laodicean message is to convince present-day Christadelphians that it is applicable to us, because even we have compromised with the world in our lives and even within the ecclesia. We have brought the worlds way of conducting business into the way we run the ecclesias. Again it is much more comfortable to attend an ecclesia where doctrinal issues aren’t taken

seriously, where for comforts sake, you avoid discussions over issues. It is easy to compromise important issues for the sake of peace. You could attend an ecclesia like Laodicea for years, and yes it would be pleasurable, but nothing much would be happening. You would not be challenged, rebuked or corrected. It is a comfortable existence but one which the Lord finds repulsive. The members may like it, but the Lord does not. It may make you comfortable but it makes the Lord sick. Has the ecclesia become a religious country club operating for the benefit of the members?

Christ came to this earth "to seek and to save that which was lost." He came to save sinners, but no sinner will accept salvation until he knows he is lost. To convince and convict of sin is the first work of the gospel message. The statement of Jesus to the self-satisfied Jews is applicable to modern Laodiceans: "They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick. I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." The Pharisees felt righteous and in need of nothing, and Christ was therefore unable to help them. He could give them nothing, regardless of their great needs. The attitude of modern Laodicea is the spirit of Pharisaism. To convince them of their spiritual condition and needs seems almost an impossible task.

The Laodiceans were not being persecuted, and there was no synagogue of Satan to disturb them. Compared to the Smyrneans they were having an easy time. Doubtless the ecclesial machinery functioned perfectly and they had the most up-to-date methods and equipment. The ritual was beautiful and impressive. There were plenty to minister, and to give logical and eloquent addresses. But all this is in vain when the members are ignorant of their spiritual destitution. This is the danger of our day, and nothing but the power of God can ever bring the spiritual revival and reformation demanded by the Laodicean message and for this everyone should fervently pray.

"I know thy works" indicates that Laodicea is busy planning, organising, raising funds, erecting buildings, establishing institutions, and apparently doing everything possible to fulfil Gods commission. The ecclesia is not lazy. She is busy with programs, campaigns, fraternals, bible schools, social functions, and home and foreign mission work. Like ancient Israel the Laodiceans are deceived by the results of their many activities.

A well-known writer said: In the estimation of the rabbis, it was the sum of religion to be always in a bustle of activity. They depended upon some outward performance to show their superior piety. Thus they separated their souls from God, and built themselves up in self-sufficiency. The same dangers still exist. As activity increases, and men become successful in doing any work for God, there is danger of trusting to human plans and methods. There is a tendency to pray less, and to have less faith. We are in danger of losing sight of our dependence on God, and seeking to make a saviour of our activity.

Material Prosperity

"I am rich, and have gotten riches" is the Revised Version. Laodicea not only believes she is spiritually rich but takes all credit to herself. What she has is her own acquisition, and she is proud of it. She carries the pride of wealth into her spiritual life. Spiritual self-sufficiency is usually fostered by material wealth. The Laodicean ecclesia not only feels abundantly supplied with all the spiritual riches needed for the present but also has a sufficient supply for the future. "I am rich, and have wealth stored up," is the Weymouth translation. Spiritually the ecclesia is poverty stricken, but imagines she is rich, wretched, but feels perfectly satisfied; miserable, but pretends great happiness; blind, but prides herself in her wisdom and vision; clothed in the

filthy rags of her own righteousness but she is naked. And you do not know that if there is a wretched creature it is you. Brothers and sisters there is a big difference between “you say” and “you are”. Our Lord points this difference out. There was a big difference between how the Laodiceans saw themselves and the way the Lord saw them. Why such a difference between the two views? Was it because they were being measured by two different standards?

It is evident that Laodicea is deceived regarding her spiritual state because of her material prosperity. Because the ecclesia is so fully occupied with material and temporal things to the neglect of the spiritual and eternal, she has become overconfident and therefore proud and boastful. Impoverished spiritually, she fails to realise that true riches and real satisfaction can be found only in Christ, who for our sakes became poor, that we through His poverty might be rich. Laodicea is proud of her magnificent ecclesias, intelligent congregations, and scholarly preachers, of her fine music and splendid services and well-manned institutions, of her great missionaries in all parts of the world and the liberality of the members in supporting them. What more could be desired?

Progress

There are two kinds of progress-material and spiritual. It is possible for the ecclesia to experience the former without the latter, as many examples demonstrate. Because of material prosperity it is the general opinion that the ecclesia is flourishing, and that peace and spiritual prosperity are in all her borders, whereas at the same time there has been a steady retreat toward the world.

The real test of spiritual prosperity is the degree of moral power, virtue, intelligence, and piety found in the members of the ecclesia, rather then numbers and material wealth.

One writer beautifully explains the real cause of Laodicea's self-satisfaction: Is Laodicea then a victim of spiritual hallucinations? We think not…What, then, is the reason that God, contemplating the condition of the church of Laodicea, sees one thing, while Laodicea, considering her own status, beholds an entirely different condition? The reason lies in the fact that God and Laodicea are really looking at two different things. Laodicea gazes upon material things. She tends to observe her achievements, which are not inconsiderable. She thinks of her missionaries at the ends of the earth. She recalls the hospitals and dispensaries which her wealth has erected and which her generosity maintains. She surveys the schools, academies, and colleges in which she purposes to lead her young people in the way that is right. She counts her printing presses and publishing houses, established to enlighten the world. She remembers her stately houses of worship, erected in many cities of many lands. She counts her membership, and analysis her offerings. Her mind goes back to her humble beginnings, and traverses with a subtle and unconscious pride the years of growth, of progress, of attainment. It is a splendid showing. Laodicea is happy. She has a flawless doctrine, a competent organisation and a triumphant message. Who can deny these things?

The same writer then gives Gods viewpoint of the reason for Laodiceas weakness: But God, the infinite Father of all, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning, looks beyond all this. His awful gaze penetrates past Laodiceas schools, sanitariums, publishing institutions, past her fine buildings and worth-while equipment, past her growing membership and constantly widening sphere of influence, and looks only down upon Laodicea's heart. There He witnesses pride, the sin by which the sons of God fell; and desire for human praise, and love of the world with all that the world offers. He sees little of sacrifice, and much of self-importance.

He sees dangerous conformity to unchristian customs, and a perilous striving for pre-eminent place. The gold of character is strangely lacking, its place being taken by brilliant tinsel which does not deceive the heavenly Watcher. The raiment of Christ's righteousness, at once so simple and so ample, is not worn, instead there is an ingenious arrangement of the filthy rags of Laodiceas own righteousness. And upon the eyes, festering with the sores of worldly short-sightedness, is no healing salve, to cleanse, to strengthen, and to sanctify.

This may be the Laodicean condition in the modern ecclesia, and until Gods people get a clear vision of the spiritual disease that makes them distasteful to Christ, there is no need of suggesting the remedy that has been so graciously and abundantly provided by the Great Physician.

The Remedy

To the sin-sick Laodiceans, Christ says: "I counsel thee to buy of Me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see."

The Great Physician graciously uses the words and language of the Laodiceans. He asks them to listen to His counsel on how to obtain spiritual wealth. One writer refers to Christ's counsel as gentle and loving irony, and another said: There is deep irony in this word. One who has need of nothing, yet needs counsel on the vital points of self-preservation. Instead of commanding, Christ gently counsels. The same Physician who so accurately and honestly diagnoses Laodiceas disease also provides a healing remedy that will completely restore her to spiritual health and favour with God. The acceptance of this counsel means life, its rejection will bring death. It is a life-or-death message that cannot be lightly treated. There is but one Physician who can heal the terrible Laodicean disease, and He alone has a healing medicine.

The divine merchant says to the spiritually bankrupt Laodiceans, "I counsel thee to buy of Me." The key to the verse is buy of me. Christ has all the ecclesia really needs to function. He is the source of the unsearchable riches of the universe. In Him are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. In Proverbs 23:23 we are told to "buy the truth, and sell it not; also wisdom, and instruction, and understanding." But it would be impossible for a poverty-stricken soul to purchase this remedy if it were not sold without money and without price.

Christ virtually says to the Laodiceans, Thou hast nothing to give, but thou must give all that thou hast. The price is one that even the beggar can pay. It places all on equality as far as spiritual riches are concerned. The price is repentance, confession, and self-surrender. The gifts of God can he purchased only at the cost of moral endeavour, repentance, and faith. All the truth and wisdom and understanding we have acquired have cost us something in time and effort, if not in actual money. The person, who is not willing to sacrifice and endure to attain the heavenly treasure, must remain without it, for it will be given to no one without a price.

Gold

Spiritual wealth is symbolised by "gold tried in the fire, or gold refined by fire" (R.V.). The gold is fresh from the fire or furnace which had tested its purity and burned out all dross. Gold has always been the symbol of wealth, and it is a fit symbol of spiritual riches. Christ promised the Laodiceans sterling spiritual riches in contrast to their counterfeit wealth, of which they were boasting. What constitutes the spiritual riches of the ecclesia? (1) The Word of God (Ps.12:6; 18:30; 119:127). (2) Faith. The rich in faith are declared to be the heirs of the kingdom (James

2:5). None are richer than those who have faith in the Word of God. I know thy poverty, but thou art rich, was Christ's message to the suffering Smyrneans. (3) Love. In Galatians 5:6 we are told that faith works by love, and in Romans 13:8,10, that love is the fulfilling of the law. The Laodiceans are lukewarm because they have lost their first love. Christ offered to the spiritually bankrupt Laodiceans His word, faith in His Word, and a love that leads to obedience to His Word.

The first cause of spiritual poverty of the modern ecclesia is the attitude toward the Scriptures. She has settled down in contentment and self-satisfaction because of the light and truth she possesses. This attitude has kept her from advancing in the ever-increasing light that shines from the Scriptures and will continue to increase till the perfect day of revealed truth (Prov.4:18).

The ecclesia is boasting that she has the truth-as if there were no more light for the people of God to the end of time-whereas the inexhaustible mine of divine truth is literally filled with brilliant gems awaiting the diligent searcher for heavenly treasure. The Bible is today the neglected Book, even of the professed people of God. One of the greatest needs of the ecclesia is a rebirth of the old-time searching of the Scriptures, to confirm the truths already discovered and to seek for more and more of the heavenly treasure.

Closely akin to the gold of truth is the gold of faith. "Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" (Rom.10:17). It is evident that genuine faith in the Word and promises of God will be scarce in the last days. At the close of a parable illustrating the rewards of importunity in prayer, Jesus asked the question: "Nevertheless when the Son of man cometh, shall He find faith on the earth?" (Lk.18:8). See also (1Tim.4:1; 2 Tim.4:1-4).

We are told that faith in the near return of Christ will be at low ebb just before He returns. Many will cast away their confidence because of decreasing faith. During this time those who hold fast to the end must live by faith, and to them is promised a great recompense of reward (Heb.10:35-39). When Jesus returns He will find a people waiting for Him who have held fast to His Word and have kept the faith of Jesus (Rev.3:10,11;14:12).

Paul declared that of the three virtues of faith, hope, and love, the greatest of these is love. Love is the first fruit of the Spirit, and therefore the chief of the treasures of the kingdom of heaven. The love that was lost at Ephesus must be regained. The ecclesia is greatly lacking in love for both God and man, the two attitudes on which hang all the law and the prophets. Love is the most fundamental principle of the heavenly kingdom. It is the very foundation of the throne of God. It is the motive that should inspire all our actions.

"The love of Christ constraineth us" was the motto of the apostles, and glorious were their accomplishments. It is love that impels us to do right and restrains us from doing wrong. The brotherly love of the Philadelphians must return and possess Gods people. Love will be one of the chief characteristics of the faithful remnant who will be ready to meet Christ when He returns to gather His own.

The White Raiment

Christ counsels His people to buy of Him "white robes, that you may be clothed and your shameful nakedness be hidden," or so as to hide your shameful nakedness, according to other translations. The spiritual nakedness of the Laodiceans is indeed shameful, and ought to put

her to shame. But instead of being ashamed of her nudity, she is proud and boastful. It is because she knowest not that she is naked or clothed in filthy rags.

Laodicea as has been said earlier is deceived because of her blindness and self-deception. If her eyes could be opened, there would quickly follow the confession of Isaiah 64:6: “But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousness are as filthy rags; and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities; like the wind, have taken us away.” The white robe Christ offers to the Laodiceans is the beautiful garment of His own righteousness. White clothes stand for a changed character. They mark someone who has taken his robes and washed them in the blood of the Lamb (Rev.7:14). It is the royal robe of the King of glory (Isa. 52:1; 61:10). It is the wedding garment of the bride in preparation to meet the Bridegroom (Rev.19:6,7). The imputed and imparted righteousness of Christ is the real clothing of the soul. The righteousness of Christ is imputed to the believer. Everyone is morally naked before God. Every one of us knows something about ourselves that we would not want anyone else to know. But God knows. He sees our nakedness and he offers the righteousness of Christ.

The white raiment which constitutes the wedding garment of the bride of Christ is a gift from the Bridegroom. “To her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints” (Rev.19:8). The word granted indicates that the character raiment is obtained by an act of faith and not on the basis of works, or merit. In the parable recorded in Matthew 22:1-14 it is evident that the garment is provided by the divine host of the wedding banquet, so that there is no excuse for being without it.

Our only hope is to, “abide in Him; that, when He shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before Him at His coming” (1 John 2:28). The shame of those without the robe of Christ’s righteousness will then be made manifest. When Adam and Eve sinned, their glorious character robes departed, and they were naked. In shame they hid themselves from the divine presence. In the Orient to strip a person of his clothes is to put him to an open shame, and to clothe him with linen is an act of great honour. It will be either open shame or divinely bestowed honours when the Bridegroom comes to claim His bride.

Eye salve

The eye salve sold in Laodicea was used principally to benefit the partially blind whose eyesight was growing dim. It may imply that the Laodiceans are not entirely blind, just as they are not entirely naked or spiritually dead, there are some signs of life. Jesus declared they needed spiritual eye salve that would enable them to see. Is the modern ecclesia defective in spiritual vision? The wise man said that “where there is no vision, the people perish” (Prov.29:18), and he was speaking chiefly of spiritual vision.

Rebuke of Love

The seven epistles of Christ constitute a perfect and complete message to the ecclesia of God. The reproofs given point out all the dangers that beset us, and the promised rewards embrace the restoration of all that was lost through sin. These letters were not sent to apostate churches, but to his body, whom Christ claims as His own and who constitute His body, or bride.

The Laodicean message if accepted will bring about a complete restoration of the favour of God and prepare the remnant for his return. It is Christ’s last appeal to His people in the last days. Despite the ecclesias terrible weakness and failure the Lord says I love you and it is because I love you, I rebuke you and discipline you.

A Love Message

“As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent. Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear My voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with Me. To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with Me in My throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with My Father in His throne. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches” (Rev.8:19-22).

None of the other six epistles open with such a sharp rebuke, and none close with such a tender love appeal and the offer of such a glorious reward to the overcomer. Christ demonstrates His love by showing the Laodiceans their faults instead of flattering them with smooth things that would encourage their self-complacent attitude. Someone has said that His is the love of gratuitous affection independent of any grounds for esteem in the object loved. It was just like Jesus to close His severe rebuke with an appeal of love. It has been said that severity, which conceals love, defeats its own end. After giving the terrible indictment, Jesus virtually says, Do not suppose from this that I do not love you.

Jesus reminded the Laodiceans that His severe rebuke and chastisement was evidence of His love. “I reprove and discipline those whom I love,” and in this the Lord makes no exceptions. Reproof and discipline constitute the greatest evidence of divine love. To each of us the Lord makes the personal appeal, “My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of Him: for whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom He receiveth. If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you, as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not? But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards and not sons ”(Heb.12:5-8).

The Laodicean message presents a very dark picture, and it would be hopelessly discouraging if it were not for the fact that the rebuke is the rebuke of love. The Laodicean message is a love message from Christ. It makes a vast difference whether a rebuke is spoken in anger or love, whether the motive is to wound and destroy, or heal and restore. Those who use the Laodicean message to denounce and discourage are using it wrongfully. Jesus reproves and chastens the Laodiceans only because they are very dear to Him. It is easy to accept reproof and even severe discipline when the one who administers them is controlled not by envy or anger but by a love that always acts for the best interests of the reproved. The rebuke of genuine love awakens a response of love in the heart of the offender, for love always begets love.

Honestly Deceived?

One reason for Christs love and sympathy for the Laodiceans is that they are honestly deceived regarding their condition. Thou knowest not seems to indicate that they are not hypocrites, making a pretence of being what they are not for the purpose of deceiving others. While their condition is deplorable in the sight of God and they are in a terrible deception, yet they are honest in that deception. There is always hope for honest men and women even though they are completely deceived. The sin of ignorance is always gladly and willingly forgiven. To the Athenians on Mars Hill Paul said regarding their ignorant worship of “the unknown God, And the times of this ignorance God winked at: but now commandeth all men everywhere to repent” (Acts 17:30).

Honest people always accept wise counsel and repent when the truth is revealed and the deception made known. The publican in the temple was honest and sincere, and the Lord heard his prayer and absolved him of all guilt. The boasting prayer of the Pharisee revealed a

deception akin to the Laodicean condition. The Laodicean message is a test of honesty and sincerity. All honest hearted Laodiceans will accept the counsel of the True Witness when it comes to them. If they reject the love message, it is evidence that they are not honest.

Not A Rejected Ecclesia

It is evident that the Laodiceans are not a rejected and cast-off people as some contend. Sharp has been His rebuke to this lukewarm ecclesia. But it does not mean that He had turned away and abandoned them, or was about to do so. It means just the reverse. For He was standing near, and ready to supply their need, and to enrich them with all His treasure, and His rebuke was a proof of His unchanging love. Nor will He fail to use the rod of correction, if His counsel and His call to repent were unheeded. Of this he warns them, and then says, be zealous therefore, and repent.

How different is the attitude of Christ toward His people from that of their enemies, whose rebuke is the rebuke of hate, whose motive is to tear down and destroy. It is Christ who reproves His people, and He alone is qualified. He has never delegated this work to enemies or disgruntled apostates, whose purpose is to scatter those whom Christ has gathered within His fold and to tear down what He has built up. Those who receive the Laodicean message as coming from Christ because of His love, will never join those who denounce the ecclesia as being rejected by Him and unworthy of His love.

To claim that the Laodicean ecclesia because of her lukewarm and poverty-stricken state is rejected and abandoned by Christ, is to charge Christ with the height of inconsistency for sending a love message to an ecclesia no longer His own. To denounce the ecclesia upon which Christ bestows His supreme regard and of which He is the Head as well as the Bridegroom not only is inconsistent but constitutes an insult that will not go unpunished. And to insist that the faithful remnant and bride of Christ whom He loves with supreme affection is to be shunned and denounced, is blasphemy of the worst type and yet this is the very attitude of those who believe they are strengthening the things which remain. The genuine Christian will make a personal application of the Laodicean message to his own life rather than use it to denounce and discourage others.

Purified By Chastening

The message of rebuke, if unheeded, will be followed by chastening and discipline. This has been God's method in dealing with His people. His counsels have always been followed by judgments. The prophet said: “When Thy judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness” (Isa.26:9). Discipline in judgment constitutes the Lord's last resort in His attempts to turn men from sin to righteousness, and is therefore one of the greatest evidences of His love.

The Psalmist declared: “Before I was afflicted I went astray: but now have I kept Thy word” (Ps.119:67). By this means Christ learned perfect obedience to His Father's will and reached the perfection that made Him a perfect Saviour. “Though He were a Son yet learned He obedience by the things which He suffered; and being made perfect, He became the Author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey Him” (Heb.5:8,9).

Paul declared, “All that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution” (2 Tim.3:12), and Jesus said, “In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world” (John 16:33). Even the servants of Christ cannot in this world always escape the baptism

of suffering. Maybe because as one author commented: that people will not long for a better world till they get tired of the one they are in.

After assuring Laodicea of His love, Christ calls her to repentance and reformation. “Be zealous therefore, and repent,” or reform, as one version renders it. Genuine repentance includes a reformation of life. Zealous means to glow with warmth and fervour, in contrast to lukewarmness. Laodicea is asked to become hot, or zealous, in contrast to coldness or tepid lukewarmness.

Outside The Door

The reason for Laodicea’s lukewarm state is that Christ is being kept outside the door. The Great Physician with His healing remedy is denied entrance and therefore cannot minister to the spiritual needs of His ecclesia. He asks for the privilege of abiding within, because from without, His work of restoration is ineffectual. It may be that His name is artistically inscribed on the doorplate, and yet He is Himself kept outside. This illustration seems to have been taken from the Song of Solomon 5:1-7, where Christ and His bride are represented as lovers. The slowness of the bride to open the door to her divine Lover answers to the lukewarm and indifferent state of Laodicea.

Jesus enters the temple by way of the individual heart. “If any man hear My voice, and open the door” indicates that the appeal is to the individual, at whose heart He stands and knocks and calls. Inside the chamber of the heart is the only satisfying place of fellowship between Christ and the soul. An Indian Muslim poet once said you can break down a Mosque, you can break down a Hindu temple but never break someone’s heart for that’s where God dwells or love lives.

“He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches” also shows that the appeal is made to the individual member, who need not wait for the entire ecclesia to respond to the call.

A door is either the means of entrance or a barrier against it. It either lets a person in or keeps him out, according to the will of the householder. The locks and bars are on the inside. The door that keeps the Saviour out is barred by the sinner, and He cannot enter till the barriers are removed. Every sin that separates us from Christ is a barrier that must be removed. His entering in will bring back the brotherly love experience of Philadelphia, and fervent devotion will supplant the sickening, nauseating lukewarmness.

“If any man hear My voice” indicates that Jesus not only knocks, He also calls. He knocks and calls to awaken the sleeping ecclesia. In the days when Christ was on earth, doors were not opened till the householder recognised the voice of the person seeking entrance. Rhoda went to the door in answer to Peter's knocking, and refused to open the door till she recognised his voice (Acts 12:13,14). What is Christ saying to Laodicea as He knocks at the door seeking admission? His plea is that while all can hear His voice, only those who love Him and are His own, will recognise it and let Him in. Jesus said, “My sheep know My voice.” Those who are sincere Christians in Laodicea will recognise the Laodicean message as the voice of Christ and will welcome the Saviour in.

Secret Of Victory

Jesus said that He was helpless and could do nothing of Himself. The secret of His success was His union with the Father. He said that He dwelt in the Father and the Father in Him (John 5:19,20,30; 8:28,29; 14:10,11). Jesus also declared that His followers are just as helpless

without Him as He was without the Father (John 14:4, 5; 17:21-23). This alone can produce victory and perfection. Is it any wonder that the Laodiceans are without this glorious experience when Christ is outside the door?

“I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with Me” indicates the desire of Christ for reconciliation. Jesus here offers to be both the Guest and the Host. He is doubtless the host, because He furnishes the spiritual food that constitutes the meal. He is the Bread of life and therefore provides the wedding banquet, just as He as the Bridegroom furnishes the wedding garment. Return unto Me and I will return unto you is Christ's message to Laodicea.

The proposal of Christ to Laodicea involves a complete union of the ecclesia with the divine as the only hope of victory. I will come in to him and will sup with him and he with Me. I will enter into all his joys and sorrows, difficulties. I will drink his cup and he shall drink mine. The power to share is just as equal to the power of love. The words supply a picture not only of union but of fellowship. The plea of Christ is for fellowship and reconciliation.

The Reward Of Victory

To the worst of the seven ecclesias Christ makes the most glorious promise. The crowning promise is that those who overcome the Laodicean condition will be crowned. Conflict and persecution are the road to victory. This promise is the climax of all the seven. The first was the promise of restoration to the tree of life and the Paradise that was lost through the transgression of the first Adam; and the last is the promise of the restoration of the throne and kingdom of David through the victory of the second Adam.

The promised reward to the Laodiceans is on condition of victory over the worst sin that ever afflicted the people of God, that of self-righteousness. The promise is remarkable, not only because it reaches the very zenith, but also because the sin which the victim of deception and hypocrisy must overcome is almost insurmountable. The reward therefore should be commensurate to the victory gained. When we consider the bondage of the Laodiceans in their wretched, pitiable, poor, blind, and naked state, and the fact that they know it not, overcoming power is the more commendable and deserving of a rich recompense of reward. For a man in this condition to open his heart's door and invite the Saviour in is akin to stepping out of the miry pit to the throne.

This glorious offer is another evidence that Christ dearly loves the Laodiceans and has not cast them off. The very persons whom Christ had just threatened to spew out of His mouth unless they repented are offered a seat on His throne. Only divine love could be so generous in dealing with such undeserving subjects. The very highest place is made available to the lowest.

The promised change is like a beggar being asked by a great king to occupy his throne with him. Indeed, that is the illustration given in Isaiah 52:2, which is an Old Testament picture of the Laodicean message: “Shake thyself from the dust; arise, sit on thy throne, O Jerusalem: loose thyself from the bonds of thy neck, O captive daughter of Zion.” To every Laodicean who accepts the counsel of the True Witness and opens the door of the heart so that Christ can occupy the throne and rule the life, He offers a place on His throne, with the privilege of helping Him rule over a kingdom that will never end. It would be sheer folly to refuse such a glorious exchange.

In this promise two thrones are mentioned-the throne of Christ; which He offers to share with the victorious Laodiceans, and the throne of the Father, representing the power and glory of divine majesty, on which none may sit except the Father and the Son. The Eastern throne was

wide enough for more than one person. There was room for at least two others, one on the right and the other on the left. The mother of James and John requested that her two sons be given such positions when Christ became king. From Hebrews 8:1 we learn that Christ is now at the right hand of His Father on the throne that rules the universe. He is to occupy this position till the conquest of this world is completed. “The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit Thou at My right hand, until I make Thine enemies Thy footstool” (Ps.110:1 See also 1 Cor.15:24, 25).

When the conflict is over, Jesus will occupy the throne of David This is the throne Christ promises to share with the victors over the Laodicean condition of lukewarmness and self-righteousness. The grandest promise is placed at the close of the seven epistles. In fact it is a summary of all seven offers of reward.

The final appeal is made by the Holy Spirit for all who have ears to listen to the message of Christ to the Laodiceans. The Laodicean message is the message of God. Christ stands at the door of the heart and knocks and pleads for admission. If we refuse to listen to the knockings and pleadings of Christ, someday He will refuse to hear us when we knock at the closed door of mercy and beg for entrance into The Kingdom of God.

Ephesus

“UNTO THE angel of the church of Ephesus write: These things saith He that holdeth the seven stars in His right hand, who walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks; I know thy works, and thy labour, and thy patience, and how thou canst not bear them which are evil; and thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars: and hast borne, and hast patience, and for My name's sake hast laboured, and hast not fainted. Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love. Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent. But this thou hast, that thou hatest the deeds of the Nicolaitanes, which I also hate. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God” (Rev. 2:1-70).

Ephesus

Ephesus was not the capital of the Roman province of Asia, but it was the most important city. Ephesus had an almost perfect location for the spread of the gospel because of its location near to the sea. For this reason it was home to vast sea traffic and commerce. Its population expanded with people from various backgrounds and ethnic groups. Ephesus became one of the wealthiest cities in Asia Minor. It was a centre of great commercial life and a crossroads of the empire and had great influence in the Roman world. The temple of Artemis ranked as one of the Seven Wonders of the ancient World. It had many different cultures operating together because the Lydians, the Persians, and the Greeks had occupied it, and so many different religions were practised simultaneously including those of the Jews, the Egyptians, the Greeks and the Romans. But around the year AD53 the apostle Paul began to preach Christ in Ephesus.

Preaching in Acts

The word Ephesus means desirable. It is also said to carry the meaning of having relaxed or let go. It was considered the most desirable city of the province and of Asia Minor. The message of Christ to the ecclesia of Ephesus is prophetic not only of the history of the city, which began in a desirable condition and ended in a heap of ruins, but also of the ecclesia. The ecclesia at Ephesus had been begun by the Apostle Paul. Paul visited Ephesus and re baptised the disciples who knew only John’s message and passed on the gift of the Holy Spirit. Paul’s preaching mightily stirred the entire city. According to Acts 20:31, Paul remained in Ephesus for three years. Since Ephesus was the metropolis of Asia, the message during this period spread over the whole province. It was doubtless during this time that the other ecclesias of the province were established (Acts18:24-28 and 19).

The ecclesia of Ephesus had received the labours of Apollos, Paul, John, and Timothy (The two letters to Timothy are addressed to him while he was present in the Ephesian ecclesia). Paul's ministry produced great results, stirring all Asia with the gospel message. The power and

progress of Christianity in the city was so great that it threatened the supremacy of the great goddess Diana and the shrine industry under the control of Demetrius and his fellow craftsmen, and so, mob violence was the result.

Jesus lists seven marks of faithfulness in the Ephesian ecclesia, which He commends. Their love, faith, and zeal were manifested by their works, labour, patience, hatred of evil, zeal in testing false apostles, perseverance under persecution, and steadfastness to the faith. The Ephesian Christians demonstrated their love and faith by their works. I know thy works is common to all seven letters, but it does not always mean good works.

Labour Zeal and False Apostles

The Ephesian ecclesia was active; they took their faith seriously and put it to work. Their doctrine was orthodox they were not tossed to and fro with every wind of new teaching that came along. Their faith was well defined and well defended and they had persisted in their teaching and labour despite much discouragement and hardship. Labour in the Greek carries the meaning of labour unto weariness, and patience means persevering endurance. The patience of the Ephesians, however, did not indicate indifference to sin. Though these early Christians could not bear evil and evil men, they could bear persecutions, ridicule, and reproaches for Christ's sake. They could bear anything except the presence of evil and impostors in their membership. They had the gift of discerning spirits, and had taken to heart Paul's warning concerning the coming of false apostles and wolves (Acts20:28-30) for he had warned them that they would have trouble in this area. A careful reading of Acts 19 and 20 is enough to convince anyone of the unparalleled zeal of the members of the ecclesia at Ephesus.

When they accepted Christianity they burned in the public square before all men their books of magic. This is a worthy example for modern Christians. We too can dispose of the filthy and trashy literature, which is far more demoralising than the Ephesian books of magic. These books could have been sold, but these earnest believers did not intend that others should be corrupted by them. They were not ashamed of their faith. Mighty miracles were wrought among them-some of the greatest recorded in the Scriptures.

To the Ephesian ecclesia Paul wrote an epistle, containing some of the deepest and most sublime of his revelations of divine truth. It contains practically no reproofs, and indicates that a splendid spiritual state existed at that time. Ephesus was located on the highway between Israel and Rome, and through it passed a continual stream of visitors and strangers, and the ecclesia often had to discriminate between pretending believers and apostles and those who were genuine. For their ability and carefulness in this respect Jesus highly commended them (v2).

But the desirable condition of the ecclesia of Ephesus did not continue long. The early love, zeal, patience, liberality, and spiritual power waned, and strife and dissension took the place of

unity and brotherly love. The prediction of Paul came true, and false teachers and doctrines multiplied. Worldliness crept into the ecclesia, and evil men were tolerated. Miracles and missionary work diminished and finally disappeared. Paul's warning recorded in Eph.4:14 that we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness after the wiles of error was no longer heeded.

The early ecclesia was noted for its zeal and patient endurance under persecution, its uncompromising attitude toward evil and evildoers, its ability to put pretending apostles to the acid test of Scripture, and its fearless exposure of lying claimants to fellowship and leadership. Their ability to detect and expose false apostles indicates that there were other apostles.

They were noted for their love, unity, pure faith, missionary zeal, and abounding liberality. The Lord supplied all the men and means needed for preaching the gospel.

Our Lord perceived all, and appreciated the Ephesian ecclesias virtue, especially their ability to detect wolves in sheep's clothing and put them to the Scriptural test. They had found them liars (Rev.2: 2). They were the agents of Judaism masquerading as the apostles of Christ (2Cor.11:13-15). Wherever possible in the seven letters, Jesus gave praise, and wherever necessary He gave reproof. But He always recognised and mentioned that which was praiseworthy first, indicating that He is more interested in finding the good in His people than in discovering evil. This is an example for all who have to deal with difficult ecclesial problems concerning our members. After praising the virtues of the Christians of the first century, like a faithful friend Jesus points out their faults. He is able to see much to admire where we see much to deplore and condemn. Jesus has a very keen eye for that which is good.

First Love

For a while their love for God was so great and infectious that people were drawn into their fellowship. They were known far and wide for their faithfulness even in the face of persecution. But after commending them the Lord added, “nevertheless I have somewhat against thee.” Despite all the commendable things, there was something seriously wrong. Their greatest fault was that they had left their first love and their first works. They had relaxed, or abandoned, their first love. Their love for Christ had not been entirely extinguished; it had diminished and become lukewarm. When Paul wrote his epistle to the same ecclesia not long before, they were still in their first love (Eph.1:15). At that time there were apparently no signs of spiritual decline. Notice that when love is alive it is described as something warm, hot or passionate. But on the other hand when love is in decline it is described as cold. In Matthew 24 Jesus speaks of the coming destruction on Jerusalem and says there will many whose love will grow cold in the face of distress and persecution.

Very seldom does a man take one giant step from a life of virtue and goodness into a life of vice and corruption. Usually, he begins his journey into evil by taking little steps into the shaded areas. Areas tinted and coloured just a little almost unnoticed by those around him. Until one day, hardly aware that he has made the journey, he finds himself firmly entangled in a life of vice and corruption. We see the same kind of journey pictured again and again in scripture. (Samson, Saul, Judas, etc, etc).

Samson was a man of God. From birth to manhood his life was dedicated to God. He started his morning with God. He spent the day with God. He ended the day with God. But then gradually Samson started flirting with evil. Little by little, evil came into his life. Then we read one of the most startling verses in scripture (Judg.16:20).

It says the Lord departed from Samson and he didn't even realise it. Samson had so deeply become involved with the pleasures of this life, that the once great man had become insensitive to the presence of God. When God left Samson he didn't even realise.

It's not the giant step we must fear it's the little steps that ultimately lead us away from God. Exactly the same happened in Ephesus. Christ looked at the Ephesian ecclesia and saw many positive things (v3) what a brilliant description. But Christ did not stop there (v4) You have forsaken your first love.

The Lord can never forget the first love and the love of His people. To ancient Israel God said: "I remember thee, the kindness of thy youth, the love of thine espousals, when thou wentest after Me in the wilderness, in a land that was not sown. Israel was holiness unto the Lord, and the first-fruits of His increase" (Jer.2:2,3). (Notice: love of thine espousal = first love, in the relationship with the ecclesia and Christ) Gods love for His people, as Christ's for the Ephesian ecclesia was unchanged. The coldness was wholly on the part of the Ephesians. He had commended them for their works, labour, and patience. What was wrong? Of faith, hope, and love Paul says that the greatest of these is love. Love was lacking, and works without love are dead and useless. Love is the foundation of all true service. For the love of Christ constraineth us, declared the apostles regarding the motive and compelling power of their zeal and works.

A Serious State

When love diminishes, it is evident that some other person or attraction has superseded Christ in the affections. The Ephesian ecclesia had not abandoned the doctrines of Christ or the form of godliness. Her failure was in becoming untrue to the Person who is the very centre and substance of Christianity. She had deserted her Lord in the way of love. In spite of their doctrinal purity their love had cooled. The warmth of affection had given way to cold and lifeless conformity. The machinery of an ecclesia may be in perfect working condition and yet at the

same time works motivated by love be on the decline. A dangerous situation brethren and sisters. Do we see this in our ecclesias or in our lives?

It appears the Ephesians were busy doing for Christ rather than being like Him.

Commenting on this loss of love, one writer says: Thou hast left thy first love. Is that serious, saith one. It is the most serious ill of all, for the church is the bride of Christ, and for a bride to fail in love is to fail in all things. It is idle for the wife to say that she is obedient, and so forth, if love to her husband has evaporated, her wifely duty cannot be fulfilled, she has lost the very life and soul of the Marriage State.

So brethren and sisters our love for Christ is a serious matter. Because it touches the very heart of having fellowship with Him which is the essence of our spiritual life. As his bride, we must love Jesus, or else we have lost our reason for existence. An ecclesia has no reason for being an ecclesia when she has no love within her heart, or when that love grows cold. It is a disease, a fatal disease, only the Great Physicians intervention can stop its progress, and deliver us from it. No peril can be greater than this. Lose love and lose all.

Love is the sign and evidence of Christian life. Zeal for mere doctrines may turn into hatred for those who differ in thought and our community has seen this time and again throughout its history. An ecclesia may be sound in doctrine and yet be guilty of relaxing the love once manifest. The great fault lies not in the outward but the inner life, visible only to Him, Who seeth in secret. The Ephesians had the work, the organisation, the workers, the crowd of worshipers, all as great and splendid as ever, but that which made the whole to be living and true had gone. And only Christ sees it. Is it, in any measure, so with us? It is so easy to offer our Lord the head, the hands, the feet, while the heart is far from Him. It is easy to drift into being an earnest and devoted ecclesial worshiper and worker, devout in service, busy in various works, teaching, visiting, speaking, praying, and yet to have left the first love. And I fear on the other side that some in large ecclesias are all but Sunday worshipers who contribute nothing and who justify themselves through their many excuses.

Signs and symptoms

Visible at first only to the individual is the loss of joy. Spiritual life becomes routine. You may feel that you have heard it all before. Even the Sunday service seems mechanical, routine, dull and drab. Is this a sign that you are beginning to lose your first love? Next you lose your ability to love others. The scriptures reveal that the reason we love others is because we have first been loved ourselves. Once we lose the consciousness of the wonder of God and his son’s love, we also lose our awareness of others and find our love for them fading. It becomes difficult to love. We become critical, censorious, complaining. We begin to choose our friends more closely and only associate ourselves with those we like. We lose compassion. We begin to loose a healthy

perspective of ourselves. We become more and more important in our thinking. Instead of what the Lord wants and what will please him, we begin to think of what we want and what will please us. Gradually we become sensitive and touchy unable to bear criticism. This causes divisions and schisms within the ecclesia. Individuals then in the ecclesia are no longer interested in preaching, they are no longer concerned about those around them who are without Christ, but are focussed on themselves, their own comfort and their own pleasure. Life now just becomes a self-centred existence.

I suppose at times we have all been guilty to a greater or lesser extent concerning these things. But when a whole ecclesia begins to reflect that atmosphere it soon looses its influence. Its light goes out. Its lampstand has been removed.

The Warning

“Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent”, is the warning. Remember the height from which you have fallen, is the Moffatt translation. The loss of love for Christ is a fall from a high spiritual plane. It represents a backsliding condition that needs to be repented of. When the ecclesia ceased to be occupied with her love for Christ, she fell. There can be no works without love. Works do not produce love, but genuine love shows itself in works. That of a bridegroom and bride, or a husband and wife illustrates the relationship between Christ and His Ecclesia in the Scriptures. Loss of love in the home, if not regained, will eventually prove fatal, and end in divorce.

The only remedy for waning love is to remember the first-love experience and then never be satisfied till it returns. Christ can never forget the first-love relationship. He remembers the beautiful love experience, and regrets its departure. The fault, however, is not His. It is the ecclesia that has relaxed her affection. A remembrance of his love is sure to create a desire on our part to return to it. The return journey, however, requires more effort and time than the fall.

Removal of the lightstand

Unless there took place a speedy reformation, the lampstand would be removed and the ecclesia would cease to be the light of the world. This was no idle threat, for Christ had already removed the lampstand from the Jewish nation and given it to another. To the Jews, Jesus said, “The kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof.” It is the loss of love that forfeits the privilege of light bearing and of witnessing for Christ. The testimony of loveless members has lost its value and power. God values the service of love, and when this is lacking, the mere course of ceremony is offensive to Him.

The removal of the lightstand does not mean that individual members of the ecclesia would be lost or condemned. What it does mean is that the ecclesia would lose its ability to shine or to witness to the truth. They would become an ecclesia with no influence or impact spiritually upon those around. Still busy being religious, but entirely irrelevant. Still working, still traditional, but inconsequential, with no light and no impact. Sadly there maybe such ecclesias within the brotherhood in our days. Ecclesias where congregations meet year after year, Sunday after Sunday doing religious things yet having no spiritual impact on those around them, seeing no change in peoples lives. Their light has failed. An acid test of an ecclesia and an individual's love for Christ is the desire to want to share the love and the hope that we have been introduced to with those around our ecclesial halls and with those whom we come across in our daily lives.

The very continuance of the ecclesia depends on her love for Christ, to whom she belongs. Love is the kernel of our religion, and the cooling of that love is the first sign of decay and is also often seen in the way ecclesial members are treated.

Praise

After ministering this severe rebuke Jesus added some more praise to mitigate the sting: "Still, you have this in your favour: you hate the practices of the Nicolaitans, and I hate them too." Brethren and sisters the praise after giving such severe reproofs and dire threatening is evidence of his most tender love and sympathy. All feelings of righteous indignation against evil is welcomed by Christ as evidence of life. There is hope where hatred of evil prevails. To love the things Christ loves and hate the things Christ hates is indeed praiseworthy. The Ephesians did not fall into the common error of believing that doctrine can be divorced from obligation and that an intellectual acceptance of the gospel is superior to moral character. Failing out of love was their only error.

Nicolaitanes

There has been much conjecture regarding the origin and identity of the Nicolaitanes, but they are doubtless included among those whom Paul predicted would arise in the ecclesia of Ephesus and draw away disciples after them, not sparing the flock. (Acts20:29-31). It is believed by some that the word Nicolaitane comes from Nicolas, meaning conquering the people, and indicates the danger of supplanting Christ as head, by false and counterfeit systems of hierarchy within the ecclesia. This sect is mentioned again in the epistle to Pergamos, and the statement indicates that they were gaining headway in the ecclesia. The Saviour tells the ecclesia of Ephesus that He hates the deeds of the Nicolaitanes, commending them for likewise rejecting such deeds. He tells those of Pergamos, He hates the doctrine of the Nicolaitanes, who are within the ecclesia. The ecclesia is admonished to repent.

Who are these Nicolaitanes?

A Nicolaitane, as the Greek shows, means a follower of Nicolas. Not the deacon Nicolas of Acts 6:5. The name Nicolas comes from two Greek words, nikos, meaning conqueror or destroyer, and laos, meaning people or laity. The original Nicolas was a conqueror or destroyer of the people, Nimrod who led the rebellion against God.

Nicolaitanes in the ecclesia institute and practice a corrupt form of ecclesial government based upon conquering the people and keeping them in subjection. Thus, despotism and elite rulership over the laity (the ordinary people or flock) is another manifestation of the doctrine of the Nicolaitanes. How prophetic of Old and New Testament times, when shepherds of the Almighty's flock ruled the innocent sheep with force and cruelty, feeding themselves with rich living while scattering the flock (Ezek.34:1-6). Peter warned other elders against this and that they should humbly serve the flock, (1Pet.5:1-6). The Bible concept is a priesthood of all believers. New Testament ecclesias were pastored by more than one elder, (Acts14:19-23, 20:17; Tit.1:5; James 5:14). God has a ministry (service) for all His people. Those who depend too much on human spiritual leaders, put those leaders in place of Christ, and are shunning the true high priest in Heaven.

Appeal

"He that hath an ear let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches. To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God." The appeal to hear the voice of the Spirit is seven times repeated in the epistles of Christ. While Christ revealed Himself to John as the author of Revelation, it was the Holy Spirit who inspired the prophet to write it. The term churches indicate that all seven ecclesias were to profit by each of the seven epistles.

It is a dangerous thing to refuse to listen when The Lord speaks, to close the ear to His appeals. In Zech.7:11-14, refusing to hearken and pulling away the shoulder and stopping the ears are said to lead to serious consequences. The heart finally becomes hard so no impressions can be made. "To day if ye will hear His voice, harden not your heart." The appeal to hear the message of the Apocalypse applies with special force to us in this last generation. A refusal to hear and obey will lead to the unpardonable sin. It constitutes a rejection of both Christ and the Holy Spirit.

Reward

The seven promised rewards make up the sum of all the good things that were lost through disobedience, and that are to be regained through faith. The word overcometh implies that our life in Christ is a warfare from which there is no discharge, but it is a warfare, our Master teaches, in which even the feeblest saint can prove victorious.

Paradise is definitely located in Rev.22:1,2,14 as being at the headquarters of the government of God. Man lost his right of access to the fruit of the tree of life and the blessings of Paradise through disobedience. He who overcomes will return to his long-lost Eden home and again have a right to its glories. The tree of life disappeared from the earth because of sin. It will reappear when Paradise is restored. What was lost through the disobedience of the first Adam will be restored through the obedience of the second Adam. Paradise is called the garden of God, and the garden of the Lord. This promise to the members of the ecclesia of Ephesus constitutes a mighty and eloquent appeal for repentance and faithfulness, to hear what the Spirit saith. And so brothers and sisters, the first promise of the first epistle of Christ is of the restoration of the first thing lost through sin. Access to the tree of life and its life-giving fruit.

Philadelphia

“AND TO the angel of the church in Philadelphia write; These things saith He that is holy, He that is true, He that hath the key of David, He that openeth, and no man shutteth; and shutteth, and no man openeth; I know thy works: behold, I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it; for thou hast a little strength, and hast kept My word, and hast not denied My name. Behold, I will make them of the synagogue of Satan, which say they are Jews, and are not, but do lie; behold, I will make them to come and worship before thy feet, and to know that I have loved thee.

Because thou hast kept the word of My patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth. Behold, I come quickly: hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown. Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of My God, and he shall go no more out: and I will write upon him the name of My God, and the name of the city of My God, which is new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from My God: and I will write upon him My new name. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches” (Rev.3:7-13).

City of Names

Philadelphia was located about twenty-eight miles south-east of Sardis. The city was founded in 189 BC by Attalus Philadelphus, after whom it was named. It was the youngest of the seven cities. Some believe that it was so named also because of the love and loyalty existing between Philadelphus and his brother, the king of Lydia. The city was also known as Decapolis, because it was one of the ten cities of the plain. It was sometimes called Little Athens because of the magnificence of its public buildings. Its modern Turkish name is Ala Shehr, which means The City of God or The Exalted City. In A.D.17 it was destroyed by earthquake, along with Sardis and other cities in that locality. Most of the others recovered quickly from the disaster, but the aftershocks continued for a number of years in Philadelphia, which resulted in the people having to flee often. Tiberius Caesar helped Philadelphia to recover from the earthquake, and out of gratitude the city changed its name to Neo-Caesarea (New Caesar), and for a while it bore that name. Philadelphia has thus been given a number of new names.

Philadelphia guarded and commanded an important pass through the mountains. It was thus the keeper of the key to the door, or gateway, to the eastern highlands, with the power to open and close according to the will of the officials. Through this portal passed the mail and trade and commerce of the west to the wide regions of central and eastern Lydia. The introduction of Christ in His epistle therefore had a forceful meaning to the Philadelphians. He reminded them of other and more important doors, to which He alone holds the key, with the power and authority to open and shut.

Exceptional Company

This message reveals the best spiritual condition of any of the seven ecclesias. The letter is addressed to a small but exceptional company who had remained faithful in the midst of a large number who had failed. The message indicates a commendable change for the better from the Sardis condition of spiritual deadness. To the Philadelphians had come a renewal of life and love and zeal, a resurrection from spiritual death, a return to the first love of the early Ephesian ecclesia. Suffering Smyrna and tried Philadelphia are the only two of the seven that received no rebuke.

The Philadelphians

The Philadelphian condition of brotherly love must prevail in the remnant who are to meet Christ when he returns. Love for the Brother always leads to love for the other brethren. This is the love that was lost during the Ephesian period. Those who escaped from the dominion of Jezebel and the spiritual deadness of Sardis, began to remember how they had received and heard, and repented.

In all the other letters, our Lord uses symbols to describe himself that come from the vision John had of him, recorded in chapter one. In this letter, however, Jesus makes no reference to that vision. To the Philadelphians Christ introduces Himself as He that is holy and He that is true. He is morally perfect. His character is without flaw or blemish. He is the true one, the one behind all that really exists. The Holy One of Israel is speaking to His people. The Head of ecclesia lays claim to divinity, and every word He speaks is true and dependable. His divinity is also proved by the fact that He has the key of David because He is the Son of David, with the right to occupy his throne. Christ holds the key to the house of David. He has the authority to open and close the heavenly kingdom and decide who can and who cannot enter. All must appear before the judgment seat of Christ. Citizenship is possible only through Him.

The declaration that Christ has possession of the key of David, with the authority to open and shut, is a quotation of a Messianic prophecy in Isaiah 22:22. “And the key of the house of David will I lay upon His shoulder; so He shall open, and none shall shut; and He shall shut, and none shall open” (See also Lk.1:32,33). A key is the means of locking and unlocking doors, and is therefore a symbol of power and authority. Since the year 605 BC when Israel’s last independent king, Jehoiakim, was dethroned by Nebuchadnezzar, the house and throne room of David have been closed and locked. The throne of David will remain vacant until He come whose right it is (Ezek.21:23-27). The Philadelphian message indicates that the time is near when Christ, the Son of David, is about to take His rightful place on the long-unoccupied throne. We are told that this will take place at His Second coming (Matt.25:31-34). The door of the tomb, the keys of death and the grave are in the keeping of Him who is “the resurrection, and the life” (Rev. 1:18).

A Faithful Remnant

Some believe that Philadelphia not only means brotherly love but also faithful remnant. The Philadelphians constitute the faithful remnant. The statement, For thou hast a little strength, has been difficult to explain. It seems that the open door was set before them because they had a little strength, the only spiritual strength left in the ecclesias.; Sardis was wholly dead and powerless. Now God had found a people with a little strength. They had responded to the appeal to “be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain.” They were doubtless also conscious of their weakness, and therefore qualified to do service for Christ. They were not over-confident, like the Sardians, or self-satisfied, like the Laodiceans. Their little strength led them to rely on the Word and power of God. Some take the position that the reference has to do with their small numbers and material weakness. The former seems the more probable explanation. The first qualification for service in the cause of Christ is recognition of our spiritual poverty.

The promise that those who claimed to be Jews but were rather of the synagogue of Satan would be made to worship at the feet of the true Israelites and to know that God had loved them, was an even better promise than a similar one made to Smyrna. In the Smyrnean letter an assurance was given that the enemies of Christ would not prevail against the remnant. But here the promise is that the remnant would prevail against the enemies who made hypocritical pretensions of being Gods chosen people.

The Jews bitterly persecuted those of their nation who became Christians, and treated them as the outcasts of Israel. They were put out of the synagogue and excluded from the temple and its services and even from the city of Jerusalem, which had long been the city of God. Now the true Messiah, who has the authority to open and close the door into the fold of the true Israel, admits genuine Christians as the only true Jews, and excludes their opponents. He promises the persecuted Christians an entrance into the New Jerusalem, which He calls the city of My God, and from which they will go no more out. All will someday acknowledge that the love of Christ is centred on those who are Israelites indeed, the faithful of all nations.

Verse 10 pictures a crisis: “Because in spite of suffering you have guarded My word, I in turn will guard you from the hour of trial which is soon coming upon the whole world, to put to the test the inhabitants of the earth” (A.D.70?). It may be that this is still future, which fact is proof that the Philadelphian condition will be revived and continue to the very end. It seems that aspects of the last four (all seven?) of the seven ecclesias continue in some respects till the coming of Christ. Just before the end the ecclesia must pass through the crucible so as to separate the dross from the gold. Before Christ returns there must be a clear distinction between the ecclesia and the world, and this is made possible by a great crisis.

The distinction between true and false professors of religion is not always apparent at the present time. Malachi 3:2,3 pictures Christ as a silversmith refining and testing His people. The fiery trials of the furnace burn out the dross till He can see in them the reflection of His own image. The word of My patience doubtless includes the whole gospel, which is the teaching which finds its central truth in the patience of Christ. True Christians will be kept from falling, because they have kept His word. In Deuteronomy 4:34 the plagues of Egypt are called temptations. Those who keep the Word of Christ's patience during the last crisis will be kept from the seven last plagues. The language indicates that pressure will be used to compel Gods faithful remnant to let go their hold on His truth.

I Come Quickly

The statement “Behold, I come quickly: hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown” indicates that the Second coming of Christ is at hand. This is the keynote of the book, the speedy coming of the Lord is the ever-recurring theme of this book. The language seems to indicate that the severe test will not be of long duration. The patient endurance of the saints will soon be rewarded, and in the brief interval they must hold fast that which they had received, till deliverance comes. The crowns of victory depend on the keeping of the Word of Christ's patience to the very end. There is no reward for those who quit.

The warning does not mean that one person gains the crown that another loses, as in an athletic contest. Paul wrote: “Let no man beguile you of your reward” (Col.2:18). The Greek and Roman athletes who gained crowns, or wreaths, of victory made every effort to keep others from taking them away from them in subsequent contests. The Christian must maintain his spiritual experience or lose his eternal reward.

The language of the text seems to indicate a delay of the second coming beyond the expectation of the ecclesia. In the parable the ten virgins, who are expecting the coming of the Bridegroom, all slumbered and slept while the bridegroom tarried (Matt.25:1-5).

This is the divinely indicated reason for the delay in the return of Christ that makes the admonition of our text necessary. Only those who patiently hold fast through the tarrying time will be saved and crowned with wreaths of victory. According to Hebrews 10:35-37, the word of

my patience seems to have to do with the attitude of the ecclesia during the delay of his return. It is because of this delay that many cast away their confidence and lose their reward. They do not live and walk by faith but say in their hearts, “My Lord delayeth His coming,” which leads them to smite their fellow servants and to eat and drink with the drunken (Matt.24:48-51).The message is not to give up and go along with worldly attitudes and worldly pursuits. We must not allow a desire for status, prestige, fame, a beautiful home and the other things the world lusts for, to become central in our thinking.

The Promised Reward

The overcomer is to be made a permanent pillar in the temple of God, on which is to be inscribed the new name representing the character of God. The new home of the Christian victor is the New Jerusalem. In the New Testament the chief men in the ecclesia are called pillars, and all Christians are called living stones. It is the pillars that keep in place and uphold the multitude of lesser stones of a temple. A pillar is symbolic of dignity, beauty, permanence, stability, and strength. In Solomon's temple were two brazen pillars thirty feet in height, called Jachin, meaning He shall establish, and Boaz, In it is strength. The promise to the overcomer is that he shall be one of the great and beautiful pillars.

Just as the pillar cannot be moved as long as the building stands, so the victorious in the closing crisis shall go no more out of the temple of God. His triumph is permanent. He shall never go out from it again. God’s faithful remnant reach the high lands of holiness, so that they go triumphantly through the final day of test and trial. They have not been defiled by the corruptions of the world. They are clothed in the glorious apparel of Christ's righteousness, and their names are enrolled among the faithful of all ages in the Lambs book of life. Augustine said: Who would not yearn for that city out of which no friend departs, and into which no enemy enters.

Philadelphia was a city of many new names. When the city was destroyed by the great earthquake of A.D. 17, Tiberius gave $600,000 to help rebuild. In appreciation the citizens changed the name of the city to Neo-Ceasarea in honour of the donor, but when the emperor became a cruel tyrant, the Philadelphians became ashamed of the new name. During the reign of Vespasian the name was again changed, to Flavia, in his honour, as he was the first of the Flavian family to rule. These changes of name doubtless called for great celebrations of dedication, when the whole city worshipped the emperor in whose honour the new name was given. Such occasions brought an hour of trial to every Christian in the city.

The victors are called pillars, on which the character of God is written. Important writings were engraved on the pillars of the ancient temples, especially the names of the emperors who built them and to whom they were dedicated. In Apostolic days, pillars were erected to rulers and generals with testimonies of their accomplishments chiselled upon them. This was also true of the triumphal arches dedicated to victorious generals. The emperor who erected a temple was usually given divine honours and worshipped as a god. This meant persecution for those, who like the three Hebrew worthies, refused to bow the knee.

A new name is necessary for those who develop a new character. This is a renewal of the promise of Revelation 2:17. When Jacobs character was changed the Lord changed his name, for the purpose of a name is to describe the character. The New Jerusalem is the capital city of the renewed kingdom, on whose throne will sit the Son of David. The conqueror will be a citizen of that kingdom forever. In that city the names of all its citizens are enrolled (Heb.2:22, 23). With

the name of God and the name of the city of God written on the overcomer, the gates of hell shall not prevail to keep him from reaching the promised destination.

Pergamos

“AND TO the angel of the church in Pergamos write; These things saith He which hath the sharp sword with two edges; I know thy works, and where thou dwellest, even where Satan's seat is: and thou holdest fast My name, and hast not denied My faith, even in those days wherein Antipas was My faithful martyr, who was slain among you, where Satan dwelleth. But I have a few things against thee, because thou hast there them that hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balac to cast a stumblingblock before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed unto idols, and to commit fornication. So hast thou also them that hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitanes, which thing I hate. Repent; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will fight against them with the sword of my mouth. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna, and will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it ”(Rev.2:12-17).

Pergamos, or Pergamum, was located about forty miles north-east of Smyrna on the imperial highway running along the coast of Asia. Ephesus, Smyrna, and Pergamos were rivals for first place among the cities of the province and also of Asia Minor.

The city was named for the lofty hill on which the ancient city was built. The name therefore means tower, height, or elevation, and carries with it the idea of exaltation. It was the exalted city. The name also indicates a union as through marriage. Because of its natural defences the city of Pergamos was considered an impregnable stronghold.

A Famous City

For 250 years Pergamos was the official capital of the province. It was also the seat of the Commune of Asia. From Pergamos the decrees of the Caesars were executed throughout the province. This gives force and meaning to Christ's introduction to the ecclesia of Pergamos: These things saith He which hath the sharp sword with two edges. The broad double-bladed Roman sword was known as the cut and thrust sword. It was the emblem of the highest official authority, carrying with it the power of life and death, and this power was vested in the proconsuls of the province, who lived at Pergamos. The governor wielded the sword of Rome from this impregnable fortress.

Pergamos was also the seat of a Roman Supreme Court. To this city prisoners were brought for trial from all parts of the province, and were sentenced by the power that ministered life and death to all. Therefore the sword that proceeded out of the mouth of Christ is a symbol of His judicial authority. He too wields the power of life and death to all who hear His message. His Word is, “quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart”(Heb.4:12). The One who has all power and authority speaks to the ecclesia located in the city where official authority and power dwells.

Throne of Satan

Jesus said to His people in Pergamos, “I know where you dwell, even where Satan’s seat is, or where Satan sits enthroned.” Throne is a better rendering than seat, for the same original is translated throne in Rev.1:4 and 3:21. The capital of the province was also the headquarters of the pagan religion of the province, for in all ancient nations church and state were united. The

ruler of the state was also the head of the religion of the state. Politics and religion seem to mix successfully only when the religion is false.

Satan is known in the Scriptures as that old serpent, doubtless because the serpent was the agent in bringing about the fall of man. The symbol of poison and sin and death was now in the midst of this ecclesia

Jesus recognised the evil environments under which the members of the ecclesia of Pergamos lived. There was a saying among the Jews that where the law of God is not obeyed, there Satan dwells. The Christians of Pergamos lived at the very headquarters of Satan, the man of sin and lawlessness whose religion is the mystery of iniquity. The fact that they were in such close proximity to Satan was no excuse for failure or defeat, for where sin abounded, grace did much more abound. The circumstances under which we live are taken into consideration in the judgment. There is no use attempting to escape entirely from the environment of evil in this world. God often places His people under very unfavourable conditions that they might be shining lights among those who sit in darkness. The ecclesia of Pergamos could not escape the situation, and Satan refused to surrender his stronghold.

Not only does Pergamos carry the meaning of power and exaltation, but it also indicates union through marriage. The Greek word gamos means marriage. Satan had failed to crush the ecclesia and destroy Christianity through persecution, and he therefore changed his policy. Christianity had won its great struggle with paganism, and Satan, as it were, joined the ecclesia in order to ruin it from within through amalgamation with the world. When Satan failed to accomplish his purpose through violence, he corrupted the ecclesia through immorality and worldly alliance. So we see that Pergamum was in sharp contrast to Smyrna. Smyrna endured external persecution and Pergamum faced internal enticement and corruption. For the disciple it is either intimidation or enticement. It is either the violence of a roaring lion or the corruption of an angel of light. Pergamum is the ecclesia that is being undermined by corrupt practices and corrupt teachings.

During this time Paul's warnings applied and his prophecies were fulfilled (Acts 20:29,30; 2 Thess.2:24). Pagan beliefs and practices were brought into the ecclesia, and Christianity was so changed by external influences that it virtually became baptised paganism. Will the prophecy again be fulfilled just before the end, when the message to the ecclesia of Pergamos will again be applicable and meaningful?

Praise

In this ecclesia of compromise and apostasy Christ had loyal followers who held fast to His name without denying the faith, even though they lived where Satan dwelleth. Jesus commended these faithful disciples. Antipas, one of the saints who suffered martyrdom in the city of Pergamos is set forth as a symbol, or representative, of all the faithful of that period. This is the only mention of Antipas in the New Testament, but no other reference is necessary to make him a real character. He was doubtless a prominent leader in the ecclesia, and probably a prominent brother.

Some believe that Antipas means against all. More probably it means the father or parent of opposition and indicates that he stood out and opposed all that was taking place in connection with the practices of Satan, and the doctrines of the Nicolaitans and of Balaam, and for this reason he was martyred. Antipas stood against all compromise with the world and sealed his

faith with his blood. This was the fate of all that stood out against the marriage of Christianity with the world.

Rebuke

Jesus asserted that He had some things against the Pergamos believers, mainly because they were accepting the doctrines of Balaam and the Nicolaitans. The language indicates that worldliness and apostasy were rapidly gaining ground. In the Ephesian ecclesia Christians refused to tolerate evildoers, and they hated the deeds of the Nicolaitans. Here they not only tolerated them in their midst but listened to their teachings. There were some that held the doctrine of Balaam. Balac was the king of Moab, and Balaam was the prophet of God who turned traitor to secure worldly gain and kingly favours. He is definitely symbolic of the compromises in the Pergamos ecclesia and he set a trap for the children of Israel so as to entice them into the twofold sin of idolatry and fornication, which always go hand in hand (Acts15:20), Jezebel etc.

Idolatry in any form is disloyalty to God. Balaam is here represented as the prototype of all corrupt teachers (Num.25:1, 2; 31:15, 16). Just as Balaam bartered his religion for wealth and honour, so some within the ecclesia exchanged religious purity, for worldly gain, making the ecclesia of God not only a house of merchandise but also watering down the faith.

Nikalaos means those who conquer the people. The forces were working that finally conquered the ecclesia and turned it into a system in which the officials exalted themselves to positions of power and authority over the flock. They presumed to take the place of the priesthood in Judaism and carried that into the ecclesia. It is said that Balaam in the Hebrew language has practically the same meaning as Nicalos, or Nikalaos, in the Greek. Therefore the doctrines of Balaam and the Nicolaitans are mentioned together because of their similarity. There were not necessarily two different groups in the ecclesia but may just have been one with elements of both who were apostatising and lording it over the flock. It seems both of these false teachings worked together. One appealed to physical lust, and the other to the ambition for power.

As Israel of old was deceived, entrapped, and corrupted by the doctrines and practices of Balaam. So also were the believers at Pergamos contaminated by the teachings and practices of these modern Balaamites who had refused to obey the decision of the Jerusalem council (Acts15:20,29) condemning idolatry and fornication, but rather they encouraged a return to the lax moral standards of the Gentiles. The Lord exposes both the error of immorality and spiritual superiority within the ecclesia and calls for repentance.

Repent

“Repent; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will fight against them with the sword of My mouth,” was the warning, or threat, of Christ to Pergamos. The entire ecclesia was called upon to repent, indicating that all had been affected by the developing apostasy. The threat, however, was against those who had accepted and were teaching the false doctrines. I will contend with such men with words that will cut like a sword, is the modern translation. There must be no delay in the work of repentance and reformation. They must repent at once. Jesus virtually said: If you do not repent and reform at once, I will fight these apostates and compromisers with the sword of My mouth.

It was with a drawn sword that the Lord withstood Balaam to thwart his evil purpose against Israel of old. So Christ here represents Himself as standing before the Pergamos with a drawn

sword threatening all who refuse to take heed to His cutting message with the fate of the ancient false prophet who was slain by the sword of Israel, which was in reality the sword of the Lord.

Hidden Manna

As an incentive to repent, Christ offers access to the hidden manna and also a white stone containing the overcomer's divinely given new name describing his new character. A pot of manna was placed in the Ark of the Covenant in the holy place of the earthly sanctuary, as a pledge that all who obey the law will be fed (Heb:9:3,4). This became known as the hidden manna, because it was hidden from all except the high priest. Christ declared Himself to be the real manna or bread of life (John 6:26-63). He said that only those who eat of the living Bread that came down from heaven could have eternal life.

In the same wilderness where Balaam tempted ancient Israel, the Lord fed His people with angel's food. This bread of heaven was secretly provided during the night. The promise is that all that resist the temptations of evil will enter the secret place of the most High and experience a close and lasting fellowship with the Bread of Life. Just as the manna was hidden in the unapproachable holy of holies of the earthly sanctuary, so Christ is hidden from our view in the heavenly sanctuary. The hidden Manna was incorruptible for it was Gods provision for the Sabbath rest (Ex.16:22-25). But the faithful still have access to him. "Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against Thee," said the Psalmist. This is the antidote to false doctrine.

White Stone

Reference to the white stone is doubtless borrowed from one or more of several well-known customs in which white stones or pebbles were used. William Ramsay wrote: The truth is that the white pebble with the New Name was not an exact reproduction of any custom or thing in the social usage of the time. It was a new conception, devised for this new purpose; but it was only a working up into a new form of familiar things and customs, and it was therefore completely intelligible to every reader in the Asian Churches. It had analogies with many things, though it was not an exact reproduction of any of them.

All who lived in Pergamos, the capital of the judicial system of the province, were acquainted with the custom of judges in using white and black stones, or pebbles, in making their decisions, the white standing for acquittal and the black for condemnation. The divine promise is that Christian victors will be given the decision of acquittal by the Supreme Court of heaven (compare the Urim and Thumim).

White stones also were given to gladiators who were victorious in athletic contests in Greece and Rome. The name of the victor was inscribed in the white stone, and this entitled him to special privileges, including maintenance at public expense the remainder of his life. This stone was called the pebble of victory. White is the colour of innocence, purity, joy, and victory. The white stone given to the overcomer not only is symbolic of victory but also indicates a pledge of an eternal friendship with Christ.

The promise indicates that the victor over sin will be given a new name to describe his new character; and that he will be given angels food, and have right to the tree of life. Taking into consideration all the implications of the hidden manna and the white stone, this is precious promise, and should be a great incentive to repent. This exceeding great and precious promise is just as verily for us as for the members of the ecclesia at Pergamos.

Sardis

“AND UNTO the angel of the church in Sardis write; These things saith He that hath the seven Spirits of God, and the seven stars; I know thy works, that thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead. Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die: for I have not found thy works perfect before God. Remember therefore how thou hast received and heard, and hold fast, and repent. If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come on thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee. Thou hast a few names even in Sardis which have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with Me in white: for they are worthy. He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before My Father, and before His angels. Re that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches” (Rev 3:1-6).

A reputation that was deceiving

When the Lord wrote to Smyrna he didn’t have one bad thing to say to the ecclesia. But when he wrote to Sardis he didn’t have one good thing to say. Yet it might be the kind of ecclesia that we would like to belong to, the one that we might be impressed with. Things that often impress us do not impress the Lord. The externals often captivate us but God is more concerned what is happening inside. Never is that more evident than in this letter to Sardis. We would have said that it was alive. But Jesus said it was dead. The Lord usually began his letters by commending the ecclesial positives. But The Lord started this letter by condemning the negatives. Jesus is not impressed with labels. He is interested in life. He is not impressed with reputations. He is interested in reality. Someone once said: reputation is what people think you are. Reality is what Jesus knows you are. God does not want his ecclesia to be a form but an active force.

City of Sardis

Sardis was located about thirty-five miles south-east of Thyatira and was the capital of the kingdom of Lydia. Lydia was one of the richest kingdoms of the ancient world. The Lydians are reputed to have been the inventors of coined money. The ancient city of Sardis was built on a plateau of crumbling rock rising 1,500 feet above the plain. The plateau was a part of Mount Tomolus, whose height was 6,700 feet. The walls of the elevation on which the city was built were almost perpendicular, and the city was inaccessible except by one narrow passage which was steep and easily fortified and guarded. Sardis was considered an impregnable fortress.

Over-confidence

The natural defences of Sardis made the guards and citizens proud and over- confident. The walls were carelessly guarded, with sometimes-fatal results. Because of the failure of the guards to watch, Cyrus captured the city by a stratagem in 549 B.C. Solon had warned Croesus not to be too confident of safety from attack, but even after the army of Cyrus appeared on the plain below, he saw no reason for concern. But the unexpected happened. Sardis was taken, and given up entirely to plunder. Thus, Sardis was a city characterized by a complacent spirit.

Appropriate message

In the light of the historic background of the city of Sardis, the epistle of Christ to the Sardian ecclesia was very appropriate and its language very impressive. He told them to “be watchful, and if therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come on thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee.” The city had fallen and was finally destroyed because the ruler and citizens had been over-confident, and its watchmen had failed to maintain a diligent watch.

The enemy took them off guard. Jesus warned the ecclesia that if they too failed to watch because of over confidence He would overtake them as a thief at the most unexpected moment. Over-confidence leading to neglect and slothfulness, is the worst of crimes. This has also been one of the greatest dangers of the ecclesia in all ages.

Sardis means those escaping or that which remains. The name, the message, and the subsequent history of the city and ecclesia, indicate a good start but a bad finish, a change for the worse. One author calls Sardis the city of death. Its history is just the opposite of that of Smyrna, which was dead and is alive; or is the city of life. Sardis had a name that thou lives, and art dead. Like Ephesus, the city and ecclesia of Sardis began with a glorious history and ended in a heap of ruins.

Sardis is a now heap of ruins, with no signs of life. It is indeed the city of death. What happened to the city was also the fate of the ecclesia. It began as a flourishing community and ended in nothing except the memory of a glory that was past. The mountains around Sardis have always been a favourite haunt for thieves, who swoop down unexpectedly upon unsuspecting travellers and villagers. No government had been able to fully subdue them. “Thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee” was an appropriate warning. Divine judgments, like the thief, approach silently and stealthily, and accomplish their mission suddenly and without warning on those who are not watching.

Ecclesia of the living dead

“I know your deeds, that you have a name that you are alive, but you are dead.” Sardis ecclesia had earned the reputation of being alive, maybe because of its outstanding deeds. If it was alive then certainly it must have been active, vibrant, and dynamic. In spite of its reputation Christ judged the ecclesia as being dead. Brothers and Sisters Living Dead Ecclesias are not limited to New Testament times. There will be living dead ecclesias at the time of our Lords return. Such ecclesias may have a large building, a big ecclesial fund a host of activities for all ages. It is the kind of ecclesia that many would like to join. Often these ecclesias are looked upon as model ecclesias envied by others who wish they had the same resources or numbers. These ecclesias carry weight in the brotherhood they are looked upon as role models. Almost everyone has a good opinion of these ecclesias, but it is only Jesus’s opinion that really matters.

Jesus Christ, who is the head of the ecclesia doesn’t base His opinion on outward appearances. He is not impressed with the size of the building, the number in attendance or how many activities a ecclesia may have (although in contrast the present author recognises that meeting twice a week may also constitute an ecclesia without life). Neither is He impressed by how many members an ecclesia may have, especially if they are living dead members. Christ evaluates each ecclesia on whether it is pleasing to God his Father. In essence, Christ says to the ecclesia in Sardis, I know your deeds and I have found them to be unacceptable. The reason they were not acceptable is that they lacked the thing that mattered most: life. There was plenty of physical life and activity, but there was no spiritual life. Surface appearance can easily mask the deadness.

Few living dead ecclesias are willing to remember, repent and change. Most would prefer to continue enjoying the reputation of being alive. An ecclesia is also in danger of death when it begins to worship its own past. When it is more concerned with forms than with life. When it loves systems more than it loves Christ. When the ecclesial constitution makes the decisions rather than the word of life.

When this epistle was written, the city was rapidly waning in prestige and glory, but its inhabitants were still boastful of the reputation and history of the past. Decay and death were inevitable, but the Sardians refused to recognise the fate of the city and continued to live on its ancient glory. The city had a name only, whereas in reality it was dead, or rapidly dying. There is nothing more desolate than a dead or dying city that once teemed with life and bustled with activity, and there are few things more pitiable than for the few remaining citizens of such a city to boast of the past and vainly hope that the future will restore what has departed forever. How apt of members of once large ecclesias.

The ecclesia had a name and reputation of life, but in reality they were dead. Every believer by the very nature of his or her baptism professes that he or she is alive and looks forward to the reward of eternal life. By calling himself or herself a Christadelphian, he or she is living on the name of Christ. If he is dead spiritually, he is making a false claim and is under a terrible deception, likened to a corpse making pretence of life. The ecclesia or the individual must guard against being spiritually dead. Remember Samson he wist not that the Lord was departed.

Nominal Christians

“I know your works.” In Sardis these were works done to impress people. They gave this ecclesia a name to live. They had a good reputation, but it was actually a dead ecclesia. The members for the most part were not spiritually alive. They were what we would call nominal Christians. Nominal comes from the word name i.e. someone who has a name for something. Our Lord declared, you have a name to live, but you are dead. This seems to indicate an ecclesia made up of members who outwardly professed Christ, but who actually possessed no spiritual life. They were Christians in name only. Are we Christadelphians in name only? Sardis was so devoid of life that it had no struggles going on within it. Notice the difference between Sardis and the other ecclesias. There were no Jewish accusers of this ecclesia even though there was a large colony of Jews in the city of Sardis. It seems they ignored the ecclesia or perhaps did not know of its existence. There were no false prophets here, no Nicolaitans to be guarded against, no Satan, no Jezebel, no nothing! That was the ministry of Sardis

A partial reformation?

“I have not found thy works perfect before God,” is the divine indictment. Perfect as used here means fulfilled, or up to the mark or standard. “I have found no works of thine perfected before my God” is the Revised Version. This indicates that the Reformation was started but not completed. It came to a standstill, and was not carried to its consummation. The good work of reform that was so nobly begun did not come to perfection, and Christ's people were therefore not complete before God. The great truths, which were received and heard, were not appreciated and remembered.

The new spiritual life engendered by the message of the gospel soon languished, and eventually ended in stagnation and death. With all the boasting and pretence of life there was little left except a hollow shell and a lifeless form. The Reformation cannot be completed until God's people are brought all the way back to the faith once delivered to the ecclesia by Christ and His apostles.

The statement ready to die indicates some signs of life. The elements of spiritual life, love, faith, and watchfulness were ready to die and would soon disappear if not revived and strengthened. The command is to awake and watch. Christ does not say, Arise from the dead, because there is some life left which might be ignited into a flame. The situation is not hopeless, because Christ

is able to give life even to dead forms of religion. The Lord does not say I have nothing to do with you, he still reveals himself as Lord of this ecclesia and gives them a way of recovery.

The message to Sardis bears witness to a spiritual decline from a far better state. Are we today filled with members who are dead spiritually? There are still many works. In fact, works have supplanted faith, and have become to the majority the all-important thing in religion. But dead faith can only produce dead works. Such works may reach the standard of mans perfection, but they are not perfect before God. They do not measure up to His requirements. The call to us is to wake up and become watchful before being overtaken by sudden and unexpected disaster.

Strengthen the things that remain

Christ had something else to say to the ecclesia at Sardis. “Wake up, and strengthen the things that remain, which were about to die; for I have not found thy works fulfilled in the sight of my God. Remember therefore what you have received and heard; and keep it and repent” (Rev.3:2,3). We might say that this was a call to wake up and consider seriously your life, your ecclesial life? There are two key words that our Lord employs, REMEMBER and REPENT. Christ does not instruct the ecclesia to come up with some new idea or some new technique. They were instructed to remember what they first received from the Lord (v3); His Word and the Holy Spirit. In order for a living dead ecclesia to become a truly living ecclesia, it needs to remember what it means to have Christ’s Word, the Bible, as its only authority for belief and practice and Gods power as the only source of spiritual life. Not only were they to remember, they were also to repent. In other words, they were to change their ways.

Further Reformation Demanded

A sleeping guard is considered a traitor. The same must be true of a sleeping elder, shepherd or watchman of the ecclesia. No person can reach such a privileged position in Christ and think that he is safe from the danger of falling and can with safety be off guard for a single moment. “Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall” is the warning. Self-deception is perhaps the greatest of all sins. To boast of life when on the verge of death is a tragic state. The call of the Sardian message is to return to the spiritual experience and high standards of Christ. The appeal is summed up in the statement, “Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light” (Eph.5:14).

The similarity between Ephesus and Sardis is striking. Both had a glorious beginning, with a corresponding spiritual decline to a condition of lukewarmness in affection and deadness in spiritual life. The Christians of both ecclesias are therefore urged to remember the past and to repent and return to the love and faith and practice of their fathers. Are there some amongst us who are modern day Sardians? We have no excuse, because for them Christ has no praise or commendation.

Thief in the Night

As an incentive to watchfulness Christ said to the Sardians, “You will certainly not know the hour at which I will come to judge you.” The Sardian condition reaches to the time of the judgment and the coming of Christ. The secret coming of judgment “in such an hour as ye think not” and as the visit of a thief in the night is referred to in Matt.24:40-44; Lk.21:34-36 (See also 1 Thess.5:3-5). Just as the over-confident and self-satisfied citizens of Sardis were suddenly surprised and overtaken by judgments, so the ecclesia in general will be caught in an overwhelming surprise if there is a failure to watch.

But there is to be a faithful remnant. Jesus declared that there are “a few names even in Sardis which have not defiled their garments.” The promise is, “and they shall walk with Me in white: for they are worthy.” Names here has the meaning of' persons-a few souls. They are the people whose names are in the book of life. Christ knows His people by name. The reference may indicate a registry in the Sardis ecclesia (like our ecclesial registers) typical of the registry in heaven in which the names of the saints are enrolled.

There will be a remnant that will be watching and waiting when Jesus returns. Their character garments will not be defiled by sin. While Christendom as a whole will be unready for the crisis, a remnant will be prepared and saved (Joel 2:32; Rev.12:17). There can be living souls even in the midst of a dead ecclesia. Garments soiled by sin can be cleansed by the blood of Christ and made as white as snow. This remnant will walk with Christ in white in Paradise restored, for they are worthy. They are worthy on the basis of grace and God's acceptance.

White Robes

The promise to the faithful remnant in Sardis is threefold: clothed in the symbolic white robes of victory, their names will not be blotted out of the book of life, and Christ will confess their names before His Father and the angels. The Hebrews regarded holiness as a beautiful white robe that could be tainted by sin. When a white robed priest committed a sin that disqualified him for the duties of his sacred office, his white garment was taken from him and he was given a black robe in its place. His name was also stricken from the sacerdotal register. In the Scriptures white is used as the symbol of both purity and triumph (Zech.3:3-5; Rev.7:13,14; 19:7, 8, 11-14).

White garments (Rev.7:13,14) in scripture are a symbol of redemption. In Rev 7 we read of a great multitude that had washed their robes in the blood of the Lamb. Clearly white garments are a sign of being redeemed, being saved by the grace of God. That is what the blood of the Lamb can do. These are said to be worthy, not because they have lived good lives, many of them very likely had not. But because they had washed away their sins in the blood of the Lamb, they were found worthy and God had imparted to them the righteousness of Christ. That is the gift he gives to all those who come to him in faith. You need no longer try to earn your way, or work your way into eternal life. Yes we have obligations, responsibilities borne out of love but it is the Fathers good pleasure to give us the kingdom.

It was the custom of the early Christians who were candidates for baptism to put on white robes and march in a procession to the place where the baptism took place. This was the evidence to all that they had become Christians. The white robe of our text is the robe of righteousness and glory worn by the redeemed and furnished by the Divine Host. We are told that the Lord is clothed with honour and majesty, and covers Himself with light as with a garment (Ps.104:1,2). The symbol is doubtless that of the glittering and dazzling linen garments worn by the high priest on important occasions. Of the transfiguration of Jesus we read: “His raiment became shining, exceeding white as snow; so as no fuller on earth can white them” (Mk.9:3). The glorified saints are promised such a covering as they march in triumph through the gates of pearl into the celestial city and kingdom of glory.

In ancient Rome the white toga was symbolic of joy and victory, and black garments were symbolic of mourning and defeat. Captives and slaves wore Black. Successful candidates for office were clothed in white robes by their friends and marched in a triumphal procession to their new official headquarters. On days of a Roman triumph all citizens were dressed in white

and Rome was called The White City. The victorious general and his staff wore white togas and rode on white horses or in chariots drawn by white horses.

Registered Citizens

In Greek and Roman cities the names of the citizens were registered as in modern times. It was a special privilege to be a registered citizen and a terrible disgrace to have the name expunged, or blotted out, because of unworthy conduct. The blotting out of the name from the citizenship registry was the preliminary step to the execution of the sentence of death or banishment for life. The names of the spiritually dead members of the Sardis ecclesia could not be retained in the book of life. When the investigative judgment is over, only the names of the spiritually alive will be found recorded. The book of life is for the names of the victors in the warfare against evil (Rev.20:12, 15; 21:27).

On the other hand the names of hypocrites and backsliders, together with their recorded good deeds, will be erased (Ex.32:32,33; Neh.13:14). Either the name is blotted out of the book of life or the sins are erased from the books of record. Peter said, “Repent ye therefore, and be converted that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord” (Acts 3:19). Only the sins of those who openly confess Christ as their Advocate will be blotted out (Matt.10:32,33). The promise of our text implies a solemn warning to those who do not confess sin. It indicates that it is possible to fall from grace. The picture is doubtless drawn from a Roman triumph given a victorious general and his army, which is used as a type of the final triumphal procession of Christ and the redeemed into the New Jerusalem. As they approach the city, the command goes forth to the angel gatekeepers, “Open ye the gates, that the righteous nation which keepeth the truth may enter in” (Isa.26:2).

I will confess his name

Brothers and sisters are you frightened of appearing before the judgment seat of Christ? When we arrive and stand before the glorified Jesus, our lives will be visible to everybody. Nothing is hidden then. Jesus tells us there is nothing covered that shall not be revealed, neither hid, that shall not be known. Every thing is wide open. No aspect of our lives can be hidden away. Knowing this, there may apprehension to appear before the risen Lord. We know truths about ourselves that we do not want known. But Jesus says, when you stand there with your whole life exposed for everybody to see. I will look at you and say, you are mine. I will acknowledge your name before my Father and all his angels. This sinner, this defiled person, this unworthy character, I want the whole of creation to know that he or she is mine. That is what he has promised to do.

So the closing word, as always in these letters, is to the one who has ears to hear. Listen the Lord says in each letter. All scripture is profitable to someone who has the life of Christ within. Have we come to life in Christ?

Chapter 4

A DOOR WAS OPENED IN HEAVEN

“Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts: the whole of the earth is full of his glory.”

(Isa.6:3)

Revelation 4:1-11

1 After this I looked and, behold, a door was opened in heaven: and the first voice which I heard was as it were of a trumpet talking with me; which said, Come up hither, and I will shew thee things which must be hereafter. 2 And immediately I was in the spirit: and, behold, a throne was set in heaven and one sat on the throne. 3 And he that sat was to look upon like a jasper and a sardine stone: and there was a rainbow round about the throne, in sight like unto an emerald. 4 And round about the throne were four and twenty seats: and upon the seats I saw four and twenty elders sitting, clothed in white raiment; and they had on their heads crowns of gold. 5 And out of the throne proceeded lightnings and thunderings and voices: and there were seven lamps of fire burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God. 6 And before the throne there was a sea of glass like unto crystal: and in the midst of the throne, and round about the throne, were four beasts full of eyes before and behind. 7 And the first beast was like a lion, and the second beast like a calf, and the third beast had a face as a man, and the fourth beast was like a flying eagle. 8 And the four beasts had each of them six wings about him; and they were full of eyes within: and they rest not day and night, saying, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come. 9 And when those beasts give glory and honour and thanks to him that sat on the throne, who liveth for ever and ever, 10 The four and twenty elders fall down before him that sat on the throne, and worship him that liveth for ever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne, saying, 11 Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created.

Before we undertake an exposition of chapter 4, it is important to reflect on the fact that it is impossible for man, bearing sinful human nature, to enter into the divine presence, “for there shall no man see me, and live” (Ex.33:20)1. Even on the Day of Atonement the high priest preserved his life by shrouding the divine presence in a cloud of incense. Yet John, while “in the spirit” (a prophetic trance) saw, “one sat on the throne.” (4:3)

Clearly, we are dealing with a paradigm of reality. God chooses to represent himself as sitting on a throne in a heavenly sanctuary, surrounded by various pieces of “tabernacle furniture” and being administered to by his angels and eventually by the high priest, Jesus Christ. Words cannot express the Holiness of God, and therefore symbolism is employed, but even this is inadequate, for both idiom and symbolism struggle to define a reality that remains incomprehensible until the eschaton.

Like many of the ancients, modern man worships the creation rather than the creator. He has developed his own ‘symbolism’ in order to express this – the language of science. According to science the universe ‘began’ 12 billion years ago when an infinitely powerful source of energy exploded and expanded (growing a trillion, trillion times within a nanosecond, to the size of a grapefruit) into a void, creating all the visible and invisible matter of the heavens. We now know that all matter when accelerated to the speed of light (squared) is converted to energy. Small particles like atoms contain enormous quantities of energy (i.e., atom bomb). Everything that a

few centuries earlier could be viewed as solid reality (like the chair you sit on) is now known to consist of atomic and sub-atomic particles attracted and repelled to each other by force fields. Science cannot even show where these particles are, for the law of probability establishes that it is impossible to know both the speed and position at the same moment. If the location is determined with any certainty then the speed cannot be accurately known, and vice versa. Time itself is not absolute but only relative and influenced by the speed of light; this means that time does not progress from past to future in a linear fashion as once was thought2. What in past centuries was believed to be absolute, unshakeable reality, is now expressed in terms of uncertainty, relativity and probability.

Although everything lives and moves and has it's being in him, it is wrong to describe the creator in terms of his creation. The creation is a mere reflection of his glory, brought into existence by the exercising of his will (4:11 A.V. for his pleasure). Even so, the creation is an expression of divine power and omnipotence, before which man is left dumbfounded:

"I know that thou cans't do everything and that no purpose of thine can be withholden from thee…therefore have I uttered that which I understood not; things too wonderful for me, which I knew not." (Job 42:2,3)

The creation itself however, says nothing to us about the divine character. It is man, who was meant to reflect upon, and ultimately express the divine image. In this man (Adam) abjectly failed, for he strove for equality with God, until God himself provided a means of salvation in the man Jesus Christ.

The material creation was made by his will and for his pleasure, and God declared it good (Gen.1:25) but it was also, 'the good pleasure of the Father that in him (Christ) should all the fullness dwell'. (Col.1:19) He is the pinnacle of God's creation, a man able to reflect the divine character, self-sacrificing love, mercy, compassion, goodness, empathy and justice. God is not just revealed in the power of his creative acts, nor only in his administration of justice, but also in the still small voice.

(1 Kgs.19:12 for what the voice articulated see Ex.33:19) He is not a despotic, capricious creative force detached from his universe, but a moral being who cares deeply about the destiny of his creatures. His power deserves our awe, his judgement our fear, and his righteousness and compassion demand our worship.

As we have seen, reality can be expressed in various ways. Just as the language of science uses 'models' and 'laws' to explain the natural world, so scriptures uses type and symbol to explain the spiritual world. But models have their limitations, whether they reflect the physical or the spiritual world. While it is true that the heavenly sanctuary provided a 'pattern' for the earthly tabernacle and sanctuary (Heb.8:5), it is itself a mere symbol, expressing a more profound reality that can only be known when God dwells with his people and they, themselves, form the temple.

'For now we see through a glass darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known'. (1 Cor.13:12)

John uses symbolism in two different ways, in the first instance he uses descriptive symbolism and in the second determinative symbolism. The strange and complex symbols of John's vision are the pictorial counterpart of earthly realities. John sees things happen in heaven because God has determined that equivalent events should happen on earth (i.e., war in heaven = the

crucifixion on earth 12:10), but other events take place, because earthly events made them possible (i.e., the resurrection makes the breaking of the seals possible – descriptive symbolism.)

We need not be surprised then that the heaven to which John is summoned turns out to be more than a 'centre of operations' – a throne room where the heavenly King holds court (4:2) a synagogue in which the scroll of God's word is opened and read (5:1), a temple with an altar on which the incense of prayer is offered (8:3), and a law court from which the Accuser is drummed out in disgrace (12:10). The very fluidity of John's images strongly suggests that he was aware of the inadequacy of all forms of religious language to express the ineffable being of God.

1. Immortal, invisible, God only wise, 3. To all life Thou givest, to both great and small

In light inaccessible hid from our eyes: In all life Thou livest, the true life of all;

Most blessed, most glorious, The ancient of days, We blossom and flourish like leaves on the tree,

Almighty, victorious, Thy great name we praise. And wither and perish; but nought changeth Thee.

2. Unresting, unhasting, and silent as light, 4. Great Father of glory, pure Father of light,

Nor wanting, nor wasting, Thou rulest in might; Thine angels adore Thee, all veiling their sight;

Thy justice like mountains high soaring above, All laud we would render: O help us to see

Thy clouds which are fountains of goodness and love. ' Tis only the splendour of light hideth Thee.

THE HEAVENLY SANCTUARY

The 'heavenly sanctuary', although itself a symbol of a more profound reality1, formed the template for earthly worship.

THE HEAVENLY SANCTUARY

THE TABERNACLE AND TEMPLE

(1) The throne (Rev.4:2)

The ark (Exod.25:10, 1Kgs.8:6)

(2) God seated on the throne (4:2)

The glory of God on the ark (Exod.25:22, 40:34, 1Kgs.8:11)

(3) Four cherubim (4:6-8)

Cherubim (Exod.25:19, 1Kgs 6:24)

(4) Seven lamps (4:5)

The Lampstand (Exod.25:31)

(5) The sea (4:5)

'The sea' (1 Kgs 7:23) andThe laver (Exod.30:18, 1 Kgs 7:30)

(6) The altar (6:9)

The altar (Exod.27:1, 1 Kgs.8:22)

(7) The incense altar (8:3)

The incense altar (Exod.30:1)

Not only the tabernacle and temple, but also the garden of Eden were modelled on heavenly things. The garden of Eden had a tree of life, or lampstand (Gen.2:9) cherubim (3:24), and similar to the tabernacle the entrance was on the east side (Gen 3:24). It also had a place where sacrifices were offered. (Gen.4:7 2)

The throne of God is the mercy seat on the ark of the covenant with the faces of the cherubim looking towards the ineffable shekinah glory residing in the midst.

According to unanimous tradition amongst the Jews, the four cherubim faces correspond to the four sections of the camp of Israel. The standard of Judah was the Lion (Gen.49:9; Rev.5:5), for Ephraim the ox (Deut.33:17), for Reuben the man (implied in Deut.33:6) and for Dan the eagle (Gen.49:17 the serpent of Dan is the adjoining constellation in the Zodiac).

The cherubim are therefore representative of his creation looking towards his glory and mercy. The fullness of the manifestation of divine glory is progressively revealed in his creative works. His glory is reflected by 1.the natural creation 2.Israel 3.Christ 4.the saints.

THE LION FACE– the kingship of God reflected by his natural creation

The lion is the king of the beasts, renowned for strength (2 Sam.1:23; Prov.30:30) and courage (2 Sam.17:10; Prov.28:1), and for his loud roar (Job 4:10; Prov.20:2) and therefore it was adopted as a sign of royalty (i.e., Judah). Nebuchadnezzar was represented as a lion (Dan.7:4) the chief of the other animals, but he was actually an untamed beast, and he was 'made to eat grass as oxen' (Dan.4:25). The destiny of the lion is to, 'eat straw like the ox' (Isa.11:7). The lion will be domesticated like the ox. The lion represents the untamed natural creation. The power of the lion is death – but God will tame even this natural force, for 'He delivereth and rescueth, and he worketh signs and wonders in heaven and in earth, who hath delivered Daniel from the power of the lions'. (Dan.6:27) [see also Ps.35:17; 57:4]

THE OX FACE – the glory of God reflected by Israel under the law

The increase (harvest) came through the strength of the ox (Prov.14:4). It was a beast of burden and sacrifice, and therefore it represented the law. The golden ox faces of the cherubim on the ark, shone with the reflected glory of God. Moses' face shone with the same glory (Ex.34:35), but it was only temporal. In like manner the nation was meant to reflect the glory of God by keeping his law, but Jeshurun waxed fat and kicked (Deut 32:15). The ox knew its owner and its master crib (the oxen looking at the manger are like the cherubim looking at the mercy seat. Isa.1:3; Lk.2:12) but the nation of Israel did not.

THE MAN FACE - the glory of God reflected by Christ

Man was made in the image of God, and was therefore meant to reflect his glory (1 Cor.11:7). The only man face that does this is Jesus Christ. 'Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person (Heb.1:3) was counted worthy of more glory than Moses, inasmuch as he hath builded the house hath more honour than the house (Heb3:3). For if the ministration of condemnation (= the law) be glory, much more doth the ministration of righteousness exceed

in glory' (2 Cor.3:9). For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ'. (2 Cor.4: 6)

THE EAGLE FACE - the glory of God reflected by the immortalised saints

The eagle hovers and soars in the heavens, in scripture it represents renewal, and therefore the immortalised saints.

'Who satisfieth thy mouth with good things (fruit of the tree of life Rev.2:7); so that thy youth is renewed like the eagles'. (Ps.103:5)

'They that wait on the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk and not faint'. (Isa.40:31)

The cherubim then represents all aspects of God's creative work reflecting his glory both the 'old heavens and earth' and 'the new heavens and earth'. The cherubim incessantly chant (Isa.6:3 R.V.mg): "Holy, Holy, Holy, is the Lord of Hosts; the fullness of the whole earth is his glory." And in Revelation 4:11: "Worthy art thou, our Lord and our God, 1 to receive glory and honour and power : for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created".

THE GLASSY SEA

The glassy sea or clear crystal is a reference to the 'firmament' in the midst of the waters – 'which divides the waters under the firmament from the waters which are above the firmament' – this was called heaven. (Gen.1:7-8) 1 This suggests the 'paved work of a sapphire stone, and as it were the body of heaven in his clearness' seen in the heavenly vision vouchsafed to Moses and the seventy elders of Israel of Sinai (Ex.24:10).

Upon (or above) this 'glass sea' sits the throne (v.6 literally before the throne). Similarly, in the tabernacle a brass sea sat 'before the throne' (before the ark). The laver was used in connection with the services. It stood on a base of brass in the court between the altar and the door of the tabernacle. Both laver and base were made of the mirrors donated by the women who assembled to minister at the door of the tent of meeting (Ex.38:8, see Ex.33:7). In Solomon's temple there was a molten sea and ten lavers. (2 Chron.4:6) 2

The molten looking glasses, and the sea represented the expanse of heaven.

'Hast thou with him spread out the sky, which is strong and as a molten looking glass?' (Job 37:18)

When God created the universe, he created heaven and earth but heaven, as well as earth, is part of a transient and temporal order. The heavens (sea) is the barrier which the redeemed must pass through in a new exodus, if they are to win access to the promised land. God will again make the depths of the sea a path for the ransomed to cross (Isa.51:9-10) he will break the head of dragons that emerge from the sea (Rev.13:1) and will divide the waters by his strength (Ps.74:13,14).

It is significant that, when John comes to speak of the new heaven and earth, the first thing he has to say is that the sea was no more. (21:1) The throne is no longer situated above an impenetrable barrier, but amongst his people. No longer is there a glassy crystal sea, but a clear crystal river flowing from beneath the throne (22:1).

This river functions like the smaller lavers, it is for the healing or cleansing of the nations, specifically the Jewish nation, for, 'there shall be a fountain opened to the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, for sin and uncleanness' (Zech.13:1). Washed from sin they are now presented as a living sacrifice to their God.

THE RAINBOW

The throne is enveloped [around – kyklothen] with a rainbow like an emerald. The emerald is a green stone and therefore the throne is shrouded in green light.

Israel stood doubly represented by the high priest in the presence of God. On the brilliant stones that rested on his shoulders, their names were engraven according to their birth order (Ex.28:10).

On the Onyx on the left shoulder:

1. REUBEN

2. SIMEON

3. LEVI

4. JUDAH

5. DAN

6. NAPHTALI

On the onyx on the right shoulder:

7. GAD

8. ASHER

9. ISSACHAR

10. ZEBULUN

11. JOSEPH

12. BENJAMIN

The stones on the breastplate however, were arranged in four rows of three; and the names engraven on them according to the tribal encampment around the tabernacle (Ex.28:21). [Hebrew is written from left to right]

3. CARBUNCLE

ZEBULUN

2. TOPAZ

ISSACHAR

1. SARDIUS

JUDAH

10. BERYL

DAN

11. ONYX

ASHER

12. JASPER

NAPHTALI

7. LIGURE

EPHRAIM

8. AGATE

MANASSEH

9. AMETHYST

BENJAMIN

4. EMERALD

REUBEN

5. SAPPHIRE

SIMEON

6. DIAMOND

GAD

The emerald is therefore representative of the firstborn son. The firstborn son was Reuben, who lost his birthright (Gen.49:3) and was replaced by Judah (Rev.7:3) [see chapter 7 page 10].

The rainbow represents the covenant of mercy that God made with his creation. This covenant was made with Noah [man] the fowl [eagle] the cattle [ox] and the beast of the earth [lion] (Gen.9:8-17). All four faces of the cherubim are represented, for the covenant is with all his creation. The rainbow consists of the seven spectral colours of light, in order: red, orange, yellow, green, blue, indigo and violet. The picture presented to us is of the rainbow (symbol of covenant mercy) extending from earth into the heavens, with the throne situated in the green bow (middle) of the rainbow. The green represents divine covenant mercy extended to the house of David. Just as God promised not to destroy the earth by flood, likewise He promises not to hurt any green thing (Rev.9:4). The tribe of Judah, has replaced Reuben (green emerald) as the firstborn son – the one destined to have the excellency of dignity (the priesthood) and the excellency of power (the kingship).

The one that sat upon the throne was to look upon like a jasper and a sardius (4:3). These are the last and first stones of the breastplate – signifying the first and last (1:17) in reverse order, for he was dead (last of the old covenant) and is alive forevermore (first of the new covenant 1:18). Once again the sardius represents Judah (on the breastplate) and jasper, the tribe of Naphtali, signifying the struggle or overcoming.

In the next vision John sees the Lion of Judah who overcame (literally: conquered) to open the book (5:5) [he overcame his flesh].

In Hebrew sardius is odem signifying redness, and jasper is Yashepheth signifying Yah polishes. Jasper is an opaque stone that mainly tends to be red (it can also be found in yellow, green and greyish blue). The Hebrew for sardius is identical for the word man: adam (from red clay) except for the vowel pointing, which is not found in the original. Although John wrote in Greek these associations with the Hebrew are not coincidental, but came from his spirit inspired mind. We have then another firstborn (adam) who lost the birthright, which was regained by the second adam, whose redness was polished to perfection by Yah. The Hebrew for 'the enthroned one' is yô . eb phonetically very similar to yashepheth (jasper). Since jasper is used for a simile for the appearance of God (4:3), it is used later in Revelation as an image for the overall appearance of the New Jerusalem, which manifests the glory of God (21:11), and is the material from which its walls are constructed (21:18), as well as the first of its twelve foundations (21:19).

To summarise, the rainbow represents covenant mercy extended to all creation, with the green (emerald) light representing that mercy as covenanted to be realised in a Davidic ancestor. God's holiness is shrouded by his covenant promises (mercy and truth), which were realised in Jesus Christ – the last and the first – the son of David – the firstborn son (emerald) from the dead. At this juncture of the vision, Christ is not yet in the 'midst of the throne', that happens later (after chapter 5) and that is the vision that David saw (7:17) when he sat before the throne (ark) in (2 Sam.7:18), which experience he recounted in Psalm 110.

THEOPHANY

Lightning, thunderings and voices proceeded from the throne, similar phenomena accompanied the giving of the old covenant at Sinai (Ex.19:16). Storm language, such as lightning and thunder are often used in a theophanic context – usually a manifestation in judgement (Rev. 8:5, 11:9, 16:18). What follows in the next chapter is judgement of the flesh by the 'Lamb as it had been slain', this event inaugurated a new covenant, not one based on fear (for they could not endure that which was commanded and even Moses said, "I exceedingly fear and quake": Heb.12:20,21), but one based on agape love, for Jesus is the mediator of a new covenant (Heb.12:24).

'Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgement: because as he is, so are we in this world. There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love. We love him, because he first loved us." (1 John 4:17-19)

THE 24 ELDERS

The twenty-four elders are obviously the heavenly counterpart of the 24 courses of priests instituted (reinstituted?) by David (1 Chron.24:1). They probably represent both Jew and Gentile, as does the naming of twelve tribes and twelve apostles in the New Jerusalem (Rev.21:12-14). The picture of the heavenly sanctuary is now complete, the throne (ark) with the cherubim (host of Israel) encamped around and the priests doing service (elders) and the seven spirits (candelabra) illuminating the scene.

These elders cast their crowns (priestly diadem) before the throne (v.10) this symbolic act of submission in the heavens, is probably in anticipation of the victory on the cross, when the Aaronic priesthood will be superseded by a better priesthood – the Melchizedek priesthood of the firstborn son.

The elders therefore, do not represent redeemed saints as some suggest. Although the white garments and golden crowns (v.4) may point to this conclusion, they do not require it.1 The elders are also encountered in 11:17 where they praise God because the time has arrived to judge the dead and to reward the saints. This demonstrates that the elders are not the same as the saints. In the previous song of praise they eulogise God for 'making us (elders) a kingdom of priests' but various Codices2 render this as 'made them (the saints) a kingdom of priests'.

It is entirely appropriate to the symbolism that the 'heavenly priests' should praise God for elevating the earthly saints to the same status as themselves. To this we might add that in 14:3 and 19:4-7 the redeemed saints appear as a group separate from the cherubim and elders and therefore cannot possibly be one and the same.

SUMMARY

A door was opened to John (the disciples who Jesus loved) in heaven; similarly an open door was set before the Philadelphians (the brethren who love one another) on earth. Every heavenly reality has an earthly counterpart and certain earthly realities have heavenly consequences. John (and us) are taken into the divine counsel and, like the O.T. prophets, we are allowed together with John to hear the deliberations of the council. We are truly privileged, 'For who has stood in the council of the Lord so as to see and to hear his word?' (Jer.23:18). John was shown the things that must happen 'hereafter' (alluding to Dan2:29); this is designed to introduce the reader to the extended vision sequence found in 4:1-22: 9. However, what John sees first of all is not future events, but the deliberations of the heavenly council, and the past events that made the unsealing of the scroll possible (the crucifixion).

The Apocalypse epitomised by H.P.Mansfield has the following to say (pg.70) "Behold a throne was set in heaven" – the things here recorded are among those matters which John was told would be fulfilled 'hereafter'. Hence 'the heaven' of this chapter cannot relate to the atmospheric heaven above, for Yahweh's throne has been established in those heavens from time immemorial. The symbology suggests a scene of national judgement in the political heaven such as described in the similar language of Daniel 7:9-14. The A.V. reads: 'the thrones were cast down', but this is better rendered 'the thrones were placed, set, or fixed'. The R.V. renders the thrones were 'placed'. The metaphor of placing thrones is borrowed from the custom of earthly judicatories, and particularly of the Great Sanhedrin, where the father of the consistory sat with his assessors seated on either side of him, in the form of a semi-circle, with the people standing before him (cp. Ps.9:7; 122:5). That is the picture presented in the picture before us. The redeemed already are in glory (vv.8-11; Rev.5: 9-10); the Lamb has 'prevailed' in judging the nation (Rev.5:5); and the vision closes with praise being ascribed to the one upon the throne on the part of all upon the earth (Rev.5:13-14). The description of the one upon the throne (a combination of jasper and sardine stones) suggests Divine judgement through the glorified Son of man.

The present author finds such a misreading of metaphor and symbol truly amazing, even if we ignore the typology of the 'heavenly sanctuary', it does a total injustice to the text to read into the 'prevailing of the Lamb' a judgement of the nations instead of the judgement of sin in the flesh. Furthermore, a throne set in heaven means simply a throne situated in heaven. This is no longer exegesis but eisegesis, a truly beautiful chapter has been ruined by seeking to impose a continuous historical application to the text.

It is not expedient for me doubtless to glory. I will come to visions and revelations of the Lord. I knew a man in Christ above fourteen years ago, (whether in the body, I cannot tell; or whether out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth;) such an one caught up to the third heaven. And I knew such a man, (whether in the body, or out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth;) How that he was caught up into paradise, and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter. Of such an one will I glory: yet of myself I will not glory, but in mine infirmities. For though I would desire to glory, I shall not be a fool; for I will say the truth: but now I forbear, lest any man should think of me above that which he seeth me to be, or that he heareth of me. And lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure. (2 Cor.12:1-7)

NOTES

1 This seems to be contradicted by passages such as Ex.24:10-11; however, this is the angel of the divine presence, not God himself. See Gen.32:30 note the emphasis on seeing the face cp. Judge 6:22,23; Isa.6:5, note how John falls down 'dead' in the vision of Rev. 1:17

---

2 Try and define the present (i.e., how long does it last?) – you will find this is impossible, for it does not exist!

NOTES

1 If anyone doubts that the heavenly sanctuary is a symbol, then think on the altar with the souls underneath (6:9) – this represented the martyrdom of the saints, an earthly reality.

---

2 Gen.4:7; 'And the Lord said unto Cain, why art thou wroth? And why is thy countenance fallen? If thou doest well shalt thou not be accepted? And if thou doest not well sin lieth at the door: And unto thee shall be his desire, and thou shalt rule over him'. The translators have made a mess of this verse. The Hebrew 'lieth' is masculine and sin (offering) [chat'a] is feminine, so that the Hebrew reads, 'at the entrance [a male] is lying, a sin offering'. The Hebrew for desire is teshû wqâ h and is virtually identical to teshû wrâ h [gift]. 'thou shalt rule over him' is rendered 'thou shalt rule over it' in the R.V. marginal notes. The R.V. also renders the phrase 'be accepted' as 'have the excellency' a reference to becoming the family priest, which under normal circumstances was the prerogative of the firstborn. (Gen.49:3) Putting all this together in a loose paraphrase we obtain the following:

And the Lord said to Cain, Why art thou wroth? And why is thy countenance fallen? If thou doest well shalt not thou [thy offering] be accepted? [or alternatively – you will become the family priest?] and if thou doest not well, the sin offering is lying at the door [of the sanctuary], and his gift [Abel's] will be for your sin, and you shall overcome it [sin].

Cain chose not to share in Abel's offering, instead he killed Abel and therefore in type he made his own brother, Abel, his sin offering.

---

1 In the tabernacle (Ex.25:19-22) there were only two cherubim; therefore not all four faces could be represented. Probably each of these had the face of an ox, which explains the golden calf incident, and also why Jeroboam fashioned two calves and installed them in Dan and Bethel – they were overshadowing Ephraim (the ten tribes) emphasising supremacy over Judah. There were also 12 oxen under the sea (1 Kgs.7:44), 12 oxen to pull the wagons containing the tabernacle (Num.7:3), and Elisha who ploughed with 12 oxen. (1 Kgs.19:19).

NOTES

1 "My Lord and my God" is the way Thomas addresses the risen Christ (John 20: 28). This is entirely correct, for he is now the fullness of God's new creation – through him and by him the new creation exits – he now bears the name above every name, so will the immortalised saints. (Rev.14:1)

NOTES

1 It is important to note that in the Hebrew Bible the word heaven (samayim) is plural; English translations sometimes use 'heaven', sometimes 'the heavens.' In Genesis 1:6-8 the creation of the firmament is described, (NSRV: dome). God called the firmament heaven [NSRV: sky]. Above the vault of the sky was the celestial ocean – probably represented by the milky way, and above this the dwelling of God (see Ps.14:2). In the firmament were openings or 'windows' through which the upper waters came down in the form of rain. (Gen.7:11 – this is poetic license, the storm cloud was the divine cherubim Ps.104:3). At times, the term 'the heavens' refers to the expanse in which the birds fly (Gen.1:20), at times to the starry heavens, and at other times still to the highest heaven above the firmament; the context decides which meaning is appropriate.

---

2 The sea was specifically for the cleansing of the priests, and the lavers for the cleansing of the sacrifices. If the altar together with its sacrifice represents baptism (atonement and dedication) then the laver represents spiritual renewal. (washing of hands and feet – the breaking of bread).

NOTES

1 See A.D.Norris and his Apocalypse for Everyman on page 89.

---

2 Sinaiticus, Vaticanus, Vulgate and Syriac have 'made them a kingdom.' Codices Sinaiticus, Vaticanus and Alexandrinus have 'they shall reign', again supported by the Vulgate.

Chapter 5

OPENING THE BOOK

'Who is worthy to open the book and loose the seals thereof ?' (Rev.5:2)

There are four possible explanations of the scroll which John sees in the hand of God:

(1) The scroll is the book of life

(2) The scroll is the old testament

(3) The scroll contains future events

(4) The scroll contains God's redemptive plan, foreshadowed in the old testament from its beginnings on the cross to the final culmination.

Both Harry Whittaker and Peter Watkins choose option (1) but the arguments against this theory are overwhelming. As each of the seven seals is broken, events happen; and the whole process of the breaking of the seals, with accompanying events, is meaningless unless it is somehow related to the contents of the book. By opening the scroll the Lamb does not merely disclose the contents, but puts them into operation.

John's description of the scroll is drawn from Ezekiel 2:9–3:3, where the content of the scroll is God's judgement on Jerusalem, i.e., a forecast of coming events. John makes a second use of this same prophecy in his vision of the 'little book' in 10:9 which contains the accomplishment of the mystery of God (=the kingdom). The events of the 'little book' are also not merely a matter of disclosure, but come into operation when John eats the book.

If the book of 5:1 were indeed, the 'Lambs book of life' (22:1) then he would not have required authority to open it. In this chapter all God's creatures were challenged to open the book, but only Christ, by virtue of his nature and his passion, won the right to open it. The opening of the book is directly linked with his crucifixion and resurrection. This is the fulcrum of the divine plan for man's redemption; until the scroll is open God's purposes remain not merely unknown but unaccomplished. Without this sacrifice the purpose of God would not have been able to continue, the events culminating in the kingdom could not have occurred and the book of life would have been redundant. Finally, there is no suggestion here or elsewhere in the book that John's purpose was to reveal the identity of the redeemed (2:17). His real purpose, constantly reiterated, is to tell the ecclesias 'what is bound to happen soon' (1:1).

(2) The second theory is that the scroll is the O.T. In this view Christ is the great expositor, who gathers up all the scattered prophecies into one comprehensive fulfilment. While it is true that Christ is the fulfilment of the law and prophets and the greatest expositor of scripture ever (Lk.24:32), it does not explain why the death of Christ is indispensable to opening the scroll.

(3) The third theory is that the scroll contains only future events. If Jesus won the right to open the scroll in A.D.30/31 why did he wait 66 years (A.D.96) until he exercised that right? The natural assumption is that the opening of the scroll, by which the contents are both revealed and put into effect, follow immediately after the victory by which he acquired the right to open it. This means that from John's standpoint some at least of the contents are already past; and for confirmation of this we need only turn to the vision introduced by the breaking of the fifth seal, in which John looks back on a past martyrdom as well as forward to a future one.

(4) The present author believes option four to be the only correct understanding. The divine decree waits, sealed with seven seals, for the emergence of a human agent, willing and worthy to put it into effect, one who will place himself unreservedly at the disposal of God's sovereign will. The events that the book depicts begin at the foot of the cross and continue into the future. The book is not merely a book of prophecy but a series of events that can only commence after the resurrection of Christ. His act of obedience qualifies him to set the events in motion that culminate in the kingdom.

I will declare the decree: The Lord hath said unto me, Thou art my son This day (the resurrection day) Have I begotten thee?

Ask of me, and I shall give thee the nations for thine inheritance. And the utmost parts of the earth for

thy possession. (Ps.2: 7,8)

The kingdom of God is a process that starts as a little stone (the crucifixion), a stone of stumbling to the Jews and foolishness to the Greeks, and grows into a great mountain. Its citizens are being called now. Upon the very day of his resurrection Jesus received the authority to put this process into motion. To sum up, the scroll contains the events from the resurrection of Christ (the firstborn) until the resurrection of the saints (the opening of book of life) and the establishment of the kingdom.

In favour of this understanding is the fact that the seals were on the outside, therefore they were already known. This should not surprise us, for they had previously been given in the Olivet prophecy. With the seals then, it is not mere revelation, but implementation that is paramount. We note that, unlike the other visions, it is the Lamb that opens the seals and not the angels. Once the Lamb commences the process the angels are left to finish the work.

The exodus of God's people begins at the foot of the cross, a theme that John expounds in Revelation chapter 12 (see page 17). The seals then span the period from the resurrection to the end of the Mosaic dispensation and the final dispersion of the Jews. They begin at the Passover and end the day after Passover forty-two years later.

Much of this period is covered by the historical narration in the book of Acts which finishes at the point when John receives his Revelation! John wrote down his visions when the ecclesias where in crisis – they had lost some of their chief shepherds and were about to endure fierce persecution and the end of the Mosaic dispensation. The point in the narrative where John received Revelation is the fifth seal – God's response to the imploring of the saints; 'How long?' (6:10) [see chapter six for a full exposition].

Here then is reassurance for the saints for, since the crucifixion, all the troubles and persecutions that had befallen them were not only predicted by Christ (Olivet prophecy) but also under his guidance. When John wrote the apocalypse the sixth seal (the Jewish war and the fall of Jerusalem) were imminent. One would have expected the other events (trumpets, vials, etc.) to follow quickly and to culminate in the return of Christ ["I come soon"].

Instead, because of unbelief, a 'breach of promise' was introduced leaving a period of nearly 2,000 years between the seals and the trumpets. The seals are then partly retrospective and offer the saints the reassurance and encouragement to endure the coming 'great tribulation'. Once all the seals are broken the scroll can be opened and future events revealed.

I have already indicated that the seals represent a 42-year period, this makes each seal seven years (6x7).1 The seventh seal is the introduction of the trumpets and therefore does not feature in this calculation, as it commences a new section.

THE SCROLL

‘And I saw in the right hand of him that sat on the throne a book written within and on the backside, sealed with seven seals’ (Rev.5:1).

John introduces the vision with the words, ‘I saw’, a formula he uses 33 times to emphasise his personal involvement as an ‘eyewitness’. This book (biblion) is a scroll written on both sides and sealed with seven seals. It is found in the right hand of God himself, denoting the importance of the scroll, and the privilege associated with receiving it. In similar fashion the strong (mighty) angel of 10:9 has a small book (bibliaridion) in his hand.2 However, whereas that ‘little book’ was open (10:8), this one is sealed. Here, even the same strong angel3 (5:2) cannot open the scroll, only issue a challenge.

The scroll was written on both sides, an unusual, but not unheard of practice in antiquity. John no doubt intends to draw our attention to Ezek.2:10, ‘written within and without: and there was written therein lamentations, and mourning, and woe’. Like Ezekiel's scroll, this one contained judgements on the house of Israel. The scroll of Zech.5:3 was also written on both sides – one side containing a curse against those who steal, the other side against those who sware falsely. Similarly, Revelation condemns those who steal (9:21) and sware falsely.1

Zechariah’s scroll flew into the house and destroyed it. This was fulfilled in A.D.70 when the temple was destroyed. It would not surprise me if a copy of Revelation was placed in the temple by a faithful priest [see chapter, 12 pages 25 & 25 for further exposition].

Although written on both sides, the writing on the outside would have been obscured by the seven seals, which were clearly visible to John (see digression 5.1).

THE CHALLENGE

‘And I saw a strong angel proclaiming with a loud voice,” Who is worthy to open the book, and to loose the seals thereof?”’ (Rev.5:2)

A challenge is now issued; in principle it is open to all God’s creatures. ‘Worthy’ does not mean ‘able’ but rather ‘qualified’, in the sense of having the proper qualifications to perform this special task. The logical sequence of events is reversed in the above quote, ‘… to open the book, and to loose the seals’. Obviously the book cannot be opened until the seals are loosed. This is an example of a figure of speech known as hysteron-proteron which occurs several times. (3:3,17; 5:4,5; 6:4; 10:4, 9; 20:4-5, 12-13; 22:14).

NO ONE FOUND

‘And no man in heaven, nor in earth, neither under the earth, was able to open the book, neither to look thereon’. (Rev.5:3)

This comprehensive way of referring to each of the three major zones of the cosmos is a way of saying ‘nowhere in the universe’. The same three divisions of the cosmos are mentioned in the context of the Christ hymn Phil.2:10, ‘every knee will bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth’.

The principalities and powers of heaven (angels) could not open it, for they were immortal beings in possession of divine nature. No one on earth could open it nor under the earth,2 not because they were dead (they could be raised), but because they were human. Only Christ qualified to open it, for he possessed both divine and human nature. But, even though he was qualified to open it, he still had to win the right to open it.

'And I wept much, because no man was found worthy to open and to read the book, neither to look thereon' (Rev.5:4).

When no one in creation is able to open the scroll John weeps: John weeps tears on behalf of all the prophets and saints. Not because he is thwarted of seeing into the future; His frustration goes deeper than that. Until the scroll is opened God's purposes remain, not merely unknown, but unaccomplished. John has been nurtured on the messianic hope of the old testament, which promised that one day God would assume His kingly power and reign openly on earth, punishing the wicked and redressing the wrongs of the oppressed. Especially in persecution God's people had longed for that day to bring an end to their sufferings, and also to vindicate their faith. For there is a limit to the capacity of faith to survive in the face of hostile fact: unless in the end right obviously triumphs over wrong, faith in a just God is utter illusion. God must 'vindicate his chosen who cry out to him day and night' (Lk.18:7). John weeps with disappointment because the hope of God's action appears to be indefinitely postponed for lack of an agent through whom God may act.

To read the book neither look thereon - this is another hysteron-proteron. One must first look upon the scroll in order to read it. John himself saw the scroll and the seven seals on the outside, the purpose for opening the scroll is not that it can be read but so that the eschatological events can begin to take place. The reason John emphasises the reading of the scroll is to draw us to Isa.29:11-14:

'And the vision of all is become unto you as the words of a book that is sealed, which men deliver to one that is learned, saying, Read this, I pray thee: and he saith, I cannot; for it is sealed: And the book is delivered to him that is not learned, saying, Read this, I pray thee: and he saith, I am not learned. Wherefore the Lord said, Forasmuch as this people draw near me with their mouth, and with their lips do honour me, but have removed their heart far from me, and their fear toward me is taught by the precept of men: Therefore, behold, I will proceed to do a marvellous work among this people, even a marvellous work and a wonder: for the wisdom of their wise men shall perish, and the understanding of their prudent men shall be hid'.

This passage highlights man's failure to redeem himself, those who thought themselves qualified (the readers i.e., priests, scribes) could not open the scroll and the common people admitted they were not qualified (non-readers). The cross was a work of foolishness to the world, but as the apostle says, "the foolishness of God is wiser than men". (1 Cor.1:25)

It must be recognised, that in this vision John is transported to the past, he sees the situation from the viewpoint of the old t estament prophets and saints. The very next verses take him to the foot of the cross and to the enthronement of the resurrected Lamb.

THE LION OF JUDAH

'And one of the elders saith unto me, Weep not: behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, hath prevailed to open the book, and to loose the seven seals thereof. And I beheld, and, lo, in the midst of the throne and of the four beasts, and in the midst of the elders, stood a

Lamb as it had been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent forth into all the earth'. (Rev.5:5,6)

John's tears are checked by what he now hears and sees. It is always worthwhile to examine closely the connection between what John hears and what he sees, and it is particularly unfortunate that in most editions and translations a paragraph break has been inserted between verses 5 and 6, so that we miss the full impact of the juxtaposition of images: One of the elders said, '....the Lion....has conquered...' Then I saw a Lamb. What John hears is couched in the traditional messianic imagery of the old testament; what he sees constitutes the most impressive rebirth of images he anywhere achieves.

The Lion of the tribe of Judah is a title with an obviously martial ring, recalling the prophecy that 'the sceptre shall not depart from Judah....and the obedience of the nations shall be his' (Gen.49:9-10). This prophecy had been adapted by the pharisaic author of the seventeenth psalm of Solomon in his portrayal of the militant Messiah, who would drive out the tyrannical and impious Gentiles and establish the reign of God with Israel as the imperial nation. The words of the elder therefore, encourage John to think that all the hopes and aspirations of the old testament are now on the point of fulfilment; and so they are, after being totally transformed by the alchemy of Christ. For John looks for the Lion of the tribe of Judah and sees a Lamb. We need not waste time searching through the old testament and other Jewish literature to find the meaning of this symbol, for John has told us what he means by it. The Lamb bore the marks of slaughter, which were explained by the heavenly choir: with his life-blood he had ransomed for God men from every tribe, tongue, people and race.

The Lamb is the symbol of self-sacrificing redemptive love. By this one stroke of brilliant artistry John has given us the key to all his use of the old testament writings (without ever quoting them). Partly because this was the language which came most naturally to him, partly because of the powerful emotive effect of familiar associations, and partly no doubt because his vision had actually taken its form, though not its content, from the permanent furniture of his well stocked mind. But to all this we must add that he believed the old testament scriptures to be the oracles of God, and that the same God who had spoken in partial and shadowy ways through the prophets had now spoken fully through his Son. The old testament was indispensable to the understanding of the character and purpose of God, but it must be read in the light of the fuller illumination of Christ. Throughout the welter of old testament images in the chapters that follow, almost without exception the only title for Christ is the Lamb, and this title is meant to control and interpret all the rest of the symbolism. It is almost as if John was saying to us in one point after another: 'whenever the old testament says "Lion", read "Lamb". Whenever the old testament speaks of the victory of the Messiah or the overthrow of the enemies of God, we are to remember that the gospel recognises no other way of achieving these ends than the way of the cross. Jesus Christ was the son of God but also the root of David (see Isa.11:1). Through his pedigree he was therefore imminently qualified to open the seals, but, nevertheless, he still had to win the right to open them. This he did by conquering his human nature – hath prevailed to open – literally overcame (conquered) to open. His followers are also urged to overcome (2:7,11,17,26;3:5,12,21; 21:7), even Jacob, symbol of unreformed fleshly Israel had to overcome (Hos.12:3-5) before he was renamed Israel (God rules).

...in the midst of the throne, and the four living creatures, and in the midst of the elders – This is a Hebraism (we say between A and B, Hebrew says between A and between B). Here we have the throne surrounded by the living creatures on the one hand, and the elders on the other. The Lamb stands between these two groups. Initially the Lamb cannot be 'in the midst of the throne'

seeing that v.7 says, ‘he came and took the scroll’. Having done this he may well have taken his rightful place on the throne.

I saw a Lamb standing as if it had been slain – The tense of ‘it had been slain’ is perfect, meaning a past action still having effect in the present – appropriate, needless to say, as regards the death of the Saviour. Again we note the retrospective character of certain aspects of John’s vision. The references to ‘has overcome’ and ‘had been slain’, plus the perfect participle in v.1, ‘opened’. All these things took place prior to John entering heaven – indeed he could only come into the divine presence because of them. The victorious death of Christ had truly opened a door in heaven permitting access by those with faith – ‘we have boldness to enter the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by the new and living way which he opened for us through the veil…’ (Heb.10:19-22, cp.4:14-16).

The description of Messiah as a lamb is first explicitly found in Isa.53:7, ‘He was led like a lamb to the slaughter’. This was taken up by the Baptist, ‘Behold the Lamb of God which takes away the sin of the world’ (John 1:29,36). Yet long before the concept of the suffering was present in the Passover (cp.1 Cor.5:7), and this probably is the main basis for its use here in Revelation. We recall the passover theme observed in 1:5.

…with seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God sent out into all the earth – This is John’s way of taking us to Zech.3:8-9:

‘Hear now, O Joshua the high priest, thou, and thy fellows that sit before thee: for they are men wondered at: for, behold, I will bring forth my servant the BRANCH. For behold the stone that I have laid before Joshua; upon one stone shall be seven eyes: behold, I will engrave the graving thereof, saith the LORD of hosts, and I will remove the iniquity of that land in one day’.

Here Christ is typified by both Joshua and the stone. God engraves the stone (virgin birth), for, no tool of man was to be used on the altar (Ex.32:16). The seven eyes are not on the stone – they are focused on it, watching it closely. These are the seven spirits, or angels. After the passion these seven become the eyes of Christ. They are the seven spirits before the throne (1:4), they are also the seven stars in his right hand, sent out to care for his seven lampstands (1:20). In chapter 4:5 they are called ‘the seven lamps of fire burning before the throne, which are the seven spirits of God’. The seven spirits are then the heavenly Menorah in the sanctuary, with the seven ecclesias forming their earthly counterpart. In the Zechariah prophecy Joshua had his filthy garments changed – with Christ this was the clothing upon with immortality. If Joshua was obedient he was promised, ‘a place of access among these that stand by’ (R.V.3:7) – in John’s vision this becomes Jesus (Joshua) Christ standing between the elders and the throne. The Horns are a symbol of strength (Deut.33:17, Psa.18:2, 89: 17, Lk.1:69) and possibly a reference to the crowns made for Joshua (Zech.6:11). The BRANCH or sprout is also used by John in v.5 and relates to his Davidic descent and therefore his legitimate claim to the throne. ‘He shall sit and rule upon his throne: and the counsel of peace shall be between them (the monarchy and the priesthood) both’ (Zech.6:13).

We note that the anti–Christ imitates the characteristics of Christ – he is also wounded to death [wast slain] but the wound healed (13:3) he also has horns – ten of them but only seven with crowns in the first century (12:3) he is also the one who was, and is not, and shall come (17:8).

RECEIVING THE SCROLL

‘And he came and took the book out of the right hand of him that sat upon the throne. And when he had taken the book, the four beasts and four and twenty elders fell down before the Lamb, having every one of them harps, and golden vials full of odours, which are the prayers of saint’ (Rev.5:7-8).

And he came and took the scroll – The Greek word ‘took’ may also be translated ‘received’, which is perhaps more suitable to the context. Because Christ had overcome, he, and only he, was now worthy to open the scroll. In giving the scroll to Christ, God is passing all judgement, revelation and the outworking of his purpose into the hands of his Son. This action is symbolic for the previous verse has shown us the Lamb (immediately after his resurrection) as all-powerful (the horns) and all-knowing (the eyes). By these symbols John undoubtedly invests Christ with the attributes of deity, but he does something more important still: he redefines omnipotence. Omnipotence is not to be understood as the power of unlimited coercion, but as the power of infinite persuasion, the invincible power of self-negating, self-sacrificing love.

…the four living creatures and the twenty four elders fell down before the Lamb – The same obeisance given earlier to God is now rendered to his Son. ‘The Father judges no one, but has given all judgement to the Son, that all may honour the Son even as they honour the Father. He who does not honour the Son does not honour the Father who sent him’ (John 4:22).

…with golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints – It is appropriate that the prayers of the saints should be included in the following praise since it chiefly concerns the theme of redemption.

A NEW SONG

‘And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; And hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth. And I beheld, and I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne and the beasts and the elders: and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands; Saying with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing. And every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I saying, Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever. And the four beasts said, Amen. And the four and twenty elders fell down and worshipped him that liveth for ever and ever’ (Rev.5: 9-14).

This new song is probably the same one as ‘the song of Moses the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb’ (15:3). The theme is exodus redemption. It is, as it were a new song set to an old familiar tune. This is the song that the children of Israel sang unto the Lord in Exodus chapter 15, but now it finds its true expression. It is not only the song that is ‘new’ but we have a ‘new name’ (2:17, 3:12), the ‘new Jerusalem’ (3:12, 21:2), the ‘new heaven and earth’ (21:1), and finally, God makes ‘all things new’ (21:5). Psalm 98 begins as follows:

‘Sing to the Lord a new song; for he hath done marvellous things: His right hand, and his holy arm, hath gotten him the victory’.

The following song can be described as new in that firstly it is addressed to Jesus, and secondly it includes the Gentiles among the redeemed. Previously it had been Israel alone who constituted the kingdom and priests to God (Ex.19:6).

You are worthy to take the scroll – the same words are used of God himself:

'Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created' (4:11).

The force of the language is in no way diminished when the Lamb is addressed, the words used in 4:11 concerning praise for the Father's physical creation are used here to praise the Son (and so also the Father) for the new spiritual creation.

...you redeemed to God by your blood – The verb translated 'redeem' (agorazo), in plain terms signifies purchase (cp.agora, 'market place'). Ownership is indicated by 'to God', and the price – 'your blood' (cp.1 Cor.6:20).

John also applies the language of Dan.7:14,18 to the redemptive death of Christ, which has 'enthroned' Christians as kings and priests. John has overlaid the existing language of Daniel with the 'kingdom and priest' language from Ex.9:6 (which he also used in 1:7; 20:6). The reference in Dan.7:9 to thrones that were set in place become the 24 thrones on which the heavenly elders sit. (Rev.4:4).

REVELATION 4 DANIEL 7: 9,10

24 elders on 24 thrones (4:4).

Thrones were set

A throne set in heaven, and sat on the throne (4:2).

The Ancient of days did sit.

like unto a jasper (4:3).

His garment white as snow.

the sea of glass or crystal (4:6).

a fiery stream issued and came forth from before Him.

REVELATION 5: 9,10,11 DANIEL 7:14,18

Every tribe, tongue, people, and nation All peoples, nations, languages [14b]

and made them a

to him was given [14a]

The holy ones of the Most High shall receive the kingdom. [18]

kingdom and priests and they will reign on the earth

Dominion and glory and kingship.[14a]

His dominion an everlasting dominion that shall not pass away.[14]

And possess the kingdom forever. [18]

The number of angels was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands

Thousand thousands ministered unto Him and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before Him.[10]

The language used in chapter 4 for God, is continued into chapter 5 for his Son. Now an innumerable host of angels join the cherubim and elders in the praise of the Lamb. The fact that seven expressions are used (v.12) no doubt indicates the perfection of the one addressed. Each of the seven are found of Christ elsewhere in the new testament: power (1 Cor.1:24), riches (2 Cor.8:9), wisdom (1 Cor.1:24), might (Eph.6:10), honour (Heb.2: 9), glory (John 1:14) and blessing (Mtt.21:9). To bring the anthem of praise to a climax every creature in heaven, on earth and under the earth and in the sea,1 ascribe blessing, honour, glory and might to both Father and Son (v.13). "And the four living creatures said , 'Amen!' And the elders fell down and worshipped."

NOTES

1 From the crucifixion until the fall of Massada, the last resistance of the Jewish war is 42 years. (For the significance of the number 42 see digression 11.1 pages 2,3). Josephus informs us that Massada fell the day after Passover [Wars of the Jews book 7.9.1].

NOTES

1 The occurrence of seven as a common feature in Revelation reinforces this conclusion (used 54 times). The trumpets also consist of seven year periods, i.e., witnessing 3½ years + beast 3½ years = 7 years.

---

2 In his right or left hand? The right hand is lifted up to heaven in 10:5 – does it also contain the 'little book'?

---

3 Strong (mighty) angel = Gabriel (See chpt.10 page 2 note 1).

NOTES

1 Stealing, is to be understood as stealing from God what rightfully belongs to him (worshipping false gods - the image of the beast) in similar fashion; swearing falsely is making a covenant with the surrounding nations and by implication with their false gods (see Hos.10:4). The disciples of the beast are sealed (covenanted) with his number.

---

2 Under the earth is the equivalent of Hades (Sheol) or the abyss – see Ezk.32:21.

NOTES

1 Under the earth and in the sea are synonymous – see Gen.1:28; Ex.20: 4 and Phil.2:10. Perhaps included in order to make another set of four expressing universality. (cp.5: 9)

5.1 The Scroll

Digression 5.1: The Scroll

VISUALISING THE SCROLL JOHN SAW

In order to understand what John is saying it is always important to visualise his descriptions. The scroll that John sees is written on both sides and sealed on the outside. It is unusual for a scroll to be written on both sides – we might presume that this is because parchment or papyrus was a scarce commodity, but as it is the occupant of the throne that hands the scroll to the Messiah, we can rule this out. Another reason might be that the layout of the scroll is important to it's interpretation.

As the scroll is sealed on the outside, this means that it starts with chapter 6 (the seals) and contains chapters 7-22. A reasonable assumption is that half the chapters are on the inside (7-14) and half on the outside (15-22) including chapter 6

I have represented this in a diagram, roughly drawn to scale – with the verses indicated by numbers. The chapters are written from left to right and not right to left as is customary in our literature. Chapter divisions are indicated for ease of reference, but did not exist in the original. I have operated on the premise that the scroll is about 21 verses wide, otherwise we would end up with a scroll that was very short but extremely wide. Even with a width greater than 21 verses the analysis is still valid, but I am fairly certain that the width was less than two consecutive chapters. The seals, probably wax, would be attached to the back of the scroll, and therefore this portion of the scroll is reserved for chapter 6.

In order to experiment with this concept I recommend cutting out the diagram along the dotted line and pasting the back to the front, so that chapter 15 (back) is opposite chapter 14 (front). Once this is done roll the two ends towards each other, ensuring they meet in the centre (insert a pen or pencil on each side the exact thickness of the cylinder in order to facilitate this).

The scroll would have been bound by something like leather thongs, sealed with wax to the exterior of the parchment. Once the seals are broken and the scroll opened, we observe some unusual features. The first thing the reader sees when opening the scroll, is chapters 10 and 11 – the commission to witness, and the witnessing itself – this is an extremely important theme in the Apocalypse. As the scroll is gradually unrolled, we notice that the chapters on the back of the scroll come to lie on the cylinder itself, next to the inside chapters. We find the following unusual configurations:

LEFT CYLINDER

INSIDE

RIGHT CYLINDER

Revelation 18:21

And a mighty angel took up a stone like a great millstone, and cast it into the sea, saying, Thus with violence shall that great city Babylon be thrown down, and shall be found no more at all.)

Revelation 9:1

And the fifth angel sounded, and I saw a star fall from heaven unto the earth: and to him was given the key of the bottomless pit.

Revelation 20:1

And I saw an angel come down from heaven, having the key of the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand.

LEFT CYLINDER

INSIDE

RIGHT CYLINDER

Revelation 19:7

Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready.

Revelation 7:4

And I heard the number of them which were sealed: and there were sealed an hundred and forty and four thousand of all the tribes of the children of Israel.

Revelation 21:2

And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.

Revelation 17:3

So he carried me away in the spirit into the wilderness: and I saw a woman sit upon a scarlet coloured beast, full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns.

Revelation 12:6

And the woman fled into the wilderness, where she hath a place prepared of God, that they should feed her there a thousand two hundred and threescore days.

Revelation 21:8

But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death.

Revelation 16:2

And the first went, and poured out his vial upon the earth; and there fell a noisome and grievous sore upon the men which had the mark of the beast, and upon them which worshipped his image.

Revelation 13:5

And there was given unto him a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies; and power was given unto him to continue forty and two months.

Revelation 22:15

For without are dogs, and sorcerers, and whoremongers, and murderers, and idolaters, and whosoever loveth and maketh a lie.

The configuration of the chapters on the inside and the outside of the scroll depend on the width of the scroll. Nevertheless, provided a reasonable width is chosen (1- 1½ chapters), the result is that roughly the same chapters lie next to each other (i.e. 17 on the outside left, 12 on the inside) – this cannot be coincidence, and should influence the way we approach the book.

The inside of the scroll begins with a vision of the144, 000 sealed in chapter 7 and ends with a vision of the 144,000 on Mt.Zion in chapter 14. The outside of the scroll also begins and ends with a vision of those who are victorious (15: 2; 22: 4). The inside of the scroll seems to deal with events from a Jewish perspective – witnessing to the nation – persecution of the (Jewish) ecclesia, oppression and destruction of the nation. The outside of the scroll relates the same events but from a Gentile perspective – the punishment of all the surrounding nations for their hatred and duplicity and the introduction of the kingdom.

Can we assume then that John sent a similar type of scroll to the ecclesias with a separate covering letter consisting of chapters 1-5?

This digression is only a suggestion, and would provide a useful field for further research.

Chapter 6

THE SEVEN SEALS

‘For nation shall rise against nation and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines and pestilences, and earthquakes in divers places,all these things are the beginning of sorrows.’ (Mtt.24:7,8)

THE FOUR HORSEMEN OF THE APOCALYPSE

The symbolism is drawn from the old testament but modified to carry a radically new meaning. Zechariah had two visions, one of four chariots1, but both were sent out only to patrol the earth and to report on its peaceful condition; and the different colours of the horses correspond to the different winds or points of the compass (Zech.1:8-11, 6:1-8). But in John’s vision the four colours indicate a difference of commision and the emergence of each new rider betokens the release of a new disaster on earth: the victory of the gospel (a disaster for Judaism), the Herodian persecution, famine and the last horseman an intensification of all the previous. The heavenly voice which says, “come!” is not calling disasters into existence, rather the voice is declaring that nothing can now happen (not even the most fearsome evidence of man’s disobedience and its nemesis) which cannot be woven into the pattern of God’s gracious purpose. Because Christ now reigns from the cross onwards; even when the four horsemen ride out on their destructive missions they do so as emissaries of his redemptive love.

THE FIRST SEAL - THE WHITE HORSE

‘And I saw when the Lamb opened one of the seals, and I heard, as it were the noise of thunder, one of the four beasts saying, “Come and see”. And I saw, and behold a white horse: and he that sat on him had a bow; and a crown was given unto him: and he went forth conquering, and to conquer’. (Rev. 6:1-2)

This seal represents the victorious course of the gospel by the rider on the white horse. Some commentators argue that as the other seals represent judgments against Israel, with especially the last horsemen acting as a kind of summary, or epitome of all the others (to kill by sword, famine, plague and wild beasts), the first seal must therefore be similar in character. Moreover a crown, ‘was given’ (edothe) to the rider, a word frequently associated with divine permission to carry out retributive judgments.2

The crucifiction and the preaching of the gospel was not only a judgment on Adamic nature, but also on Judaism itself.

‘Now is the judgment of this world; now shall the prince of this world be cast out. And if I be lifted up (crucified and raised) from (out of R.V.) the earth, will draw all men to me’. (John.12:31,32)

Here we already have an indication of a major change in divine policy; after the resurrection the Jews would lose their priveledged position; all men (without distinction) would be drawn to the foot of the cross.

‘And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; then shall the end come’. (Mtt.24:14)

This period is defined by the conversion of Saul:

‘But 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”’. (Acts 9:15)

The cavalier on the white horse is the Lord Jesus Christ, many commentators have drawn the comparisons with Rev 19.

REV chpt.6.

REV chpt.19.

- white horse

- white horse

- had a bow

- out of his mouth a sharp sword

- given a crown

- many crowns

KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS

That the cavalier is awarded a crown before he rides out may be constructed as a promise of victory: he went forth conquering and to conquer. Literally – conquering (overcoming) that he might conquer. This conveys a different meaning i.e., overcoming (his flesh) that he might conquer (his enemies) and compares favourably with the literal translation of Rev.5:5; conquered to open i.e., he overcame his flesh in order to open the book.

The crown that he is given, is the crown of life; promised to all those who suffer persecution for their witness (Rev.2:10). In the days of his flesh he was awarded a crown of thorns (associated with the curse – Gen 3:18) by the Roman soldiers (Mk.15:17): the irony of the situation was that the CORONA GRAMINEA or OBSIDIONALIS (= grass crown) was the rarest of all Roman military decorations. It was made out of grass or wheat, if the battle took place in a field (of grain) and was awarded ‘on the spot’ by the soldiers. It was given to a man who had by personal efforts saved a whole legion – or a whole army: Julius Caesar had been awarded one in the field. It was a cherished award attesting personal valour, and if worn in the senate, the senators were obliged to acknowledge the wearer with a standing ovation. In Rev.14:14 we have, ‘one like unto the son of man’ with a golden crown on his head, when he is encountered in Rev.chpt.19 he wears, many crowns:

‘Take silver and gold, and make crowns and set them upon the head of Joshua the son of Jehozodak, the high priest; and speak unto him, saying, Thus speaketh the Lord of hosts, saying Behold the man whose name is THE BRANCH and he shall grow up

out of his place, and he shall build the temple of the Lord: even he shall build the temple of the Lord’.

It is not a coincidence that this coronation passage occurs in the Zechariah prophecy immediately after the mention of the four horses (Zech.6:11-15). The ‘many crowns’ represent the saints, who are his crowning glory in the age to come, the travail of his soul.

‘They shall be on the head of Joseph, And on the crown of the head of him that was separate (a Nazareen) from (among R.V.) his brethren’. (Gen.49:26) 1

It is significant that we have arrived at this quote from the blessing on Joseph in Genesis 49, for the cavalier on the white horse is based on this passage as the table on the next page demonstrates.

GENESIS 49

PSALM 211

PSALM 89

REVELATION 6

v.24: Page_5

His bow abode in strength and the arms of his hands were made strong by the hands of the mighty one (R.V.) of Jacob.

v.1:

The King shall joy in thy strength, O Lord.

v.12: Thou shalt make ready thy bowstrings against the face of them.

v.21:

Mine arm shall also strengthen 2 him.

v.10: Thou hast scattered thine enemies with thine strong arm.

v.8: Who is a mighty one like unto thee, O Yah? (R.V.)

v.2:

He that sat thereon had a bow.

v.25-26:

Blessings of El Shaddai (Almighty).

(Offspring/children)

v.4:

For thou hast made him most blessed forever.

v.29:

His seed also will I make to endure forever.

(of the tribe of Joseph were sealed 12,000 – see chapter chpt.7:8)

v.26:

They shall be on the head of Joseph, And on the crown of the head of him that was separate from his brethren.

v.3:

Thou settest a crown of pure gold on his head.

v.2:

A crown of gold was given him.

v.27:

Benjamin shall ravin as a wolf.

v.22-23: The enemy shall not exact upon him, nor the son of wickedness afflict him. And I will beat down his foes before his face, And plague them that hate him.

CONVERSION OF SAUL IN ACTS

The blessing – although it can hardly be called such, it is more appropriately a prophecy; 'that I may tell you that which shall befall you in the last days' (Gen.49:1), concludes with the tribe of Benjamin. This is also appropriate to the white horse period;

'Benjamin shall ravin as a wolf: In the morning he shall devour the prey, And at even (R.V.) he shall divide the spoil' (Gen.49:27).

The apostle Paul (formerly Saul) was from the tribe of Benjamin (Philip.3:5) and just as his progenitor and namesake Saul had persecuted David in the morning of Israel's history, so too Paul had persecuted Christ in the evening of Israel's history (Acts 9:4).

This persecution was however for a purpose, the proclamation of the gospel to the gentiles was the outcome – God had, 'added another son'.

In Ancient Rome the horse was a powerful symbol, the title – MASTER OF THE HORSE or MAGISTER EQUITUM was given to the lieutenant of the dictator in crisis situations with powers of imperium. Imperium involved the power of supreme authority, incorporating command of the army, law interpretation and execution including the right to inflict capitol punishment. Magistrates with imperium were assisted by lictors who carried the symbols of imperium – fasces (bundle of rods). The MAGISTER EQUITAE had 12 lictors (compare12 disciples) and the dictator (absolute power) had 24 lictors. (contrast the 24 elders, 4:4 around the throne of God, who in 5:8 fall down before the Lamb and who carry vials full of prayers as symbols of their imperium! – these 24 are based on the courses of the priests)

It is intresting to note that Pompey Magnus who was voted special powers by the senate and who defeated eastern potentate Mithridates and annexed Judea as a Roman client state in B.C.63, was accorded a white horse and bestowed upon himself the eastern title KING OF KINGS (cp.19:16).

Alexander was also known for his legendary black horse Bacaphalus. Alexander conquered the civilized world and died in Babylon at the age of 33. Jesus refused the 'kingdoms of the world' and chose the way of suffering. He also died at the age of 33 but in so doing he gained salvation for the whole world.

'For what is a man profited if he gain the whole world (like Alexander), and loose his own soul?' (Mtt.16:26)

(Compare the similarity of the incidents in Mtt.16:22-26 with Mtt.4:8-10; Jesus unlike Alexander chose the way of suffering and obedience – in so doing he has inherited the whole world and the, 'fullness thereof', now he rides forth to conquer).

THE SECOND SEAL – A RED HORSE

‘And when he had opened the second seal, I heard the second living creature, saying come. And another horse came forth, a red horse and power was given to him that sat thereon to take peace from the earth, and that they should kill one another: and there was given unto him a great sword’ (Rev.6:3,4).

This period is characterised by the Herodian persecution, which culminated in the death of James and the arrest of Peter, who was arrested at Passover (Acts 12:3):

‘to take peace from the earth that they should kill one another’.

Christ himself had warned that he had not come to send peace on the earth: ‘I come not to send peace, but a sword. For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and a daughter against her mother.....’ (Mtt.10:34-39). This was not a deliberate choice of the Lord, but rather a consequence of the attitudes toward his messianic claims – which resulted in divisions and even martyrdom:

v.38.....take up your cross.....

v.39.....he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it....

The divisions caused is apparent in the epistle of James:

‘Ye kill and desire to have, and cannot obtain, ye fight and war’ (James 4:1).

Does this indicate that brethren in Christ were murdering each other? God forbid. In order to understand the epistle of James it must be put into context. It has been proposed by H.A.W. in his book Seven Short Epistles, that the author of the epistle was James the son of Zebedee. This is important, for it would make the epistle one of the earliest - if not the earliest - in the New Testament. Moreover, it has been proposed that the epistle contains parts of a discourse that James gave at the funeral of Stephen.

‘Ye adulterers and adulteresses1 know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? Whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God. Do ye think that the scripture saith in vain, The spirit that dwelleth in us lusteth to envy?” (James 4:4,5)

The ‘world’ in this passage is the Jewish world, James is referring to Num.11:24-29. In this incident two men, Eldad (friend of God) and Medad (more than a friend) had received the holy spirit and prophesied in the camp, away from the Tabernacle. This made the seventy (Sanhedrin) of Moses envious until he reprimanded them. Who is the friend of God and the one who is more than a friend? I would suggest that they are the friend of the bridegroom, John the Baptist and the other was Stephen. Both men were full of the holy spirit, both were martyred because of their friendship with Jesus.

Abraham was called, the friend of God (James 2:23) but these Jews were no longer friends of God, for unlike their father Abraham they were disobedient and faithless, for , ‘ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you’ (John 15:17). The breaking of bread (agapae) is the greatest expression of love for God and the brethren.

Murdering Stephen was not the way to friendship with God.

‘If the world (Jewish world) hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you. If ye were of the world (friend of the world) the world would love its own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you.” (John 15:18,19)

The epistle of James therefore reflects the situation in the early ecclesia, where the congregation encompassed Jewish Christians and Judaists (non converts), this circumstance only lasted momentarily, for animosity and persecution soon led to a complete separation of the two communities.1 It does not require much imagination to conclude that James’ speech would provoke dire consequences from the establishment. The Sanhedrin used a tried and tested technique and approached the Machiavellian statesman Herod Aggripa I, who for pollitical reasons had converted to Pharisaism,2 and who had James arrested.

James himself was killed with the sword (Acts 12:2). Clement of Alexandria has an impressive story, preserved by Eusebius in his church history (2:9), that the man who ‘led James to the Judgment–seat’ (betrayed him? Was chief witness against him?) was so impressed with the apostles’ bearing that he thereupon confessed belief in Christ and was condemned to the same fate. ‘On their way, he entreated James to be forgiven of him; and James, considering a little, replied: “Peace be unto thee”, and kissed him; and then both were beheaded at the same time. The rider on the red horse had come to take away peace on the earth but James, showing the spirit of Christ, forgave his persecutor (Stephen cried for Saul’s forgiveness and Christ answered the prayer by converting Saul) and granted him peace. James did indeed drink from his Lord’s cup and suffer the same baptism! (Mtt.20:23)

How strange, and comforting that the apostle John should find himself recording a vision relating to the death of his brother James. The death of James was already an historic event when John received the RED HORSE vision on Patmos. This would have reassured the brethren that the witnessing, persecution and martyrdom of the saints was all part of the divine redemptive purpose - Herod and the Jews may kill and persecute, but God rules in the kingdom of men.

The date of these events is precisely fixed by the death of Herod as being the spring of A.D.44.

THE THIRD SEAL – A BLACK HORSE

‘And when he had opened the third seal, I heard the third living creature saying Come. And I saw, and behold a black horse; and he that sat on him had a pair of balances in his hand. And I heard as it were a voice in the midst of the four living creatures saying, “A measure of wheat for a penny, and three measures of barely for a penny; and the oil and the wine hurt thou not”’. (Rev.6:5,6)

This is a strange famine indeed, for it does not affect the oil or the wine. During the occasion of the famine in 1Kgs.17. Elijah produced the miracle of the constantly full cruse of oil, which would not fail, ‘until the Lord sendeth rain upon the earth’ (v.14) Later in 2 Kgs.4:6 he produced a similar miracle for another widow, who was in danger of having her sons sold into bondage (Judaism). The widows are obviously types of the Jews and Gentiles and the oil, is olive oil:

‘…pure olive oil beaten for the light to burn before the Lord continually.’ (Lev.24:2)

This represents the gifts of the holy spirit, given for the enlightenment of the ecclesia. The ecclesia at Ephesus was warned that these gifts would be removed (lampstand) unless repentance was forthcoming, but at this juncture in time the oil would not fail.

During his flight from the rebellion of Absalom David had been provided with a bottle of wine, 'that such as be faint in the wilderness may drink' (2 Sam.16:2). This was the 'new wine' (Mk.2:22) of the covenant provided to sustain them in the wilderness wanderings.

Although there was a literal famine during this seal, the holy spirit and the breaking of bread would sustain the brethren. The famine conditions are severe, a quart of wheat will cost a days wages (a denarius). Agabus the prophet (Acts 11:27-30) warns of a famine throughout the Roman world, which the author of Acts links specifically with the reign of Claudius (A.D.41-54 and especially severe in 45,46) a period we know from other sources to have been a troubled one. As Bruce de Winter remarks in chapter 3 of Acts In Its First Century Setting: "The unearthing of epigraphic evidence relating to the experience of grain shortages has provided insights into a first century situation of civil unrest and benefaction which relates in revealing ways to the actions and motivations of characters in the book of Acts, and the conditions in which they find themselves".1

THE FOURTH SEAL – PALE RIDER

'And when he opened the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth living creature (R.V.) saying, "Come". And I looked and behold, a pale horse: and his name that sat upon him was Death and Hell (Hades) followed with him. And power was given unto them over a fourth part of the earth, to kill with the sword, and with famine (R.V.), and with death2, and with the beasts of the earth' (Rev.6:7-8).

The language used in this passage is a direct cross reference to Ezek.14:21;

'For thus says the Lord God: "How much more when I send my four sore judgments upon Jerusalem, the sword, famine, evil beasts, and pestilence, to cut off from it man and animal"'.

These are God's judgments on Jerusalem, they are the same judgments set out by Moses (Lev.26:25,26) sword, famine and pestilence is a trio of divine judgment that is directed at Israel in scripture (and no one else). [Jer.14:21; 21:9; 24:10; 38:2 Ezk.7:15 see especially 2 Sam.24:13]

This trio is now expanded with 'beasts of the earth' – the Roman empire. This seal not only summarises the previous ones, it also intensifies the judgments. The pale rider is the angel of death called Abaddon or Apollyon in 9:11, that is, the destroyer. The colour of the horse is chloros (from which chlorine is derived) being the greenish pallor of a decaying corpse or diseased flesh. The pale hue is reminiscent of Jeremiah.

'And these are the words that the LORD spake concerning Israel and concerning Judah. For thus saith the LORD; we have heard a voice of trembling, of fear, and not of peace. Ask ye now, and see whether a man doth travail with child? Wherefore do I see every man with his hands on his loins, as a woman in travail, and all faces are turned into paleness?' (Jer.30:4-6)

Jacob was not saved out of his time of trouble in the first century, an indication that the 'time of the end' (trumpet section) will see a repeat of a similar national disaster.

This seal is characterised by the passover revolt under the Roman procurator Ventidius Cumanus (A.D.48-52). Josephus informs us that on the day of the feast one of the Roman soldiers, 'pulled back his garment and, cowering down after an indecent manner, turned his breech towards the Jews and spake such words as you might expect upon such a posture." (Jos.Wars 2.12.1) As a consequence a riot ensued in which 10,000 were killed in the crush. This whole period is characterised by, 'robbings, rapings and insurrections of the bolder sort... over

the whole country.' (Jos.Wars.2.12.5) During the procuratorship of Antonius Felix (A.D.52-60) we have the incident of the Egyptian false prophet who gathered 30,000 people on the Mount of Olives and attempted to expel the Romans by force. This was followed by a band of robbers and insurrectionists who, 'filled all Judea with their madness and thus the flame was every day more blown up, till it came to direct war'. As if this was not bad enough, trouble erupted between the Syrian Greeks and the Jews of Caesarea. The Galilee region was a hotbed of trouble, this was originally the domain of Herod, tetrarch of Galilee – the Romans adopting the term tetrachy from Philip of Macedon, a term meaning a fourth part (power was given over a fourth part of the earth). Later the term was applied to minor dignataries.

This was also a period of terrorism in which assassins known as sicarri killed prominent people in broad daylight (Jos.Wars. book 2. –read chpt.13). The background to all this civil unrest was the famine that still continued to affect the population until 53,54. Famine is always the precursor to civil unrest and plague. Nero's reign (54-68) also began during this period (52-59), setting the scene for the horrors to come.

THE FIFTH SEAL - THE SLAIN UNDER THE ALTAR

'And when he had opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held: and they cried with a loud voice, saying, "How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?" And white robes were given unto every one of them; and it was said unto them, that they should rest yet for a little season, until their fellow-servants also and their brethren that should be killed as they were, should be fulfilled." (Rev.6:9-11)

'Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints.' (Ps.116:15)

This period is characterised by the death of Paul1 (A.D.64?) who was put on trial before Nero, the Nero persecution of the Christians and the death of Peter (A.D.66?). The persecutors of the ecclesia are called 'inhabitants of the earth', this is in contrast with those whose citizenship is in heaven. More specifically, the inhabitants of the earth refers to Jews. It was the Jews who caused the apostle Paul's arrest and even the Nero persecution probably had its roots in Jewish antagonism, for Nero's wife2 was a convert to Judaism.

The altar is the altar of burnt offering in the heavenly sanctuary. The incense altar is to be found in 8:3. (golden altar, see pg.3 of chapter 8). Martyrdom of the saints is connected with self–sacrifice in order to 'complete that which is lacking of the afflictions of Christ' (Col.1:24).

The souls under the altar is an allusion to the old covenant ritual of pouring3 out the blood at the foot of the altar (Lev.1:5; 3:8; 4:25), the reason being that, 'the life (nephesh = soul) is in the blood' (Lev.17:11). These martyrs had been 'slain for the word of God and the testimony (witness) which they held'. Several commentators, including H.A.W., point out that the souls are under the altar because at some time in the past they have been offered upon it.

This view equates the martyrs with the saints of the old covenant, such as Abel, whose blood cries from the ground (Gen.4:10). H.A.W. quotes Mtt.23:34,35 to show that from the blood of Abel (in Genesis – the first book in the Hebrew Bible) to Zacharias (2 Chron.24:20,21 – last book in the Hebrew Bible) refers to all the martyrs under the old covenant. The point that requires emphasis here is that all the blood shed from the foundation of the world would be required from this generation (Lk.11:50). They were encouraged to fill up the measure of their fathers

(Mtt.23:32) and they did! The Old Testament saints could not be made perfect until their numbers had been complemented by their New Testament counterparts. (Heb.11: 39,40)

These Old Testament witnesses (martyrs) were told that they should, 'rest for a little season' (cp. Daniel 12:13; 'thou shalt rest, and stand in thy lot at the end of days'). Once again there is every indication that it would only be a short time before their prayer for vengeance would be answered. Is this then a vindictive prayer for personal vengeance? God forbid! They have gone to their death in the confidence that God's word, attested in the life and death of Jesus, is the ultimate truth; but unless in the end tyranny and other forms of wickedness meet with retribution, that faith is an illusion. "Vengeance is mine saith the Lord" and it requires faith to leave matters of justice in the hands of the righteous judge (Deut.32:35; Rom.12:19).

The martyrs had been condemned in a human court of law, and that decision stands against them unless it can be reversed in a higher court. But the heavenly judge cannot declare them to be in the right without at the same time declaring their persecutors to be in the wrong and passing sentence against them. Justice must not only be done; it must seen to be done.

The souls under the altar had to wait until their fellow-servants (Gentile Christians) and their brethren (Jewish Christians) which should be killed (even) as they were, should be fulfilled. The living and the dead share the solidarity of the same faith, metaphorically they are not dead at all, for our God is a God of the living not of the dead!

Though John writes here about the dead, he does so in the interest of the living, for whom the question of the martyrs' faith is a question of supreme moment, because they are experiencing the same tribulations. The cry, "How long?" had echoed down centuries of oppression. (Ps. 6:3; 13:1; 35:17; 74:9; 79:5; 80:4; 89:46; 90:13; 94:3; Isa 6:11; Jer.47: 6; Hab.1:2; Zech.1:2)

The cry is particularly pertinent to these fellow-servants and brethren for they are also facing martyrdom.

Was their cry (prayer) answered?

It is the belief of the present author that their prayer was answered. The answer was two-fold.

(1) The giving of the book of Revelation in ~ A.D. 65

(2) The vindication of the martyrs by the destruction of Jerusalem.

The parallel between the first century and the future is instructive: During the first century witnessing the cry, 'how long' goes forth. They are given the book of Revelation and martyred – their death is followed by a great earthquake (6th seal).

The future witnessing echoes the same cry, 'how long?' (see chpt.10 pg.7) they are given a little book (10:8), are also killed, and their death is followed by a great earthquake (11:13).

'And he spake a parable unto them to this end, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint, saying: "There was in a city a judge, which feared not God, neither regarded man. And there was a widow in that city and she came unto him saying, avenge me of mine adversary; and he would not for a while, but afterward he said within himself, though I fear not God, nor regard man, yet because this widow troubleth me, I will avenge her, lest by her continual coming she weary me'. And the Lord said, "Hear what the unjust judge saith. And shall not God avenge his own elect, which cry day and night unto him, though he bear long with them?"' (Lk.18:1-7)

THE SIXTH SEAL – THE GREAT EARTHQUAKE

‘And I beheld when he had opened the sixth seal, and, lo, there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became as blood; and the stars of heaven fell unto the earth, even as a fig tree casteth her untimely figs, when she is shaken of a mighty wind. And the heaven departed as a scroll when it is rolled together; and every mountain and island were moved out of their places. And the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men, and every bondman, and every free man, hid themselves in the dens and in the rocks of the mountains; and said to the mountains and rocks, fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb: For the great day of his wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?’ (Rev.6:12-17)

Although it is not the intention of this exposition to expose the flaws in the orthodox interpretation the author feels that the traditional view has remained unchallenged for too long. Before we examine the sixth seal let us then satisfy ourselves that the alternative is illogical and even unscriptural for it ignores all the principles of sound hermeneutics. The following exposition is drawn from the verse by verse exposition of Revelation by H.P.Mansfield in the series known as the ‘Christadelphian Expositor’.

‘On being opened, the seven-sealed scroll reveals the course of future events in relation to the pagan Roman empire, in accordance with the purpose of Yahweh. In succession, four horsemen ride forth, bringing with them a series of judgments upon an empire that dared lay its hands on Yahweh’s people. Nevertheless, Christians are subjected to intense persecution, and as it increases in intensity, their prayers ascend to heaven, appealing for relief. A measure of this is provided with the opening of the sixth seal, for it pictures a great earthquake that overturns the prevailing order, symbolising the demise of paganism, and the establishment of a pseudo-Christianity as a state religion in the time of Constantine’ (page 84).

We are informed that the sixth seal was opened in A.D.311\12 and closed in A.D.324. According to this view it represents the historical period when Constantine emerged victorious from the battle of Chrysopolis and instituted Christianity as the state religion. The exegisis of verse sixteen is as follows:

‘And they said to the mountains and rocks, “Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne - (this describes the attitude of pagans previously in power, [i.e., they are afraid] as they witnessed the elevation of Constantine, the so-called ‘first Christian Emperor’ and from the wrath of the Lamb”. As pagans saw so-called Christians now in power, they assumed that they were the true representatives of Christ and that the successes attached to the conquests of Constantine were manifestations therefore of the Lamb’s power’.

The exposition quotes the historian Scutari, who says that the greater part of the fugitives retired to the mountains. This they did of course for the purpose of concealment from the conqueror who had won the wreath, as predicted in the seal. (pg.98)

Presumably then the historian Scutari and H.P.Mansfield equate the ‘conqueror (Constantine) winning the wreath’, with his elevation to the throne. According to this convoluted reasoning Constantine is the one that sits on the throne.

Once again this is reductio ad absurdum, for the one that sits on the throne is God.

‘The four and twenty elders fall down before him that sitteth on the throne, and worship him that liveth for ever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne, saying, “Thou art worthy, O

Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created"' (Rev.4:10-11).

In chapter 4 it is God that is worthy of praise for his new creation; in chapter 5 it is the Lamb, the agent of the creative work, who is worthy of praise and who opens the seals. That Lamb is Christ. (5:6)

This language can be applied to no one else:

'And no man in heaven and earth, neither under the earth, was able to open the book.' (5:3)

Are we to believe, that this language (even by proxy) can be applied to Constantine?

Are we to believe, that the most cataclysmic event in Jewish history, as prophesied by Christ, finds absolutely no mention in Revelation? Even if Revelation was written after the fall of Jerusalem, we would still expect a retrospective reference to the fulfilment of this prophecy. Scripture always reminds the reader of God's past judgments (Sodom, Egypt, Babylon etc., etc.).

Are we to believe that God answered the prayers of the saints for vengeance (i.e., justice) by replacing true Christianity with false Christianity?

'It witnessed an epoch of political triumph of pseudo-Christianity, of spiritual declension for the Truth as a whole. In an endeavour to make Christianity attractive to pagans, errors which challenged the fundamental teaching of the apostles were superimposed upon the Truth, whilst practices unseemly to saints were freely indulged in' (page 98).

This is a strange way for God to answer prayers for justice. Traditionalists cannot explain what hermeneutical principles they use for interpreting scripture, because their interpretation is completely arbitrary. Accordingly, their interpretation throws up the following anomalies:

Rev. chpt. 4 -the one on the throne = God

Rev. chpt. 5 -Lamb = Christ

Rev. chpt. 6 -the one on the throne = Constantine

-Lamb = false Christianity perceived by pagans as true Christianity

Rev. chpt.12 -man child caught up to the throne = Constantine

Rev. chpt.20 -the one on the great white throne = Christ

What criteria is determinative in this approach? Is scripture so inconsistent that it applies the same symbol (within the same book) to more than one application?

The reason for this arbitrary treatment of scripture rests on two false assumptions.

(1) That Revelation has a late date and therefore no further application to the Jews until the very end when Christ returns.

(2) That Revelation follows the history of the Catholic church from A.D.96 until the end.

These two false assumptions force the expositor to do violence to the text, indeed we can no longer speak of exegesis but of eisegisis.

Let us now turn to a constructive scriptural exegesis of the sixth seal. The sixth seal concerns the 'wrath of the Lamb' and the, 'great day of their (R.V.) wrath'. This is the day of vengeance, in accordance with the prayers of the saints in the previous seal, who ask to be avenged (justified). At the commencement of his ministry Jesus had refused to proclaim the day of vengeance, for he 'closed the scroll and gave it back to the minister, and sat down. And the eyes of all them that were in the synagogue were upon him'. (Lk.4:20)

But now the Lamb breaks all the seals and opens the scroll. The penultimate seal to be opened, is the great day of wrath, it describes the fall of Jerusalem, the dissolution of the nation state and the end of temple worship – the most cataclysmic event in Jewish history and the commencement of a 2,000 year diaspora.

As one scroll is about to be opened, another is about to be closed; for 'heaven and earth was removed as a scroll when it is rolled up'. Just as the Lord had closed the scroll in the synagogue, even so now, he again closes the scroll of the law.

Jesus had warned them in the Olivet prophecy: " Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away". (Mtt.24:35) Although that whole dispensation would disappear, Christ's words would still have a future application. This indicates that 'heaven and earth' will pass away again, some time in the future, when it will be replaced with, 'a new heaven and earth'. (21:1)

The sixth seal describes the end of an epoch, the closure of the Mosaic dispensation, it is fitting that we receive a vision of the 144,000 sealed at this juncture. The 144,000 sealed are in answer to the question, 'who is able to stand?'

'For the day of the Lord is great and very terrible and who can abide it?' (Joel 2:11)

Indeed, this was terrible, but deserved retribution; for what will the Lord of the vineyard do?

'He will miserably destroy those wicked men and let out his vineyard unto other husbandmen, which shall render him the fruits in their seasons' (Mtt.21:41 and this sentence came from their own mouths!) Jesus pronounced that – "there shall be great distress in the land and wrath upon this people." (Lk.21:23)

The Lord found no figs on the tree and cursed it (Mtt.21:19,20) he had sought fruit on the tree for three years and finding none, ordered it cut down. The vinedresser begged his Lord for one last chance; "Lord let it alone this year also, till I shall dig about it, and dung it: and if it bear fruit well; but if not, then after that thou shalt cut it down". (Lk.13:6-9)

The fig tree in the sixth seal was already withered and dry and its immature fruit ready to drop.

'Then they will begin to say to the mountains, "Fall on us!" and to the hills, "Cover us!" For if they do these things (i.e. arrest and crucify Christ) when the tree is green, what shall be done when it is dry?' (Lk.23:28-31)

These words were spoken by Christ to the 'daughters of Jerusalem' on his way to the cross, in so doing he paraphrased Hosea 10:8, which he repeats in Revelation 6:14,15:

'every mountain and island were moved out of their places….to the mountains and rocks fall on us, and hide us……'

The metaphor of the most stable features of the world, such as mountains, islands, coastlands, 'shaken' and 'moved' occurs in the context of divine theophany or divine judgment (Judg.5:5;

Ps.18:7 [LXX 17:7]; 46:2-3; Isa.5:25; 54:10; 64:1; Jer.4:24; Ezk.26:18; 38:20; Mic.1:4; Nah.1:5; Hab.1:6; Zech. 14:4)

'And this word, yet once more signifieth the removing of those things that are shaken, as of things that are made, that those things which cannot be shaken may remain'. (Heb.12:27)

The 'mountain' represents the temple mount (Mtt.21:21 – this passage also mentions the fig tree) and the island probably represents Massada, Herod's fortress, which rocky prominence was isolated like an island in a sea of sand. This fortress in the Negev desert was the last bastion of Jewish resistance, where nearly a thousand Jews committed suicide rather than surrender to the Romans. The etymology of the word Massada probably comes from the Hebrew word foundation, but this house was built on a foundation of sand.

'and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell, and great was the fall of that house'. (Mtt.7:27)

The fig tree is shaken of a mighty wind.

'Behold, your house (the Temple) is left unto you desolate' (Mtt.23:38)

God is democratic in his judgments, for no one was spared (except the sealed), from the highest, to the lowest in the land. A similar judgment occurs in Rev.19:18. Many passages in Isaiah reflect the terror of these judgments.

Rev.6:16 Isa.2:19

from the presence of from the presence of

the one seated on the throne the fear of the Lord

and from the wrath and from the glory

of the Lamb of his might

shaken of a mighty wind (v.14) to shake terribly the earth

'The lofty looks of man shall be humbled, and the haughtiness of men shall be bowed down, and the Lord alone shall be exalted in that day'. (Isa.2:11)

Isaiah 34:1-5 also forms part of the woven Revelation context:

ISAIAH 34

REVELATION 6

The host of heaven dissolve

heaven and earth shall pass away

The heavens rolled up like a scroll

heaven rolled up like a scroll

All their host shall fall down

the stars of heaven fall to earth

As leaves fall from the fig tree

fig tree, casting unripe figs

This is clearly a judgment on Israel, God says, “For my sword has drunk its fill in the heavens (ISRAEL); behold it descends upon Edom for judgment, upon the people I have cursed.”

Judgment must begin at the house of God (1 Pet.4:17) – the Isaiah context is plain, God judges Israel and Judah first – with the Assyrian invasion of Sennacherib (and his predecessors Sargon, Shalmaneser and Tiglath-pileser) then he judges the Assyrian and his allies, including Edom.

This passage is very appropriate to the first century, for the Jews had a wicked Edomite ruler who they proclaimed to be, ‘their brother’ and a Caesar who they declared was their king. The Messiah’s blood was indeed, on their heads and on that of their children, they had pronounced their own doom.

The great earthquake covers the seven-year period of the Jewish war, starting in A.D. 66½ when Roman soldiers looted Jerusalem and it was consequently seized by Zealots. The Romans sent reinforcements from Syria, who were defeated by the Zealots. In the meantime the Jews began fighting amongst themselves, there being three different factions within Jerusalem. In A.D.67 Vespasian who was Nero’s general landed at Antioch and received the submission of the Jews of Sepphoris. The Jewish garrison of Jodepath was massacred after a two month siege, and by the end of 67 the Romans had overcome Jewish resistance in Galilee. In A.D.68 a revolt broke out in Italy against Nero, who committed suicide. Civil war raged in Rome as one military leader after another tried to gain control of the city and the Empire. Vespasian suspended the siege against Jerusalem and withdrew. This was seen by the Jews as divine intervention – the city was invincible. Huge numbers of Jewish pilgrims came up to Jerusalem to celebrate the Passover - the first century Christians, however, heeded the Lord’s warning (Mtt.24:15-21) and fled Jerusalem, for they knew that no deliverance would be forthcoming – the siege was about to start in earnest. Vespasian was proclaimed emperor at Alexandria, then left for Rome to restore order, leaving his son Titus in charge of the siege. The horrors now began in earnest, with the population of Jerusalem swollen for the Passover. Titus arrived a few days before the feast in A.D.70. As the siege wore on, the horrors of famine, and even cannibalism, were added to the dangers of the war. The vicious internal fighting amongst the Jews caused them to burn the city’s store of grain, stockpiled to withstand the siege. Joseph’s comments; “Yet did God avenge himself upon them, in a manner agreeable to justice” and “the Romans slew some of them, some they carried captives, and others they made search for underground, and when they found where they were, they broke up the ground and slew all they met with.” (Jos.Wars.vi.9.4)

They were indeed, hiding in the labyrinth of tunnels under the Temple, the temple mount literally fell on them (‘to the mountains fall on us! Cover us!’). Archaeologists have recently found the bones of people who had taken refuge in water tunnels beneath the streets and had been sealed up there by the Romans. Even though the Romans met no further opposition when they did enter the upper city three weeks later, they engaged in wholesale slaughter, rape and looting. In April A.D.73 the last Jewish resistance was crushed by the Romans. At Massada the last defenders killed themselves (after first killing their wives and their children) death being preferable to slavery.

Massada, the first Roman garrison to be captured by the Zealots in A.D.66, was the last to fall – seven years later on the day after Passover. (Jos.Wars.x.9.1.)

What had begun at PASSOVER with the Lamb opening the first seal was now finished 42 years later on the DAY AFTER PASSOVER. The wave offering (144,000) is about to be presented.

SUMMARY OF THE SEVEN SEALS

WHITE HORSE

(A.D.31-38)

Seal opened by the PASSOVER Lamb. (Rev.5:6)

Conquering gospel – witness of Stephen conversion of Saul, preaching to the Gentiles.

Acts 1-10

RED HORSE

(A.D.38-45)

Peter arrested at PASSOVER.

The Herodian persecution – death of James and arrest of Peter.

Acts 12

Epistle of James

BLACK HORSE

(A.D.45-52)

Famine – during the whole reign of Claudius.

Acts 11:27-30

PALE HORSE

(A.D.52-59)

Riots at PASSOVER.

Sword, famine, plague and wild beasts – Period of the procurators Ventidius Cumanus and Antonius Felix – Sedition, robbery, terrorism, famine, start of Nero's reign.

SLAIN UNDER ALTAR

(A.D.59-66)

Nero persecution – death of Apostles, Saints cry, 'HOW LONG?' ANSWER: the book of Revelation given: It will shortly come to pass. (Rev 1:1)

1 PETER 5:8-13

2 PETER 3

GREAT EARTHQUAKE

(A.D. 66-73)

Jerusalem besieged at PASSOVER A.D.70

Massada falls day after PASSOVER.

Jewish war - dissolution of the Jewish state – end of the Mosaic dispensation. Rome also judged see digression 8.1 page 3

HEBREWS 12:25-29

NOTES

1 'the chariots of Israel and the horsemen thereof' (2Kgs.2:11,12; 6:17; 13:14; 1 Chron.28:18; Ps.18:10) The chariots, are the cherubim and the angels are the drivers of the horses. This is symbolic language - the cherubim with four faces represents the glory of God in all aspects of creation (Isa.6:3; Rev.4:11). All creation was made for his pleasure and glory and is ultimately under his control. The cherubim – chariot was seen by Ezekiel (ch.1) at the beginning of the captivity in Babylon, and again by Zechariah at the end of the captivity.

---

2 'was given' (edothe) is less frequently used in association with God's redemptive grace

'there was given to each one of them a white robe' (6:11)

'there was given to the woman two wings' (12:4)

'and it was given unto her.....to be arrayed in fine linen' (19:8)

NOTES

1 Compare the commision to the witness in Rev.10:11.

NOTES

1 The word 'separate"' is nâ zî yr from the word Nazarite, i.e., consecrated as a Nazarite; hence figuratively from the later an unpruned vine (cp. Gen.49:22 – like an unshorn Nazarite) by false alliteration it is associated with Nazareth where Jesus was brought up. A comparison of Mtt.2:23 with the Hebrew text of Isa.11:1 favours the derivation of the name Nazareth from the root which appears in Heb. neser and Aramaic nisarA, sprout: Nazareth accordingly would mean verdant place or offshoot. This corresponds with the one who is the 'branch"'or sprout in Zechariah. (although a different word is used in the Hebrew – tsemach). The prophecy in Genesis 49 does not make it apparent whether the blessing of Messiah would come to the tribe of Judah or Joseph (Ephraim = Israel). Ancestoraly Jesus was from the tribe of Judah but geographically from Nazareth of Galillee (Ephraim).

NOTES

1 Psalm 21:6; 'Thou hast made him exceeding glad with thy countenance'. Literally, "thy faces" in this case the divine cherubim chariot with which David has won great victories (cp.18:7-15;contrast 20:7) The occasion of this Psalm is probably 2 Sam.12:30 were David was crowned with the crown of Malcam (or Milcom) the Ammonite god whose name means 'king of the people' or 'their king'. It seems that the Massoretes repointed Milcom to Malcam to avoid associating David with false gods. War with Amalek represents war against sin in scripture. The crown was a massive crown of gold that weighed one talent, variously estimated at 10lbs, 54lbs

and even 130lbs – and could not therefore be comfortably worn on an everyday basis. See H.A.W. Samuel, Saul & David. Pg.276

---

2 The word 'strenthen' indicates that this is a Psalm contemporary with Hezekiah whose name means 'strengthened of Yah'. The Psalm is reminding God of the blessings bestowed on Joseph and the covenant made with David. The question "How long Lord?" (v.46) is similar to that of Psalm 79:5 and the reproach of the enemy in 79:10 similar to that of 2 Kgs18:29.

---

3 The title EL SHADDAI, is always associated with fecundity and fertility (see H.A.W. Bible Studies Pg.362). This corresponds with the name Joseph – which means, 'add to me another son' (Gen.30:24) or to increase. The sons of Joseph ,Ephraim (fruitful) and Manasseh (forgetting the toil of my father's house – Gen.41:51,52) are also appropriate to the motif of the blessing. Ephraim was, 'the fruitful bough whose branches ran over the wall' (the tribe settled on both sides of the Jordan). Jesus would also forget the toil of his father's house (Abraham = the Jews) and would become fruitful and increase by adding the Gentiles into the covenants of pomise. Joseph himself did not become a tribe, but his sons, Ephraim and Manasseh became progenitors of tribes, yet it is Joseph that is included in the 144,000 as a tribe (7:8) as well as Manasseh (7:6).

NOTES

1 Adulterers and adulteresses – an expression used by Christ, primarily against the Pharisees. (Mtt.12:39; 16:4. Mk.8:38)

NOTES

1 The epistle of James accurately portrays the persecution started by Saul when he sought to persecute the Jewish Christians of Damascus and bring them back bound to Jerusalem (Acts 9:1,2 see especially Acts 11:19 and note the similarity of language – these are, 'the twelve tribes of the dispersion' James 1:1). James warned that they would not be able to flee persecution by planning to trade in other cities (James 4:13,14). The lamentable condition of the ecclesia – too much teaching (of the law), an emphasis on works, the unbridled tongue, love of the (Jewish) world, deference to the rich and scorn of the poor, 'jealousy and faction', 'wars and fighting' depicts a primitive ecclesia with two distinct factions. James is obviously addressing two separate entities in his epistle. The fact that the epistle concludes without greetings suggests that James was killed before it was finished. Jerome, while acknowledging the genuineness of the epistle, remarks that it was said to have been published by another in the name of James, though it gradually acquired authority. For further reading see Seven Short Epistles and also Studies in the Acts of the Apostles pg.171-174 by H.A.W.

---

2 There is a striking incident recorded in the Mishna that when at the feast of Tabernacles (in A.D.41) he read according to custom the book of Deuteronomy, he burst into tears at the passage, 'Thou mayest not set a stranger over thee, which is not thy brother.' (Dt.17:15) but the

people cried out, ‘Be not grieved Agrippa!’ ‘Thou art our brother!’ (see Dt.23:7,8) This was magnificent play-acting by Herod Agrippa I, who was an Edomite. It was an Edomite acting as the henchman of Saul, who slew the priests of Nob. (1 Sam.chpt.22) David, who was fleeing from Saul, sustained himself with holy bread (and wine?) and he also took the (great) sword of Goliath (contrast, ‘there was given him a great sword’ Rev.6:4) The chapter concludes with: ‘Abide thou with me, fear not; for he that seeketh my life seeketh thy life: but with me thou shalt be safeguarded.’ (v.23).

NOTES

1 See chapter 3: ‘Acts And Food Shortages’ pg.59 - a whole chapter is devoted to grain shortages; Rome controlled the price and movement of grain, it was a major commodity like oil is today. Times of scarcity allowed speculators to make huge profits and cities inland (away from ports) suffered the worst effects. It is needless to say that Rome never suffered, as the city always secured its own supply first. The subject is extensively treated in the book.

---

2 To kill with death is a tautology – how else can one kill? The word death is thantos in the Greek and should be translated as ‘pestilence’. This is how it is rendered in the R.V. margin.

NOTES

1 Tradition says that Paul was beheaded, this would seem to confirm that Paul died as a consequence of a separate judicial action and not during the Nero persecution.

---

2 The erstwhile mistress of Nero, Poppaea was, ‘a religious woman’ and probably a proselyte (Jos. Antiq.xx.chpt.9.11) Poppaea favoured the Jews and protected them from the accusation of arson

which fell so savagely on the Christians – the Christians were a sect, indistinguishable to the Romans from the Jews. It would seem probable that Jews hostile to Christianty suggested this strategy (blaming Christians) to Poppaea, who in due course influenced Nero’s policy. At this time there were some 40,000 Jews and fourteen synagogues in Rome.

3 Paul wrote: ‘I am already being poured out as an offering, and the time of my departure is at hand’ (2 Tim.4:6; Philp.2:17)

NOTES

1 Read the whole chapter from v.5-21 it has an application to A.D. 70 and the future ; for idols read image of the beast note that the ships of Tarshish are also judged. (v.16)

Chapter 7

144,000 SEALED

“ Set me as a seal upon thine heart, as a seal upon thine arm: For love is as strong as death; Jealousy is cruel as the grave: The coals (flashes. R.V.) thereof are coals (flashes) of fire, Which hath a most vehement flame. (a very flame of the Lord. R.V.). Many waters cannot quench love, Neither can the floods drown it: if a man were to give all the substance of his house for love, It would be utterly contemned.” (Song.S. 8: 6,7)

INTRODUCTION

This chapter has posed exegetical problems for various commentators. The divergent views can be summarised as follows:

1. The 144,000 represent Jewish Christians, a remnant chosen from the nation.

2. The 144,000 represent the new “Spiritual Israel” both Jew and Gentile.

3. The 144,000 are the same as the “great multitude.” (So H.A.W.in his exposition pg.98)

4. The 144,000 and the “great multitude” are two distinct groups. (So N. Lunn in Alpha and Omega)

5. The 144,000 in 7:1-8 are different to the 144,000 in 14: 1-5.

The present author believes that the 144,000 and the “great multitude” are two distinct groups. The 144,000 represent Jews chosen from amongst a larger number. The author also believes that the 144,000 of chapter 7, 14 and 21 are the same group.

The 144,000 and the New Jerusalem.

The 144,000 were not a vision but an audition. John did not see the 144,000 but he heard their number (7:4) it is only in 14:1 that he sees the 144,000. What John sees in 14:1 is a prelude to the, “Heavenly Jerusalem” of 21:10-26. In the first vision (chpt.7) John could not see the 144,000 because their number was not yet complete.

Only God knows the fullness of the number, which is communicated to John by the angel. It is significant that John hears the number at this juncture, for the sixth seal (The Great Earthquake = removal of the Mosaic dispensation and the destruction of Jerusalem) culminates with the words:

“for the great day of his (their) wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?”

The answer to this question is: only the 144,000 sealed are able to stand. The apostle Paul was to answer those who were critical of the liberty of those in Christ with the words:

“Who art thou that judgest another man’s servant? To his own master he standeth or falleth. Yea, he shall be made to stand (R.V.); for God is able to make him stand.” (Rom.14:4)

This is the doctrine of justification by faith. The sealing is obviously a reference to Ezek. 9. There we read of destroying angels poised and ready for passing through the city to smite with their weapons of slaughter (v.2) But first another angel is commanded, “Go through the midst of the city, through Jerusalem, and put a mark on the foreheads of the men that sigh and cry over all the abominations that are committed in it.” (v.4)

Those who were thus sealed were not to be harmed (v.6) This prophecy was given shortly before the Babylonian destruction of Jerusalem. The function of sealing, is however, not limited to the first century. It also has a latter day fulfilment. The “four winds” which refer us back to the agents of judgment in the previous chapter (the four horsemen or four chariots are described as “winds” by Zechariah [6:5]) are about to be intensified in the trumpet judgments. To the apostle John the trumpet judgments were still future, but they are being fulfilled in our present.

There is then, a future sealing to take place in order to complete the number of the 144,000. This sealing coincides with, and is extradited by, the ministry of the witnesses. It is only after this final ministry is finished, and after the persecution of the beast empire of chapter thirteen, that John saw the 144,000. (the sealing occurs in 8:4 which is parallel with chpt. 11 – see page 12 of chapter 8& 9)

The vision of 14: 1-5 is a proleptic escathalogical scene, that depicts the 144,000 as already victorious. There is every indication that by chapter 14 some of the sealed have been killed because they refuse the mark (seal) of the beast. (13:15-16):

“Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord. Verily, says the Spirit, that they might rest from their labours, for their works follow after them.” (14:13) [translation from Word Biblical Commentary]

The sealing does not encompass protection from persecution but protection from divine wrath. (“the vials of the wrath of God upon the earth” 16:1) In actuality, the number of the 144,000 is only completed in chapter 21.

THE 144,000 SEALED ARE JEWISH CONVERTS.

The scenario that has been described sees the 144,000 as Jewish converts. They are sealed out of all the tribes of the sons of Israel. Whilst “Israel” may be a term applied to the “new Israel” (Gal.6:16; 1 Pet 2: 9) nowhere in the N.T. are Gentile Christians allocated specific tribes. Even when James (1:1) refers to Christians as “the twelve tribes of the dispersion”, he does not enumerate the tribes. (in this case they are probably Jewish Christians anyway)

John informs us that, “in their mouths was found no guile ('lie' R.V.) for they are without fault before the throne of God.” These are the words of Christ to Nathaniel: “Behold an Israelite in whom is no guile” The reference to guile, is a play on the name of Jacob, whose name means supplanter or deceiver. In effect Jesus is saying , “an Israelite in whom is no Jacob.”

The context of the Nathaniel incident, is that while Nathaniel was contemplating his forthcoming marriage (John chpt. 2) his meditations brought him to the wedding night of Jacob, who was himself deceived, and woke up next to the wrong woman. (the deceiver, deceived!) Nathaniel was astonished at the Lord’s ability to read his mind – and Jesus replied to him in the terms of the vision of Jacob’s ladder at Bethel. (Gen 28: 12) “Hereafter ye shall see the heaven opened and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man.” (John 1:51) Jesus was in fact saying to Nathaniel – I AM THE HOUSE OF GOD. (BETHEL)

[for these wonderful insights I am forever indebted to Studies in the Gospels by H.A.W.]

The point that Rev 14:5 stresses, is that the 144,000 will only be formed by Jews who have overcome their old nature (like Jacob, Gen.32:25-31; Hos.12:2-5), and are therefore, true Israelites. Jacob overcame his old nature and was renamed Israel (an acknowledgement that God ruled in his life, for the meaning of Israel is, GOD RULES, and not, RULER or PRINCE with GOD)

The blessing cannot be obtained by birthright or by deception, only by the acknowledgement that God rules in our lives, otherwise the Jews will find themselves (like Jacob) wrestling against God himself. The cross-reference to the Nathaniel incident in John's gospel is not coincidental:

JOHN 1

REVELATION 14

Where abidest thou? Come and ye shall see. (v.38,39)

I saw the Lamb stood on Mt. Zion and with him 144,000. (v.1)

The Lamb of God. (v.24,36)

They followed Jesus. (v.37,43)

Which follow the Lamb withersoever he goeth. (v.4) [even to the grave?]

Jesus saw him, 'under the fig tree' (v.48)1

Fistfruits unto God and the Lamb. (v.4)

An Israelite in whom is no guile. (v.47)

In their mouth was found no guile. (v.5)

The 144,000 are protected from divine retribution (but not necessarily from persecution) and they have the same attributes as the Philadelphians.

PHILADELPHIA. Rev. 3: 7-12

THE 144,000 Rev. chpt.7,14,21

Behold, I will make them that are of the Synagogue of Satan, which say they are Jews but are not, and do lie.

In their mouth was found no guile. [R.V. lie] (14:5)

I will also keep thee from the hour of temptation (trial) to try them that dwell upon the earth. (the Jews)

The 144,000 sealed on the heavenly Mt. Zion.(14:1)

Hurt them not. (7:3)

I will write upon him,...name of my God...name of the city...New Jerusalem...my new name.

My name....my Fathers name...written on their foreheads. (14:1)

The Heavenly Jerusalem. (21:2)

Again, we note the reference to those, that say they are Jews (descendants of Abraham – see John 8: 39-41, and of Isaac and Israel – but they are descendants of Jacob) but are not, but do lie.

"For they are not all Israel, which are of Israel: neither, because they are Abraham's seed are they all children." (Rom.9: 6,7b)

The 144,000 are Jews, who like their father Jacob have emerged from the wrestling and have overcome their old nature. (passages from Gen. chpt.32; Jer. chpt.30,31; Hos. chpt. 12)

JACOB'S WRESTLING

REVELATION CHAPTER 7

He called the name of the place Mahanaim. [the two hosts or companies] (32:1)

- the 144,000. (v.4)

- the great multitude. (v.9)

Jacob [deceiver] renamed Israel [God rules]

In their mouth was found no guile.[Jacob] (14:5)

Whose are these before thee? (32:17)

What are these arrayed in white robes? And whence came they? (v.13)

Then was Jacob greatly afraid and distressed. (32:7)

Alas! For the day is great, so that none is like it: it is even the time of Jacobs trouble; but he shall be saved out of it. (Jer.30:7)

At that time, saith the Lord, will I be the God of all the families of Israel, and they shall be my people. (Jer.31:1)

These are they which came out of THE GREAT TRIBULATION. (v.14)

144,000 sealed of all the tribes of the children of Israel. (v.4)

They shall come with weeping and supplications. (Jer.31:1)1

Jacob wept and made supplication to the angel. (Hos.12:4)

God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes. (v.17)

Thou saidst, I will surely do thee good, and make thy seed as the sand of the sea, which cannot be numbered for multitude. (32:12)

A great multitude, which no man could number. (v.9)

And Jacob journeyed to Succoth, and built them an house, and made booths for his cattle; and therefore the name of the place is called Succoth. (33:17)2

He shall spread his tabernacle over them. (v.15) [Succoth = Feast of Tabernacles or booths]

The Lamb will be their shepherd.(v.17)

The comparison between "wrestling Jacob" and Revelation 7, makes it apparent that the 144,000 represent Jews. Equally significant is the fact that in the epistle to the Hebrews1, the author weaves Rev.14: 1-5 into the body of Hebrews chapter 12. The strength of his polemic rests on the case that Jewish Christians have not come to the "earthly Sinai " (Mosaic dispensation of the law), but to Mt. Zion, "the heavenly Jerusalem." (the new covenant in Christ)

HEBREWS 12

REVELATION

And these all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise. God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect. (11: 39,40)

- how long?

- they should rest for a while until their fellowservants also and their brethren, that they should be killed as they were, should be fulfilled. (6:11)

Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses. (12 :1)

A great multitude which no man could number. (7:9)

Mount Zion.

The city of the living God.

The heavenly Jerusalem. (12: 22)

- Mt. Zion. (14: 1)

- New Jerusalem coming down from God out of heaven. [= 144,000] (21: 1)

Innumerable company (hosts) of angels. (12: 22)

Great multitude includes angels. (7: 11)

To the assembly and ecclesia of the firstborn. (12: 23)

Firstfruits (14: 4)

Which are written in heaven. (12: 23)

Seal of God in their foreheads. (7:2; 9:4; 14:1)

To God the Judge of all. (12:23)

Dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on earth. (6:11)

And to the spirits of just men made perfect. (12: 23)

White robes given to everyone of them. (6: 11)

Hebrews is written to Jews and draws on the example of the 144,000 – the inevitable conclusion is that they are Jewish Christians. However, the 144,000 and the great multitude are two distinct groups.

The 144,000 The great multitude

On earth before the winds. In heaven before the throne.

(later seen on the heavenly Mt..Zion.)

Not seen but “heard.” John “saw” the multitude.

From the twelve tribes of Israel. From every nation and tribe and people and tongue.

Sealed during the fifth trumpet. These have already come out of the great tribulation.

THE SEALING

“And after these things I saw four angels standing on the four corners of the earth, holding the four winds of the earth, that the wind should not blow on the earth, nor on the sea, nor on any tree. And I saw another angel ascending from the east, having the seal of the living God: and he cried with a loud voice to the four angels, to whom it was given to hurt the earth and the sea, Saying, Hurt not the earth, neither the sea, nor the trees, till we have sealed the servants of our God in their foreheads.”

(Rev. 7:1-3)

The winds that blow upon the earth are based on the natural phenomenon of the Sirocco – a hot south –easterly wind like a furnace, which withered all vegetation. We have already observed the chariot winds of Zechariah 6: 1-5. Nahum speaks of the Lord who has his way in the whirlwind (the Sirocco) and the storm (Nah.1: 3) they are his chariots (Jer.4: 13; Isa.66: 15) and his breath (Job 37: 9,10). The mountains are rend by it (1 Kgs. 19: 11) and the grass withered (Isa.40: 7,24). It dries up the stream, the river and the sea (Nah.1:4; Ps.18: 15). God would destroy his enemies as stubble before the wind (Ps.83: 13) God’s day would be the day of the whirlwind (Amos 1: 14), which in it’s fury falls on the head of the wicked (Jer.23:19,30:23). The Sirocco comes from the wilderness and destroys the fertility of the land (Hos. 13:15) – and finally the mighty wind (Rev.6: 14) blows upon the house built on sand, and “great was the fall of it.” (Mtt.7: 27)

From what danger does the seal protect them, since clearly it does not protect them from a martyrs death? (This is the implication of the fifth seal, they were told to rest until they were joined by their fellow martyrs). This is one question to which John supplies an unambiguous answer : The angel rising out of the east – where the Sun of Righteousness himself rises – tells the four restraining angels not to loose the destructive winds until the sealing is effected. The sealing therefore must be protection from the disasters which the winds, who are the same agents as the four horsemen, are permitted to inflict upon the earth. Others may die in these disasters, but not the martyrs; not because their persons are inviolate, but because God has another more significant death in store for them. We are reminded of Jesus, confident in his immunity from any threat of Herod, because Jerusalem has first claim on the blood of God’s prophets (Lk.13: 33) including that of the two witnesses, or that of Paul, assured that he cannot be allowed to die in a mere shipwreck, because God has determined that he should stand before Caesar. (Acts 27: 24) For the man who knows himself to be designated for martyrdom war, famine, pestilence and earthquake have no terrors.

John is seeing the vision of the last terrible days and in particular the great tribulation which is to come;

“For then shall be great tribulation (cp. Rev.7: 14) such was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be. And except those days be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect’s sake those days shall be shortened.” (Mtt.24:21,22)

The context of the Olivet Prophecy is the impending doom of Jerusalem in the first century. The elect are the Israelites who respond in faith.

“Even so at this time also there is a remnant according to the election of grace. Israel hath not obtained that which he seeketh for, but the election obtained it (the sealed), and the rest were blinded.”

“As concerning the gospel, they (Israel) are enemies for your sakes; but as touching the election, they are beloved for the fathers’ sakes.” (Rom.11: 6,7, 28)

“For Jacob my servants sake, and Israel mine elect, I have called thee by thy name: I have surnamed thee (sealed) though thou hast not known me.” (Isa. 45: 4)

THE TWELVE TRIBES

“And I heard the number of them which were sealed: and there were sealed an hundred and forty and four thousand of all the tribes of the children of Israel.

Of the tribe of Judah were sealed twelve thousand.

Of the tribe of Reuben were sealed twelve thousand.

Of the tribe of Gad were sealed twelve thousand.

Of the tribe of Aser were sealed twelve thousand.

Of the tribe of Nepthalim were sealed twelve thousand.

Of the tribe of Manasses were sealed twelve thousand.

Of the tribe of Simeon were sealed twelve thousand.

Of the tribe of Levi were sealed twelve thousand.

Of the tribe of Issachar were sealed twelve thousand.

Of the tribe of Zabulon were sealed twelve thousand.

Of the tribe of Joseph were sealed twelve thousand.

Of the tribe of Benjamin were sealed twelve thousand.”

(Rev.7:4-8)

Much has been written about the 144,000 and the order of the tribes, some commentators suggest that displacement has occurred.1 The order of the tribes, which would seem almost random to some, is determined in the first instance by birthright.

BIRTHORDER THE 144,000

Sons of Leah Sons of Leah

1.Reuben. – firstborn 4. Judah

Sons of Zilpah. (L)

7. Gad.

8. Asher.

2. Simeon.

3. Levi.

1. Reuben

4. Judah.

Sons of Bilhah [R] Sons of Bilhah [R]

5. DAN – firstborn

6. Naphtali. 6. Naphtali.

MANASSEH

Sons of Zilpah. (L)

7. Gad.- firstborn

8. Asher.

Sons of Leah

2. Simeon.

3. Levi.

Sons of Leah

9. Issachar- firstborn 9. Issachar.

MANASSEH

(firstborn)

10. Zebulun. 10. Zebulun.

Sons of Rachel Sons of Rachel

EPHRAIM

11. Joseph.

1 11. Joseph.

12. Benjamin. [R]= Rachel's maid (L)= Leah's maid 12. Benjamin.

Firstly we notice that Reuben has lost the right of the firstborn,1 this is because he slept with his fathers concubine. (Gen.49: 3,4) The concubine he slept with was Bilhah (Gen.35: 22) and as a consequence, the concubine tribes of Dan and Naphtali were demoted below the concubine tribes of Leah's maid.2 (with Dan being omitted altogether) Simeon and Levi, had fallen out of favour for killing a man in their anger (Gen.49: 5-7; Gen. Chpt.34), it was the priests (Levites) and scribes (Simeonites) that conspired to put Jesus to death.3 Their fall from grace demonstrates the demotion of the law as a means of salvation. They are grouped with the other sons of Leah, but still have priority over them because of their birth order.

The tribe of Manasseh (Rachel's firstborn grandchild – Gen.48: 14) replaces Dan (the firstborn of Rachel's maid) but, placed below the tribe of Naphtali, who has birth priority in the original list of children. Judah4 obtained overall priority of the tribes, not simply by default, but because of the love displayed towards his father in the matter of Benjamin. Having himself experienced the

loss of sons (Gen.38: 7,10), he demonstrated his love by offering himself as a hostage in Egypt.(Gen. 44: 32-34)

It was this change of character that caused Joseph to reveal himself to his brethren.5 Similarly, Reuben was not relegated to the same depths as Simeon and Levi, for although he lost the primogeniture he redeemed himself by pleading for Joseph's life (Gen.37: 21,22). In contrast, Simeon and Levi did not change their cruel behaviour, which was subsequently directed at their half – brother Joseph, and eventually at Christ.

As we have observed, the tribe of Dan is omitted altogether, and replaced with Manasseh another firstborn. Dan means judgment, and is not appropriate to the 144,000 who have been (or will be) redeemed. Moreover the tribe of Dan failed in two aspects.

(1) They were slothful (neglected) to take up their inheritance in the land.

(2) They were the first tribe to introduce idolatry.

The book of Proverbs says,

"The hand of the diligent shall bear rule: but the slothful shall be put under tribute." (Prov.12: 24)

and also;

The slothful man catcheth not his prey (R.V.mg), but the substance of a diligent man is precious." (Prov.12: 27)

The first reference is applicable to the tribe of Dan, and the latter to Esau. The tribe of Dan did not take up their inheritance and were put under tribute by the Amorites (Judges 1:34,35). In Judges 18:1, the Danites had still not taken up their inheritance, note especially verse 9, "Be not slothful to go, and to enter to posses the land." Esau also despised his inheritance, and because he was faint after his hunting expedition, he sold his birthright for a mess of red pottage. (Gen.25: 27-34)

The promises, and blessings of the firstborn were, however, precious to Jacob (Jacob was diligent, and the substance of the promise precious to him). Those who despise the covenants and promises of God, embodied in his firstborn, will not obtain the inheritance.

Dan was also the first tribe to introduce false religion – a graven image and a rival priesthood (Jdgs. 18: 30,31) that endured until the Babylonian captivity. This situation provided fertile ground for the apostasy of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who had one of his golden calves installed in the territory of Dan. (1 Kgs 12: 28-33)

It is instructive to note that the rival priesthood was Levitical – Jonathan the son of Gershom the son of Moses (Jdgs.18: 30). The Jews changed the name of Moses (MSS) to Manasseh (MNSSH) in the Masoretic text. One presumes, that this was done in order not to tarnish the memory of Moses. Manasseh means, "forgetting my fathers house." (Gen.41: 51) In similar vein, the name of Dan is now replaced with that of Manasseh.

Revelation makes it abundantly clear, that those Jews who worship the "graven image" (image of the beast. Rev.13: 5) will find no place amongst the 144,000.

To summarise

The order of the list is determined by two factors:

(1) The natural birth order

(2) The order of blessing or cursing by Jacob in Genesis chpt.49.

It is to be noted that the birth order is still preserved, even when a tribe is omitted or replaced. i.e., Manasseh is placed under Naphtali even though it substitutes Dan. This is because Naphtali has priority over Manasseh in the original birth order of tribes. Even Simeon and Levi retain priority over Leah's other sons, despite their demotion.

The number 144,000 is not literal, nor is the tribal distribution – the lessons are spiritual. It does not mean, for example that no Jews from the tribe of Dan will be in the kingdom (Samson will be there). The lesson to be drawn from the tribes, is that it is the Jewish attitude to their father and half-brother, and their eagerness to take up the inheritance that will determine their position in the eschaton. The blessings of Jacob are a prophecy – "That I may tell you that which shall befall you in the last days." (Gen.49:1)

Attempts have been made to construct a sentence from the tribal names – the paraphrase is instructive:

Natural birth order -Genesis

See a [firstborn] Son (Reuben), who heard (Simeon) Yah, and joined (Levi) himself to Yah. Praise Yah! (Judah) The judgment (Dan) of his flesh and his wrestlings (Naphtali) brought to the birth a company (Gad) of blessed (Asher) ones. They are the reward (Issachar) of his travail, and they will dwell (Zebulun) with and increase (Joseph) the Son of the right hand. (Benjamin)

Spiritual birth order (Rev.chpt.7)

Praise Yah! (Judah)[Rev.14:3; 7:12; 19:1etc.] See the Son (Reuben)[I looked, and, lo, a Lamb – Rev 14:1] and with him a company (Gad)[with him 144,000- Rev 14:1] of blessed (Asher) [Blessed are the dead…Rev.14:13] who having finished the wrestling [these are they which came out of the great tribulation – Rev.7:14] having forgotten their father's [Adam's] house (Manasseh) [God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, or sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away. – Rev 7: 16,17; 21: 4]. They heard Yah (Simeon) [I heard the number – Rev.7:4 - I heard a voice from heaven- Rev.14:2] and were joined to him (Levi) [his wife hath made herself ready- Rev.19:7] and were rewarded (Issachar) [my reward is with me- Rev.22:12] by dwelling with (Zebulun) [the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them –Rev.21: 3] and so increasing (Joseph) [After this I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude which no man could number- Rev.7:9] the son of the right hand. (Benjamin) [the Lamb in the midst of the throne – Rev.7: 17]

THE SYMBOLISM OF THE NUMBER

The number 144 is important, for it is the square of 12, a number which symbolises perfect government (12 tribes x 12apostles x 1,000). It is also the twelfth Fibonacci number.1 Fibonacci numbers occur regularly in many natural patterns – the number of petals on flowers, the way shoots rotate around a central stem, the growth of spiral shells, the determination of genetic characteristics, are all determined by Fibonacci numbers.

The number 144 therefore represents the perfection of divine government in the natural creation.

THE GREAT MULTITUDE

“After this I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands; ”

(Rev. 7:9)

“In the multitude of the people is the kings honour” (Prov.14: 28)

God had promised Abraham that his descendants would be innumerable , “as the dust of the earth”, “as the stars of the sky”, or “as the sand of the sea”. (Gen.13:1b; 15: 15; 16:10), a promise repeated to Isaac (Gen. 26: 4) and to Jacob (Gen.28:14; 32:12). This promise is frequently repeated in later contexts (Ex.32:13; Deut.1:10; 10:22; 28: 62; 2 Sam 17: 11; 1 Kgs.3: 8; 4:20; Neh.9:23; Isa.10:20; 48:19; 51:2; Hos.1:10) He was also promised that he would be the Father of many nations (Gen.17:4-6, 11:12) – this was indicated by his change of name from Abram to Abraham. This promise was also repeated to Isaac and Jacob (Gen.28:14;32:12;35:11; 48:19)

“In blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which is upon the sea shore; and thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies (Rev.1:18); and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; because thou hast obeyed my voice.” (Gen.22:17,18)

This promise was given to Abraham on Mt. Moriah, after his obedience to the call to sacrifice his beloved son Isaac. On this mountain was the site of the threshing floor of Ornan the Jebusite, which David purchased for the erection of the Temple. It has now been appropriated by the Muslims, who have erected their sanctuary, the, “dome of the rock” above this sacred place.

Mt. Moriah is then, one of the prominences of Mt. Zion – the etymology suggests the meaning, “the vision of Yah”, and it was this place that Abraham named “Yahweh-Jireh” (22:14). Once again the name implies that on this mountain, “The Lord will be seen” (R.V.mg.) [i.e. – his salvation will be seen or provided at this place].

Jesus said,

“Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day; and he saw it, and was glad.”

(John 8: 56)

Now the apostle John sees the outworking of that day.

REVELATION 7& 14 GENESIS 22

And I looked, and behold. (14:1)

Yahweh –Jireh = The Lord will be seen. (22:14)

A Lamb. (14:1)

And Abraham lifted up his eyes, and looked, and behold behind him a ram. (22:13)

On Mt. Zion. (14:1)

Mt. Moriah. (22:2)

With him 144,000. [Jews] (14:1)

I will multiply thy seed. [Jews] (22:17]

A great multitude which no man could number from all nations. (7:4)

In thy seed shall all nations of the earth be blessed. (22:18)

This comparison confirms our belief that the two multitudes are distinct. We see in Revelation chpt.7 and 14 the fulfilment of the promises to the patriarchs. This was because;

“I know that thou (Abraham) fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only, from me.” (Gen.22: 12)

Similarly these martyrs had not withheld “their only” from him, for their very lives were sacrificed in faith, witnessing to Jesus, the beloved Son. The 144,000 are now joined to the “great multitude” for there is only one body in Christ. Here we have then the beginning of the vision of the future blessedness of the martyrs. They are now one with their “fellow servants and brethren.” – they have become part of the heavenly Jerusalem, encompassing old and new covenants, past, present and future – they have joined “the spirits of just men made perfect” (Heb.12: 23), those, who, although they have not received the outworking of the promises, are nevertheless, “written in heaven.”

John is setting out how infinitely worthwhile it is in the long run to accept everything in the martyrdom which faith must undergo.

The great multitude are also found in Matthew 25: 31-37 – these parallels have been documented by H.A.W. on pg. 100 of his Revelation, and are worthwhile reproducing:

Revelation 7:9,11,16,17 Matthew 25:31,32,37

A great multitude out of all nations.

Before him shall be gathered all nations.

Before the throne, and before the Lamb.

Then shall he sit on the throne of his glory, and before him…

All the angels round about the throne.

All the holy angels with him.

They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more.

I was hungered, and ye gave me meat…thirsty, and ye gave me drink.

The Lamb shall be their shepherd

As a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats.

To these may be added v.10: “Salvation (Hosanna) to our God” and v.9: “palms in their hands” with their echoes of Jesus’ triumphal entry into Jerusalem – which, as already mentioned, was itself a “dress rehearsal” of the Second Coming. (see Zech.9:9-11) The palm branches of verse 9 also have associations with the Feast of Tabernacles on which this chapter is based.(see the introduction to Revelation pg.48 for Tabernacle references in Revelation chapter 7 -see also digression 12.3 for discussion of Matthew chapter 25)

THE PRAISE OF THE GREAT MULTITUDE AND THE ANGELS

“And cried with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb. And all the angels stood round about the throne, and about the elders and the four beasts, and fell before the throne on their faces, and worshipped God,” (Rev.7:10-11)

The word translated salvation (soteria) is more accurately rendered victory.

It is not their salvation that the martyrs are celebrating, but their triumphant passage through persecution. Their salvation was achieved long since, first by the act of Christ, who loved them and released them from their sins with his own life- blood, then by the faith which accepted his redemptive love and the baptism which had sealed the faith and made them members of the redeemed and priestly community (Rev.1:6). It is worth noting, too, that, with one minor exception, all the New Testament writers who use soteria to denote the Christian’s salvation from sin also use the corresponding verb sozein, but John never does; in his vocabulary soteria means something quite different. It would be possible to take the word here in one of the senses it bears in classical Greek –‘safety’, ‘escape’, or ‘preservation’, so that the martyrs would simply be thanking God and the Lamb for providing a way of escape from the persecution to which they have fallen victim; but John’s thought is so thoroughly biblical that this explanation is unlikely. In the Septuagint sozein and soteria are the regular equivalents for the Hebrew verb yasha‘ and the cognate nouns yesha‘ , ye shu‘ah , and teshu‘ ah. Yasha‘ , besides meaning ‘to save’, frequently means ‘to give victory to’ or ‘to win a victory’. In some contexts either meaning makes good sense, since to save a beleaguered nation is the same thing as giving them victory.(see,e.g.,1 Sam.24: 6,45; Ps.118: 14,15,21). God may be said to have granted victory to Israel (1 Chron.11:14; 18:6; Ps.20:6; 44:4), or to have won a victory for himself (Ps.98:1; Isa.59:16; 63:5; Hab.3:8). Both ideas are present in the martyrs’ shout of triumph. For these are the conquerors, to whom the promise was made that they should share both the throne of Christ (Rev.3:21), and they are attributing their victory to the their God, whose love was fully revealed on the cross. In the martyrs the Lamb has won again the victory of Calvary, using only the weapons of redemptive love. But this victory of Christ is also the victory of God. The new song with which the heavenly choir greeted the appearance of the Lamb (v.9) is now swelled by the voices of the Conquerors.

‘sing to the Lord a new song,

For he has done marvellous deeds;

His right hand and holy arm have won him victory.....

All the ends of the earth have seen the victory of our God.’ (Ps.98:1,3)

The picture is of a series of great concentric circles of the inhabitants of heaven. On the outer ring stand all the angels. Nearer the throne are the twenty four elders; still nearer are the twenty four elders; still nearer are the four living creatures; and before the throne are the white robed martyrs. The martyrs have just sung their shout of praise to God, and the angels take that song of praise and make it their own. The doxology begins and ends with the word “Amen” (so let it be) and frames seven doxological predicates:

1. blessing

2. glory

3. wisdom

4. thanksgiving

5. honour

6. power

7. might

This doxology immediately reminds one of the Lords prayer. (Lk.11:2-3; Mtt.6: 9-13) Commencing with the hallowing (blessing) of God's name and culminating with the phrase, "for thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory, for ever. Amen." Now, however, there is no need to ask for forgiveness, or for the daily bread (bread of tomorrow – incorruptible manna) for the multitude consists of immortals (angels and the redeemed). They also do not require to ask to be, "delivered from temptation (trial)", for they have already triumphed.

The seven doxological predicates can be summarised as follows:

1. They ascribe blessing (eulogia) to God; God is worthy of praise from his creation, because by him and through him, and for his pleasure, they were created. They are the new creation in Christ. "Bless the Lord, O my soul and forget not his benefits." (Ps.103:2)

2. They ascribe glory (doxa) to God, for, he is the "Father of glory", the source from whom all divine splendour and perfection proceed in their manifestation. (Eph.1:17) - in him there is no darkness, he is the shekinah in the Holy of Holies, the glory in the face of Christ, the origin of light in the temple of immortals of the age to come.

3. They ascribe wisdom (sophia) to God, this wisdom is embodied in Christ crucified (1 Cor.1: 24) who was foreordained before the world (Jewish world) – this was "hidden wisdom" (1 Cor.2:7) not discernible by the world. Wisdom was the divine "craftsman" from the beginning (Prov.8: 22,30), it is transmitted by his Spirit, personified by his Son (the wisdom of God) and manifested by all his children.

4. They offer thanksgiving (eucharista) – from the Greek, charizomai, - to give freely; an act of gratitude from which we derive the English word, eucharist, used to describe the act of worship associated with the sacrament. The ugliest sin is ingratitude.

5. They ascribe honour (time) to God. The Greek means primarily a valuing, hence a price (money) paid or received; by analogy value of the highest degree or esteem. God is to be worshipped. It may be that sometimes we come to think of him as someone to be used; but we ought not to forget his claims on our worship, so that we not only ask things from him but offer ourselves and all that we have to him. God's character as revealed to us in the person of Christ, deserves our highest esteem. "Christ was counted worthy of more glory than Moses, in as much as he who hath builded the house hath more honour than the house. For every house is builded of some man; but he that built (established) all things is God." (Heb.3: 3,4) How much more honour is his due?

6. They ascribe power (dunamis) to God. A word often associated with miracles and mighty (wonderful) works. This is the strength (dunamis) that is made perfect in weakness (2 Cor.12:9). [God's power perfected in the weakness of Christ's flesh.] The apostle Paul warned his opponents that, "the kingdom of God is not in word, but in power." (1 Cor.4: 20) This power is demonstrated as follows:

"I kill, and make alive;

I wound , and I heal;

And there is none that can

Deliver out of my hand." (Deut.32: 39)

The Sadducees misunderstood both his word and his power.. "Ye do err, not knowing the scriptures, nor the power of God....God is not a God of the dead, but of the living." (Mtt.22: 29-33) The power of God is demonstrated in the resurrection of those, who have faith in him.

7. They ascribe might (ischus) to God. The words might and power convey similar meanings. Both words are used together in the Epistle to the Ephesians. In fact many of the elements in the Revelation doxology are found in Eph.1:16-22, which is, itself, a paraphrase of Psalm 8.

REVELATION 7. EPHESIANS 1 and PSALM 8.

Blessing .

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in the heavenly places in Christ.(v.3)

Who hast set thy glory above the heavens. (8:1)

Glory

Father of glory (v.17)

Wisdom

The spirit of wisdom and revelation. (v.17)

Thanksgiving

Out of the mouths of babes and sucklings thou hast ordained strength. (praise) (8:2)

Honour

Crowned with honour. (8:5)

Power

The exceeding greatness of his power to usward who believe.....[hast ordained strength.]

Might

According to the working of his mighty (ischus) power (dunamis) which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead. (v.19,20)

"In whom (Christ) also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory." (Eph.1:13b,14)

The doxology in Jude (written after Revelation) , also bears many similarities with Revelation chapter seven.

Jude Revelation 7.

Hating the garment spotted washed their robes, and made them white

with the flesh in the blood of the lamb (v.14)

unto him that is able to keep shall be their shepherd and shall guide them

you from falling (v.17)

present you faultless before stood before the throne (v.9)

the presence of his glory

without blemish arrayed in white (v.13)

in exceeding joy thanksgiving (v.12)

to the only wise God wisdom (v.12)

our Saviour, Salvation (victory) to our God,

which sitteth on the throne,

through Jesus Christ our Lord, and unto the Lamb (v.10)

be glory glory (v.12)

and majesty,

dominion and power, power and might be

unto our God.

Both now,

And for evermore for ever and ever

Amen Amen (v.12)

WASHING FROM SIN

“And one of the elders answered, saying unto me, What are these which are arrayed in white robes? and whence came they? And I said unto him, Sir, thou knowest. And he said to me, These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.” (Rev.7:13-14)

These are the saints who have come through THE GREAT TRIBULATION or ORDEAL. In the first century this was the Nero persecution and the Jewish war. We have already demonstrated the parallels with the, “time of Jacobs trouble” when he confronted his brother and wrestled the angel. The great crowd are arrayed in white robes. These robes had been given to them (6:11)1 and therefore represents righteousness which is not their own. “and some of those who are wise shall fall, to refine and cleanse them and to make them white, until the time of the end, for it is yet for the time appointed.” [Dan.11:35 R.S.V.]

We have then, the paradoxical metaphor that they, “made them (the robes) white by the blood of the Lamb.” They had washed themselves in the waters of baptism, now they were washed in the blood of the Lamb. Does this indicate that they have undergone martyrdom like their Lord? Although they were given robes, they had to wash their own garments in his blood. That is to say, the act of redemption is Christ’s but the effect is not passive and man has to appropriate it. Christ is the faithful witness (Rev.1:5) and these witnesses (or martyrs) have metaphorically washed themselves in the blood that flowed from his side (representing his life) and in so doing have imitated his witnessing.

It is the blood of Christ which is cleansing us from all sin (1 John 1:7). It is the blood of Christ which makes expiation for us (Rom.3: 25) and it is through his blood that we have redemption (Eph.1: 7), and we are redeemed with the precious blood of Christ as of a lamb without blemish and without spot (1 Pet.1: 19). It is through his blood that we have peace with God (Col 1:20). His blood purges our conscience from dead works to serve the living God (Heb 9: 14).

To have washed themselves in the blood of the Lamb means that they have immersed themselves into his life. (for the blood is the life – Gen.9:4) They died for their witness, in so doing their robes were washed with his blood.(not their own)

There is still a great witnessing to happen.

The Israelites in Egypt marked their doorposts and lintels with the blood of the paschcal Lamb to protect them from the angel of death (Ex.12: 23). In each case the mark is a protection against the destructive agents of divine judgment. Now John undoubtedly envisaged the great martyrdom as a New Exodus, so that the sealing can be regarded as part of a new Passover; if the martyrs are not actually marked with the blood of the Lamb, they are certainly marked with his name (Rev. 14: 1).

“Whence came they? And I said unto him, sir thou knowest.” At one moment the stand point is that of heaven, where the whole process is complete (i.e. they have washed…….they stand); at the next it is the standpoint of earthly experience. “these are they which came out of the great tribulation” The present participle (are coming), however, gives the impression that the great tribulation is a prolonged process, which from John’s temporal standpoint was partly past and partly future.

The response to the question, ‘whence came they?’ is similar to that of Ezekiel 37: 3, when God asks him; “Son of man, can these bones live?” and Ezekiel replies, “O Lord God you know.”

God is omniscient, and knows the beginning from the end. Just as he is able to make the dry bones live and to, “open your graves, and cause you to come up out of your graves, O my people; and I will bring you into the land of Israel.” (Ezk.37: 12) , in like manner he is able to resurrect the faithful.

THE SERVICE AND THE BLISS OF THE BLESSED

“Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple: and he that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them. They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes.” (Rev.7:15-17)

The description of the state of blessedness is one that actually belongs to a time yet to come. So it is that almost every verb in these verses is in the future tense. We are being given a preview here of a scene which is, in fact, chronologically post resurrection and judgment. Notice these correspondences with the state of affairs that exist in the New Jerusalem of the kingdom age; (so N.Lunn. Alpha and Omega.pg.114)

“they shall serve (latreuo) him” (7:15) “his servants shall serve (latreuo) him” (22:3)

“in his temple (naos)” (7:15) “its temple (naos) is the Lord” (21:22)

“will tabernacle (skenoo) over them” (7:15) “the tabernacle (skene) of God is with men” (21:3)

“neither thirst (dipso) any more” (7:16) “to the thirsty (dipso) I will give ….” (21:6)

“the sun shall not fall upon them” (7:16) “the city has no need of sun” (21:22, 22:5)

“fountains (pege) of living water” (7:17) “the fountain (pege) of the water of life” (21:6)

“God will wipe (exaleipo) every tear” (7:17) “he will wipe away (exaleipo) every tear” (21:4)

These parallels demonstrate that the multitude of righteous saints do not receive their reward until after the Lord returns (c.f. Rev.22:12 – “my reward is with me”) Most of the details outlined above are self –explanatory. Some are quite literal – the service of the saints, for instance. The wiping away of tears may not be strictly literal but its meaning is readily grasped. The living water obviously denotes the water of life; i.e., eternal life through the gospel, thus those who thirst after salvation and righteousness will be satisfied. The only detail which might cause some difference of opinion is that of the sun. Is it literal or figurative? It is hard to accept that the literal sun could be such a problem to these people, so a figurative sense is probable. There is an allusion to Psa.121, “The sun will not smite you by day, nor the moon by night” (v.6) This is a reference to the cloud and the pillar of fire, during the wilderness wanderings (Ex.40: 34-38) – “He that dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High, shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty.” (Ps.91: 1) This is the language of God’s protective care. The purpose of this passage is obviously to comfort the generation of the last days with the thought that the generation of believers who suffered such severe persecution in the first century were assured of their place in the New Jerusalem. This assumes its relevance when we learn from the Apocalypse that the generation of the last days is to undergo a similar experience of suffering at the hands of the beast.

In contrast to the old covenant, where not even the Levitical High Priest was permitted to see God – the saints are able to approach before the throne. “Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God.” (Mtt.5: 8) There are no distinctions of race or status anymore, only one great multitude that encompasses the 144,000 as well. This is a vision of eternal bliss, where God dwells among his people. The Greek for to dwell is skenoo, from skene which means a tent. It is the same word as is used when John says the word became flesh and dwelt among us (Jhn.1: 14). The Jews always connected this with a certain Hebrew word which was somewhat similar in sound although quite unrelated in meaning. This was the word shekinah, the visible presence of the glory of God. Usually that presence took the form of a luminous cloud. So when the Ten Commandments were given, “the glory of the Lord settled on Mount Sinai, and the cloud covered it six days….. And the appearance of the glory of the Lord was like a devouring fire on the top of the mountain” (Ex.24 :16-18). It was the same with the Tabernacle. The cloud covered the tent of congregation and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle. Moses could not enter into the Tabernacle because of the glory of the Lord. This was the cloud which guided the Israelites by day and the fire that guided them by night. At the dedication of Solomon’s temple the glory of the Lord filled it so that the priest could not enter (2 Chron.7: 1-3) . Skenoo always turned the thoughts of a Jew to shekinah: and to say that God dwelt in any place was to say that his glory was there. This was always so for a Jew, but as time went on it became more and more so. The Jews came to think of God as increasingly remote from the world. They did not even think it right to speak of him as being in the world; that was to speak in terms which were too human; and so they took to substituting the shekinah, for the name of God. We read Jacob’s words at Bethel: “Surely the Lord is in this place.” (Gen.28: 16); the Rabbis changed that to: “The shekinah is in this place” In Habbakuk we read: “The Lord is in his holy temple” (Hab.2: 20); but later Jews said: “God was pleased to cause his shekinah to dwell in the temple.” In Isaiah we

read: “My eyes have seen the King the Lord of Hosts.” (Isa.6: 5) the later Jews altered it to: “My eyes have seen the shekinah, of the King of the world.” No Jew cold hear the word skenoo (dwell) without thinking of shekinah (presence of glory); and the real meaning of the passage is that God’s blessed ones would serve and live in the very sheen of his glory. It can be so on earth. He who faithfully witnesses for God has always the glory of God upon his work.

THE DIVINE SHEPHERD

This was the title that Jesus took for himself. I am the good shepherd (John.10:11,14) Peter calls Jesus the shepherd and bishop of our souls (1 Pet.2: 25) and the writer to the Hebrews speaks of him as that Great Shepherd of the sheep (Heb.13:20) He is both Lamb and Shepherd, First and Last.

“A Psalm of David. The LORD is my shepherd; (shepherd-7:17) I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters.(shall lead them unto living fountains of waters- 7:17) He restoreth my soul (the souls of them that were slain for the word of God and for the testimony which they held – 6:9): he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake. Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, (the great tribulation- 7:14) I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.(he shall guide them –7:17) Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies (they ascended up to heaven in a cloud; and their enemies beheld them – 11:12): thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell (he that sitteth on the throne shall dwell or spread his tabernacle among or over them – 7:15) in the house of the LORD for ever.” (Ps.23:1-6)

This beautiful picture is also reminiscent of the vision in Ezekiel 37: 22-28:

“And I will make them one nation in the land upon the mountains of Israel; and one king shall be king to them all: and they shall be no more two nations, neither shall they be divided into two kingdoms any more at all: Neither shall they defile themselves any more with their idols, (image of the beast –13:14) nor with their detestable things, nor with any of their transgressions: but I will save them out of all their dwelling places, wherein they have sinned, and will cleanse them: so shall they be my people, and I will be their God. And David my servant shall be king over them; and they all shall have one shepherd: they shall also walk in my judgments, and observe my statutes, and do them. And they shall dwell in the land that I have given unto Jacob my servant, wherein your fathers have dwelt; and they shall dwell therein, even they, and their children, and their children's children for ever: and my servant David shall be their prince for ever. Moreover I will make a covenant of peace with them; it shall be an everlasting covenant with them: and I will place them, and multiply them, and will set my sanctuary (the saints = the heavenly Jerusalem – 21:2) in the midst of them for evermore. My tabernacle (Jesus Christ – John 1:14) also shall be with them (Emmanuel) : yea, I will be their God, and they shall be my people. And the heathen shall know that I the LORD do sanctify Israel, when my sanctuary shall be in the midst of them for evermore.” (Ezk. 37:22-28)

The vision of the eschaton presented here, is an idealised situation based on the historical reality of the Davidic kingdom. During the reign of king David the sanctuary and the tabernacle existed side by side. There were two places of worship. Jerusalem and Gibeon. David took the ark to Jerusalem and pitched a tent over it (2 Sam.6:17) he acted as a Melchizedek king-priest (v.14,18,19) and he appointed Levites to minister before the ark.(1 Chron.16: 4) Two places of worship co-existed the ark at Jerusalem (1 Chron.16:37,38) and the high place at Gibeon where

the tabernacle remained, this was ministered by Zadok the priest (1 Chron.16:39-43). It was at the sanctuary at Gibeon that Solomon offered a thousand burnt offerings, and where the Lord appeared to him in a dream (1 Kgs.3: 4,5). It was in Jerusalem, that David went in and sat before the ark.

“Who am I, O Lord God? (i.e., I am not a Levite) and what is my house (i.e. not the house of Aaron), that thou hast brought me hitherto?” (2 Sam.7:18)

“And is this the manner of man, O Lord God?” (v.19)

The R.V. margin renders manner as law or ‘torah’ – literally: Is this the TORAH of ADAM, O Lord God? (i.e., where does it say in the law concerning man that I can come in and sit before you? – see Rom.3:27,28)

David had always desired only one thing:

“One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in his temple.” (Ps.24: 7)

David longed to ask God questions, for he perceived that there was a greater priesthood than the Aaronic. In response, he received the vision of Jesus Christ the Melchizedek high priest (Psalm 110) – he saw the vision when he was sat before the ark. It was on this occasion that he was granted the Davdic covenant – the Melchizedek priest would be both the son of David and the son of God (2 Sam.7:12-14).

The vision in Ezekiel 37: 22-28, is therefore based on the historical situation during David's reign. Reference is made to my servant David (v.24,25) the sanctuary (v.26) [at Gibeon] and the tabernacle. (v.27) [the ark at Jerusalem] These represent two forms of worship, the Aaronic and Melchizedek priesthoods.

This is a cameo of the eschaton. However, the kingdom will not have two forms of worship. The sanctuary of the kingdom age is the “heavenly Jerusalem” – the glorified saints, and the tabernacle is the Lord Jesus Christ.

“The word became flesh and dwelt (tabernacled - same word) among us and we beheld his glory as of the only begotten of the Father.” (Jhn.1: 14)

God did not desire a permanent house in the wilderness, but a mobile sanctuary, that could be disassembled and re-erected. There will be no blood sacrifices in the kingdom age – see chapter 20-22

“For in the time of trouble he shall hide me in his pavilion: in the secret of his tabernacle shall he hide me; he shall set me up upon a rock. And now shall mine head be lifted up above mine enemies round about me: therefore will I offer in his tabernacle sacrifices of joy; I will sing, yea, I will sing praises unto the LORD.”

(Ps.27:5-6)

SUMMARY

NOTES

1 The fig tree, a symbol of national Israel had borne fruit. It would bear fruit again – the little man Zacchaeus who climbed the sycamore (fig) tree (Lk.19: 1-10) – but in the end the tree was doomed to be cursed, because it was devoid of edible fruit. (Mtt. 21:18-20)

NOTES

1 The full quote goes as follows:

"I will gather them from the coasts of the earth, and with them the blind (ISAAC-Gen.27:1) and the lame (JACOB-Gen.32: 31) the woman with child (ZILPAH PREGNANT WITH GAD) and her that travaileth with child together (RACHEL – died in childbirth –cp. Rev.12:1. Gen.35:16) a great company (THE MEANING OF GAD'S NAME –Gen. 30:10) shall return hither. They shall come with weeping and supplications (like Jacob) will I lead them.." (Jer.31:8,9)

This is the, "Spirit of grace and supplication" When they will, "mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him (BEN – OMI-Gen.35:18) as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn." (Jacob, mourning the loss of Joseph, his firstborn by his favourite wife, Rachel) And the land shall mourn, every family [all the tribes of the 144,000] apart." (Zech.12: 10-14)

---

2 Jacob was concerned for his cattle, even just after his "wrestling" he was still thoughtful enough to care not to exhaust his animals: "the flocks and herds with young are with me: and if men should overdrive them one day, all the flocks will die." (Gen.33: 13) The Proverbs say, that, "A righteous man regardeth the life of his beast: But the tender mercies of the wicked are cruel." (12:10) If Jacob was concerned for his flock, how much more the Great shepherd and bishop of our souls?

NOTES

1 The Epistle to the Hebrews was written to the Jews at Ephesus. See the INTODUCTION TO REVELATION page 42-46.

NOTES

1 So G.B. Gray in THE EXPOSITOR (1902) pp.225-240. 'The Lists of the twelve tribes' – The four 'concubine tribes' (Manasseh being a substitute for Dan) for interrupt the sequence of the Leah tribes. He suggests that verses 5 and 6 have been displaced and ought to be restored to their proper position, either at the end of the list or after verse 8a. On the other hand, Gray himself pointed out that in the Old Testament lists there are no less than eighteen different arrangements of the tribes. Most commentators feel that it is unwise to assume that any one order is more rational or more traditional than another.

NOTES

1 Ephraim the younger obtains the blessing of the firstborn (Gen 48: 14), in it's practical outworking the blessing of Ephraim substitutes the blessing of Joseph, who never formed one of Israel's tribes. Joseph therefore received a double blessing, for both his sons became tribal progenitors. The motif of the second (younger) son being preferred over the elder, and obtaining the right of primogeniture is a theme frequently encountered in scripture – Jacob and Esau, Ephraim and Manasseh, Christ and Adam.

NOTES

1 Reuben lost the 'excellency of dignity' (priesthood) and the 'excellency of power' (kingship) – this represents the Melchizedek blessing. The tribe of Reuben, however, still harboured aspirations to leadership, and expressed this by joining the Korah rebellion. (Num. 16:1) As a consequence many perished, which explains the blessing of Moses, given at the borders of the Land; "Let Reuben live and not die; and let not his men be few." (Deut 33: 6)

---

2 When about to confront Esau, Jacob sent his handmaids first with their children, then Leah and her children, and lastly Rachel accompanied by Joseph himself. (Gen. 33: 1-2) This was clearly a display of favouritism. This displeases God and we find the list of the 144,000 now headed by the children of Leah and her handmaid.

---

3 The tribe of Levi (and Simeon ?) were temporarily restored to their rightful place after the golden calf incident (Ex.32:29) but later the priests were again cursed: "I will curse your blessings." (Mal.2: 2)

---

4 During the Tamar incident, Judah had lost the insignia of tribal leadership (Gen.38:18) but because of the love displayed towards his father (and brother) the "sceptre would not depart from Judah, nor the rulers staff (R.V.) from between his feet until Shiloh come. " (Gen.49: 10)

---

5 This was the object of Joseph's elaborate charade, to produce repentant behaviour. When he saw their change of heart he could no longer contain himself. (Gen.45: 1)

1 The first twelve of this series of numbers discovered by Fibonacci are as follows: F1=0, F2=1, F3=2, F4=3, F5=5, F6=8, F7=13, F8=21, F9=34, F10=55, F11=89, F12=144. They are determined by adding each number to the previous number.

NOTES

1 Wisdom was beside the Lord, like a master workman – this is not the language of pre – existence but of fore ordination. In like manner the martyrs are also the "wisdom of God" for their lives are, "hid with Christ in God." (Col.3: 3) Wisdom is not only an attribute of God, but also of Christ and his apostles, who were infused with the Spirit. Christ is, the, "wisdom of God", his apostles are by proxy the same. Stephen, the Lord's witness (martyr) was one of the seven, "full of the holy spirit and wisdom" (Acts 6:3) in this he was similar to Daniel, to whom, "God gave knowledge and skill in all learning and wisdom: and Daniel had understanding in all visions and dreams." (Dan.1: 17) These men had been gifted divine wisdom (like Solomon) Page_17 index_of_tables_and_diagrams

STEPHEN (Acts chpt.6)

DANIEL (chpt.1)

Full of wisdom (6:3;6:10)

All learning and wisdom (1:17)

Refused Judaism and Temple worship. (6:11-13)

Refused the kings meat. (1:8)

Compare Smyrna: tribulation for ten days: given a crown (stephanos) of life. (Rev.2:2)

Proved for ten days (1:12)

They saw his (Stephens) face as it had been the face of an angel. (6: 15)

Countenance fairer and fatter (1:15) [i.e., glowing with health]

Proverbs chapter 9 compares the difference between the wise and the foolish (v.13). Once again the contacts are instructive.

PROVERBS 9

ACTS 6 and 7

Wisdom hath builded her house, she hath hewn out her seven pillars. (v.1)

Seven men – full of the holy Spirit and wisdom. (6:3)

She hath also furnished her table. (v.2)

To serve tables. (6:2)

Eat of my bread, drink of the wine…and live. (v.6)

The agapae

Reprove not a scorner lest he hate thee. (v.8)

They gnashed on him with their teeth. (7:54)

For by me thy days shall be multiplied and the years of thy life increased. (v.11)

Stephen sees a vision of Christ and commits his spirit to him. (7:55-57)

The seven pillars of wisdom in Revelation are the seven ecclesias.

NOTES

1 Zechariah sees the high priest Joshua clothed in filthy garments and hears God say.... "Remove the filthy garments from him.....Behold, I have taken your iniquity away from you, and I will clothe you with rich apparel." (Zech.3:1-5) This passage symbolises a change of nature – immortality;

"For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven: if so be that being clothed we shall not be found naked." (2 Cor.5:3,4)

We observe that the clothing upon is not in heaven, but from heaven, and also that the state of nakedness represents vulnerability and mortality – Adam in the garden. The slain under the altar

(6: 11), are however, not immortal at this stage. The vision is proleptic – for they are told to rest a little season (this clearly indicates death) The receiving of a robe therefore represents a change of nature. In the first instance this is baptism. In preparation for the receiving of the commandments at Sinai, Moses commanded the people to wash their garments (Ex.19:10,14). The Psalmist prays to God, to, " wash him thoroughly from his iniquity, to purge him with hyssop, to wash him until he is whiter than snow" (Ps.51: 1-7). The prophet hears the promise, that, the sins which are as scarlet will be as white as snow and those that are red like crimson will be as wool (Isa.1: 18). Paul reminds his people in Corinth that they have been washed and sanctified (1 Cor.6: 11) The full import of receiving a robe is immortality, "when this corruptible shall put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality" (1 Cor.15: 53).

Chapters 8 & 9

REVELATION CHAPTER 8 AND 9 THE TRUMPETS

“Put the trumpet to your lips! An eagle (vulture) is over the house of the Lord, because the people have broken my covenant and rebelled against my law.” (Hos.8:1 -N.I.V.)

“ And when he had opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven about the space of half an hour. And I saw the seven angels which stood before God; and to them were given seven trumpets. And another angel came and stood at the altar, having a golden censer; and there was given unto him much incense, that he should offer it with the prayers of all saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne. And the smoke of the incense, which came with the prayers of the saints, ascended up before God out of the angel's hand. And the angel took the censer, and filled it with fire of the altar, and cast it into the earth: and there were voices, and thunderings, and lightnings, and an earthquake. And the seven angels which had the seven trumpets prepared themselves to sound.” (Rev. 8:1-6)

“And when…….” The trumpet section is introduced by the seventh seal with the Greek word hotan – literally, whenever, thus implying a breach of time. The trumpets are based on the Jewish new-year and specifically on the Day of Atonement rituals, ten days later (see introduction to Revelation page 49). The trumpet judgements are in response to the prayers of the saints from all the ages and there is silence in heaven while the Almighty considers their imprecations. The seals were fulfilled in the first century (shortly come to pass), the trumpets are not future anymore, for, they are unfolding before our very eyes if we are not to blind to see!

The destiny of the saints (both Jew and Gentile) the fate of the Gentile nations, indeed the future of the whole world is inextricably bound to the Jewish people. This is because God has associated his covenant name with their forefathers. (beloved for the fathers’ sake - Rom.11:28) Why should we be surprised then to find that the book of Revelation details God plan of redemption for the Jews?

“For if the casting away of them be the reconciling of the world, what shall the receiving of them be, but life from the dead?” (Rom.11:15)

The trumpets are a time of trouble for the nation of Israel, their purpose is two–fold:

to prepare a repentant remnant and to reveal the man of sin. In a chapter shot through with allusions to the Day of Atonement the prophet Isaiah has the following to say;

“Cry aloud, spare not, lift up thy voice like a trumpet, and show my people their transgression, and the house of Jacob their sins.” (Isa.58:1)

Just as the walls of Jericho fell at the blast of the seventh trumpet, and the last obstacle was removed before the people entered the promised land, so to the last trump heralds the introduction of the kingdom.

THE FIRST TRUMPET

“And the first angel sounded, and there followed hail and fire mingled with blood, and they were cast upon the earth: and the third part of trees was burnt up, and all the green grass was burnt up.” (Rev.8:7)

This is no ordinary hail storm, it is in fact the live, burning coals from the altar intermingled with the blood of the sacrifices (the saints). The fire for this incense offering was gotten in the form of

live coals from the brazen altar. (Lev 16:12), to which incense was then added. The golden altar, or altar of incense which stood in the Holy place before the veil was lighted by fire from the brazen altar (altar of burnt offering) which explains why the coals (hail stones) were mixed with blood.

Once a year on the great Day of Atonement, the high priest brought the incense within the veil, and, burning it on a fire in a censer in the Most Holy Place, enveloped the mercy seat in a cloud of odoriferous smoke.

There is however no Atonement for this people only retribution. The incense symbolises the prayers of the saints (Rev 8:4). This intimate connection between incense and prayer is reflected in Psalm 141:2 (R.S.V.)

“Let my prayer be counted as incense before thee, and the lifting up of my hands as the evening sacrifice.”

The saints are those who, “were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held.” Their ‘souls’ reside under the altar (brazen altar) and their prayer is for the avenging of their blood on them that dwell on the earth. (Rev.5: 9-10) The time for forgiveness has long since passed and it is fitting that burning coals from the brazen altar of burnt offering, soaked with the blood of the saints, should be cast into the earth.

Just as the generation of A.D. 70 had been punished for persecuting the apostles, so to this generation will be punished for the persecution and murder of the witnesses.

“that upon you may come all the righteous blood shed upon the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel unto the blood of Zacharias whom ye slew between the temple and the altar.” (note the context: Jerusalem that killest the prophets, Mtt. 23: 30-38 compare Rev. 11:8,9)

The scattering of burning coals from the altar recalls Ezek.10:2b,

“…fill thine hand with coals of fire from between the cherubim and scatter them over the city.” (of Jerusalem)

These burning coals burn a third part of the trees and all the green grass. The repetition of the phrase “a third part” occurs twelve times in the trumpet section (v.18 is a duplication of v.16) and is therefore indicative that the judgements concern Israel, the phrase also harks back to two passages that relate to the overthrow of Jerusalem.

“A third part you shall burn in the fire in the midst of the city, when the days of the siege are completed; and a third part you shall take and smite with the sword round about the city; and a third part you shall scatter to the wind, and I will unsheath the sword after them.” (Ezek.5: 2)

“In the whole land, says the Lord, two thirds shall be cut off and perish, and one third shall be left. And I will put the third part into the fire, and will refine them as silver is refined.” (Zech.13:8f)

Certain Old Testament presentations are without doubt recognisable as prototypes of the descriptions of individual catastrophes, such as the Egyptian plagues and the destruction of Sodom. Once again this is fitting for the city of Jerusalem is “spiritually called Sodom and Egypt.” (Rev.11:8)

“Then the Lord rained brimstone and fire upon Sodom and Gomorrah from the Lord out of heaven.” (Gen 19:24) The verb ‘rained’ (himtir) is identical to that used of the plague of hail in Exodus 9:23.

Jesus himself warned that, “the same day that lot went out of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven … so shall it be when the son of man is revealed.” (Lk.17: 29) God had promised to visit the plagues of Egypt upon the people if they were disobedient.

“Then the Lord will make thy plagues wonderful, and the plagues of thy seed, even great plagues, and of long continuance….moreover He will bring upon thee all the diseases of Egypt which thou wast afraid of.” (Deut.28:59,60)

The trumpets have a number of allusions to the plagues of Egypt:

TRUMPETS

PLAGUES OF EGYPT

1. Fire from altar cast upon the earth

1. Dust of the furnace (altar) sprinkled abroad

2. Hail and fire

2. Hail and fire

3. Sea became blood

3. Waters turned to blood

4. Darkness

4. Darkness

5. Locusts

5. Locusts

6. Abaddon

6. The Destroyer (Ex.12:23)

7. Men slain by Angels

7. The firstborn slain by Angels

The trees are undoubtedly a reference to the trees mentioned in the Joel prophecy (Joel 1:10-12)2 relating to the utter devastation caused by the Assyrian invasion (Sennacherib).

“A fire devoureth before them; and behind them a flame burneth: the land is as the garden of Eden before them, and behind them a desolate wilderness.” (Joel 2:3)

“For the fire devoured the pastures of the wilderness, and the flame hath burned all the trees of the field.” (Joel 1:19)

Both Isaiah and Ezekiel speak of the invader as coming upon the land of Israel as a “tempest of hail”3

THE SECOND AND THIRD TRUMPET

“And the second angel sounded, and as it were a great mountain burning with fire was cast into the sea: and the third part of the sea became blood; and the third part of the creatures which

were in the sea and had life, died; and the third part of the ships were destroyed. And the third angel sounded, and there fell a great star from heaven, burning as it were a lamp, and it fell upon the third part of the rivers, and upon the fountains of waters; And the name of the star is called Wormwood: and the third part of the waters became wormwood; and many men died of the waters, because they were made bitter." (Rev.8:10-11)

The reason the second and third trumpet have been banded together is because they are a doublet.

- burning mountain - burning star

- cast into the sea - fell on the source of the waters

- sea turned into blood - rivers become bitter

One falls into the sea, the other effects the source of the waters that flow into the sea. Both trumpets are based on the fall of Babylon. The burning mountain is Babylon (Jer.51: 25,42) and the burning star is Babylon (Isa.14:4,12-20)

"Though Babylon should mount up to heaven (compare Lucifer), and though she should fortify the height of her strength, yet from me shall spoilers come unto her, saith the Lord." (Jer.51:53)

Babylon will sink into the Euphrates under the weight of the curses spoken against her (Jer.51:63,64) she will sink like a millstone cast into the sea (Rev.18:21) her sins have

reached unto heaven (Rev.18:5 like the tower of Babel) and she will be cast down like a falling star. She is the woman who sits on many waters (17:18) – the Euphrates (Jer.51:13) the source of her wealth, from which she exports her poison1 to the sea. (contrast the New Jerusalem exporting the water of life – 22:1)

Her fall also effects a third of the ships of the sea for the rich merchants lament the loss of trade (18:17-19). Even the sea creatures are effected (Ps 104:29).2 She is guilty of the blood of the prophets (witnesses) and the saints (18:24) in fact she is drunk with their blood (17:6).

She has power for one hour (17:12) but her judgement comes in that same hour (18:19). She is betrayed by her lovers who burn her with fire, this is God's will, for she, "shall be utterly burned with fire; for strong is the Lord God who judgeth her." (18:8)

Her fate is to be burnt. She is both a burning mountain and a burning star. "Render unto her double according to her works." (18:6)

See Digression 8.1 – THE TWO BABYLONS.

NOTE 1 CONTINUED

In the future Jerusalem will become a fountain of living waters for cleansing the land. (Zech.13:1; Rev.22:1) Note the context of Zechariah chpt.13:

ZECHARIAH 13

REVELATION

I will cut of the names of the idols (v. 2)

Idols of gold, silver ….(9: 20) –image of the beast (13: 5)

The unclean spirit (v.2)

Devils, spirits of devils (9: 20; 16:13,14)

Prophets ashamed everyone of his vision (v. 4)

The false prophet

Neither shall they wear a hairy garment (like Elijah) to deceive (v. 4)

The false witnesses (this is essentially the same thing as the false prophet see Rev.13 :13-14.

Jesus himself referred to 'the mountain cast into the sea' in the context of judgement against the nation of Israel (cursing the fig tree). The mountain was obviously the temple mount. Note also the reference to prayer: 'whatsoever things ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive.' (Mtt.21: 18-22) The trumpets are also in response to the prayers (incense) of the saints (8: 4). The judgements of the first century are a type of the judgements in our day. The burnt mountain represents Israel, in particular the temple mount. Capernaum, the city that rejected Christ's witnessing 'a city exalted to heaven, shall be thrust down to hell.' (Lk.10:14) Just as the city of Capernaum fell like a burning star, so the nation of Israel (represented by the star of David) will also fall because they reject 'the latter day witness', that is about to happen.

The following is an extract from John Romer's book, Testament (The Bible and History pg.151) :

"The cataclysmic destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple had created an explosion of scholarship. There was a determination that whatever might happen in the future, the law and the sacred writings of Israel would be preserved. The holy texts, the Hebrew Bible, had been fixed forever. There would be no more writings recording the relationship of Jehovah and his chosen people. The faith that had been lived with it's God in time now moved into a timeless limbo. Rabbi Akiva would attend the ending of this religious tradition. In his old age he saw the last phases of his holy history rising around him. About A.D. 130 he went on the warpath, travelling through the Jewish communities of the Eastern Empire (i.e. Babylon – my emphasis) preaching an imminent apocalypse and the establishment of the direct rule of Jehovah on earth. He named and anointed a resistance leader as the Messiah come to free the Jews. The cold light of revolt flared like a comet over Israel. (my emphasis) While scholars sat in Jamnia copying books of the law, charting Jehovah's path through the nations history wild-eyed fighting men saw the same deity as a modern ally who could destroy the mighty resources of Rome. Like an ancient prophet, Akiva set his hand on a guerrilla leader named Ben Kosebah. A son of the house of David, just as the ancient prophets said the Messiah would be, Ben Kosebah was renamed Bar Kochba, Son of the star. (my emphasis) The revolt, as had happened sixty years earlier, had an initial success. Coins were issued decorated with a picture of the destroyed Temple with a star over it's door, dated from the first second or third years 'of the freedom of Zion' (my emphasis: revolt 3½ years) Yet not all the rabbis were convinced of Bar Kochbas divine role. "Grass will grow through your skull, Akiva ", a fearful colleague declared, "and still the son of David will not have come." Once again the Roman legions were marshalled in force and war ravaged Judea. But this time there was no Josephus to record the sad details. We can only judge the terror from the records which report a succession of small pungent incidents. It is said that at the end the Roman cavalry charged crowds so dense that the blood of the slain washed the withers of the horses. (my emphasis – does this not remind one of Rev.14: 20?) It is said also that to prevent the enslavement of their children some Jews wrapped them up in sacred parchments and set fire to the parchments. Judea was virtually destroyed. The Romans pursued

the last survivors into the desert to frightful, lonely endings (contrast Rev.12: 6). Sometimes their sad remains still come to light – a little basket of letters and deeds, a child's toy, a mirror, a fine bowl made of bright blue glass, some balls of wool with which a woman was knitting a winter cloak, (compare Mtt.24:17,18) and the desiccated bodies of the dead." [see also Digression 11.1 note 1] The events of the first century typify the last day events in Israel. The "son of a star " had all the attributes of the "man of sin" he was a false Messiah accompanied by a false prophet (Rabbi Akiva) he persecuted the saints, his revolt lasted three and one half years, and was supported by Babylonian Jews. The symbol for the secular state of Israel is still the star of David. The trumpet judgements have only recently begun, the burning mountain and burning star are based on Babylon but are clearly meant to be applied to the nation of Israel in the 'latter days.'

Note 2 continued.

GENESIS

TRUMPETS

VIALS

DAY 1 - LIGHT

The Lamb the glory not the sun (7:16,17)

The glory of God (15: 8)

DAY 2 - THE HEAVENS

Altar before the throne (8:3)

Voice out of the temple (16: 1)

DAY 3 - LAND,SEA,GRASS AND TREES

1st TRUMP - EARTH

2nd TRUMP - SEA

3rd TRUMP - RIVERS

1st VIAL - EARTH

2nd VIAL - SEA

3rd VIAL - RIVERS

DAY 4 - SUN,MOON AND STARS

4th TRUMP - SUN

4th VIAL - SUN

DAY 5 - SEA CREATURES AND BIRDS

5th TRUMP - BEAST

5th VIAL - BEAST

DAY 6 - MAN AND WOMAN IN EDEN

6th TRUMP - EUPHRATES (EDEN)

6th VIAL - EUPHRATES (EDEN)

DAY 7 - SABBATH

7th TRUMP - KINGDOM

7th VIAL - AIR (KINGDOM)

The 5th vial is poured out on the kingdom of the beast, the 5th trumpet also concerns the beast, for the abyss (= bottomless pit = sea) is opened (9:1) and it is from the abyss that the beast emerges (Rev.11:7 ; 17: 8). The sea beast that God created on the 5th day is Leviathan which is a sea crocodile (see Job 41 especially verse 31) representing a beast-empire, whose destiny is to be punished by God (Ps 74: 14; Isa.27:1). The Leviathan destroyed in Psalm 74 was the nation of Egypt, "who became meat to the people inhabiting the wilderness." (i.e. they plundered the Egyptians) The fourth beast of Dan.7:7 that emerges from the sea (v. 3) is probably based on Leviathan.

The 6th trumpet (and vial) effect the region of the Euphrates – this is the geographic location of the garden of Eden. (Gen. 2: 10-15) Psalm 104 also mentions the springs (v. 10) the trees (v. 16) the sun and the moon (v. 19, 20) the ships (v. 26) the smoking (burning) mountain (v. 32) all of these are the subjects of the trumpet and vial judgements.

The last verse of the Psalm provides a succinct summary:

"Let sinners be consumed out of the earth,

And let the wicked be no more."

THE FOURTH TRUMPET

"And the fourth angel sounded, and the third part of the sun was smitten, and the third part of the moon, and the third part of the stars; so as the third part of them was darkened, and the day shone not for a third part of it, and the night likewise." (Rev.8:12)

The sun, moon and stars are always associated with Israel. (See chpt.11 note 2 and also digression 12.2) The language in this trumpet is similar to Isaiah 13: 10;

"For the stars of heaven and the constellations thereof shall not give their light: the sun shall be darkened in his going forth, and the moon shall not cause her light to shine."

This verse forms part of the prophet's burden of Babylon. It is profitable to examine this prophecy in more depth. Even a cursory examination of chapter 13 reveals that both Babylon and Judah fall under God's condemnation.

The structure of the chapter is as follows:

1-5 Prophecy – Babylon to punish Judah

---

6 THE DAY OF THE LORD

7, 8 Consequences for Judah

---

9 THE DAY OF THE LORD

---

10 HEAVENS DARKENED

11,12 Consequences for the world

---

13 THE DAY OF HIS FIERCE ANGER HEAVENS SHAKEN

14,15 Consequences for Babylon and her allies

16-22 Prophecy – Punishment of Babylon

(See Digression 8.2 : THE BURDEN OF BABYLON)

The fourth trumpet makes it apparent that the eclipse is only partial, “the day shone not for a third part of it, and the night likewise.”

To summarise; the first four trumpets all have a Babylonian – Assyrian motif in common:

1. Hail – Babylonian\Assyrian invasion likened to hail

2. Burning mountain – Babylon

3. Burning star – Babylon\Assyria

4. Heavens darkened – Burden of Babylon

The nation of Israel, and specifically the city of Jerusalem, becomes Babylon and she will therefore suffer the same fate.

THE THREE WOES

“And I beheld, and heard an angel flying through the midst of heaven, saying with a loud voice, Woe, woe, woe, to the inhabiters of the earth by reason of the other voices of the trumpet of the three angels which are yet to sound.” (Rev.8:13)

The R.V. has an eagle flying through the midst of heaven (aetos) – the Greek word is often translated eagle or vulture and is connected with aemi, to blow. The meaning of this verse has possibly been corrupted, for John beheld, and heard an eagle (vulture) flying. It should probably read as follows:

“And I beheld a vulture flying through the midst of heaven, and heard him saying with a loud voice, woe, woe, woe.....”

This reminds us immediately of Hos.8:1 (N.I.V.)

“Put the trumpet to your lips! An eagle (vulture) is over the house of the Lord, because the people have broken my covenant and rebelled against my law.”

The meaning seems to be that, the birds of prey are gathering where the carcass is, for the judgements of God are about to descend on the corrupt nation. (See digression 8.3 THE BIRDS OF PREY)

The eagle (vulture) herald, associates the three woes with the last three trumpet blasts of the angels. The woes are progressively worse until the last trumpet introduces the kingdom.

The fifth trumpet (9:1) - 1st woe – ends at 9: 12

The sixth trumpet (9:13) - 2nd woe – ends at 11:14

The seventh trumpet (11:15) - 3rd woe- ends ?

The third woe is not specifically enumerated at the conclusion of the seventh trumpet. The seventh trumpet, however, also encompasses the seven vials from which the seven last plagues are poured out. The sixth vial describes the events at Armageddon. This occurs at the return of Christ (see 16:15) the details of which are enlarged upon in Revelation chapter 19:

“And he hath on his vesture and on his thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS. And I saw an angel standing in the sun; and he cried with a loud voice, saying to all the birds (R.V.) that fly in the midst of heaven, come and gather yourselves together unto the supper of the great God; that ye may eat the flesh of Kings, and the flesh of captains, etc...” (v. 16-18)

The last woe, must then be associated with the final fall of Babylon, which occurs just before the establishment of the kingdom. It has already been observed that Babylon falls twice. First when she is destroyed by the ten kings (see digression 8.1- THE TWO BABYLONS), then, once again when she is destroyed by Christ. The judgement of (both) Babylons is recounted in 17:1-19:21, where the phrase, “Woe, woe, you great city.” Is repeated three times. (18:10,16,19) The phrase, “Woe to the bloody city”, is directed at Nineveh in Nah.3:1 and is used twice by the prophet Ezekiel against the city of Jerusalem. (Eezk.24:6-9) Jeremiah invoked double destruction upon the people of Jerusalem (17:18) as did the prophet Isaiah (40:1).

Jerusalem had become like Nineveh – Babylon and would therefore receive double from the Lord’s hand.

Therefore the first two woes concern Israel, specifically Jerusalem - the Jewish Babylon– and the last woe pronounces judgement on the gentile Babylon.

THE FIFTH AND SIXTH TRUMPET

“And the fifth angel sounded, and I saw a star fall from heaven unto earth: and to him was given the key of the bottomless pit. And he opened the bottomless pit, and there arose a smoke of a great furnace; and the sun and the air1 were darkened by reason of the smoke of the pit.” (Rev.9:1-2)

In the three woes, announced by the eagle (vulture) of the previous verse we have already identified a reference to the carcass of the nation and the covenant of Genesis 15 (See digression 8.3 THE BIRDS OF PREY) It is only natural that this theme should continue.

REVELATION

GENESIS 15

Eagle(vulture) flying (8:13)

The birds of prey come down (15:11)

Bottomless pit (9:1)

A horror of great darkness (15: 12)

Smoke of a great furnace (9: 2)

A smoking furnace (15: 17)

Sun darkened (9:2)

Sun went down (15: 17)

It is appropriate that the demise of the nation should be framed in the words of the Abramic covenant.2 The smoke of the pit is a reminder of the judgement of Sodom (Gen.19:28) for the city (Jerusalem) had spiritually become like Sodom.(Rev.11:8)

Just as the Lord had sent his angels to destroy Sodom, "for we will destroy this place, for the cry of them is waxen great before the face of the Lord; and the Lord hath sent us to destroy it." (Gen.19:13) So now the Lord had sent his angel Abaddon (=destroyer) to organise the retribution. (Rev.9:11)3

The picture that is drawn for us is that of the powers of hell (sheol) are unleashed upon the nation. It was to hell that the mighty nations of old had been consigned,

"all of them slain, fallen by the sword, which are gone down uncircumcised into the nether parts of the earth, which caused their terror in the land of the living; yet have they borne their shame with them that go down to the pit." (Ezek.32: 18-32)

But now the sceptre of a persecuting kingdom is figuratively, "resurrected from the dead."

" The beast that thou sawest was and is not; and yet shall ascend out of the bottomless pit (abyss) and goeth into perdition." (Rev.17: 18)

At the end of the millennium4the same picture is repeated , Satan is again released from the pit, where the angel with the key had incarcerated him. (Rev.20: 1,2)

THE FIFTH AND SIXTH TRUMPET

The reason the fifth and sixth trumpet are treated together (like the second and third) is that there are a number of similarities between the narratives, which suggest that the two passages are doublets.

FIFTH TRUMPET REV. 9:1-11

SIXTH TRUMPET REV.9:13-19

(1) Nature of the plague (v. 1-6)

(1) Nature of the plague (v. 13-16)

(a) Abyss opened (v. 2)

(a) Four angels released (v. 14 -15a)

(b) Purpose of plague (v.4 -5)

(b) Purpose of plague (v. 15b – 16)

(2) Description of locust army (v. 7 –10)

(2) Description of cavalry of 200 million (v.17)

(a) Lethal nature of their tails (v.10)

(a) Lethal nature of mouths and tails of horses (v.19)

This does not mean that the sixth trumpet is the same as the fifth trumpet, but that it is an intensification of the previous woes. The fifth and sixth trumpets bear many similarities and contrasts with the sealing of the 144,000 in Revelation chapter 7.

REVELATION CHAPTER 7

REVELATION Chpt. 8,9 (5+6th Trump)

Four angels (v.1)

Four angels (9: 15)

Restraining four winds (v. 1)

Releasing destruction from the Euphrates (9:14)

Angel ascending from the east [sunrise] (v.2)

A star [angel] fall [descending] from heaven (8:1)

Having the seal of the living God (v.2)

Having the key of the bottomless pit (8:1)

Hurt not the earth neither the sea (v.3)

Should not hurt the grass of the earth (8:4)

I heard the number of them –144,000 [sealed] (v.4)

Only hurt those men which have not the seal of God (8:4)

A great multitude [of saints] which no man could number (v.9)

And the number of the horsemen were 200 million I heard the number of them [the enemy] (9: 15)

The 144,000 were sealed in chapter 7 as a consequence of the great ordeal in the first century – the Jewish and Nero persecutions. Chapter 8 and 9 relate another sealing also as a

consequence of a great ordeal which will occur shortly. The sealing and the destruction are concurrent events, just as they were in Egypt.

The witnessing to the nation happens during a time of down treading (11:2) until the witnesses are killed by the beast from the abyss.5 (11:7)

The result of the witnessing is another sealing – just like the witnessing of Christ and his apostles were effective in sealing the 144,000.

The people of Israel are left without excuse for God does not send retribution without first appealing for repentance. That is why there are similarities between the first century witnessing in A.D. 70 and the latter day witnessing.6

LUKE 10 (1st Cent.)

REVELATION 9

Satan as lightning fall from heaven (v.15)

I saw a star fall from heaven unto earth (v.1)

Power to tread on scorpions and serpents (v.19)

Power as the scorpions of the earth have power (v.3)

Nothing shall in any wise hurt you (v.19)

They should not hurt the grass of the earth (v.4)

Your names written in heaven (v. 20)

Only those men which have not the seal of God (v.4)

Moreover the witnesses have power to exacerbate the misery of the retribution against the nation, this is demonstrated by the similarity in language between chapter 9 and 11.

REVELATION CHAPTER 9

REVELATION CHAPTER 11

Locusts – horses

Witnesses

Tormented (9:5)

Tormented them (11:10)

Unto them was given power (9:3)

I will give power (11:3)

By these three plagues (9:18)

To smite the earth with all plagues (11:6)

Fire, smoke and brimstone proceedeth out of their mouths (9:18)

Fire proceedeth out of their mouth (11:5)

Power to hurt men (9:10)

Power to shut heaven – power over the waters (11:6)

This may well explain why the locusts have anthropomorphic features (faces like men and long hair like women 9:7-8) for they are the outworking of the prophetic programme dictated by the witnesses, and therefore have the features of the witnesses? 7

The programme of retribution is based on the locust invasion of Joel:

JOEL

REVELATION

Woe, woe, woe (2: 15 LXX)

Woe, woe, woe (9:1)

Blow the trumpet in Zion (2: 1)

Fifth (and sixth) trumpet (8: 13)

Smoke (2: 30)

Smoke (9: 2)

Darkness (2: 2)

Darkness (9: 2)

Sun darkened (2: 10)

Sun darkened (9: 2)

Their appearance is like the appearance of horses.....in battle array (2: 4f)

The appearance of the locusts was as horses prepared for battle (9: 7)

Whose teeth are the teeth of a lion (1: 6)

Teeth were like the teeth of a lion (9: 8)

The sound of chariots (1:6)

The sound of chariots (9:9)

The picture is that of an Assyro – Babylonian invasion and continues the themes of the previous trumpets.8 The paradox of the situation is that while the first trumpets recount the fall of the nation in terms of the fall of Babylon, the last trumpets inform us that this is accomplished by Babylon. Babylon destroys Babylon !

The purpose of the fifth and sixth trumpet is not only retribution but repentance, as it was during the ministry of the prophet Joel.9 This was however not to be, for they “repented not” (Rev.9: 20) even after the intensification of the woes in the sixth trumpet.

Particular attention is drawn to a five month period of “torment” (Rev.9: 5,10) this is based on the Genesis flood account, when the waters were on the earth for five months. (Gen.7: 24)10

The consequence of this torment is that “men shall seek death, and shall not find it; and shall desire to die, and death shall flee from them.” (Rev.9: 6)11 Peter Watkins comments as follows:

“The people of Israel have been scattered into other lands, but the locusts pursued them relentlessly. As in Joel, these locusts are a symbol of the enemies of Israel. The thoroughness of locusts is proverbial. The people who have cut themselves off from God – “which have not the seal of God in their foreheads” (9: 4) – are persecuted so severely that they seek death. As a nation they want to die. They want to loose their national identity and be assimilated by other nations and thus escape persecution: but this is denied them.” (Exploring the Apocalypse page 156)

The sixth trumpet is an intensification of the nations woes. Gods angels have until now been restraining the evil from the Euphrates12 but they can no longer hold back the flood of evil. Such is the hatred of these nations that a flood of destruction now bursts forth, but this is also God’s will, for these enemies have been prepared for this exact moment in divine history. (9: 15)

The structure of this section of Revelation can be termed as progressive parallelism, for the fifth and sixth trumpet are parallel with (part) of the witnessing mission of chapter 11 and also with the events surrounding the beast empire of chapter 13 and it’s demise as described in 16:12-14. It has already been demonstrated how the witnessing runs parallel with the fifth trumpet and the following comparison should show that this structure is also valid for the beast empire.

THE SIXTH TRUMPET (chpt.9)

THE BEAST,IMAGE OF THE BEAST AND THE FALSE PROPHET

The great river Euphrates (v. 14)

Beast coming out of the sea (Persian Gulf) leopard, bear and lion characteristics. [Greek Seleucid, Medo-Persian, Babylonian empire] (13: 1-2)

The sixth vial poured on the Euphrates (16: 12)

Repented not of the works of their hands (v. 20)

Repented not of their works (16: 11)

They should not worship devils13 (v.20)

They are the spirits of devils [unclean spirits] (16: 14)

Idols of gold, silver and brass14 (v.21)

Image of the beast (13: 15) [gold, silver, brass = Babylonian, Medo –Persian, Greek Seleucid empires]

Murder (v.21)

Those who refuse worship killed (13: 15)

Sorceries15 (v.21)

False prophet doest great wonders (13: 13,14)

Fornication (v.21)

The harlot (17: 5)

The sixth trumpet speaks of a Babylonian invasion, the metals indicate Babylonian centred empires – note the distinct lack of iron.

The vials of chapter 16 effect the same arena's (sea, rivers, sun etc) as the trumpets. They are the seven last plagues (Rev. 15: 1) before the kingdom is established. These plagues are poured out on the Gentile nations (beast empire) for persecuting the saints and swallowing the land of Israel. Together with the three plagues of the sixth trumpet ("By these three plagues was a third part of men killed" Rev.9: 18) these make ten plagues.

Egypt was plagued with ten plagues the first three effected both Israel and Egypt but with the last seven God made a distinction, for these effected only Egypt. (Ex.8: 22-23)

This demonstrates that our interpretation is correct, for the chapters concerning the trumpets (Judgements on Israel by the beast and ten kings) and the witnessing are parallel and culminate with the judgement of the beast empire itself and the establishment of the kingdom. (seventh trumpet)

Further comments

John uses Old Testament imagery to convey what is in essence a 21st century invasion and occupation. It emerges from the text that John had difficulty describing to his first century readers what he actually saw and heard ;

- the likeness (R.V.) of the locusts

- sound of their wings as the sound of chariots

- breastplates as of fire (i.e. gleaming, shinning like fire)

Is John, for example, describing an attack helicopter? With the beating rotors, the gleaming metal, the bulbous elongated cockpit with the human face (faces were as the faces of men?), rockets and guns capable of firing in both directions (stings in their tails?).

This is only speculation and is offered here as a suggestion.

NOTE THE SYMETRY BETWEEN THE FIRST CENTURY AND THE FUTURE

FIRST CENTURY (Ch.5+6)

FUTURE (Ch.10,11)

Sealed scroll

Sealed thunders

5th seal: How long?

How long? Implicit question compare 10:5-7 with Dan.12: 6

Answer: the giving of the book of Revelation

Answer: the little book: commission to witness

Death of apostles (witnesses)

Death of witnesses

6th seal : Christ and apostles vindicated by destruction of the Temple

Witnesses vindicated by the destruction of the wailing wall? (earthquake Rev.11:13)

144,000 sealed (chpt. 7)

144,000 sealed (chpt. 14)

JEREMIAH AND THE TRUMPETS

Much of the language and idiom of the trumpet section contains woven context material from the book of Jeremiah. This has already been noted by H.A.W., and for the sake of completeness I have included two comparisons between Jer. chpt. 6 and Jer.chpt.8 and Revelation. Also included is my own comparison with Jeremiah chpt.4.

The comparisons all reinforce the conclusion that the trumpets concern the nation of Israel and specifically the city of Jerusalem.

(From Revelation: a biblical approach by H.A.W.)

JEREMIAH 6

v.1: Blow the trumpet in Tekoa

v.17: Hearken to the sound of the trumpet

v.15: They have committed abomination.....nay, they were not at all ashamed, neither could they blush (cp.Rev 9:20,21)

v.20: Your incense and offerings are not acceptable (contrast Rev. 8:3-5)

v.22: A people cometh from the north country (cp.Rev.9: 14-16)

v.23: They ride upon horses (cp.Rev.9: 16)

v.26: O daughter of my people....bitter lamentations (cp.Rev.8:11; reference to the trial of the bitter waters of jealousy? Num.5)

JEREMIAH 8

REVELATION 8,9

v.2. The idols "which they have loved, served, walked after, sought, worshipped"

9: 20 "Idols of gold, and silver, and brass, and stone, and wood; which can neither see, nor hear, nor walk"

v.3. "Death shall be chosen rather than life"

9: 6 "Men shall seek death and shall not find it"

v.5. "Why is this people of Jerusalem slidden back by a perpetual backsliding? They hold fast deceit, they refuse to return"

9:20 "Yet they repented not of the works of their hands....neither repented they of their murders etc"

v.7. The stork knoweth her appointed times ..but my people doth not know"

9: 15 "Prepare (the attacking army) for the hour and day and month and year"

v.14."The Lord hath given us water of gall (wormwood) to drink"

8: 11"The star wormwood…and many men died, because the waters were made bitter"

v.16. "The snorting of his horses was heard….the whole land trembled at the sound of the neighing of his strong ones"

9: 9 "The sound of many horses running to battle"

v.17. I will send serpents, cockatrices among you…and they shall bite you"

9: 5 "Their torment was as the torment of a scorpion when he striketh a man"

v.20. "The harvest is past the summer is ended, and we are not saved"

9: 5 The end of the five month siege of Jerusalem (it came in August) , and only hopelessness.

v.22. "Is there no balm in Gilead?"

Saints in Pella (Gilead) pleading for Jerusalem, yet unable to save it (9: 13)?

v.19. "The cry of the daughter of my people from a land that is far off

Israel sold into captivity in far-off lands

v.19. "Is not the Lord in Zion? Is not her King in her?"

Jerusalem rejected as God's dwelling place. The Messiah no longer acknowledged there by any.

It is apparent from the last few verses of the above table (v.20,22,19) that H.A.W. gives the trumpets a first century fulfilment as well as a last days fulfilment. Prophecy often has a long term and a short term fulfilment and it must be taken into consideration that divine patterns often repeat themselves. The present author is content to view the trumpet section as having an outworking in our day – however the 'breach of time' and 'chronometrical principles' have demonstrated that there is often an element of ambiguity in prophecies, with, for example, prophecies concerning the first and second advent woven together without any time element present. In order to demonstrate this I have included a comparison between Jeremiah chapter 4 and Revelation. The comparison includes references to the seals and the trumpets. The language of Jeremiah has then an application to the fall of Jerusalem in B.C. 586, A.D.70 (seals) and the future (trumpets). From the viewpoint of the eternal God (and his prophet Jeremiah) these are all one and the same event.

JEREMIAH CHAPTER 4 AND REVELATION

JEREMIAH CHPT 4

REVELATION

Ye shall have peace…….(v.4) How long shall thy vain thoughts lodge within thee? (v.14)

- for she saith in her heart, 'I sit a queen and am no widow, and shall see no sorrow. (18: 7)

For I have heard a voice as of a woman in travail and the anguish as of her that bringeth forth her first child, the voice of the daughter of Zion, that bewaileth that spreadeth her hands, saying, woe is me now! For my soul she is wearied because of murderers. (v.31)

- and there appeared a great wonder in heaven; a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars. And she being with child, travailing in birth, pained to be delivered. (12: 1,2)

Behold he shall come up as clouds, and his chariots shall be as the whirlwind: his horses are swifter than eagles. Woe unto us for we are spoiled. (v.13)

THE FIRST FOUR SEALS: and there went out another horse…the four horses of the cherubim.

(6: 1-8)

THE TRUMPETS: and I saw an eagle in the midst of heaven, saying with a loud voice Woe, woe, woe. (8:13) [last three trumpet woes]

I beheld the mountains, and lo they trembled, and all the hills moved lightly. (v24) I beheld the earth, and lo it was without form, and void; and the heavens and they had no light.(v.23) For this shall the earth mourn, and the heavens shall be black…(v.28)

THE SIXTH SEAL:

-Earthquake

- and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became blood. (6: 1-8)

A dry wind of the high places in the wilderness toward the daughter of my people, not to fan, nor to cleanse, even a full wind from these places shall come unto me: Now also will I give sentence unto them (v.11,12) for this gird ye with sackcloth lament and howl. (v.8)

THE SIXTH SEAL:

- the fig tree shaken of a mighty wind.

(6: 1-8)

- my two witnesses shall prophesy 1260 days clothed in sackcloth. (11: 3)

Blow ye the trumpet in the land: Cry, gather together and say: 'Assemble yourselves, and let us go into the defenced cities.' (v.5)

Oh my soul, the sound of the trumpet, the alarm of war. (v.19)

TRUMPETS:

- and I saw the seven angels which stood before God: And to them were given seven trumpets. (8: 1)

Destruction upon destruction is cried; for the whole land is spoiled, suddenly are my tents spoiled and my curtains in a moment. (v.20)

FIRST TRUMPET WOE:

Whose name in the Hebrew tongue is Abaddon (= the destroyer) but in the Greek hath his name Apollyon (= the destroyer)

[double destruction] (9: 11)

And when thou art spoiled, what wilt thou do? Though thou clothest thyself with crimson, though thou rentest thy face with painting, in vain shalt thou make thyself fair: thy lovers will despise thee, they will seek thy life. (v.30)

- and the woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet colour, and decked with gold and precious stones. (17: 4)

- and the ten horns which thou sawest upon the beast, these shall hate the whore, and shall make her desolate and naked, and shall eat her flesh and shall burn her with fire. (17: 6)

NOTES

1 Although there are a number of allusions to the Egyptian plagues in the trumpets, only three are actually called plagues. (Rev.9:18) This is important for together with the seven last plagues (Rev.15:1 – 16:21) these constitute the ten plagues of Egypt. For further exposition of this see the fifth and sixth trumpet.

---

2 The Joel prophecy mentions four different trees; the fig tree, the pomegranate tree, the palm tree and the apple tree. Jesus Christ refers to these in Luke 21:29,30.

“Behold the fig tree, and all the trees; when they now shoot forth, ye see and know of your own selves that summer is now nigh at hand.”

All the trees is not a reference to the surrounding nations, but a metaphor for all aspects of Jewish affairs i.e. a complete renaissance of the Jewish people. However, as the first trumpet indicates, the renaissance is short lived, for these are destined to be burned. The fig tree is a symbol for the Jewish state and Jewish nationalism (Mtt.21:18-22) Adam and Eve tried to hide their nakedness behind fig leaves. (Gen.3:7)

Jeremiah recounts how Nebuchadnezzar break in pieces the two pillars of the temple; Jachin and Boaz (He[YAH] shall establish in strength) and carried the brass back to Babylon (Jer.52:17-23). He specifically mentions the pomegranate relief on the pillars (v.22,23). The pomegranate is a fruit known for it’s seed ; God had promised to establish David’s throne and his seed forever.

“I will set up thy seed (pomegranate) after thee, which shall proceed out of thy bowels, and I will establish (Jachin) his kingdom.” (2 Sam.7:12)

In Jeremiah’s time, the multitudinous seed (pomegranate) was dis-established and carried away into captivity, symbolised by the removal of the pillars. Palm trees represent righteousness, because they are very straight. (Jer.10:5 see Ps.92:12) [Palm trees do not represent the gentiles – in Ex.15:27 it is the number 70 that represents the gentile nations] Palm branches were used to build booths to celebrate the feast of Tabernacles (Lev.23:40) the feast is closely associated with the introduction of the Kingdom, and was so understood by the disciples (Lk.9:33) and by the people in general which explains the use of palm branches during the Lord’s triumphant entry into Jerusalem. (John 12:13) Both the pomegranate and the palm feature in the temple (and tabernacle) decorations. The apple is often associated with something that is particularly beloved (Song.2:3;Deut.30:10) and it is surely significant that it is used both for the law (Prov.7:2) and for Zion (= the temple of God- Lam.2:18;Zech.2:8) The Lord Jesus Christ compares the Kingdom of God with a grain of mustard seed, which grows into a large tree, that

becomes the habitat of birds. (Mtt.13:31) This parable is based on Nebuchadnezzar's dream of Dan.4:10-18, where the tree represents the Kingdom of Babylon. The tree is cut down and seven times of madness are prophesied for Nebuchadnezzar, during which he is like a beast of the field until he acknowledges the authority of God. This invites an interesting comparison with Revelation:

7 TIMES OF MADNESS

7 TIMES OF THE BEAST (see chpt.13)

A STUMP LEFT

A STUMP (Isa.6:13; Rev.11:13)

It is significant that the Judgements pronounced on Babylon in Dan.4:15,16 are the same as those pronounced against Israel. (Lev.26: 19-21; Deut.28: 23)

NOTES

3 Isa.28: 2,7 and Ezek.13:11,13. It is worth noting in Isaiah that Assyria, having been brought by God against Israel as 'hail', is then later destroyed by 'hail' once God has accomplished his purpose with it. (Isa. 30:30). In Ezekiel too we find that the Jews are first judged by 'hail' (Ezek.13:11,13), but then the latter day invader is itself destroyed by 'hail' (38:22). This state of affairs is parallel to the Apocalypse where in the first trumpet Israel experiences 'hail' from God, destroying a third, but later Babylon is inflicted with a much more severe hailstorm. (Rev. 16:21)

NOTES

1 The name of the star is "Wormwood" or "Aspinth." The bitterness of wormwood was proverbial throughout the ancient world. A single ounce of the herb diluted in 524 gallons of water can still be tasted! The term "Wormwood" apparently an alteration of "Wormwort", is based on the medicinal use of the herb as a vermifuge (an intestinal insecticide used to expel worms from the intestines). The German term for wormwood, wermut, is related to "vermouth", a wine containing an extract from wormwood. It is still widely used as a vermifuge in Central and South America. One ingredient in wormwood is the toxic agent thujone, a chemical that can cause intoxication, hallucinations, convulsions, and permanent damage to the nervous system. The connection between wormwood and poison is based on the parallelism in Jer.9:15, "Behold I will feed this people with wormwood, and give them poisonous water to drink." (repeated verbatim in Jer.23:15) Wormwood was the fruit of idolatry (Deut 29:17,18). The reason for giving the people wormwood to drink is because, "from the prophets of Jerusalem is profaneness gone forth into all the land." (Jer.23:15) Thus wormwood is associated with both the false prophet and with the image of the beast (idolatry). It is suggested by H.A.W. (Bible Studies pg. 20) that the Sanhedrin tried to force Jesus to drink gall on the cross in order to be able to denunciate him as a false prophet. Jesus perceived their plot and refused to drink. The wormwood makes the fountains (sources) of the rivers bitter. Jeremiah has the following to say about the fountain of poison water.

"As a fountain casteth out her waters, so she (Jerusalem) casteth out her wickedness: violence and spoil is heard in her; before me continually is grief and wounds. Be thou instructed O Jerusalem, lest my soul depart from thee; lest I make thee desolate, a land not inhabited" (Jer.6:7,8)continued on next page.

2 Psalm 104 celebrates God's glory in creation. Both the trumpet and the vials parallel the creative acts, but in Revelation the motif is not creation but destruction, which in turn leads to a new creation. Note 2 continued on next page.

NOTES

1 Not only the sun, but also the air was darkened. Is this an allusion to the, "prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience..." (Eph.2: 2). The realm of the destroying angel- KOSMOKRATOR? The rulers of the darkness of this world (Eph.6: 12) See chapter 12 page 20.

---

2 We have allusions to four covenants in the next few chapters.

Rev. 8 :13-9:2 Abramic covenant

Rev. 10:1 Noahaic covenant

Rev. 11: 19 Sinaitic covenant

Rev. 12: 11 The New covenant

---

3 The destroyer applies both to the angel of destruction and to the instruments of destruction. (gentile nations)

" Neither murmur ye, as some of them also murmured, and were destroyed of the destroyer." (I Cor 10: 9)

" A lion is come up from the thicket, and the destroyer of nations; he is on his way; he is gone forth from his place to make thy land desolate; and thy cities shall be laid waste." (Jer.4:7)

"And I will prepare (sanctify) destroyers against thee, every one with his weapons.." (Jer.22: 7)

The Locusts have a king over them called Abaddon in the Hebrew and Apollyon in the Greek, probably an indication that the effect of the destroyer is on both Jew and Gentile. (as in Egypt – unfaithful Jews and Egyptians slain by the destroyer) These are no ordinary Locusts, for scripture informs us that Locusts , " have no king" (Prov. 30: 27)

---

4 Whether the 1,000 years is literal or symbolic is discussed in chapter 20.

---

5 It is interesting at this stage of the interpretation to list the mentions of the beast empire in order of occurrence.

(1) THE BEAST – that kills the witnesses (11:7). Note the use of the article (THE) in conjunction with the beast. This is unusual, for it is the first mention to the reader and the article suggests

that the reader is already familiar with this monster, although it has not yet been introduced into the book of Revelation.

(2) A GREAT RED DRAGON – in heaven (12:3). This monster definitely precedes the sea beast of 13:1 for it transfers it's power to it. (13:3) It is also different in substance (but not in type) from the beast of 11:7.

(3) And I saw A BEAST rise (coming R.V.) out of the sea (13:1). Note here that the monster is anarthrous (has the preposition A) this could indicate that it is a different monster from THE BEAST (11:7). It rises out of the sea (Gr. thalassa) whereas the other monster emerges from the bottomless pit or abyss (Gr. Abussos mentioned seven times, 9:1; 9:2; 9:11; 11:7; 17:8; 20:1; 20:3) The difference between the sea and the bottomless pit, is however artificial, for Luke has the beast (swine) drown in the abyss (Lk.8: 31) whereas the synoptics use the word sea when describing the same event. (Mtt.8: 32) The sea and the abyss (bottomless pit) are to some extent interchangeable. Gentile nations are condemned to the pit (Ezek.32:24) But in Daniel they emerge from the sea (Dan.7:3) and the intention of 13:1 is no doubt to draw us to Daniel's prophecy.

(4) THE BEAST that was, and is not, and shall come…and the beast that was, and is not, even he is the eighth (head?) and is of the seven and goeth into perdition. [= bottomless pit] (17: 8,11)

Conclusion

The bottomless pit of Revelation chapter nine is similar to the sea of Revelation thirteen, the sea conjures up images of Gentile empires. The first beast appears without introduction in Revelation chapter eleven, for it is assumed that the reader is familiar with the acted parable of Matthew chapter eight. (see chapter 11 pg. 18,19). This beast has the same Jewish religious characteristics that saw the persecution of Christ and his apostles in the first century. This alliance of ten kings is controlled by the city of Jerusalem. It is however a short lived 'marriage of convenience', for she is betrayed and destroyed by her lovers. The first beast is not the same as that of chapter 13, although it is very similar. The ten kings that have destroyed the woman, voluntarily cede their power to the "second beast" that emerges from the Euphrates region. The second beast has all the traits of the previous empires from this region, (except Rome see chapter 13) epitomised by the city of Babylon. The second beast has received it's power from the red dragon of chapter twelve. The red dragon no longer exists, and has in fact been extinct for 2,000 years. Chapter twelve should be seen as a bridging chapter, it is the chapter of origins, it recounts the origins of sin and the beast (human empires) and also the origins of Israel's and our redemption. The transfer of authority from the red dragon to the beast of chapter thirteen is simply instructing us that the, " second beast" has the same characteristics as the first century beast. The first century beast was JEWISH RELIGIOUS AND ROMAN IMPERIALISTIC of nature. This means that the, "second beast" will also be religious and imperialistic, it does not mean that it will be Romish (that beast no longer exists) it will in fact come from the middle east (Euphrates region)

This second beast undergoes a metamorphosis and becomes a parody of the kingdom, with it's own false witnesses (prophet) becoming a mammon centred image of it's previous incarnation.

This subject will be extensively examined in the coming chapters, for now a simplified flow chart should demonstrate the progressive parallelism of the coming chapters.(see page 16 and 19 of this chapter)

---

6 This subject is extensively examined in chapter 11.

---

7 John the Baptist, who is one of the prototypes of the witnesses, was probably a Nazarite (see Num.chpt.6) John shall, " drink neither wine nor strong drink." (Lk.1:15) Nazarites also had unshorn hair in imitation of the priestly crown. John was already a priest, yet he was commanded to adhere to a lifestyle that was an imitation of the priesthood. This was an outward sign of a better priesthood (Melchizedek) and a token that the Aaronic priesthood must decrease while the Melchizedek priesthood must increase.

---

8 As we have already mentioned, the Old Testament, especially the book of Isaiah, makes little distinction between Assyria and Babylon and the terms are often used interchangeably. Similarly, the description of the invading forces in the fifth and sixth trumpets have attributes of both Assyria (Nineveh) and Babylonia (Babylon).

"And the shapes (likeness) of the locusts were like unto horses prepared unto battle; and on their heads as it were crowns of gold.." (9:7)

The enemies of Babylon (Ararat, Minni and Ashkenaz – geographically East Armenia) have horses which are described by Jeremiah as "rough caterpillars" (A.V.) or more accurately like "bristling locusts" (Jer.51:27) [the golden crowns denote invincibility]

" They had breastplates like iron." (9: 9) The Aramaic targum of Nah. 3 : 7 expands the phrase, "Your princes are like grasshoppers" to "Behold your plates gleam like the locust", comparing the scaled armour of the Assyrian warriors and the scaled thoraces of the locusts. A boundary stone of Nebuchadnezzar I (12 B.C.) depicts a scorpion – man with a bow and arrow. (compare 9: 5)

"Teeth like lions" (9: 8) is a reference to Joel 1: 6 in the context of Joel it is the Assyrian lion, but the lion was also a symbol for Babylon. The imagery is mixed Assyrian and Babylonian. Locust swarms are known for stripping everything bare. The Midianite invasion is described in these terms: "For they came up with their cattle and their tents, they came as locusts (R.V.) for multitude; for both they and their camels were without number: and they entered into the land to destroy it." (Judg.6:1-10)

---

9 Joel's contemporaries were most probably Isaiah and Hezekiah – the invasion that he describes is that of Sennacherib. The people were exhorted to repent (Joel 2: 12 -13) if they did so, then:

"Who knoweth if he (= the Assyrian) will not turn (R.V.) and repent, and leave a blessing behind him; even a meal and a drink offering unto the Lord your God?" (Joel 2: 14)

The prophet's argument is based on Jonah 3: 9 to which he is alluding. On that occasion the Assyrian city of Nineveh had repented. The prophet seems to be saying – If you repent, the Assyrian may well also repent (like he did in the past)

---

10 The allusion to the flood is one that is extended into chpt.10 with the "rainbow covenant" and is further continued with the "seven thunders" This will be extensively treated in chapter 10. For further references to the five months see digression 11.1 page 13 note 19 and introduction to Revelation page 51 note 13 and page 57.

---

11 This is a quote from the book of Job, which is also used by the prophet Jeremiah about the demise of the nation. (Jer 8:3) [see Jeremiah and the trumpets page] The trials of Job form the basis for much of the fifth and sixth trumpets.

JOB

REVELATION

My days flee away.....as the eagle (vulture) hasteth to the prey

(9: 25,26)

An eagle (vulture) flying (8: 13)

Hell is naked before him and Abaddon (R.V.) hath no covering (26: 6)

The pit of the abyss opened (9: 1)

Abaddon (9: 11)

And the Lord said unto Satan, Behold he is in thine hand; but save his life (2: 6)

Tormented but not killed (9: 5)

Which long for death but it cometh not ....the thing I greatly feared is come upon me (3: 21-26)

Which seek death, and shall not find it (9: 6)

Thou huntest me like a lion (10: 16)

Teeth like lions (9: 8)

Thou dost destroy me (10: 8)

The destroyer, abaddon (9: 11)

But the thunder of his power (mighty deeds) who can understand? (26: 14)

The seven thunders sealed up (10: 4)

Thou renewest thy witness against me (10: 17)

The two witnesses (11: 3)

12 The four angels that are ‘bound’ at the Euphrates are ‘loosed’ (Rev 9: 14,15) this should probably be understood in the same sense as, “the four angels, holding (restraining) the four winds of the earth.” (7: 1) Does this also explain Paul’s reference to the, “one who restrains” in 2 Theses. 2: 7? The beast of Revelation has many of the characteristics of Lucifer in Isaiah 14, of whom it is said, “that he ruled the nations in anger, with a persecution that none restraineth” (Isa.14: 6) Scripture teaches that angels control the affairs of nations. (Dan.10: 20-21)

13 The worship of devils or demons (unclean spirits). Demons are the intermediaries of idols (See: Demons, Magic and Medicine by A. Perry) This is definitely a reference to the ‘image (idol) of the beast’ – which is not a literal idol but a philosophy of evil embodied in a human totalitarian empire. The unclean spirits that come out of the mouth of the dragon, beast and false prophet, all repeat the same lie; ‘MAN CAN BE LIKE GOD.’ This is the lie of the serpent in Eden.

A synoptic comparison of the three vice lists in Revelation is instructive:

REV. 9: 20-21

REV. 21: 8

REV.22: 15

cowards

unfaithful

abominable

dogs

murderers

murderers

murderers

immorality

immoral

fornicators

sorcery

sorcerers

magicians

idolatry

idolaters

idolaters

all liars

Everyone who loves and practices lying

thefts

(literal translation, lists rearranged for purpose of comparison)

---

14 Idols of gold, and silver, and brass and stone and of wood. The gold , silver and brass are the metals of the image of the beast, note the distinct lack of iron. The stone and wood is no doubt a reference to Zech. 5:4; “the house…..with the timber thereof and the stones thereof. ” In the first century this was the Temple which became the focus of false worship, in the future this is the whole “house” of Israel, who had been instructed not to make covenants with the surrounding nations and not to bring an abomination (idol) into their house. (Deut.7: 3,26) The gold, silver and brass are all empires in the Babylonian region and not Roman in origin.

---

15 The lists of vices enumerated in Revelation all include:

-murders

-sorcery (magicians)

-fornication (immorality)

These crimes can be explained as follows, murders – the killing of the witnesses and saints. (Rev.17: 6) Sorcery (magic?) – great signs and wonders of the false prophet. (Rev.13:13) Fornication – the great whore of Rev. chpt. 17. Cavorting with the surrounding nations. Other crimes include thefts and lies. Theft, or robbing God was the crime of the first century and the Old Testament. (Mtt.21:13; 23: 23; Malachi 3: 8) – false religion is essentially robbing God. Lying is a reference to the lie of the serpent, for the beast of the earth (false prophet) looks like a lamb, but speaks like a dragon [serpent] (Rev.13: 11) As the trumpet section concerns Israel, this means that the Jewish nation is involved in these crimes, and at this stage the majority had not repented. (unlike the time of Joel)

8.1 Two Babylons

DIGRESSION 8.1: THE TWO BABYLONS

“MYSTERY BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH.” (Rev.17:5)

It should be recognised that Revelation relates the fall of two Babylons.

The first Babylon, is “the great city”, spiritually called Sodom and Egypt. It is the city of Jerusalem where Jesus was crucified. (Rev. 11:8)

(see digression 12.4 A TALE OF TWO CITIES; JERUSALEM VERSES ROME)

It is destroyed by the ten kings, who betray her, they then give their kingdom to the beast. (17:12-18)

The second Babylon, is the beast empire, it emerges from the Euphrates region and has the characteristics of the old Babylonian, Persian and Greek Seleucid empires.(13: 1-7) It oppressed both Israel and the saints (6th trumpet) and is judged in the 6th vial. (16:12-17) during the events of Armageddon, where it is defeated by Christ and his army. (19: 11-21)

The winepress (19:15) is trodden outside the city (of Jerusalem 14:20)

It is a scriptural principle that God uses the nations to punish his people, but the nations themselves, who are used as instruments of divine retribution will themselves be judged. This principle is expounded in Jeremiah 30: 11-16; “I will correct thee in measure, and will not leave thee altogether unpunished……..therefore all that devour thee shall be devoured; and all thine adversaries, every one of them, shall go into captivity; and they that spoil thee shall be a spoil, and all that prey upon thee will I give for a prey.”

This happened in Hezekiah’s day when God used the Assyrian to punish his people (Isaiah chpt.10):

“O Assyrian, the rod of mine anger, and the staff in their hand is mine indignation. I will send him against a hypocritical nation, and against the people of my wrath will I give him a charge..” (v.5)

The attitude of the Assyrian, however was one of superiority (of their gods) against God’s people and against God himself;

“Shall the axe boast itself against him that heweth therewith?” (v.15)

The outcome was therefore the punishment of the Assyrian:

“The Lord of Hosts shall send among his fat ones leanness.” (v.16)

The same principle is established in Jeremiah chpt.51, first the punishment of Israel by Babylon for her sins (v.5) then the Lords vengeance against Babylon herself. (v.11)

Does this principle hold true in the first century?

(1) – first ; punishment of the Jewish nation.

(2) – then ; punishment of Rome.

Babylon was used as a pseudonym for Rome by Peter (1 Pet.5: 13) and Nero was the “devil”, who, like a “roaring lion”, sought to persecute the Christians by throwing them to the lions.(5:8)

That Rome was used as the instrument of divine punishment against the Jews is beyond dispute. But what happened to Rome itself? Was the city left unpunished?

Rome itself was severely punished at the same time as Jerusalem was punished!

This happened on December 19 to 21 in 69A.D. The storming and the burning of the Capitol by the foreign mercenaries of Vitellius, and the subsequent capture and sacking of the city by the infuriated Flavian army under Mucianus and Antonius Primus is described by the ancient Roman Historian Tacitus and also by Josephus. In Tacitus own words:

“Close by the fighting stood the people of Rome like the audience to a show, cheering and clapping this side or that in turns as if this were a mock battle in the arena. Whenever one side gave way, men would hide in the shops or take refuge in some great house. They were then dragged out and killed at the instance of the mob, who gained most of the loot, for the soldiers were bent on bloodshed and massacre, and the booty fell to the crowd. The whole city presented a frightful caricature of it’s normal self: fighting and casualties at one point, baths and restaurants at another, here the spilling of blood and the litter of dead bodies, close by prostitutes and their like – all the vice associated with a life of idleness and pleasure, all the dreadful deeds of a pitiless sack. These were so intimately linked that an observer would have thought Rome in the grip of a simultaneous orgy of violence and dissipation. There had indeed been times in the past when armies had fought inside the city, twice when Lucius Sulla gained control, and once under Cinna. No less cruelty had been displayed then, but now there was a brutish indifference, and not even a momentary interruption in the pursuit of pleasure. As if this were one more entertainment in the festive season, they gloated over horrors and profited by them, careless which side won and glorying in the calamities of the state.” Tacitus: The Histories.[83] see also Josephus: Wars of the Jews. Book IV.XI.4

Tacitus also mentions that, “Lamentation was heard from every quarter, and Rome was filled with cries of despair and the horrors of a city taken by storm.”

“And the Kings of the earth, who have committed fornication and lived deliciously with her, shall bewail her, when they shall see the smoke of her burning.” (Rev 18: 9)

The language of Rev.18: 17-18 seemingly reflects the burning of the port of Ostia. Ostia was strategically located at the mouth of the Tiber, fifteen miles down river from Rome. In the fourth century it became known as Portus Romae, and was at the hub of Romes empire and wealth.

“And every shipmaster, and all the company in ships, and sailors, and as many as trade by sea, stood afar off, and cried when they saw the smoke of her burning, saying what city is like unto this great city?” (18:17,18)

Revelation chapter 18 has therefore an application to both Rome and Jerusalem (the two Babylons) – in the first century – and the prophecy is still not exhausted.

It must be recognised that Revelation 18 uses Babylon and Tyre as a model. These were trading city-states. Babylon was situated on the Euphrates and traded her wealth, similarly Jerusalem should have dispensed her wealth – living waters, but she had become a source of poison. Jerusalem was judged by the instrumentality of Rome, this was predominantly for the way she had persecuted Christ and his apostles (witnesses).

Similarly, Rome was also judged by God for the way she had treated the Jews and the saints. The association of Jerusalem with Babylon is not as strange as it may seem, for, it was from Babylon that the Jews had returned from their seventy years of exile.

It was at Jerusalem that the punishment accorded to Babel, should have been reversed (Acts 2:5 cp.Gen.11: 7-9 confounded – same word used in LXX) but was not, for the nation did not fully repent. Babylon was also the place from which a renaissance of Jewish thought and religion would emerge.

(see digression THE ESTABLISHMENT OF INIQUITY ON IT'S BASE)

Babylon became therefore a symbol for apostasy and persecution and it is fitting that it is a pseudonym for both Jerusalem and Rome.

This does not mean that I advocate a preterits view, on the contrary, a divine pattern has been established – the first century events will be repeated.

(1) – first Jerusalem (Babylon) will be judged

(2) – then God will judge the empire (Babylonian) that replaces Jerusalem

The latter day destroyer of Jerusalem (The beast and ten kings) is, however, not Rome. We will establish the characteristics of this empire in chapter 13. Suffice to say that the final overthrow of Babylon by Christ and his army will have world wide consequences;

"And the great city was divided into three parts, and the cities of the nations fell: and great Babylon came into remembrance before God, to give unto her the cup of the fierceness of his wrath." (16:19)

NOTE :

The "great city" Babylon is a pseudonym for Jerusalem. In this context she is the capitol of the beast empire, this happens after she has been destroyed by ten kings as divine retribution for her treatment of the witnesses. It was in the days of Peleg that the earth was divided (Gen.10:25) – this was the tower of Babel incident when a theophany, "confounded the language" and "scattered them abroad." (Gen.11: 9). It is not just the beast empire and it's capitol that has become "Babylon" for she represents the whole world.

Mans ever increasing drive to globalisation and human rights epitomises the Babylon principle. Consider the following:

(1) 500 corporations control 33% of global GNP (gross national product) and 75% of global trade.

(2) A dozen huge corporations will soon control all food production.

(3) The internet is globalising the world. (w.w.w. world wide wickedness)

(4) One trillion dollars is now turned over each day on global currency markets.

(5) Six international crime syndicates are believed to gross $1.5 trillion dollars annually from crime.

(6) Man will soon be able to write his own "Human book of life" enabling manipulation of DNA to produce ever increasing life spans. (for the rich)

We all dwell in Babylon at the moment, and we are all exhorted to “come out of her.”

8.2 Burden of Babylon

DIGRESSION 8-2: THE BURDEN OF BABYLON (Isa.13: 1)

ISAIAH 13

CONREMPORARY WITH HEZEKIAH

The burden of Babylon (v.1)

Prophecy of Isaiah concerning Babylon (=Assyria)1

Lift up a banner upon the bare (levelled) mountain (v.2)

-the banner of Sennacherib, lifted against the temple mount (2Kgs.18: 17; Isa.5: 26)

I have commanded my sanctified ones (v.4,5)

- sanctify war (Joel 3:9; 2: 17) holy war: Ashur v.s. Yahweh (2 Kgs 18:35; Isa.37: 6; 2Kgs.19: 28)

Howl ye, for the day of the Lord is at hand (v.6)

- with fasting and weeping (Joel 2: 12; Isa.37:2)[compare Rev.8:13; woe, woe, woe]

Woman in travail (v.7-9) the day of the Lord

- the city of Jerusalem in dire trouble (Isa 37:3) [compare Rev.12: 1,2]

The stars of heaven darkened (v.10)

- the nation extinguished, but Jerusalem saved because of Hezekiah's faith (Isa.5: 30)

I will shake the heavens and the earth (v.12-13)

"Hear O heavens, and give ear, o earth for the Lord hath spoken, I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me." (Isa 1: 2)

The enemy flees, those who collaborate with the Assyrian destroyed (v.14,15)

Isaiah pronounces burdens against ten nations – Babylon, Philistia, Moab, Damascus, Egypt, the desert of the sea, Dumah, Arabia, the valley of vision and Tyre. (cp.Rev 17: 16)

Stir up the Medes against them ....Babylon overthrown (v.16-21)

- fall of Nineveh prophesied 2

Judgment to happen soon (v.22)

- Sennacherib assassinated by his sons while worshipping in the house of his god Nisroch. (2 Kgs.19:37)

NOTES

1 It must be recognised that the terms for Assyria and Babylon are used interchangeably by the prophet Isaiah. A good example of this is the next chapter where the prophet mentions the King of Babylon (14: 4,12) and the Assyrian (v.25) both are references to Sennacherib. The Assyrians took special pride in their domination of Babylon. Tiglath – Pileser styled himself "King of Babylon." The association of Babylon with Assyria, by the prophet is understandable, for both Babel and Nineveh were founded by the same man – Nimrod. (Gen.10: 8-11)

---

2 Nineveh became the capitol of Assyria during the reign of Sennacherib. The fall of Nineveh and the Assyrian empire happened within seventy years after the death of Sennacherib. Four particular factors contributed to the downfall of the Assyrian empire: a struggle for succession between two sons of Esarhaddon; the Chaldaen chieftan, Nabopolassar, who challenged Assyrian overlordship by assuming the kingship of Babylonia in 626 B.C.; the Medes who under Cyaxares attacked Assyria, and, lastly, tribal hordes from the north, known as Ummanmanda, mainly Cimmerians (biblical Gommer), who overran Assyrian territory. After several years of fighting to break the Assyrian hold on Babylonia, Nabopolassar moved against Assyria itself by 616 B.C. In 615 B.C. the Medes invaded, and in 614 B.C. took the old capitol Ashur. A formal alliance between Nabopolassar (Babylonian) and Cyaxares (Mede) followed this success. In 612 B.C. Nineveh itself fell, surprisingly quickly, to a combined siege by Babylonians, Medes and Ummanmanda. They were greatly aided by a sudden rise of the Tigris, which carried away a part of the city wall and rendered the place indefensible.

“The gates of the rivers shall be opened, and the palace shall be dissolved.” (Nahum 2: 6)

So complete was the desolation that in Greek and Roman times the departed Nineveh became a myth. After the fall of Nineveh the Assyrian army withdrew first to Haran, then to Charchemish where they called on Egypt for assistance. The Egyptians sent a large army northwards under Nechoh. Josiah of Judah, an ally of the Babylonians, attempted to intercept the Egyptians at Megiddo and was killed (2Kgs.23: 29). The Egyptians joined the Assyrian remnant at Carchemish. In 605 B.C. the crown prince Nebuchadnezzar, placed in charge of the Babylonian army, attacked the Egyptian army at Carchemish, with massive slaughter. (Jer.46: 2-12)

1 It must be recognised that the terms for Assyria and Babylon are used interchangeably by the prophet Isaiah. A good example of this is the next chapter where the prophet mentions the King of Babylon (14: 4,12) and the Assyrian (v.25) both are references to Sennacherib. The Assyrians took special pride in their domination of Babylon. Tiglath – Pileser styled himself “King of Babylon.” The association of Babylon with Assyria, by the prophet is understandable, for both Babel and Nineveh were founded by the same man – Nimrod. (Gen.10: 8-11)

2 Nineveh became the capitol of Assyria during the reign of Sennacherib. The fall of Nineveh and the Assyrian empire happened within seventy years after the death of Sennacherib. Four particular factors contributed to the downfall of the Assyrian empire: a struggle for succession between two sons of Esarhaddon; the Chaldaen chieftan, Nabopolassar, who challenged Assyrian overlordship by assuming the kingship of Babylonia in 626 B.C.; the Medes who under Cyaxares attacked Assyria, and, lastly, tribal hordes from the north, known as Ummanmanda, mainly Cimmerians (biblical Gommer), who overran Assyrian territory. After several years of fighting to break the Assyrian hold on Babylonia, Nabopolassar moved against Assyria itself by 616 B.C. In 615 B.C. the Medes invaded, and in 614 B.C. took the old capitol Ashur. A formal alliance between Nabopolassar (Babylonian) and Cyaxares (Mede) followed this success. In 612 B.C. Nineveh itself fell, surprisingly quickly, to a combined siege by Babylonians, Medes and Ummanmanda. They were greatly aided by a sudden rise of the Tigris, which carried away a part of the city wall and rendered the place indefensible.

“The gates of the rivers shall be opened, and the palace shall be dissolved.” (Nahum 2: 6)

So complete was the desolation that in Greek and Roman times the departed Nineveh became a myth. After the fall of Nineveh the Assyrian army withdrew first to Haran, then to Charchemish where they called on Egypt for assistance. The Egyptians sent a large army northwards under Nechoh. Josiah of Judah, an ally of the Babylonians, attempted to intercept the Egyptians at Megiddo and was killed (2Kgs.23: 29). The Egyptians joined the Assyrian remnant at Carchemish. In 605 B.C. the crown prince Nebuchadnezzar, placed in charge of the Babylonian army, attacked the Egyptian army at Carchemish, with massive slaughter. (Jer.46: 2-12)

8.3 Birds of prey

DIGRESSION 8-3: THE BIRDS OF PREY

“And when the birds of prey came down upon the carcasses, Abram drove them away.” (Gen 15: 11)

“And the carcasses of this people shall be meat for the fowls of the heaven, and for the beasts of the earth; and none shall fray them away.” (Jer.7: 33)

The birds of prey (R.V.) or fowls (A.V.) of Genesis chapter 15 are the same bird(s) that pronounce the triple woe in Rev.8: 13. In Genesis God gave Abram a unilateral assurance of the promised progeny and land by “cutting” (biryth) a covenant. Normally both parties would be required to walk between the pieces, so implying that a fate similar to that of the sacrificial animals awaited the covenant breaker.(to be cut in half)

This unique covenant, only had one party (God) pass1 between the pieces, moreover it occurred when Abram was “dead.” 2 While he was “alive” he was able to keep the vultures away (15: 11) but when he was “dead” only God was able to protect the covenant sacrifice.

When the people of Judah betrayed the covenant the prophet Jeremiah warned that their carcasses would be meat for the birds of prey (and for the beasts of the earth) and that no one would “fray them away” (Jer.7: 33) The covenant that they had broken was not the Abramic3 but the Sinaitic covenant. Zedekiah the king, and the royal family would be destroyed and taken captive in the Babylonian invasion and, “their dead bodies shall be meat unto the fowls of heaven, and to the beasts of the earth.” They had undertaken a solemn covenant, and passed between the pieces of the sacrificial animals. They had promised to liberate their Hebrew slaves as instructed in the law of Jubile4, and then they had reneged on their promise. (Jer.34: 8-22)

God had promised Abram that he would liberate the children of Israel out of the slavery of Egypt, and had passed between the pieces by himself (Gen.15: 13,14) but unlike God the wicked princes of Judah refused liberating their fellow countrymen. (see Jer.34: 13) Similarly, the nation of Israel is still a slave to the law of Moses, even though they claim to be, “Abraham’s seed and were never in bondage to any man” (John 8: 33)

In the future, the birds of prey will gather around the carcass of the dead nation (just as they did in A.D.70) and God will not only judge the corrupt nation, but also restore it, this will be done despite the condition of the nation, because God passed between the pieces alone.

Note the correspondence between the Genesis 15 covenant and Matthew 24.

GENESIS 15

MATTHEW 24

The fowls came down upon the carcasses (v.11)

For wheresoever the carcass is, there will the eagles5 be gathered together (v.28)

The sun went down, a horror of great darkness (v.12)

The sun darkened (v.29)

A smoking furnace

A flaming torch (v.17) 6

Then shall appear the sign of the son of man in heaven. (v.30)

The Lord Jesus Christ is alluding to the Genesis 15 covenant in Matthew chpt.24 – he is responding to the disciples question, "Where will we be gathered Lord?" (see the synoptic account Lk.17: 37) The implication is that like Abram, the saints will awaken out of their horror of great darkness and together with the living, all those liberated from sin and death will be gathered to the carcass of the nation.

The carcass of a dead animal can be seen from a great distance because of the circling vultures. Then the saints will be gathered to that spot. Moreover, there is also an allusion to the bodies of the witnesses as well as the to the death of the nation. (see chapter 11 pg. 12,26)

We have already established that Babylon falls twice (see digression 8.1) We might then arrange this chronologically as follows:

Witnesses murdered – dead bodies.Rev.11- birds of prey?

Witnesses raised (vindicated). Rev.11

Jewish eccleisia born: Rev 12

Jerusalem destroyed – by ten kings – dead bodies: Rev 17 – birds of prey?

Beast empire persecutes new born ecclesia: Rev.13

Beast empire destroyed – by Christ – dead bodies: Rev. 19 (and 16) - birds of prey

The fulfilment of the promise to Abram is still future7 when he will become Abraham (the father of a nation) and will possess the land from the "river of Egypt to the river Euphrates." (Gen 15: 18-21)

The land was then in possession of ten nations, it will be the ten surrounding nations that betray and attack Jerusalem (Rev.17: 16-18) but those same nations will constitute the kingdom, when, "ten men shall take hold out of all the languages of the nations, even take hold of the skirt of him that is a Jew (= Jesus), saying, we will go with you: for we have heard that God is with you." [EMMANUEL] (Zech.8 :23)

" In that day there will be a highway from Egypt to Assyria….Blessed be Egypt my people, and Assyria the work of mine hands, and Israel mine inheritance." (Isa.19:22-25)

---

1 The law was ordained by angels through the hand of a mediator (Moses). It was made between two parties, God and the Israelites. The promise to Abraham did not require a mediator, and also did not require Abraham's participation. It was unique and unilateral. Only God passed between the pieces. God will fulfil his promise despite the unfaithfulness of the nation. (Gal 3: 15-20)

---

2 The implication of the "horror of great darkness" and the "deep sleep" (Gen.15: 12) is the sleep of death. The events of the Egyptian bondage and liberation would happen after his death.

Ultimately, the final humbling of the nation would also happen when he was dead, and the final restoration and inheritance upon his resurrection.

---

3 The Abramic covenant cannot be broken, even by the nations unfaithfulness. (see note one)

---

4 Exodus 21:2; Deut.15:12-15; Lev.25:39-41

---

5 The word used here is aetos (Gr.) the R.V. margin has the word vulture and the context seems to demand a carrion eater.

---

6 Abraham probably saw a comet with a burning tail.

---

7 The primary fulfilment of the Abramic covenant happened when the Israelites were liberated from the Egyptian captivity exactly 430 years later. (Ex.12: 40,41; Gal 3: 17). This occurred on the Passover night (the self same day), this means that Abram received the covenant on the Passover night 430 years before the first Passover was celebrated. All the nations deliverances occurred at Passover as also did our own. The ultimate fulfilment of this covenant promise can also be expected at Passover and consequently Rev. chpt 19 is based on the Passover. (see the introduction to Revelation pages 52,53)

Chapter 10

THE RAINBOW ANGEL

“And it shall come to pass, when I bring a cloud over the earth, that the bow shall be seen in the cloud: and I will remember my covenant, which is between me and you and every living creature of all flesh. And the bow shall be in the cloud; and I will look upon it, that I may remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is upon the earth.” (Gen.9: 14-16)

“In the midst of the years, In the midst of the years make it known; In wrath remember mercy.” (Hab.3: 2)

“And I saw another mighty angel come down from heaven, clothed with a cloud: and a rainbow was upon his head, and his face was as it were the sun, and his feet as pillars of fire: and he had in his hand a little book open: and he set his right foot upon the sea, and his left foot upon the earth.” (Rev.10:1,2)

The status and importance of this angelic messenger is clearly being emphasised, for only one like the son of man in 1: 13-16 is described with more striking imagery.1 Chapter 10 and chapter 11 (up to verse 14) are a kind of interlude between the sounding of the sixth and seventh trumpets, suggesting that the events run parallel with the trumpet judgments. The last trump is of course the introduction to the kingdom age.

We are dealing here with a moment of crisis, John is expecting the return of his Lord at this juncture – instead it is communicated to him that other important events must occur before the Lord returns. First there must be another period of witnessing to the nation of Israel.

Just as the sealed scroll of chapter 5 could not be opened until the work of the faithful witness (Jesus Christ 1:5) had been completed, so the seven thunders are sealed until the two witnesses complete their commission.

This chapter contains three main themes which we will examine in depth.

(1) The seven thunders

(2) The implicit question: How long?

(3) The mystery of God

Of all the angels that inhabit the pages of Revelation only three are called mighty. The first mighty angel was the herald who proclaimed the challenge to all comers to try their strength at opening the scroll with seven seals, and who thus prepared the way for the advent of the Lamb.

Now, in what can only be a deliberate cross- reference, John speaks of another mighty angel, and we are encouraged to look for a new disclosure comparable in importance to the earlier one. He is wrapped in the cloud of the divine presence, and over his head is the rainbow of the divine mercy. He bears the delegated attributes of deity, but he is also the angel of Jesus Christ, whose face John has seen shining like the sun. The legs like pillars of fire are reminiscent of Israel’s journey in the wilderness. This is the angel who is to guide the new Israel through the darkness of it’s Exodus pilgrimage from Egypt to the promised land.

The great scroll contained the purposes of God in so far as they were to be achieved by the Lamb. The little scroll contains a new version of those purposes in so far as they are to be achieved through the agency of the two witnesses.

The angel that John saw is the same angel that appeared to Daniel and concerns the same prophetic time period - 3½ years.

Other expositors, including H.A.W. have already shown the comparisons between Revelation and Daniel.

(Revelation. A Biblical Approach. Pg. 140)

Revelation

Daniel

10: 1. A mighty angel.

10: 5 and 12: 7. A man clothed in linen.

10: 2. Right foot on the sea, left foot on the land.

12: 7. Standing on the waters of the river.

10: 1. Face like the sun.

10: 6. Face like lightning.

10: 1. Feet as pillars of fire.

10: 6. Feet like polished brass.

10: 2. Open book in his hand.

10: 21. “I will show thee that which is noted in the Scripture of truth (the heavenly prototype).”

10: 3. Voice as a lion.

10: 6. Voice like a multitude.

10: 5. Lifts right hand to heaven. (the left hand holds the book)

12: 7. Lifts both hands to heaven.

10 : 6. Swears by him that liveth for ever.

12: 7. Swears by him that liveth for ever.

10: 7. Mystery of God to be finished as declared to the prophet.

12: 7. “All these things shall be finished.”

11: 2. Temple court “cast out”, given to Gentiles.

12: 11. Daily sacrifice taken away, abomination set up.

11: 2. Holy city trodden under foot.

12: 7. Power of the holy people scattered.

11: 2. 42 months.

12: 7. Time, times and a half.

11: 18. The time of the dead that they should be judged.

12: 2. Many that sleep awake, to everlasting life or to contempt.

“The angel has set his right foot upon the sea, and his left foot upon the earth” (v.2)

Throughout scripture the right is generally associated with blessing and the left with curse. (Gen.48: 14; Mtt.25: 31). The left foot on the earth represents the down treading of Israel for, “the court that is without the temple is given unto the Gentiles, and the holy city shall they tread underfoot forty and two months.” (11: 2) At this juncture God has allowed the Gentiles to gain the advantage1, but now amidst the turmoil unleashed against the nation, God remembers his covenant of mercy (the rainbow) with, “every living creature of all flesh that is upon the earth.” [Israel] (Gen.9: 16)

God will send his witnesses (prophets) to the nation, this indicates that although Israel experiences a time of trouble, Jerusalem will only be trodden down of the Gentiles, “until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled.” (Lk.21: 24)

THE SEVEN THUNDERS

“and he cried with a loud voice, as when a lion roareth: and when he had cried, seven thunders uttered their voices. And when the seven thunders had uttered their voices, I was about to write: and I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Seal up those things which the seven thunders uttered and write them not.” (Rev.10: 3,4)

It is significant that the “seven thunders” are heard by the apostle John, who together with his brother James was, “surnamed Boanerges which is, the sons of thunder”

(Mk.3: 17). The two apostles form types of the two witnesses, for it is John himself that receives the commission to witness at the end of chapter 10. This is obviously not literal, for John was already an old man, and James had died some time back, before this latest commission was given. Never the less, although not present in body, the sons of thunder are present in spirit when the two future witnesses speak.

Why were the two brothers surnamed Boanerges? Several suggestions have been made, amongst them, the suggestion that the name belonged to the two Sanhedrin assistants, who counted the votes for “Yea” or “Nay”, and who were seated at the right and left of the High priest. With this may be compared the request by James to sit on the Lord’s right and left hand in his kingdom. (Mk. 10: 36)

This is an attractive suggestion, for in essence this is what the two witnesses are instructed to do, “to measure the temple” (count the votes for and against), furthermore the Lord asked, whether they could, “drink of the cup that I drink of and be baptised with the baptism that I am baptised with?” (Mk.10:38-39) They answered in the affirmative, and Jesus said they would experience the same baptism as himself – that is, suffering and martyrdom due to their witnessing.2 The two witnesses of chapter 11 also share in the suffering of their Lord.

When he spoke of his own suffering he was answered by an angel – a voice from heaven saying, “I have glorified it (my name) and will glorify it again. The opinion of the bystanders who heard

the voice was divided, some said that it thundered, others that an angel spoke to him. (John12: 28,29) In the verses previous to this (v.25,26)

Jesus had exhorted his disciples that, “He that loveth his life shall loose it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal. If any man serve me let him follow me; and where I am, there shall also my servant be: if any man serve me, him will my Father honour.”

The suffering and vindication of the Lord is therefore associated with the suffering and vindication of his witnesses, which are also justified by the voice of thunder, for, “whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified them he also glorified.” (Rom.8:30)

The suffering of Christ and his witnesses glorify the name of God, who in turn will glorify them. It was the two “sons of thunder” who wished to, “call fire down from heaven, and consume them (the unbelievers) even as Elias did.” (Lk.9: 54) Jesus rebuked them with the words, “Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of.” They belonged to the spirit of salvation, the acceptable year of the Lord, not the year of vengeance. (Lk.4 18-20) However, metaphorically, the future witnesses do have the power of Elijah (see chpt.11 pg.11) but this time fire comes out of their mouths (11:5) for no one can stand against their words.

“I will make my words in thy mouth fire, and this people wood, and it shall devour them.” (Jer 5: 14)

Thunder is associated in scripture with the voice of God. The rabbinical term is the bat qol (literally, ‘daughter of a voice’) tradition has it that the voice of God on Sinai was heard as seven thunders. The voice of God is often compared with the sound of thunder (2 Sam.22:14; Job 37:2-5; Ps.18:13; Isa.29: 6; 30: 30-31; Jer.25:30; Amos 1: 2) though only in Psalm 29: 3-9 with seven thunders.

(1) The voice of the Lord is upon the waters; the God of glory thundereth. (v.3)

(2) The voice of the Lord is powerful. (v.4)

(3) The voice of the Lord is full of majesty. (v.4)

(4) The voice of the Lord breaks the cedars. (v.5)

(5) The voice of the Lord divides the flames of fire. (v.7)

(6) The voice of the Lord shakes the wilderness (v.8)

(7) The voice of the Lord makes the hinds calve. (v.9)

This thunder accompanies rainfall for,

“The Lord sitteth upon the flood; yea, the Lord sitteth king forever.” (v.10)

The motif of the seven thunders is a flood of destruction that is sealed up until after the witnessing. We have then a clear association with the flood.

GENESIS REVELATION: FUTURE LUKE:TYPICAL A.D. 70

6:5,6. “And when God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. And it repented God that he had made man upon the earth, and it grieved him to his heart.”

6:2. The sons of God marry the daughters of men.

6:13. The earth filled with violence

9:20,21 "....they repented not of the work of their hands, that they should worship devils, and idols of gold and silver.....

....nor of their fornication...

....nor of their murders...(of the witnesses)

17: 26. "And as it was in the days of Noah even so shall it be in the days of the son of man."

17: 27. "They did eat, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, until the day that Noah entered into the ark, and the flood came and destroyed them all."

Murder the Just and Holy one.

(Acts 6: 52)

7:24. The flood on the earth five months.

9: 10. Power to hurt men five months

The last five months of the siege of Jerusalem.(see dig.11.1pg.18 note 19.)

9:14. THE RAINBOW COVENANT

10:1. THE RAINBOW COVENANT

THE SIGN OF THE SON OF MAN IN HEAVEN (Mtt.24: 30) in the first century this was a comet according to Josephus – an omen of destruction in the ancient world, not of mercy.

PSALM 29

29: 3,4,5,7,8 and 9;

The seven voices (thunders).

10:4. Seven thunders – to be found in Rev. chpt. 14 as the seven voices, the last being 16:1 – the introduction to the vials.

29:10. The voice of the Lord is upon the flood. The glory of God thundereth.

16: 1. And I heard a great voice (thunder) out of the temple saying ....

17: 30. Even so shall it be in the day when the son of man is revealed.

The flood of destruction that came in A.D. 70 was typical of the future:

"For this they (those who scoff at the Lords return) willingly are ignorant of, that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of the water and in the water: whereby the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished: but the heavens and earth which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men." (2 Pet.3: 5,7)

Not just the nation of Israel, but also the ecclesias had become corrupt. "It has happened to them according to the true proverb, the dog is turned to his own vomit again; and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire." (2 Pet.2: 22) A wholesale haemorrhaging back to Judaism and hedonism. The sons of God marrying the daughters of men, both literally and

spiritually, as is apparent from the epistle of Jude. There was only one remedy possible – removal of Judaism (the Temple) and removal of spirit gifts from the corrupted ecclesias. The Lord came in judgment, and it is as a consequence of that disobedience, that we have a 2,000 year breach of promise.

H.A.W.'s exposition of Revelation proposes that the seven thunders were written down (pg.144). In his exegesis the seven thunders are found in the judgments pronounced against Babylon in a loud voice by the angels of Revelation chapter 14.(see pg.177) The present author agrees with this analysis. Some commentators assert that there is little point in asking what their content might have been, for we are obviously not intended to know.

An enigma within a mystery. This is untrue, for both the enigma (seven thunders) and the mystery of God can be found in the pages of scripture.

"The thunder of his power who can understand?" (Job 26: 14)

Rabbinic tradition comments as follows:

When thunder goes forth in his full force, no creature can understand it. It is not written none understands, but who can understand? The intelligent ones they know his hints and thoughts.

(Gen. Rab. 12:1 – trans., Epstein, Babylonian Talmud)

Here thunder is regarded as a divine means of communication, that only the wise will understand. This is the point that H.A.W. emphasises, "write them not" must read as "write not their meanings" (pg.145) otherwise it seems totally inappropriate to instruct John to, "seal them up."

HOW LONG?

"And the angel which I saw standing upon the sea and upon the earth lifted his right (R.V.) hand to heaven, and sware by him that liveth for ever and ever, who created heaven and the things that therein are, and the earth, and the things that therein are, and the sea, and the things which are therein, that there should be time no longer: but in the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he shall begin to sound, the mystery of God should be finished, as he hath declared to his servants the prophets." (Rev.10: 5-7)

The mighty angel of Revelation 10 is reminiscent of the angel of 2 Sam 24: 17 (and 1 Cron.21: 16), this is the angel seen by king David standing between heaven and earth at the incident of the numbering of Israel. This is essentially what both Satan and the witnesses do – some numbered (measured) for destruction (666), others sealed for eternal redemption. The plague is stopped at the threshing floor (temple), similarly, it is the temple that the witnesses measure.(Rev11:1) – and the threshing floor that is purchased by David (Christ) for the erection of the temple. The pestilence was sent to Israel even to the time appointed, and 70,000 died.1

In this passage God is the witness not the subject of the oath. Dan.12: 7 is clearly the source of the gesture, even though in that passage the angel lifts both hands. In LXX Deut.32: 40 and Rev.10: 5 alone, however, is the right hand raised as a gesture accompanying an oath. In the important passage in Deut.32: 40, the first line of verse 40 can be constructed as the second part of v.39, i.e., "and no one can deliver from my hand, for I lift up my hand to heaven. I swear: as I live forever.."

This passage is so important that it behoves us to quote it fully and examine it properly:

“See now that I, even I, am he, and there is no god with me: I kill, and I make alive; I wound, and I heal: neither is there any that can deliver out of my hand. For I lift up my hand to heaven, and say, I live for ever. If I whet my glittering sword, and mine hand take hold on judgment; I will render vengeance to mine enemies, and will reward them that hate me. I will make mine arrows drunk with blood, and my sword shall devour flesh; and that with the blood of the slain and of the captives, from the beginning of revenges upon the enemy. Rejoice, O ye nations, with his people: for he will avenge the blood of his servants, and will render vengeance to his adversaries, and will be merciful unto his land, and to his people.”

Deuteronomy 32:39-43

The context of the passage is the death and resurrection of the nation: “I kill, and I make alive” (contrast the death and resurrection of the witnesses) When she is resurrected this causes, “the rejoicing of the nations with his people.”(v.43) This is not a general reference to the gentile nations themselves, but to people from gentile nations rejoicing with his people:

“I will move them to jealousy with those which are not a people; I will provoke them to anger with a foolish nation.” (Deut.32: 21)

The word foolish is sometimes used in a derogatory sense (Ps.74: 18) but on this occasion the “foolish nation” is the nation referred to by the apostle Paul, who quotes this very passage:

“For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him. For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.(Joel 2:32) How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things! (Isa.52: 7) But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Esaias saith, Lord, who hath believed our report?(Isa.53: 1) So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God. But I say, Have they not heard? Yes verily, their sound went into all the earth, and their words unto the ends of the world.(Ps.19: 4) But I say, Did not Israel know? First Moses saith, I will provoke you to jealousy by them that are no people, and by a foolish nation I will anger you.(Deut. 32: 21) But Esaias is very bold, and saith, I was found of them that sought me not; I was made manifest unto them that asked not after me.(Isa.65: 1) But to Israel he saith, All day long I have stretched forth my hands unto a disobedient and gainsaying people.” (Isa.65: 2)

Romans 10:12-21

The context of this passage is of Israel being provoked to jealousy by the preaching (witnessing) of the gospel by Paul to the Gentiles. However, it is quite plausible that this passage also has a latter day reference – it may well be the case that the “two witnesses” who are sent to the nation of Israel are Gentiles. (Paul quotes Ps.19:4 compare the line with measuring in Rev.11:1,2 and the word line in Isa.28: 10-13 in the context of preaching, for, “with stammering lips and with another tongue will he speak to this people”)

Apart from the reference to, “lifting the hand to heaven and swearing”, which is a direct reference to the angel of Rev.10: 5, the prophecy of Moses in Deuteronomy 32 has a definite latter day flavour;

- “they moved him to jealousy with strange gods, with abominations they provoked him to anger.” (v.16)1 : image of the beast (Rev.13: 14)

- “they sacrificed unto devils not to God.” (v.17) : Worship devils (Rev.9 :20)

- “bitter destruction.” (v.24) : wormwood (Rev.8:11) the destroyer (Rev.9:11)

- “I will send the teeth of beasts upon them.” (v.24) : beast of the sea (Rev.13: 1)

- “with the poison of crawling things of the dust.” (v.24) :scorpion, serpents (Rev.9: 3,5,19)

- “the vine of Sodom” (v.32) : Jerusalem called Sodom (Rev.11: 8)

And yet, despite all this, there is always a way back to our God.

“And will be merciful (= rainbow covenant) unto this land, and to his people.” (v.43)

Normally heaven and earth are called upon as witnesses to an oath, not because they serve as guardians or protectors of the covenant but because they are stable and permanent aspects of reality. That is not done here because the heaven, the earth, and the sea will all pass away. (Rev.21: 1) The only true stable reality is God himself.

Both Daniel and Deuteronomy form the source for the lifting of the hand(s) to heaven, and Daniel, like John, is also instructed to, “shut up the words, and seal the book, until the time of the end: many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased.” (Dan.12: 4)

Running to and fro is not a reference to air travel, and the increase of knowledge is not a reference to computers. Running to and fro, is Bible idiom for prophesying for knowledge of the word shall be increased. (This clearly means that Revelation was not meant to be understood until the very last. i.e., by the generation that will be alive when the Lord returns)

“And the Lord answered me and said: Write the vision , and make it plain upon tables, that he may run that readeth it. For the vision is yet for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak (and it hasteth toward the end. R.V.) and not lie: though it tarry wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry.” (Hab.2: 2-3)

“None of the wicked shall understand; but the wise shall understand.” (Dan.12: 10)

I have already indicated in the sub heading; “ how long?”, that this question is implicit in this section of the text. This was the question on the lips of the prophet Daniel; “How long shall it be to the end of these wonders?” (Dan 12: 6) however, the question was not asked by Daniel, but, “one said to the man clothed in linen.” This question was asked on behalf of the saints of all ages (Rev.6: 10) and although the question was probably asked by another angel, the possibility must be considered that Daniel actually saw John ask Gabriel the question. The answer given, was that, “there should be time no longer” (Rev.10: 6) literally there will be no more interval of time. (breach?) “delay” is an inappropriate translation of CrovnoV (Chronos) in v.6, for it assumes that eschatological events have been postponed. In Rev.6: 11 the phrase, eti CrovvnoV mikrovn (eti chronos mikron) means “for a little while longer”, similarly in Rev.20:3 it means, “a little while” or “a short time.” The time period in Dan.12: 7 is for a, “time, times and a half (3½ years) ; and when he shall have accomplished to scatter the power of the holy people all these things shall be finished.” The word finished is a direct cross reference to Rev.10: 7, “the mystery of God should be finished.” Revelation also speaks of 3½ years (11: 3) [not 1260 years – by any stretch of the imagination it is impossible to regard that as a short time or interval]

The question “how long?” was also on the lips of our first century brethren. (6: 9) The symmetry between first century and last day events has already been demonstrated. (see chapter 8& 9 pg.20), Peter Watkins has also recognised that this question is implicit in the text. (see chpt. 11

pg.30 of this book), moreover the quote that we have already considered from Hab.2: 2-3, “it will surely come it will not tarry” carries the same overtones.

The book of Habbakuk contains many allusions to Revelation, furthermore it poses the question, “how long?” twice (1: 2;2: 6) corresponding with the two times the question is posed in Revelation.

“In the midst of the years, in the midst of the years [half way the seven – Dan.9:27] make it known; In wrath remember mercy. [= rainbow covenant]” (Hab.3: 2)

“Before his face shall go a report.” [= the witnesses?] (Hab.3: 5)

“Thy bow [rainbow?] was made quite bare surely thou didst bend thy bow at seven thunders.” 1 (Hab.3: 9)

Habbakuk resides in the southern kingdom of Judah, and unlike the other prophets who preceded him, Habbakuk addresses his words not to his compatriots but to God. His principle question is: when will God fulfil his purpose and bring his reign of justice, righteousness, and peace on earth? When is the kingdom of God going to come?

THE MYSTERY OF GOD

“then is finished the mystery of God, according to the good tidings which he declared to his servants the prophets.” (10: 7b)

H.A.W. proposes that the mystery of God is the preaching of the gospel to the Gentiles, this is only partially correct. The mystery of God is the kingdom. This great mystery has various components.

(1) Marriage - this is a great mystery (for this cause shall a man leave his father and mother. i.e., marriage of the Lamb. Eph.5: 31-33)

(2) Christ – the mystery of godliness (1 Tim.3: 16; Col.2: 2,3)

(3) The casting away of Israel. (Rom.11: 25)

(4) The inclusion of the Gentiles. (Eph.3:3; Rom.11:25)

(5) Eternal life. (1 Cor.15: 51; Col.1:5,27; Col.2: 2,3 compare 3: 3)

All these mysteries will only achieve their completion in the kingdom age. The mysteries of the kingdom of heaven are described in the parable of the sower.

Matthew 13, Luke 8 Revelation

Seed fallen by the wayside:

1. Eaten by birds. (Mtt.)

2. Trodden down.(Lk.)

1. Saying to all the birds gather yourselves together unto the supper of the great God. (19: 17,18)

2. Shall they tread underfoot. (11: 3)

On rocky ground:

Scorched by the sun.

And power was given unto the sun to scorch men with fire. (16: 8,9)

Amongst thorns:

Choked with riches and pleasure

Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked. (Sardis – 3: 17)

Good ground:

fruitbearing

Firstfruits unto God. (14:4)

The mystery of God encompasses many things but essentially it is the eschaton. In Revelation the "good tidings" or "eternal gospel" that is declared is the hour of judgment or the Fall of Babylon. This is indeed "good tidings" to the believers and it is no coincidence that we find this theme replicated in chapter 14, for as we have already indicated chapter 14 contains the seven thunders.

REVELATION 10 REVELATION 14

v.7. "according to the good tidings (gospel) which he declared to his servants the prophets."

v.6. "another angel having an eternal gospel to preach (proclaim R.V.) unto them that dwell on the earth."

v.4. "when the seven thunders uttered their voices."

v.7. "saying with a loud voice: Fear God, and give glory to him; for the hour of his judgment is come."

v.6. who created heaven…and earth…and sea.

v.7 "worship him that made heaven, and earth and the sea, and the fountains of waters."

v.7. "then is finished the MYSTERY OF GOD."

v.8. "And there followed another angel saying, Fallen, Fallen is Babylon the Great. (MYSTERY BABYLON)"

v.4. "those things which the seven thunders uttered write them not."

v.13. "Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth."

The mystery of God is then the final fall of Babylon and the consummation of the kingdom. It is finished does not mean that the kingdom is over, but that it has come to fruition, it is fulfilled.

"Shall the (R.V.) trumpet (last trump- 11: 15) be blown in the city, and the people not be afraid? (11: 13) shall there be evil in a city, and the Lord hath not done it? (judgment of Babylon -14: 7) Surely the Lord will do nothing, but he revealeth his secret (seven thunders- 10: 4) unto his servants the prophets. (which he declared unto his servants the prophets – 10: 7)

The lion (of Judah – 5: 5) hath roared (a loud voice- 16: 1) who will not fear? The Lord hath spoken, who can but prophesy?"(the witnesses- 11:2) [Amos 3: 6-8]

The last trump sees the introduction of the kingdom and the judgment of the world:

“And the nations were angry, and thy wrath is come, and the time of the dead, that they should be judged, and that thou shouldest give reward to thy servants the prophets, and to the saints, and them that fear thy name, the small and the great; and shouldest destroy them that destroy the earth. (Israel)” (11:18)

The mystery of God finds it’s counterpart in scriptures:

§ Mystery of godliness – mystery of iniquity (2 Thess.2: 7 = man of sin)

§ Mystery of God – mystery Babylon (17:5)

§ Mystery of marriage (the bride of the Lamb) – mystery of the woman (17:7)

It is finished is a formula that occurs at crucial (critical) moments in God’s purpose.

“Thus the heaven and earth were finished, and all the host of them. And on the seventh day God finished his work which he had made; and he rested on the seventh day.” (Gen.2: 1,2)

This was God’s first great creative act.

“Jesus cried with a loud voice, “it is finished” (John19: 30; Mtt.27: 50; Lk.23: 46; Mk.15: 37)

This was God’s second great creative act.

“The mystery of God should be finished” (10:7) …. “Great voice…it is done.” (16:17) [previous verse = Armageddon] “ ….and he said unto me it is done…the tabernacle of God is with men.” (21: 6) “new heaven and earth: for the first heaven and earth were passed away.” (21: 1)

(God has finished creating the ‘host of heaven’ and rests on the seventh day)

This is God’s last great creative act.

THE LITTLE SCROLL

“And the voice which I heard from heaven spake unto me again, and said, Go and take the little book which is open in the hand of the angel which standeth upon the sea and upon the earth. And I went unto the angel, and said unto him, Give me the little book. And he said unto me, Take it, and eat it up; and it shall make thy belly bitter, but it shall be in thy mouth sweet as honey. And I took the little book out of the angel's hand, and ate it up; and it was in my mouth sweet as honey: and as soon as I had eaten it, my belly was bitter. And he said unto me, Thou must prophesy again before many peoples, and nations, and tongues, and kings.”

(Rev.10: 8-11)

In this section we note how John is told twice to take the roll. It is not handed to him; even when he asks the angel to give it to him, the answer is that he must take it. This was also the experience of Ezekiel who was told to eat the roll and to fill his belly with it (Ezek.3: 1,3). In both pictures the idea is the same. The messenger of God has to take God’s message into his very life and being.

The sweetness of the roll is a recurring theme, the judgments of God are sweeter than honey and the honey comb (Ps.19:10) “How sweet are thy words to my taste! Sweeter than honey to my mouth.” (Ps.119: 103). Apparently, when a Jewish boy was learning the alphabet it was

written on a slate in a mixture of flour and honey, which he was allowed to lick off if he remembered the pronunciation.

But for John the roll was both sweet and bitter at the same time. It is a sweet thing to be chosen as God's witness, but the message he proclaimed was bitter. The sons of thunder have the privilege to be admitted to the secrets of heaven (seven thunders) but at the same time it was bitter to have to predict a time of terror, even if triumph lay at it's end.

NOTES

1 The mighty angel is not Christ. Scripture could not speak of Christ as 'merely' another angel. The angel is without question Gabriel, who appeared to Daniel. The angel has the attributes of Christ because of the importance of the forth coming revelations. The following comparison is culled from H.A.W.'s Revelation. Pg. 140. See also digression 11.1 page 13 and also note 18 of this book.

The Angel of Revelation 10

Christ

(a) Clothed wit a cloud.

(a) " A cloud received him out of their sight…shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven." (Acts 1: 10, 11). "Behold he cometh with clouds." (Rev.1:7 and 14: 14)

(b) His face as the sun.

(b) "His countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength." (1: 16)

(c) His feet as pillars of fire.

(c) "His feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace." (1: 15)

(d) "Cried with a loud voice as when a lion roareth."

(d) "The Lion of the tribe of Judah hath prevailed to open the seals." (5: 5)

(e) "A rainbow was upon his head."

(e) "There was a rainbow round about the throne (4: 3)…a Lamb in the midst of the throne." (5: 6)

NOTES

1In his Revelation, 'A Biblical Appoach' (pg.142,143) H.A.W. argues that the left foot indicates the casting away of Israel and the right foot the blessing of the Gentiles. The Gentiles were blessed when Israel was cast off, through the preaching of the gospel: "according to the good tidings which he declared to his servants the prophets." (10:7) H.A.W. poses the following question; How could judgment on Israel be characterised as "good tidings" if it were not that their casting away meant the receiving of the Gentiles? According to this view the "mystery of God" is the preaching of the gospel to the Gentiles. The present author believes that the, "mystery of God" is the kingdom. The preaching of the gospel to the Gentiles is only part of that mystery. This theme will be fully explored later in this chapter.

2 James was killed by the sword (Acts 12:1) not by stoning. This indicates that the accusation against him was not religious. He was probably beheaded like John the Baptist. John the Baptist is the only one we can say with any certainty was beheaded. (see Rev.20:4 does this answer the question posed in Mk.10: 36?)

NOTES

1 David did not sin in numbering the people, the people neglected to pay the 'atonement money', which was commanded in the law of Moses, whenever there was a census. The Lord's anger was, "Kindled against Israel (2 Sam.24: 1) David only sinned in the matter of Uriah the Hittite. (1 Kings 15: 5) The census numbers in the two accounts are different, which suggest inflation.(a common occurrence) If 70,000 died, might the census have been 700,000 ? (for Israel only – ten tribes ?) In that case God was taking his tithe. (Compare Rev.11:13 : 7,000 killed out of a total of 70,000) See also; Samuel, Saul and David by H.A.W. pgs.220-226.

NOTES

1 Therefore he moves them to jealousy with a "foolish nation."

NOTES

1 This is a reconstruction of the LXX text by J.Ziegler, where the M.T. has probably been corrupted. The LXX has seven sceptres i.e., seven thunders. (Day, Vetus Testamentum 29 [1977] 146-7)

Chapter 11

THE TWO WITNESSES

“The testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy” (Rev.19:10)

SYNOPSIS OF EXEGESIS ON CHAPTER 11

THE FAITHFUL WITNESS

This comparison establishes that the witnessing mission was based on that of Jesus Christ. The witnesses cannot therefore be the Huguenots who accepted infant baptism, the trinity and the immortality of the soul. John Calvin fiercely attacked and persecuted any who thought otherwise. (See Apocalypse for Everyman by AD. Norris pg. 192)

WITNESSING IN THE FIRST CENTURY

This section shows that the witnessing of the disciples and the apostles in the first century was a type of the future witnessing mission, the words of the Lord Jesus Christ are unfulfilled as yet: “Ye shall not have gone through(RV) the cities of Israel till the son of man be come” (Mt. 10:23) This also indicates that the final witnessing mission will be a call for the nation of Israel to repent.

THE WITNESSING OF THE SONS OF OIL

The ‘Sons of Oil’ comparisons indicate that we are dealing with a spirit gifted mission to build and preserve the true temple of God during a time of gentile occupation. The resulting ecclesia undergoes an internal struggle as it did in the days of Zacheriah and Jude, climaxing in the casting out of the satanic element.

THE WITNESSING OF MOSES AND ELIJAH

Although the law and the prophets could of themselves not lead the nation of Israel into the kingdom (both buried outside the land) their role is not complete yet, for they will be called upon to testify against apostasy (false gods) during a time of oppression, in order to turn, ‘the hearts of the children to the (covenants) of the fathers.’

THE WITNESSING OF JOHN THE BAPTIST

Not only Jesus, but also John the Baptist functions as a model for the witnesses. John came in the spirit and power of Elijah, as will the future witnesses - this rules out a literal return of Moses and Elijah. Like the Baptist their call to repentance and warning of coming retribution will be uncompromising. Their Elijah mission will also be rejected by all but a minority.

THE WITNESS OF THE LILIES

This Lilly psalm from Hezekiah’s reign demonstrates that the witnessing happens during a time of occupation and culminates with the death of the witnesses. During the siege of Jerusalem the false witness was Rabshakeh - probably a renegade Jew who was thoroughly familiar with Isaiah’s prophecies. This has implications for the false witnessing described in Revelation chapter 13.

THE WITNESSING OF HEZEKIAH

This section establishes the reformation of Hezekiah as a type of the future witnessing mission, resulting in a repentant community saved by the intervention of God.

THE FAITHFUL WITNESS AND LEGION

This section shows that the unclean spirit that Jesus exorcised during his ministry was never replaced (nationally) with the wholesome message of the gospel. It is the same unclean spirit that emerges to murder the witnesses at the end of their mission.

THE FALSE WITNESSES

These parallels demonstrate that the mission of the false witnesses is a parody of the ministry of the true witnesses.

THE DEATH OF THE WITNESSES

This section establishes Jerusalem as the place where the witnesses are killed.

WITNESSING AND TIME PERIODS

This section differentiates between the witnessing which occurs daily and the persecution which is expressed as a monthly phenomenon. The removal of the daily witnessing is analogous with the removal of the daily in Daniel chapter 8.

DIGRESSION 11.1 CHAPTER 11 - TIME PERIODS AND WITNESSING - THE SEVENTY SEVENS PROPHECY

The digression examines divine time periods in general and the seventy sevens prophecy in particular and endeavours to answer the question whether the 'time of the end' is a 3½ year or a 7 year period. The nature of Daniel's prophecy is shown to be 'discontinuous' i.e. key events occur with long periods of inactivity between the segments. The section also highlights that each section of the 'seventy sevens' had a short term primary fulfilment, that typified and established the veracity of the long term fulfilment. The conclusion is that both 3½ year periods had a typical fulfilment in the first century - the Jewish war, culminating in the destruction of the temple and the man of sin (false messiah) typified in the Bar Kochba revolt. Both Revelation and Daniel point to a 3½ year period that is yet unfulfilled. The question whether this can be expanded to encompass a full seven years must remain open, but seems likely.

DIGRESSION11.2 CHAPTER 11 - TIME PERIODS AND THE LITTLE HORN

This section demonstrates that the vision in Daniel chapter 9 is a continuation of the vision in chapter 8. Daniel Ch. 8 describes the removal of the daily (witnessing) and the manifestation of the 'man of sin'. In contrast Ch. 9 reveals the 'coming one' - Jesus Christ. The first century Jews confused the two roles and as a consequence equated Jesus' first advent with that of the 'man of sin'.

THE TWO WITNESSES

This section examines the death and vindication of the witnesses as a prelude to the resurrection of a repentant remnant in the nation of Israel. The commissioning of Isaiah as a prophet (witness) is used to establish that although a period of desolation is predicted, God will preserve a repentant remnant. The ecclesia that is born as a consequence of the witnessing experiences a similar fate to the witnesses.(who in turn experience a similar fate to their Lord)

THE TWO WITNESSES - THE SEVENTH TRUMPET

The seventh trumpet (which inaugurates the kingdom) encompasses the events of chapter 12& 13, and even later events. It is in effect a summary of all the events that follow, but also serves as an introduction to the enthronement (birth, resurrection) of the 'last days Jewish ecclesia' which is based on (and is only possible through) the enthronement of Christ. Consequently, the theme is that of being 'born again'; a repentant remnant is taken back into covenant relationship with God. (Caught up to his throne - the mercy seat on the ark of the covenant)

THE WITNESSING OF THE ARK

It is fitting that the last verse of chapter 11 summarises all the themes and bridges the continuation of the same motif 's into Ch.12 - thereby demonstrating that Ch.12 is integral to the seventh trumpet. The themes are witnessing, deliverance, resurrection and enthronement.

THE COMMISSION TO WITNESS

At the end of Revelation Ch.10 John is given a little book (bibliaridi` n) to eat:

"And I took the little book out of the angel's hand, and ate it up; and it was in my mouth sweet as honey: and as soon as I had eaten it, my belly was bitter. And he said unto me, Thou must prophesy again before many peoples, and nations, and tongues, and kings" (Rev.10:10-11).

The message contained in the book was sweet because it is God's word, but the consequences of preaching the message would be bitter both to the prophet and the hearers alike (See Ezek.Ch.2:9 – 3:11). In v.11 John himself is commissioned to prophesy again before many peoples, however it is not John, but the two witnesses that literally fulfil the commission and continue the work:

"… they shall prophesy a thousand two hundred and threescore days clothed in sackcloth" (11:3).

The witnesses witness daily, clothed in sackcloth a sign that they are in mourning and an indication that their message is essentially one of retribution and punishment to a rebellious people.1

The symbols of the measuring line and plummet are not just the symbols for the persecution of a faithful remnant, but also of judgement and destruction. But the background here is clearly Ezek.40 – 45, where the point of the action laid upon the prophet is purification –' to teach my people to distinguish the sacred from the profane' (44.23): 'so tell the Israelites, man, about this temple, it's appearance and it's proportions, that they may be ashamed of their iniquities', which include, above all the failure to remove the corpses of their kings. (Ezek.43:7-10)

But the testimony of the two witnesses of Revelation ends in failure: their corpses are left unburied; and it is only by God's resurrection of them to heaven (symbolic of their vindication) that a remnant repents.

We must not forget that their message is still part of the second woe.(Rev.11:14)

THE FAITHFUL WITNESS

The work of the two witnesses is based on that of the Lord Jesus Christ witnessing against apostate faith:

JESUS CHRIST

THE TWO WITNESSES

“THE FAITHFUL WITNESS” (1:5).

“I will give power to my two witnesses” (11:3).

Public ministry 3½ years.

1260 days (= 3½ years) (11:3).

Protected during His ministry (Luke 4: 29,30; John 8:59, 10:39).

Protected during their ministry

….. if any man should hurt them (11:5)

….. when they have finished their testimony (11:7).

Put to death by apostate religion

(Acts 7:51-53).

…..the Beast shall overcome and kill them (11:7).

Killed in Jerusalem.

“Nevertheless I must walk today, and to morrow, and the day following: for it cannot be that a prophet perish out of Jerusalem” (Luke 13:33).

Killed in Jerusalem

(11:8).

In the grave 3 days

(Matthew 12:40).

Dead for 3½ days

(11:9).

Ascended to heaven in a cloud

(Acts 1:9).

They ascended up to heaven in a cloud (11:12).

Earthquake at the resurrection

(Matthew 27:50-54).

A great earthquake at the resurrection

(11:13).

Repentance

(Acts 2:37).

Repentance?

(11:13).

His resurrection results in the birth of an ecclesia:

“A woman when she is in travail hath sorrow, because her hour is come: but as soon as she is delivered of the child, she remembereth no more the anguish, for joy that a man is born into the world”

(John 16:21).

Their resurrection (vindication) results in the birth of an ecclesia:

“And she brought forth a man child, who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron: and her child was caught up unto God, and to his throne” (Revelation 12:5).

WITNESSING IN THE FIRST CENTURY

The witnesses sent out in pairs

(Lk.10:1).

Two witnesses

(Rev.11:3).

“Nothing shall in any means hurt you”

(Lk.10:19).

“If any man will hurt them…”

(Rev.11:5).

“Brought before governors and kings

for my sake, for a testimony (witness) against them and the Gentiles”

(Mtt.10:18).

“Thou must prophesy again before

many peoples and nations and tongues and kings”

(Rev.10:11 = 11:3).

“And fear not them which kill the

body , but are not able to kill the soul but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell”

(Mtt.10:28).

“The Beast shall overcome and kill them …. their dead bodies …. spirit of life from God entered into them”

(Rev.11:11).

“More tolerable for Sodom in the day

of judgement”

(Mtt.10:15).

Spiritually called Sodom.

“I beheld Satan as lightning fall from

heaven”

(Lk.10:19).1 See Notes

“That great dragon (SATAN) cast out

(of heaven)”

(Rev.12:9).

The conclusion from this comparison would seem to be that the witnessing of Revelation is a continuation of first century witnessing resulting in the birth of an ecclesia. We also note that one of the witnesses was the son of perdition (Judas). Similarly the man of sin will come out of the true ecclesia and be revealed at the last.

At the day of Pentecost there was an outpouring of spirit and Peter quotes from Joel 2:28-32 to show the fulfilment of that prophecy:

Acts 2:17-21

“And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams:

And on my servants and on my handmaidens I will pour out in those days of my Spirit; and they shall prophesy:

And I will shew wonders in heaven above, and signs in the earth beneath; blood, and fire, and vapour and smoke:

The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before that great and notable day of the Lord come:

And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved”.

It is notable that Peter changes Joel’s prophecy:

- “It shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my Spirit” (JOEL).

- “And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God” (ACTS).

Joel’s prophecy is therefore a last day prophecy and must have some application to future witnessing as well as first century witnessing. The prophecy is “telescoped” i.e.:

(1) A fulfilment in Hezekiah’s day.

(2) A fulfilment in Peter’s day.

(3) A fulfilment in the future (Revelation)?

Joel (Peter) says:

- “I will show wonders in the heaven above”.

Cp. Revelation 12:1

- “And there appeared a great wonder in heaven; a woman”.

Joel (Peter) says:

- “Signs in the earth beneath”.

Cp. Revelation 12:16

- “And the earth helped the woman, and the earth opened her mouth, and swallowed up the flood which the dragon cast out of his mouth”.

In Acts 2:20 Joel foresees the sun turned into darkness, and the moon into blood. These prophetic terms describe a solar and a lunar eclipse (the moon turns blood red at a lunar eclipse).

This is similar to Matthew 24:29:

“Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken”.

A period of great tribulation is described in which the powers of the heavens shall be shaken. Is this describing the war in heaven? (Rev.12:7)

[Refer to the witnessing of the ‘sons of oil’]

All this happens after Jesus links the place of his return with the place where the carcasses are left (Mtt.24:28).

[Refer to the witnessing of John the Baptist]

Joel’s prophecy had an application to the end of the Mosaic age – there was a wonder in heaven – the birth of a spirit gifted ecclesia – there were signs in the earth beneath – the apostle Paul (then Saul) was stopped on the road to Damascus.

The earth had opened up (the risen Christ?) and stopped the flood of persecution (Saul breathing out threats and slaughter, Acts 9:1) directed against the “remnant of the woman’s seed”.

The sun and the moon were “darkened”.1 The Temple was destroyed, the Jews dispersed and many of the ecclesias that had become corrupted (by the man of sin and Judaist elements) were punished.

The coming (parousia) of the Son of Man (Mtt.24:27) was in judgement of that generation, but…. Before that great and notable (EPIPHANË S)2 day of the Lord come:

“And it shall come to pass, that whosoever (Jew and Gentile) shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved” (Acts 2:20,21).

Opportunity will be given to repent, just as in the first century a spirit directed mission will again be sent to the nation.

THE WITNESSING OF THE SONS OF OIL

The work of the two witnesses is also based on Zechariah and Haggai, the two “sons of oil” (RV) engaged in building the Temple of God after the exile.

The Revelation text does not differentiate between the olive trees and the candlesticks, however the Zechariah prophecy depicts the olive trees as feeding the candlestick (Zech.4:12-14).1 We can assume then, that in a similar fashion, the two ‘sons of oil’ in Revelation also feed the golden olive oil into the two candlesticks (R.V. mg. = lampstands 11:4) The oil represents the spirit-directed preaching of the witnesses that feeds and invigorates the new-born ecclesia; the pure oil from God (by my Spirit) that provides the light.

The comparison with Zechariah (next page) clearly shows that the work of the two ‘sons of oil’ or the two anointed ones (the prophets Zechariah and Haggai), is animated by the spirit and power of God, similarly the spirit-directed witnesses are measuring up a spiritual Temple – the New Jerusalem ;

“Measure the Temple of God, and the altar, and them that worship therein” (11:1).

In the prophecy of Zechariah the construction of the Temple leads to a confrontation with Satan (Zech.3:1-2). Jude comments on this confrontation as follows:

“Yet Michael the archangel, when contending with the devil he disputed about the body of Moses, durst not bring against him railing accusation but said, The Lord rebuke thee” (v.9).

Jude informs us that the angel of Zechariah 3:1-2 was Michael. He also tells us that the dispute was about the ‘body of Moses’ (Greek – the servant of Moses). In other words the dispute was about the suitability of Joshua (the servant of Moses i.e. the law) to function as high priest (Joshua was clothed with filthy garments – Zech.3:4).

Jude himself uses this verse against Judaising elements who are challenging ecclesial authority. Similarly the passage in Rev.12:7-8 describes a confrontation in the ‘new-born’ ecclesia between Michael and SATAN (= the dragon). We can surmise that this challenge is not about the body of Moses but about control of the body of Christ.

THE WITNESSING OF THE SONS OF OIL

COMPARING ZECHARIAH AND REVELATION 11

“And there was given me a reed like unto a rod: and the angel stood, saying, Rise, and measure the Temple of God, and the altar, and them that worship therein” (Rev.11:1).

“I lifted up mine eyes again, and looked, and behold a man with a measuring line in his hand. Then said I, Whither goest thou? And he said unto me, To measure Jerusalem, to see what is the breadth thereof, and what is the length thereof” (Zech.2:1-2).

“And I will give power2 unto my two witnesses, and they shall prophesy a thousand two hundred and threescore days, clothed in sackcloth” (Rev.11:3).

“Then he answered and spake unto me, saying, This is the word of the LORD unto Zerubbabel, saying, Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the LORD of hosts” (Zech.4:6).

“These are the two olive trees, and the two candlesticks standing before the God of the earth” (Rev.11:4).

“Then answered I, and said unto him, What are these two olive trees upon the right side of the candlestick and upon the left side thereof?” (Zech.4:11).

“And if any man will hurt them, fire proceedeth out of their mouth, and devoureth their enemies: and if any man will hurt them, he must in this manner be killed” (Rev.11:5).

“Then he answered and spake unto me, saying, This is the word of the LORD unto Zerubbabel, saying, Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the LORD of hosts” (Zech.4:6).

“And there was war in heaven and Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels, And prevailed not; neither was their place found any more in heaven” (Rev.12:7-8).

“And he shewed me Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of the LORD, and Satan standing at his right hand to resist him. And the LORD said unto Satan, The LORD rebuke thee, O Satan; even the LORD that hath chosen Jerusalem rebuke thee: is not this a brand plucked out of the fire”? (Zech.3:1-2).

“Yet Michael the archangel, when contending with the devil he disputed about the body of Moses, durst not bring against him a railing accusation, but said, The LORD rebuke thee” (Jude:9).

THE WITNESSING OF MOSES AND ELIJAH

The witnessing in Revelation chapter 11 is also based on the work of Moses and Elijah – representatives of the law and the prophets.

These have power to shut heaven that it rain not in the days of their prophecy (1260 DAYS = 3½ years) (Rev.11:6).

Elijah prayed for 3½ years drought

(James 5:17).

To turn them to blood, and to smite the earth with all plagues (Rev.11:6).

The plagues on Egypt

brought by Moses (Deut.34:10,11).

Fire proceedeth out of their mouth

(Rev.11:5).

Elijah calls down fire from heaven

(2 Kgs.1:10).

Seven thousand slain (Rev.11:13).

Seven thousand faithful (1 Kgs.19:18).

The correspondence between the lives of Moses and Elijah is instructive; both witnessed against false gods, Moses in Egypt, Elijah against Baal in Israel. Both men spent 40 days on

Horeb and received a revelation from God (1 Kgs.19, Ex.34:6). Both men were buried outside the land (by the angels?) (2 Kgs.2:7-12; Deut.34:6).

Both men appeared to Christ and his disciples in a Kingdom vision – the transfiguration (Lk.9:30).

Both men were buried outside the land in unknown graves, the reason for this is twofold:

(1) To prevent their graves becoming objects of veneration.

(2) To indicate that their work is not complete – this leaves room for others (John the Baptist – and the two witnesses) to continue the work.1

Malachi 4:4-5

"Remember ye the law of Moses my servant, which I commanded unto him in Horeb for all Israel, with the statutes and judgements. Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD".

The task of the 'latter day' Elijah and Moses is to turn the hearts of the children (of Israel) to their fathers (Abraham, Isaac and Jacob), to bring them back into covenant relationship with God.

THE WITNESSING OF JOHN THE BAPTIST

John 1:6-9

"There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. The same came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all men through him might believe. He was not that Light, but was sent to bear witness of that Light. That was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world".

The two witnesses = two lampstands

Jesus = The faithful witness = the greater light.

John = witness of the light = the lesser light.

Matthew 11:13-14

"For all the prophets and the law prophesied until John. And if ye will receive it, this is Elias, which was for to come".

John the Baptist appeared to the nation in the spirit and power of Elijah – he was attired like Elijah, had an uncompromising message like Elijah and appeared to the nation at the very place where Elijah had been snatched away 900 years previously! It was also the same place where the nation had crossed the Jordan to enter the land under Moses.1

John the Baptist had come to prepare the way for the Messiah – who would lead them into the Kingdom.

In Revelation chapter 11 we are told the following about the death of the witnesses:

"And their dead bodies shall lie in the street of the great city, which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where also our Lord was crucified".

The Greek word for bodies is ptoma,2 it means corpse or carcass, it is used only five times in the New Testament.

(1) Dead bodies – Rev.11:8 – singular in all texts (dead body)

(2) Dead bodies – Rev.11:9 – plural

(3) Dead bodies – Rev.11:9 – plural

(4) For wheresoever the carcass (ptoma) is, there will the eagles be gathered together (Mtt.24:28).

(5) And when his disciples heard of it, they came and took up his (John the Baptist's) corpse (ptoma) and laid it in a tomb (Mk.6:29).

Of the five usages it is used three times in Revelation 11 of the bodies (or body?) of the witnesses, once in Matthew 24 in the Olivet prophecy concerning the return of Christ,3 and once for John the Baptist, who was the witness concerning Christ's first advent.4

NOTES

1 Compare Joshua 4:9 with Luke 3:8 and 2 Kings 2:7-12. ALL IN THE SAME VICINITY!

2 The other Greek word frequently translated, as body is soma. Whereas soma can refer to either a living or a dead body, ptoma only ever refers to a corpse and is used only five times in the N.T. Table for the usage of soma in the New Testament:

The body of Christ

(the ecclesia) - 40x

The ecclesia (plural) - 1x

A body of grain - 3x

1 Cor.15:37,38

A resurrected body - 3x

1 Cor.15:44,45;

Phil.3:2

A living body - 70x

Uncertain (?) - 2x

Body of beasts - 1x

Heb.11:13

Translated as slaves - 1x

Rev.18:13

3 In Matthew's gospel a corpse is indicated, in the synoptic record of Luke 17: 37. In response to the question Where, Lord? (Where will we be gathered?), Jesus says "Wheresoever the body is (soma) thither will the eagles be gathered together." The word soma can be used for either a dead or a living body.

This could indicate that the ingathering of the saints happens at Jerusalem and coincides with the raising of the witnesses from a dead corpse (ptoma) to a living body (soma)? The very next event in Revelation 11 is the last trump(et) and the time of the dead that they should be rewarded (11:18).

4 Revelation 20:4: “Those that were beheaded for the testimony (witness) of Jesus”. Scripture records only one person as beheaded for his witness – John the Baptist. Does this answer the question by the mother of the sons of Zebedee? (Mtt.20: 20-23)

THE WITNESS OF THE LILLIES

Shoshannim Eduth

This is the title of one of the Asaph Psalms. There are twelve in total (50, 73, 74, 75, 76, 77, 78, 79, 80, 81, 82, 83).

All the Asaph Psalms are contemporary with Hezekiah, Isaiah, Micah and Joel and describe the invasion of Sennacherib.5

The Psalm which concerns us here is Psalm 79 and its correspondence with Revelation 11.

PSALM 79

REVELATION 11

verse

verse

1

The heathen (Gentiles) are come into thine inheritance… they have defiled..

2

2

The dead bodies of thy servants.

8,9

2

The flesh of thy saints… the beasts of the earth..

7

3

None to bury them.

9

4

A reproach to our neighbours, a scorn and a derision….

10

5

How long Lord?

11

6

Pour out thy wrath upon the heathen.

18 (16:1)

11

Let the sighing of the prisoners come before thee.

11

12

Render sevenfold into their bosom.

(7 vials ch.16)

13

We will give thee thanks for ever.

17

Joel 2:16-17:

“Gather the people, sanctify the congregation, assemble the elders, gather the children, and those that suck the breasts: let the bridegroom go forth of his chamber, and the bride out of her closet. Let the priests, the ministers of the Lord, weep between the porch and the altar, and let them say, Spare thy people, O Lord, and give not thine heritage to reproach, that the heathen should rule over them: wherefore should they say among the people, Where is their God?”

The prophecy of Joel shows us that at the time of the invasion, the people gathered between the porch and the altar to plead with God 6 – the outcome of that pleading was the former and latter rain (Joel 2:23) i.e. the outpouring of the spirit (Joel 2:28-32) and deliverance from invasion.

Psalm 79, an Asaph psalm is a direct consequence of “the young men shall see visions” : the psalm is prophetic of the time of the end. The name Asaph means to collect or gather, consider the following:

Psalm 50 (Asaph psalm):

Gather (Asaph) my saints together unto me.(v5)

Joel 2:16:

Gather (Asaph) the people, sanctify… assemble the elders, gather (Asaph) the children.

Just as the elders, the people, priests and children were gathered between the porch and altar at the time of invasion – so the measuring of the Temple and the altar and them that worship therein finds place when the outer court is downtrodden (=JEBUS)7 of the Gentiles (Rev.11:1-2).

In the time of Hezekiah there was deliverance for the remnant in Jerusalem8 – there is also deliverance for the witnesses but this happens after their death.

How appropriate that the young men and women of Hezekiah's day should dream dreams and see visions of the future witnessing against the reproach of the enemy! How marvellous that they should record it in a Psalm entitled the witness of the lilies, a psalm title that has up to now been ambiguous – but according to Thirtle has Passover connections (i.e. the lamb of God).

NOTES

5 For a comprehensive picture of this time period read Dr. J.W. Thirtle: The Titles of the Psalms, their nature and meaning explained (1904) and Old Testament problems (1907)see also Psalms Studies, volume I and II by George Booker; Hezekiah the Great and Isaiah by Harry Whittaker.

How do we understand the 'testimony' (witness) to which this Psalm refers? The first of these words [SHOSHANNIM – LILLIES] refers to the Spring Festival. The second word [EDUTH] meaning testimony or witness is undisputed. It is one of the ten words found twenty three times in Psalm 119. It must be something connected with the Spring Festival (Passover) and Dr Thirtle sees in it the law and the 'testimony' respecting the keeping of the Passover in the second month (cp Joel 2:23) when, under special circumstances it could not be kept in the first month (see Num.9:10-11 and 2 Chron.30:1-3). Psalm 79 tells of enemies being then in the land, which might well have created a difficulty in keeping the Passover in the first month.

6 While the people were weeping outside the Temple - was Hezekiah inside the Temple with the letter from Sennacherib? (2 Kgs.19:14).

7 The old name for Jerusalem is JEBUS (after the Jebusites) and it means downtrodden, see Lk.21: 24.

8 Psalm 79:1 says "They have laid Jerusalem on heaps." This would indicate that the Psalm is post-exilic and not from the time of Hezekiah. Thirtle comments (p.53): "Looking at the prayer as serious, and taking into account the allusions that indicate continued habitation of the land, we grasp the true meaning of the first three verses as prophetic of coming judgement"

This judgement was also predicted by Micah (3:12) but was deferred because of Hezekiah and the faithful remnant.

THE WITNESSING OF HEZEKIAH

ISAIAH 66

REVELATION 11

"The heaven is my throne, the earth is my footstool: where is the house that ye will build for me?.... to this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word" (v.1,2).

"Measure the Temple of God, and the altar and them that worship therein" (v.1).

(a spiritual Temple = THE HOLY CITY)

"When I called none did answer; when I spake, they did not hear" (v.4).

"These two prophets tormented them that dwelt on the earth (v.10) i.e. their message".

“Hear the word of the Lord, ye that tremble at his word (the witnesses), your brethren that hated you, that cast you out for my name’s sake, have said, (sarcastically) Let the Lord be glorified: but he shall appear to your joy, and they shall be ashamed” (v.5).

“Shall overcome them and kill them”

(v.7).

“Their dead bodies lie in the street”

(v.8).

“And the remnant were affrighted and gave glory to the God of heaven” (v.13).

“A voice of noise from the city, a voice from the Temple, a voice of the Lord that rendereth recompense to his enemies”

(v.6).

“And the Temple of God was opened…”

(v.19).

“Before she travailed she brought forth”

(v.7-9).

“And there appeared a great wonder in heaven a woman travailing” (Rev.12:1-2).

“Rejoice for joy with her, all ye that mourn for her” (v.10).

“The witnesses clothed in sackcloth”

(v.3).

“And they shall go forth and look upon the carcasses of the men that transgressed against me…” (v.24).

“And they shall not suffer their dead bodies to be put into graves” (v.9).9

NOTES

9 The enemies of the witnesses display their bodies as trophies in the street of the city. This is what God

intends to do to His enemies (see Jer.14:15-17). We have here a role reversal and a classic case of misusing Scripture – but the witnesses will not be ashamed for they will be vindicated – God will display his enemies as trophies – a perpetual reminder to transgressors, as with HAMON-GOG (Ezek.39:11).

COMMENT

Isaiah chapter 66 relates to the reformation work of Hezekiah, when he sent out to the Northern tribes – their response was one of sarcasm and mockery; those who responded by regularly attending the feasts and came to Jerusalem for the Passover were delivered from the Assyrian, just as Hezekiah (whose sickness coincided with the invasion) was delivered from his sickbed – the deliverance of the King (on the third day) and of the remnant are metaphorically described as birth pangs. (Isa.37.3) We have then a picture of the refugees and captives returning (from the

retreating Assyrian army)and God blessing the nation with abundance (a Jubilee year?), a cameo of the Kingdom age.

In this context see also 'the little Apocalypse', Isaiah chapters 24 to 29.

Note the following:

Isaiah 26:5 – downtrodden (JEBUS)

v. 6 – poor and needy (witnesses)

v. 8 – memorial = Passover = Lord's table

v.11 – Elijah = witnesses

v.14 – death of God's enemies

v.15 – God glorified, Rev.11:13

v.16 – repentance, Rev.11:13

v.18 – birth pangs, Rev.12:2

v.19 – resurrection, Rev.11:18

v.20 – all this happens at Passover!

27:1 – Leviathan = Dragon, Rev.12:3

For further background see HAW Isaiah.

Does the text of Isaiah 66 indicate the restoration of Temple worship in Israel before the second advent? This is outrightly condemned by God and seen as an abomination. I will choose their delusions" (v.4) – Is this in any way connected with 2 Thess.2:11 – "God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie." However outlandish the idea of the re-emergence of Temple worship might seem, we know that certain Jewish sects have already made all the Temple instruments and priestly robes and have created a database with all the priestly (Levitical) names (COHEN) as well as producing periodicals that detail sacrificial worship. For further reading see 'Ready to Rebuild, Imminent plan to rebuild the last days Temple' – Thomas Ice and Randal Price (1992).

THE FAITHFUL WITNESS AND LEGION

THE TWO WITNESSES – A COMPARISON OF REVELATION 11 AND THE GOSPELS

REVELATION 11

MATTHEW 8, 9 & LUKE 8

"And I will give power unto my two witnesses, and they shall prophesy a thousand two hundred and threescore days, clothed in sackcloth" (Rev.11:3).

"And from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness" (Rev.1:5).

Jesus Christ the faithful witness –

3½ year ministry.

The nation of Israel possessed with an unclean spirit –

“A people that provoketh me to anger continually to my face; that sacrificeth in gardens, and burneth incense upon altars of brick; Which remain among the graves, and lodge in the monuments, which eat swine’s flesh, and broth of abominable things is in their vessels” (Isaiah 65:3-4).

“And when he was come to the other side into the country of the Gergesenes, there met him two possessed with devils, coming out of the tombs, exceeding fierce, so that no man might pass by that way” (Mtt.8:28).

“And when he went forth to land, there met him out of the city a certain man, which had devils long time, and ware no clothes, neither abode in any house, but in the tombs” (Lk.8:27).

“And they that dwell upon the earth shall rejoice over them, and make merry, and shall send gifts one to another; because these two prophets tormented them that dwelt on the earth” (Rev.11:10).

“When he saw Jesus, he cried out, and fell down before him, and with a loud voice said, What have I to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of God most high? I beseech thee, torment me not. (For he had commanded the unclean spirit to come out of the man. For oftentimes it had caught him: and he was kept bound with chains and in fetters; and he brake the bands, and was driven of the devil into the wilderness.)” (Lk.8:28-29).

“And when they shall have finished their testimony, the beast that ascendeth out of the bottomless pit (=Abyss) shall make war against them, and shall overcome them, and kill” (Rev.11:17).

“And they besought him that he would not command them to go out into the deep (=Abyss)” (Lk.8:31).

“Then went the devils out of the man, and entered into the swine: and the herd ran violently down a steep place into the lake, and were choked” (Lk.8:33).

“And they ascended up to heaven in a cloud; and their enemies beheld them” (Rev.11:12).

“But that ye may know that the son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins, (then saith he to the sick of the palsy,) Arise, take up thy bed, and go unto thine house” (Mtt.9:6).

“The remnant were affrighted, and gave glory to the God of heaven” (Rev.11:13).

“But when the multitudes saw it, they marvelled, and glorified God, which had given such power unto men” (Mtt.9:8).

The Faithful witness, Jesus Christ, had come to cast the unclean spirit out of the nation and heal them. The unclean spirit of the nation was transferred to the unclean beast (swine) who drowned in the sea.

It is from sea (ABYSS) that this beast emerges in Revelation 11:7. Commenting on a similar occasion (the casting out of a devil) Jesus says:

“When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man, he walketh through dry places seeking rest; and finding none, he saith, I will return unto my house whence I came out. And when he cometh, he findeth it swept and garnished.10 Then goeth he, and taketh to him seven other spirits more

wicked than himself; and they enter in and dwell there: and the last state of that man is worse than the first".

(For the complete passage read Lk.11:14-26.)

In Peter's second epistle, he warns the ecclesia about the folly of returning to Judaism for the "earth also and the works therein shall be burned up" (3:10). It was foolish to return to the old way of life – justification by works – "for all these things shall be dissolved" (3:11).

He warns against becoming entangled again in the things of this world (turning back) and quotes the proverb "The dog is turned to his own vomit again; and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire" (2 Pet.2:17-22). We might well add "The last state of that man was worse than the first".

Similarly Hebrews warns those that have "tasted the powers of the world (age) to come (holy spirit); If they shall then fall away it is impossible to renew them again to repentance" (Heb.6:6). Such a one was Judas Iscariot.

The picture that emerges from Revelation 11 is of the re-emergence of a very virulent strain of Judaism that eventually overcomes and kills the witnesses.

The parable continues into Matthew chapter 9 where Jesus shows that he has the authority to forgive sins by 'raising' the sick of the palsy, in like manner he raises the witnesses to show that they prophesy with his authority. The effect on the spectators is virtually the same in Matthew and Revelation.

THE FALSE WITNESSES

"A false witness shall not be unpunished, and he that speaketh lies shall not escape" (Proverbs 19:5).

The false witness or false prophet is first mentioned in Rev.13:11-18 although the subject will be thoroughly examined in chapter 13, it seemed fitting to observe the contrasts, and superficial similarities with the faithful witnesses of chapter 11 in this section.

TWO WITNESSES

THE FALSE PROPHET (WITNESS)

Stand before the Lord of the earth (11:4)11.

Comes up out of the earth (13:11).

They speak on behalf of God (I will give power..... 11:3).

Speaks on behalf of the Beast (exercise all the power of the first Beast.... 13:12).

Fire out of their mouth (11:5).

Fire from heaven (13:13).

Death of witnesses (11:7).

Death stroke of beast (13:12).

The breath of life from God entered into them (11:11) (resurrection).

Power to give life (breathe RV) into the image of the Beast (i.e. resurrection and creation both implied)12 (13:15).

The parallels are instructive and show that the ministry of the false witness is a parody of the ministry of the true witnesses. It is also notable that whilst the false prophet looks like a lamb, it speaks like a dragon.

This is the dragon of Rev.12:9 – "That old Serpent, the Devil and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world".

The false prophet perpetuates the lie of the Serpent:

"Ye shall be as gods (= the Elohim) knowing both good and evil" (Gen.3:5).

We will examine this lie in more depth in chapter 13, suffice to say that this is humanistic thinking, man can achieve his own salvation and be morally autonomous – a creed that leads to self-justification by works and independence from God.

THE DEATH OF THE WITNESSES

"And their dead bodies shall lie in the street of the great city, which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where also our Lord was crucified" (Rev.11:8).

It has been argued that the great city which is heir to the vice of Sodom, the tyranny of Pharaoh's Egypt and the blind disobedience of Jerusalem is not to be literally identified with any of them. It has been pointed out that the other seven occasions it is mentioned, the context makes it clear that Rome is intended (especially 17:9-10).

Furthermore their bodies are viewed by every people, tribe, tongue and nation, this sort of exposure could only happen in Rome, a city that possessed an empire from the Euphrates to the North Sea and Sahara desert.

The great city (11:8) where the bodies of the witnesses lie is JERUSALEM.

(The other disputed passage, Rev 17:9-10 is dealt with in the Digression 12.1 chapter 12 – a tale of two cities: JERUSALEM VERSUS ROME)

The context of Revelation 11 is Jewish.

1 a)Their enemies rejoice and send gifts one to another (Jewish feast of Purim celebrating the defeat of Haman) (v.10).

b)The phrase 'holy city' (v. 2) is a clear reference to Jerusalem (see Is.48:2; Nehemiah 1:1, 18; Dan.9:24; Mtt.4:5; 27:53). The other occasions where 'holy city' is used in Revelation, it refers to the saints, but on all these occasions it is qualified by the phrase"descended out of heaven from God", i.e. "the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven" (AV Rev.21:2).

c)The phrase 'Jerusalem the holy' occurs on silver shekels minted during the Jewish revolt in AD 66 – 70.

d)The holy city, undergoes a period of down-treading, a direct reference to Lk. 21:24 and a play on the name Jebus (the old Gentile name = downtrodden). The outer court (court of the Gentiles) is downtrodden but the inner court the saints) is under divine protection as are the

witnesses during the 3½ year ministry. Therefore the 42 months down-treading refers to the city of Jerusalem (holy city) not the saints.

e)The murder of the two witnesses in Jerusalem reflects the traditional view expressed by Jesus (Lk.13:33), "It cannot be that a prophet perish outside Jerusalem." Prophets traditionally thought to have been killed in Jerusalem include Isaiah, Uriah (Jer.26:20-23), Zechariah son of Jehoiada (2 Chron.24:20-22; Lk.11:50-51) and some unnamed prophets (Jos. Ant. 10.38). In addition, there was a foiled attempt to murder Jeremiah in Jerusalem (Jer.38:4-6).

2 The term 'spiritually' [pneumatikos] -"which spiritually is called "Sodom", does not mean simply 'allegorically' or 'metaphorically' but 'prophetically', it refers to the charismatic exegesis of the O.T. under the guidance of the spirit of God. In Isaiah 1:9-10 the prophet denounced Jerusalem as 'Sodom' (see Jer.23:14; Ez.16:46, 49). In the O.T., Sodom is frequently used as a type of the 'wicked city'(see Gen. 8:16 – 19:29; Deut.29:23; Isa.1:9; Jer.49:18; Amos 4:11; Zeph.2:9). Also in the N.T. (Mtt.10:15; 11:23, 24; Lk.10:12; Rom.9:29; 2 Pet.2:6; Jude 7). Egypt is a symbol of idolatry (Isa.19:1; Ezek.20:7) and slavery (Ex.2:23; 6:6; Deut.5:6; 6:12; Josh.24:17; Judges 6:8; Neh.9:17; Jer.34:13; Micah 6:4).

3 The objection that Jerusalem (unlike Rome) is not cosmopolitan enough to fulfil the criteria of, 'every people, tribe, tongue and nation viewing the bodies' is unfounded. We are told the following in Acts 2:5:

"There were dwelling in Jerusalem Jews, devout men, out of every nation under heaven".

It then proceeds to list 16 different nationalities including strangers and proselytes (2:7-11). It is fair to say that this was the occasion of a great feast which no doubt attracted many diaspora Jews, but O.T. allusions seem to indicate that the witnesses are killed on a feast day (the Passover, like their Lord?). In any case, the invention of television and the possibility of Jerusalem being declared an 'international city' under UN mandate makes a literal and metaphoric fulfilment of v.8 very likely.

Conclusion

The identification of the harlot of Revelation 17-18 with a single city, and that city Rome, raises several difficulties,

1. In Rev.11:8 we read that the dead bodies of the witnesses lie in the street of 'the great city', which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where also their Lord was crucified. Here, then, the great city is primarily Jerusalem.

2. 'The great city', of 17:18 is set in antithesis to the 'holy city' of 21:2 – the harlot is a parody of the bride. Since the bride is the new or heavenly Jerusalem, the harlot symbolises the earthy Jerusalem.

3. The most natural interpretation of 17:16 is that it refers to the destruction of Jerusalem by Rome in A.D. 70 seen as the fulfilment of Ezek.16:37,39.

4. In Revelation 17-18 the writer draws equally upon Old Testament prophecies of the doom of heathen cities, such as Babylon and Tyre, and prophecies of the fate of Judah and Jerusalem; and this would be more natural if the prophecies applied, at least in part, to Jerusalem. These difficulties are removed if we take the harlot as a symbol of the cities of the Empire, including Jerusalem. 'Babylon' is Rome, but it is also the Jerusalem whose citizens rejected their Messiah and chose Caesar (compare John 19:15), and who will therefore suffer Rome's ultimate fate. The

writer may have been influenced in his exposition by the fact that occasionally in the prophecy of Jeremiah (in 9:11 and 51:37, for instance) the fate of Babylon and Jerusalem is described in almost identical terms. Similarly, the 'great city' of chapter 11 is to be understood as signifying Jerusalem, but not only Jerusalem, for we read that men 'from the peoples tribes and tongues and nations' look at the dead bodies of the witnesses. The ecclesias are scattered throughout all the cities of the Empire, and any city who treats the witnesses of Jesus as he himself was treated models herself on Jerusalem, who killed the prophets and stoned them that were sent to her (Mtt.22:37) 'The great city' is first of all Jerusalem, then any other city that identifies with her deeds.

WITNESSING AND TIME PERIODS

SYNOPSIS

The following time periods are recorded in the book of Revelation:

- the holy city (Jerusalem) downtrodden 42 months (11:2)

- witnessing 1260 days (11:3)

- the woman in the wilderness 1260 days (12:6)

- the Beast continues 42 months (13:5)

(See Digression11.1 chapter 11 – TIME PERIODS AND WITNESSING – THE SEVENTY SEVENS PROPHECY.)

The key difference between these time periods is that one is defined as days and the other as months.

The witnessing is a daily event, the woman is nourished in the wilderness daily (as the children of Israel were). It is tempting to equate the daily witnessing as the nourishment of the woman, "man shall not live by bread alone but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God" (Mtt.4:4; Deut.8:3). God tells the prophet Jeremiah that he "sent unto you all my servants the prophets, daily rising up early and sending them" (Jer.7:25).

Jesus sat in the Temple daily teaching the people (Mtt.26:55; Mk.14:49; Lk.19:47; Lk. 22:53). The continual burnt offering (or morning and evening sacrifice) was also offered daily (Num.28:3) as an offering made by fire. The burnt offering signified complete dedication, it was completely consumed, the fire on the altar burning day and night (Lev.6:10).

Jesus then can be likened to the daily burnt sacrifice – John 2:7 quotes Psalm 69:9 "For the zeal of thine house hath eaten me up" which mirrors Psalm 119:139 "My zeal hath consumed me, because mine enemies have forgotten thy words".

The daily sacrifice therefore typifies a living sacrifice (Rom.12:1), the daily witnessing (1260 days) being a type of the continual burnt offering.

If this is the case, then the removal of the daily sacrifice (the word sacrifice is not in the original)13 in Daniel chapter 8 could possibly be speaking about removal of the daily witnessing i.e. the death of the witnesses.

(See Digression II chapter 11: TIME PERIODS AND THE LITTLE HORN.)

THE TWO WITNESSES

SYNOPSIS

The inhabitants of the earth rejoice over the death of the witnesses14. This is the same reaction of the Jews at the feast of Purim, when their enemies are killed (Esther 9:19,22). It is also the experience of the Messiah, prophetically foretold in the expansive Messianic prophecy of Micah chapter 7:

“Rejoice, not against me, O mine enemy: when I fall, I shall arise; when I sit in darkness, the Lord shall be a light unto me” (Micah 7:8).15

This was to be the experience of the disciples at the death of Jesus:

“Verily, verily, I say unto you, that ye shall weep and lament, but the world (=Jewish world) shall rejoice: and ye shall be sorrowful, but your sorrow shall be turned into joy. A woman when she is in travail hath sorrow, because her hour is come: but as soon as she is delivered of the child, she remembereth no more the anguish, for the joy that a man is born into the world” (John 16:20,21).

In this passage Jesus, is reassuring his disciples and reminding them that pain and suffering are necessary but are soon forgotten after the birth. Jesus death and resurrection (the first begotten or firstborn of the dead, Rev.1:5) would have as a consequence the birth of the 1st century ecclesia. There would have been no ecclesia and our faith would be in vain had it not been for the resurrection. The following themes are noticeable:

JOHN 16:20,21

REVELATION 11:10; 12:1-5,12.

Enemy rejoicing.

Enemy rejoicing.

A woman travailing in birth.

A woman travailing in birth.

Sorrow.

Pained to be delivered.

Birth of a man child.

Birth of a man child.

Your sorrow turned to joy16.

Rejoice ye heavens…

The death and resurrection of the witnesses has the same effect and consequence as the death and resurrection of Jesus, it results in the birth of a repentant remnant; a Jewish ecclesia (Acts 2:37,38). After 3½ days (again reflecting a period of persecution and witness - 3½ years, 1260 days, 42 months) which is analogous with Jesus rising ‘after three days’ (Mtt.27:60; Mk. 8:31; 9:31), the breath or spirit of life from God entered into them, and they stood upon their feet. This alludes to Ezekiel 37:10:“I prophesied as he commanded me, and the breath came into them (the dry bones), and they lived, and stood on their feet a great multitude”. The Ezekiel passage is

about the nation of Israel, the apostle John, however, applies it to the witnesses who are preaching to the nation. This does not, however, prevent us from also applying it to the nation.

“Thy dead men (Judah’s) shall live, together with my dead body (the witnesses) shall they arise.” (Isa 26:19) [context: Hezekiah raised from his sickbed a sign of the nations impending deliverance]

The death and resurrection of the witnesses is symbolic of the bringing to life again of the nation. We note that it is the prophecy of Ezekiel that causes the breath to enter the dry bones, similarly it is the prophecy of John – “thou must prophesy again over many people…” (Rev.10:11) [This is the commission to Ezekiel – “prophesy over (RV) these bones” (Ezek.37:4).] that causes the dry bones to live – the witnessing of the two prophets in Revelation is a thematic continuation of John’s (and Ezekiel’s) testimony.The ascension of the witnesses to heaven is not literal like that of Jesus.

The ascension to heaven signifies the state of fellowship with God and of access to his throne (eg Rev.15:1; 19:1). “Their enemies beheld them” implies a change of status and negates the idea of a literal ascension.A paraphrase of verses 11-12 would be as follows:Through the spirit-gifted testimony of the witnesses new life was breathed into the nation. The death and vindication of the witnesses catalysed the resurrection of a faithful remnant from amongst the nation of Israel; all the enemies (of the witnesses) could do, was look on helplessly while the preaching and vindication of the (dead) witnesses resulted in a new status (in heavenly places – Eph.2:6)17 of the Jewish converts.“For if the casting away of them (Israel) be the reconciling of the world, what shall the receiving of them be but life from the dead?” (Rom.11:15)

This is both symbolically and literally true, for shortly after the repentance of a remnant within the nation of Israel, we have the resurrection (Rev.11:18).The death and vindication of the witnesses is itself the earthquake shock by which the great city is overthrown:“And the same hour was there a great earthquake, and the tenth part of the city fell, and in the earthquake were slain of men (Greek- the names of men) seven thousand and the remnant were affrighted, and gave glory to the God of heaven” (Rev.11:13).Here we find an instructive comparison between Isaiah 6 and Revelation 11:

ISAIAH 6

REVELATION 11

Temple (v.1).

The temple of God was opened in heaven (v.19).

The Lord sitting upon a throne (v.1)18

The ark of his covenant (v.19).

Seraphim (v.2).

Cherubim (same thing) on the ark.

EARTHQUAKE (at the death of Uzziah, cp. Is.6:1 with Zech.14:5)

“And the posts and the door moved at the voice of him that cried” (v.4).

A GREAT EARTHQUAKE (v.13).

How long?

“Until the cities be wasted…

the land be desolate…

But yet in it shall be a tenth and it shall return, and shall be eaten: as a teil tree and as an oak, whose substance is in them when they cast their leaves19 : so the holy seed shall be the substance thereof” (v.11-13).

THE TENTH PART OF THE CITY FELL (v.13).

“Her seed (the remnant) which keep the commandments of God” (Rev.12:17).

The whole earth is full of his glory (v.3).

“The remnant were affrighted, and gave glory to the God of heaven” (v.13).

“Then said I, woe is me” (v.5).

“The second woe is past” (v.14).

The comparisons with Isaiah 6 are significant for this is the chapter in which he Isaiah is commissioned as a prophet (witness).

“Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then said I, here am I; send me” (v.8). This vision occurred at the death of king Uzziah, and the earthquake (v.4) was probably that referred to in Zech.14:5. HAW comments as follows on Isaiah 6:13; “the Hebrew of this verse is unpleasantly difficult, as the AV italics bear witness. As Israel’s tithe was ‘holy to the Lord’ (Lev.27:32), so there was to continue in the remnant who were truly his, and from the impending tribulation ‘they shall return’ – Shear Jashub (the name of Isaiah’s son). The idea is repeated with a change of figure: Israel, looking like a prosperous well-established tree, will be burnt up, yet nevertheless even if the stump be cut down (NIV), survival will still be possible, for “there is hope of a tree, if it be cut down, that it will sprout again…through the scent of water it will bud, and bring forth boughs like a plant” (Job 14:7-9).”

Nevertheless the ‘tree’ of Israel will survive through the ‘holy seed’ foretold in Isa.7:14, the rod out of the stem of Jesse, the Branch out of his roots (Isaiah HAW pg.141).

This prophecy was given to Isaiah in answer to the question, “How long?” It is revealed to him that there was more destruction to come even the tenth (the holy tithe) would be destroyed – but this would not be the end for the holy seed would still be able to sprout forth.

Revelation 11:13, informs us, that, ‘a tenth of the city fell’ (7,000). This must be the ‘holy tithe’, the 7,000 who had not bowed the knee to Baal (1Kgs.19:18); this faithful ‘tithe’ represents the witnesses who die for their testimony.20

They witness amidst a city with a population of 70,000 – this number indicates that the city is under gentile domination.21 This has already been intimated because the outer court “is given unto the gentiles” [RV nations] (v.2).

The earthquake symbolises the shock of the realisation that their testimony is true; they have been vindicated by God (HOW?) and this leads to the conversion of a remnant.

In Rev.16:9 people blasphemed the name of God, and "they did not repent so as to give glory to him." In contrast the events in Revelation 11 lead the remnant to give glory to the God of heaven (= repent).22 The conversion of Nebuchadnezzar as described in LXX Daniel 4:34, uses the same phrase "Give glory to the God of heaven". The 7,000 that were slain are called in the Greek 'names of men' (RV mg.) – 7,000 were slain of the names of men. This may well be a reference to Numbers 1:5 "These are the names of the men that will stand with you" (Moses).

These men were chosen to go forth to war in Israel, every one the head of his father's house. "They are expressed (LXX called) by names" (Num.1:17). It is appropriate that this statement should be used about the men who would stand with Moses (symbolic of one of the witnesses in Revelation 11 – standing before the God of the earth).

The death and resurrection sequence of Rev.11:11-12 which results in conversion (v.13) is mirrored in Revelation 12:

The third woe cometh quickly (v.14).

Woe to the inhabitants of the earth (v.12).23

Although Revelation 12 seems to be a repeat description of the ministry of the witnesses, this is not necessarily the case. It must be remembered that Jesus Christ serves as a type for the witnesses, and the witnesses themselves serve as a type for the last days' ecclesia.

The symbology in Revelation is complex and prolific; often it merges or overlaps. The resulting ecclesia experiences similar persecution to the witnesses – "The disciple is not above his master…" (Mtt.10: 24,25)

The differences between the witnesses and the man child of Revelation are apparent, the witnesses are commissioned by God (10:11; 11:3), the man child is born and immediately snatched up to the throne of God.(12:1-5).24

THE TWO WITNESSES - THE SEVENTH TRUMPET (Rev.11:14-19)

"The second woe is past: behold the third woe cometh quickly" (11:14).

The three woes are associated with the last three trumpets (8:13) – the first woe with the fifth trumpet, the second woe with the sixth trumpet (9:12,13) which terminates in 11:4 and introduces the third woe at the commencement of the seventh trumpet (11:15).

We also have a mention of woe in 12:12:"Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and the sea." This suggests that, Rev.12:1-11 is part of the third woe (= 7th trumpet). We are also informed that the third part of the stars of heaven are cast down (v.4). 'The third part' is a phrase that is characteristic of the trumpets and is mentioned twelve times in the first six trumpets.25

The message of the last trumpet given here is evidently no more than a summary of what is to be given in more detail later (on this see HAW, REVELATION – A BIBLICAL APPROACH, p.156). God has taken his power and assumed the kingdom:

"The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and his Christ" (v.15).

"Thou hast taken to thee thy great power and hast reigned" (v.17).

The aorist form of the verbs are used and therefore refer to the assumption of God's kingship as a fact of the past – the verbs are used proleptically, like the prefectum propheticum, 'prophetic

perfect', of a future event that prophetic certainty speaks of as an event of the past. The verbs emphasise the certainty of the final and complete rule of God.

This does not however occur until the rout of the Beast in 19:19 – 20:4. The time for the dead to be judged has arrived, say the elders again, but no such judgement is described until 20:4. Those who destroy the earth are destroyed themselves, again this only happens in 15:8 (seven last plagues).

Peter Watkins comments as follows in his book EXPLORING THE APOCALYPSE AND THE FUTURE, p.72:

"So the witnesses do their work just before the sounding of the seventh trumpet. What do we know about the seventh trumpet? Let the Scriptures speak:

"And the angel... sware by him that liveth for ever and ever... that there should be time no longer: but in the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he shall begin to sound, the mystery of God 26 should be finished, as he hath declared to his servants the prophets" (10:5-7).

These words are spoken by the mighty angel of chapter 10, who has a rainbow upon his head. From Genesis 9 we learn that rainbows are associated with covenants, and this is the occasion of a covenant. When the solemn assurance concerning the seventh trumpet is given, the angel lifts his hand to heaven and swears by him that liveth for ever and ever. There is a remarkable similarity between these words and those of Dan.12:7. Here also an angel lifts up his hands to heaven and swears by him that liveth for ever and ever. But the assurance given to Daniel is that "it shall be for a time, times, and a half; and when he shall have accomplished to scatter the power of the holy people, all these things shall be finished". These words in Daniel, are in reply to the question: "How long?"; and this must be the question that calls forth the assurance of Revelation 10. The waiting saints cry, "How long?", and a solemn promise, an oath, assures all who wait that their time of waiting will end when the seventh trumpet sounds."

The seventh trumpet has already been associated by the apostle Paul with the introduction of the kingdom in 1 Thess.4:16,17:

REVELATION 11

THESSALONIANS

Great voices in heaven (v.15).

With a shout (v.16).

The seventh angel (v.15).

The voice of the archangel (v.16).

Sounded (the trump) (v.15).

With the trump of God (v.16).

The time of the dead, that they should be judged (v.18)

And the dead in Christ shall rise (v.17).

"And her child was caught up to God and his throne" (Rev.12:5).

“Then we which are alive, that are left, shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord” (v.17).

The events of the seventh trumpet happen quickly (11:14) after the second woe. The snatching up of the man child (Rev.12:5) is a continuation of the seventh trumpet (which includes the third woe, Rev.12:12).

HAW comments as follows (REVELATION, A BIBLICAL APPROACH, p.156):

“If the quite arbitrary chapter division of 11:19 be ignored for the moment, it is then no easy matter to settle whether the end of the seventh trumpet comes at the end of v.18 or v.19. According to the structure being argued for here, this becomes a matter of minor importance, since it is now all part of the seventh trumpet, either in its summary form (end of chapter 11) or in its extended form (chapters 12 & 13)”.

I would add to this observation that many of the events in the seventh trumpet happen concurrently not consecutively.

In the first century the dragon – beast protagonist endeavoured to prevent the enthronement of Christ and his ecclesia, this is typical of future events. Although ‘being caught up to the throne’ is reminiscent of events at the Lords return, the actual resurrection of the dead happens much later 27 (Rev.20:1-4) after the manifestation of the man of sin. The narrative has been framed this way because the theme of the seventh trumpet is enthronement. This theme starts in Revelation 11 with the sounding of the seventh trumpet and continues into Revelation chapter 12.

REVELATION 11 (SEVENTH TRUMPET)

PSALM 2

“The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord and his Christ” (v.15).

“Yet have I set my king, upon my holy hill at Zion” (v.6).

“And the nations were angry” (v.18).

“Why do the nations rage?” (v.1).

Thy wrath is come” (v.18).

“Then shall he speak to them in his wrath and vex them in his sore displeasure”(v.5).

“Thou hast taken thy great power, and hast reigned” (v.17).

“Ask of me, and I will give thee the nations for thine inheritance and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession” (v.8).

“A man child, who is to rule all nations with a rod of iron” (12:15).

“Thou art my son” (v.7).

“Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron” (v.9).

“Woman travailing in birth” (12:2).

“This day I have begotten thee” (v.7).

“The kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ” (Gr. anointed) (12:10).

“Against the Lord, and against his anointed” (Christ) (v.2).

“That thou shouldest give reward unto thy servants the prophets, and to the saints, and them that fear thy name” (v.18).

“Blessed are they that put their trust in him” (v.12).

“Serve the Lord with fear and rejoice with trembling” (v.11).

“Destroy them which destroy the earth” (v.18).

“Thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter’s vessel” (v.9).

From the comparison of the seventh trumpet with Psalm 2 we observe that the enthronement of the ecclesia is based on the enthronement of Christ after his resurrection.

“To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am sat down with my Father in his throne” (Rev.3:21).

In Old Testament times a king’s birthday was the day of his ascension. Sonship and enthronement belong inseparably together – Jesus was enthroned with the words ‘Thou art my son’. Similarly the theme of birth and enthronement belong together – Jesus was the firstbegotten from the dead (1:5): “this day I have begotten thee”.

As we have already observed, the theme of enthronement begins in Revelation 11 and continues into Revelation 12 where it merges with the theme of birth. Without pre-empting our study of Revelation 12, we note that no sooner is the man child born than he is ‘caught up’ to the throne. The immediacy of this event is expressed in Isaiah 66:7: “Before she travailed she brought forth: before her pain came she was delivered of a man child.” 28

Once again we have a prolific merging of symbol and type making us profoundly aware of the beauty and complexity of Scripture.

THE WITNESSING OF THE ARK

SYNOPSIS

Before we attempt an exegesis of Revelation chapter 12, we will examine the last verse of Revelation 11:

“And the Temple of God was opened in heaven, and there was seen in his Temple the ark of his testament: and there were lightning’s, and voices and thunderings, and an earthquake, and great hail” (Rev.11:19).

All chapter divisions in Scripture are artificial (in order to aid ease of reading). This last verse embraces all the themes of the seventh trumpet and serves to introduce us to Revelation chapter 12.

I have entitled this section the witnessing of the ark because it continues the theme of witnessing. The ark of the covenant (RV) is also called the ark of the testament (= witness) because it housed the two witnesses, namely the two tables of testimony (Ex.34:29). It is from this that the ark derived its name ‘the ark of the testimony’ (Ex.25:22) and also the tabernacle, which housed the ark, became the ‘tabernacle of testimony’ (Num.1:50).

The ark of the testimony also contained the symbols of resurrection; the dead rod which budded, the corruptible manna which never corrupted (compare Rev.2:17) and the tables of law which were destroyed (by Moses) and made new. It is therefore fitting for John to see the ark at this juncture, for he has just been informed that at the last trump the dead will be raised (11:18).

The ark also continues the theme of enthronement because it is there that Yahweh is enthroned:

“And there I will meet with thee, and I will commune with thee from above the mercy seat, from between the two cherubims which are upon the ark of the testimony, of all things which I have commanded thee in commandment unto the children of Israel” (Ex.25:22).

The blood-spattered mercy seat represents Christ, who in turn represents the glory of God enthroned above all creation (especially the new creation):

“Worthy art thou, our Lord and our God 29 to receive the glory and the honour and the power: for thou didst create all things30, and because of thy will they are, and were created” (Rev.4:11). (The above verse is a mixture of AV/RV translation.)

It is to be noted that in Revelation 4 it is the living creatures (symbolised by the cherubim) that repeat the refrain “Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come” (v.8). [Cp. Rev.11:16-17]

The death and resurrection of the faithful witness (Christ) brought about a whole new creation. He is now enthroned in his full glory, superior to the angels (things invisible, Col.1:16) and he now has a name more excellent than they (Heb.1:4). In the words of Hebrews, quoting Psalm 45:6,7:

“Thy throne is the throne of God, for ever and ever”.31

He is now the full embodiment of the glory of God – he is now our Lord and our God. This may sound trinitarian to our ears, but this is not so. (John 12:45), In the days of his flesh he could say,“he that beholdeth me, beholdeth him that sent me” but now we are told that it pleases the Father that “in him (Jesus) should all the fullness dwell” (Col.1:19).

The ark of the testimony (witness) also represents the theme of deliverance:

REVELATION 11 & 12

DEUTERONOMY 632

The ark of the testimony (11:19).

What mean the testimonies? (v.20).

There appeared a great wonder in heaven (12:1).

The Lord showed signs and wonders (v.22).

A great red dragon (12:3)33.

Upon Egypt, ….and brought us out from thence (v.23).

Nourished in the wilderness (12:6).

That he might preserve us alive (v.24).

Her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony (witness) of Jesus (12:17).

If we observe to do all these commandments (v.25).

The ark (which bore the testimonies) entered the land first, after three days (Joshua 3:2 – 1st Advent) and at a distance of two thousand cubits (Joshua 3:4 – 2nd Advent). Moreover, it was the ark of the testimony at the sound of the trumpet blasts with the people shouting with a loud voice (Josh.6:20) that preceded the earthquake that overthrew Jericho.34

Again, these are all themes that permeate Revelation 11:19.

To summarise

The ark of the testimony represents:

1) Witnessing

2) Resurrection

3) Enthronement

4) Deliverance

All these themes are continued into chapter 12.

The witnessing is framed between two covenant symbols - that of the rainbow (10:1) and the ark (11:19). This serves as both a reminder and an assurance of the inevitability of fulfilment.

This chapter would not be complete without examining the first century implications of Revelation 11 and how they act as a type for future events. Scripture always uses past events to typify future events and we ignore these at our peril. The apostles extensively quoted Psalm 2 during their witnessing campaign (Acts 4:25-32). We are told that "with great power gave the apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus" (v.32). It is obvious that this Psalm had a first century application, it is also obvious that it has not achieved its fulfilment yet.

In Revelation John sees the 'heaven opened' and he sees the 'ark of the testimony'. Stephen, who is styled by Paul as 'thy witness' (Acts 22:20 RV) also sees the enthronement of Christ:

"But he, being full of the holy spirit, looked up steadfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God, (enthroned between the cherubim?) and Jesus standing on the right hand of God, and said, Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God" (Acts 7:55,56).

HAW comments35 that Stephen saw Jesus standing because he was asking his Father to give him the Gentiles as his inheritance (cp. Psalm 2:8) – this would make sense for Jesus (and Stephen) were about to be rejected by the Jews (again).

The witnessing of Stephen (like that of his master) was vindicated, because his prediction about the coming destruction of the temple was proved to be true (Acts 6:14)36

Although the witnessing of the apostles may seem a failure, this was not the case for a new ecclesia was born in Jerusalem. Just as the death of Stephen was the catalyst for preaching to the Gentiles, the death of the witnesses in Revelation 11 is the catalyst for the conversion of the

Jews for the end of the age is at hand, and there will be only one ecclesia comprised of both Jew and Gentile.

And so, we see that Revelation 11 had meaning for the first century disciples just as it has for us, and this is only what we would expect.

THE TWO WITNESSES – SUMMARY

We have examined Revelation 11 in depth and seen that the context of the witnessing is Jewish and also 'last days'.

The spirit-gifted witnessing is in order to measure (preserve and establish) a repentant remnant in Israel.

The witnessing occurs during a time of national oppression (like it did in the first century – Roman occupation).

The witnesses are killed by the same element that Jesus tried to exorcise (we might call this Judaism?). They are vindicated, and this leads to the birth of an ecclesia, that, like their Lord is destined to be enthroned in glory. The witnessing is the precursor to the kingdom age and to the inevitability of the deliverance of the nation and the resurrection of the dead.

Psalm 35:11:28:

" False witnesses did rise up; they laid to my charge things that I knew not. They rewarded me evil for good to the spoiling of my soul. But as for me, when they were sick, my clothing was sackcloth: I humbled my soul with fasting; and my prayer returned into mine own bosom. I behaved myself as though he had been my friend or brother: I bowed down heavily, as one that mourneth for his mother. But in mine adversity they rejoiced, and gathered themselves together: yea, the abjects gathered themselves together against me, and I knew it not; they did tear me, and ceased not: With hypocritical mockers in feasts, they gnashed upon me with their teeth. Lord, how long wilt thou look on? rescue my soul from their destructions, my darling from the lions. I will give thee thanks in the great congregation: I will praise thee among much people. Let not them that are mine enemies wrongfully rejoice over me: neither let them wink with the eye that hate me without a cause. For they speak not peace: but they devise deceitful matters against them that are quiet in the land. Yea, they opened their mouth wide against me, and said, Aha, aha, our eye hath seen it. This thou hast seen, O LORD: keep not silence: O Lord, be not far from me. Stir up thyself, and awake to my judgement, even unto my cause, my God and my Lord. Judge me, O LORD my God, according to thy righteousness; and let them not rejoice over me. Let them not say in their hearts, Ah, so would we have it: let them not say, We have swallowed him up. Let them be ashamed and brought to confusion together that rejoice at mine hurt: let them be clothed with shame and dishonour that magnify themselves against me. Let them shout for joy, and be glad, that favour my righteous cause: yea, let them say continually, Let the LORD be magnified, which hath pleasure in the prosperity of his servant. And my tongue shall speak of thy righteousness and of thy praise all the day long".

---

1 Fire proceeds out of their mouth, and devoureth their enemies. (Rev. 11:5) compare Jer. 5:14; "I will make my words in thy mouth fire, and this people wood, and it shall devour them."

1 See HAW – The return of the seventy, studies in the Gospels, page 458 for more back - ground information.

NOTES

1 The sun and moon are associated with the nation of Israel (Gen.37:9) and with the divine covenants made to that nation (Jer.33:25) the moon represents the law (Jer.31:35 – ordinances, same word used in Ezk.43:18; 44:5) and regulated the Jewish feasts (Ps.81:3,4). The sun represents the covenants of promise invested in the Messiah (Ps.72:17; 19:4,5; Mal.4:2; Isa.60:1-3). They were made for signs [of Messiah] and seasons [feasts of the law] (Gen.1:14). The glory of the covenant promises concerning the Messiah [sun] being reflected in the law [moon]. The extinguishing of the sun and moon is the temporary casting away of the nation. (Ezek.32:7,8)

2 (The definitions below are from Vines dictionary)

EPIPHANË S: illustrious, renowned, notable (akin to EPIPHANÖ - to show forth, appear; Eng. Epiphany), is translated "notable" in Acts 2:20, of the great Day of the Lord. The appropriateness of this word to that future occasion is obvious.

(EPIPHANË S comes from EPIPHANEIA).

EPIPHANEIA (Eng. Epiphany) lit. 'a shining forth', used of the appearance of a god to men, and of an enemy to an army in the field, etc.

In the N.T. it occurs of:

(a) The advent of the Saviour when the word became flesh, 2 Tim.1: 10.

(b) The coming of the Lord Jesus into the air to the meeting with his saints, 1 Tim.6: 14; 2 Tim. 4:1,8.

(c) The shining forth of the glory of the Lord Jesus "as the lightning cometh from the east, and is seen even unto the west", Mtt.24: 27, immediately consequent on the unveiling, apokalupsis, of his Parousia in the air with His saints, 2 Thess.2:8; Tit.2:13.

COMMENT

It is obvious from the above that lightning (Mtt.24:27) does not refer to "thunder and lightning" but to the shining forth of the first rays of the sun that break over the eastern horizon and dispel the darkness.

The contextual setting links Epiphanë s and Epiphaneia closely with the Lord's second advent (as in Joel's prophecy).

NOTES

1 In Revelation chapter 11 there are two lampstands (two ecclesias fed by the witnesses?) representing Jew and Gentile (or Israel and Judah?), these correspond with the single candlestick in Zech.4. In Rev.1: 20 there are seven (Gentile) lampstands corresponding with the "seven eyes of the Lord" in Zech.4:10.

NOTES

2 "But truly, I am full of power even the spirit of the Lord, and of judgement, and of might, to declare unto Jacob his transgression, and to Israel his sin." (Micah 3:8)

NOTES

1 Was John the Baptist also buried outside the land? He was beheaded in Herod's fortress

Macherus in PERAEA – there is evidence that John's ministry was on the borders of the

land possibly to emphasise that he was not the one to lead them into the Kingdom, he

certainly never went to the Temple in Jerusalem.

Is this why Jesus comments on Elijah's ministry outside the land? (Lk.4: 24-27)

NOTES

10

a) The house swept and garnished, this is (even today) ritual practice. Before the Passover the house is spring -cleaned in order to observe the command "Ye shall put away leaven out of your houses" (Ex.12:15, 19).

b) Legion dwelt amongst the tombs (Lk.8:27). Compare Babylon (Rev.18:2) – "the habitation of devils (demons) and the hold of every foul spirit".

c) Legion was chained and bound, but was able to "brake the bands asunder" (RV Lk.8:29). "Let us break their bands asunder and cast away their (the Lord and his anointed, Christ) cords from us" (Ps.2:3).

d) Mark's Gospel adds the comment:

"He (Legion) besought him much that he would not send them (the unclean spirits) away out of the country" (Mk.5:10).

God had often sent the nation into a far country (i.e. Babylonian exile) and after AD 70 the Jews were dispersed over the whole world.

e) How remarkable that the gospel, 'good news', is seen by Legion and the enemies of the witnesses as 'torment'.

f) Matthew's account has two lunatics, this is characteristic of his gospel which often doubles the participants; representing both Judah and Ephraim. (also Jew and Gentile?)

g) The accusation of legion; "torment me not" is often repeated in Jesus' exorcisms i.e. "art thou come to destroy us? " (Mk.1:24) this reflects the Jewish fear that Jesus had come to destroy the law (Mtt. 5:17, John. 10:10) and the Temple. (Mtt.26:61, Acts 6:14)

NOTES

11 The Lord of all the earth - is the Lord Almighty, see Zech.4:14; 6:5.

12 Just as God made man in his image (Gen.1:26) and woman in the image of man (Gen.2:21) so the false prophet creates (resurrects?) the image of the Beast – which is none other than a man (Rev.13:18) and the system he represents – the man of sin.

NOTE

13 The word 'burnt-offering' is absent in the original. 'The continual' included besides the daily burnt- offering , the offering of incense in the Holy Place (Ex.30:8), the lighting of the lamps (Lev. 24:2), the placing of the shew bread on the table (Lev.24:8) and the meal-offering (Lev.6:20). As

all these, with the exception of the shewbread, were attended to daily, it would be better to substitute for 'the continual burnt-offering', 'THE DAILY SERVICE'.

NOTES

14 'Inhabitants of the earth' occurs nine times in Revelation, always in a negative sense.

15 The next verse states "because I have sinned against him" (=the Lord) – HAW repoints this and achieves a more accurate translation "because I have cleansed sin for him", see BIBLE STUDIES (AN ANTHOLOGY) MICAH 7: THE FINEST OF ALL MESSIANIC PROPHECIES, p.94-99.

16 Joy- linked with conversion and birth (born again) of individuals and ecclesias (Lk.15:7,10;Acts 13:52;15:3)

NOTES

17 Ephesians 2:5,6: "We were dead in sins....hath raised us up with him (RV) and made us to sit

with him (RV) in heavenly places in Christ Jesus".

NOTES

18 God dwelt between the cherubim on the mercy seat (see Jer.17:12; Ex.25:22).

19 Cast their leaves – the same sort of language is used in Rom.11:15 "the casting away of them" (Israel).

NOTES

20 An equally valid alternative view, is that the seven thousand were seven thousand wicked, killed for their treatment of the witnesses –"If the witness be a false witness, and hath testified falsely against his brother; then ye shall do unto him as he had thought to have done to his brother...and those that remain shall hear and fear, and shall henceforth commit no more any such evil." (Deut 19:16-21) In that case the "names of men" would be a reference to the tower of Babel (Gen 11:4) and the 70,000 to the 70 Gentile nations of Genesis chapter ten.

21 The number 70 is often used in Scripture to signify the gentile nations. Deut.32:8 (with Genesis 10 and 46); Exodus 15:27 (seventy palm trees) and 24:4,9 (with Luke 9:1; 10:1); 70 years captivity (in a gentile land); 70 weeks (sevens) prophecy about gentile domination.

22 In John's vocabulary 'fear', 'do hommage', and repent are almost synonymous terms. (Rev.14:7;15:4;16:9)

NOTES

23 The woe in Rev.12:12 is independent from the three woes of 8:13, and is specifically targeted at Jerusalem in A.D. 70 (see chapter 12 page 23-25) Revelation chapter 12 describes the birth of an ecclesia as a result of the witnessing. It does this in the terms of the nation of Israel's Exodus, and of Christ's Exodus out of sin and death. One of the consequences of those events was the punishment of Jerusalem. The remainder of Rev. chpt.12 bridges the interval between A.D. 70 and the future , thus explaining the origin of the beast's power (13:3). Revelation 12 demonstrates that salvic history always follows the same patterns.

24 The birth occurs in heaven, where the protagonist (dragon) is also present. The child is snatched up to the throne of God (from heaven) – the throne is represented by the mercy seat on

the ark of the covenant – thus signifying that the man child is in covenant relationship with God. Later the man child is persecuted on earth by the dragon.(12:17)

NOTES

25 The trumpets all refer to Israel.

26 The mystery of God – see chapter 10, for a full explanation.

NOTES

27 Those who are alive at the Lord's return, specifically in this case, 'the last days' Jewish ecclesia

are, 'caught up' at the same time as the resurrection: "That they without us should not be made perfect" (Heb.11:40).

NOTES

28 This does not mean that the 'last days Jewish ecclesia' is immediately saved upon conversion, but rather that the time between conversion and the kingdom is very short indeed (3½ years). In the first century the nation brought forth the man child (Christ and his ecclesia) before it underwent its time of travail (AD66½ - 70).

NOTES

29 This is the title used by Thomas after Christ's resurrection (John 20:28) – My Lord and my God and is in no way trinitarian. JESUS HAS BEEN EXALTED AND NOW BEARS THE NAME ABOVE EVERY NAME.

30 See Colossians 1:15-19.

NOTES

31 See RV margin Psalm 45:6. This is how Hebrews 1:8 should read i.e. God's throne (the mercy

seat) has now becomes Christ's throne.

32 Deuteronomy 7: 26 makes reference to Revelation 13:15 'Apostasy of Israel'.

33 Egypt is often represented as a dragon (Ezek.29:3; Ps.74:13,14).

NOTES

34 The Jewish nation had to be circumcised again in order to bring them into covenant

relationship when they entered the land. (All except Joshua and Caleb, Josh.5:8.)

NOTES

35 Studies in the Acts of the Apostles, p.101.

36 Stephen asked for this sin (his death) not to be laid to their charge (v.59) – his prayer was answered by the conversion of the apostle Paul!!

NOTES

1 Compare Joshua 4:9 with Luke 3:8 and 2 Kings 2:7-12. ALL IN THE SAME VICINITY!

2 The other Greek word frequently translated, as body is soma. Whereas soma can refer to either a living or a dead body, ptoma only ever refers to a corpse and is used only five times in the N.T. Table for the usage of soma in the New Testament:

The body of Christ

(the ecclesia) - 40x

The ecclesia (plural) - 1x

A body of grain - 3x

1 Cor.15:37,38

A resurrected body - 3x

1 Cor.15:44,45;

Phil.3:2

A living body - 70x

Uncertain (?) - 2x

Body of beasts - 1x

Heb.11:13

Translated as slaves - 1x

Rev.18:13

3 In Matthew's gospel a corpse is indicated, in the synoptic record of Luke 17: 37. In response to the question Where, Lord? (Where will we be gathered?), Jesus says; "Wheresoever the body is (soma) thither will the eagles be gathered together." The word soma can be used for either a dead or a living body.

This could indicate that the ingathering of the saints happens at Jerusalem and coincides with the raising of the witnesses from a dead corpse (ptoma) to a living body (soma)? The very next event in Revelation 11 is the last trump(et) and the time of the dead that they should be rewarded (11:18).

4 Revelation 20:4: "Those that were beheaded for the testimony (witness) of Jesus". Scripture records only one person as beheaded for his witness – John the Baptist. Does this answer the question by the mother of the sons of Zebedee? (Mtt.20: 20-23)

5 For a comprehensive picture of this time period read Dr. J.W. Thirtle: The Titles of the Psalms, their nature and meaning explained (1904) and Old Testament problems (1907)see also Psalms Studies, volume I and II by George Booker; Hezekiah the Great and Isaiah by Harry Whittaker.

How do we understand the 'testimony' (witness) to which this Psalm refers? The first of these words [SHOSHANNIM – LILLIES] refers to the Spring Festival. The second word [EDUTH] meaning testimony or witness is undisputed. It is one of the ten words found twenty three times in Psalm 119. It must be something connected with the Spring Festival (Passover) and Dr Thirtle sees in it the law and the 'testimony' respecting the keeping of the Passover in the second

month (cp Joel 2:23) when, under special circumstances it could not be kept in the first month (see Num.9:10-11 and 2 Chron.30:1-3). Psalm 79 tells of enemies being then in the land, which might well have created a difficulty in keeping the Passover in the first month.

6 While the people were weeping outside the Temple was Hezekiah inside the Temple with the letter from Sennacherib? (2 Kgs.19:14).

7 The old name for Jerusalem is JEBUS (after the Jebusites) and it means downtrodden, see Lk.21:24.

8 Psalm 79:1 says "They have laid Jerusalem on heaps." This would indicate that the Psalm is post-exilic and not from the time of Hezekiah. Thirtle comments (p.53): "Looking at the prayer as serious, and taking into account the allusions that indicate continued habitation of the land, we grasp the true meaning of the first three verses as prophetic of coming judgement"

This judgement was also predicted by Micah (3:12) but was deferred because of Hezekiah and the faithful remnant.

9 The enemies of the witnesses display their bodies as trophies in the street of the city. This is what God

intends to do to His enemies (see Jer.14:15-17). We have here a role reversal and a classic case of misusing Scripture – but the witnesses will not be ashamed for they will be vindicated – God will display his enemies as trophies – a perpetual reminder to transgressors, as with HAMON-GOG (Ezek.39:11).

COMMENT

Isaiah chapter 66 relates to the reformation work of Hezekiah, when he sent out to the Northern tribes – their response was one of sarcasm and mockery; those who responded by regularly attending the feasts and came to Jerusalem for the Passover were delivered from the Assyrian, just as Hezekiah (whose sickness coincided with the invasion) was delivered from his sickbed – the deliverance of the King (on the third day) and of the remnant are metaphorically described as birth pangs. (Isa.37.3) We have then a picture of the refugees and captives returning (from the retreating Assyrian army)and God blessing the nation with abundance (a Jubilee year?), a cameo of the Kingdom age.

In this context see also 'the little Apocalypse', Isaiah chapters 24 to 29.

Note the following:

Isaiah 26:5 – downtrodden (JEBUS)

v.6 – poor and needy (witnesses)

v.8 – memorial = Passover = Lord's table

v.11 – Elijah = witnesses

v.14 – death of God's enemies

v.15 – God glorified, Rev.11:13

v.16 – repentance, Rev.11:13

v.18 – birth pangs, Rev.12:2

v.19 – resurrection, Rev.11:18

v.20 – all this happens at Passover!

27:1 – Leviathan = Dragon, Rev.12:3

For further background see HAW Isaiah.

Does the text of Isaiah 66 indicate the restoration of Temple worship in Israel before the second advent? This is outrightly condemned by God and seen as an abomination. I will choose their delusions" (v.4) – Is this in any way connected with 2 Thess.2:11 – "God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie." However outlandish the idea of the re-emergence of Temple worship might seem, we know that certain Jewish sects have already made all the Temple instruments and priestly robes and have created a database with all the priestly (Levitical) names (COHEN) as well as producing periodicals that detail sacrificial worship. For further reading see 'Ready to Rebuild, Imminent plan to rebuild the last days Temple' – Thomas Ice and Randal Price (1992).

11.1 Time periods and witnessing

DIGRESSION 11.1 - THE SEVENTY SEVENS PROPHECY

WITNESSING AND TIME PERIODS

It is important for us to establish the general usage of these numbers in Scripture before we examine their more specific application in Revelation.

The 1260 days and 42 months, as well as the 3½ years or 'time, times and half a time' are the same period of time (1260/30 = 42), but are differentiated in order to emphasise certain spiritual lessons.

The number 42 denotes a time of trial (and persecution) before obtaining the inheritance:

1) 42 campsites in the wilderness (count them in Numbers 33)

2) 42 generations between Abraham and Christ (Mtt.1:17; 3x14=42)

3) At the dedication of the tabernacle (Num.7), each tribe brought instruments weighing 210 shekels (210x12=2520 shekels = 2x1260 shekels). This denotes 2 time periods of 1260.

4) Elijah's drought for 3½ years = 1260 days = 42months (Lk.4:25, compare Rev.11:6).

5) The seven times of madness of Nebuchadnezzar – he turns into a beast for seven years (=2x3½) (Dan.4:31-37).

Two of the time periods in Daniel's prophecy are intimately connected with other time periods in Scripture: 1260 (time, times and a half, 12:7) and 1290 days (12:11);

1260 = 3x 420

1290 = 3x 430

The numbers 420 and 430 are repeatedly used (both directly and indirectly) in the O.T.

The Jews were commanded to keep a yearly Sabbath every six years and every 49th year they kept a Jubilee.

6 years S 6 years S 6 years S 6 years S 6 years S 6 years S 6 years J

Therefore in a period of 49 years there were 42 normal years (6x7) and 7 Sabbath years (including the Jubilee) 42+7=49.

The people of Judah went into captivity for 70 years (Dan.9:2) because they had neglected to keep the Sabbaths for a period of 490 years (420+70=490).

"Then shall the land enjoy her Sabbaths, as long as it lieth desolate, and ye be in your enemies land; even then shall the land rest and enjoy her Sabbaths". (Lev.24:34)

"To fulfil the word of the Lord by the mouth of Jeremiah, until the land had enjoyed her Sabbaths: for as long as she lay desolate she kept Sabbath, to fulfil threescore and ten years". (2 Chron.36: 21)

Daniel's seventy sevens prophecy is also a period of 490 years, this time divided into three periods of years of which the last period is seven years, deliberately divided into two (Dan.9:27).

(49+434+7=490)

(3½ +3½ =7)

The number 430 also reoccurs in the divine history of Israel and Judah:

Ezekiel lies on his side 390 days for Israel and 40 days for the sins of Judah (390+40=430). The apostle Paul informs us that there were 430 years (Gal.3:17) between Abraham and the Exodus (till the building of the Temple?). (These periods sometimes overlap because they are counted from different starting dates, compare 1 Kgs.6:1 = 480 years; Acts 13:19,20 = 450 years.) A Bible dictionary will show that from the building of the Temple to the return of the exile is also 430 years (970-537=433 years, again depending upon which dictionary, etc...).

The conclusion from a general examination of Scripture must be that the divine history of the Jews is divided into specific periods of 420 years, 430 years and 490 years – these are interconnected and often overlap and are intended to teach certain spiritual lessons.

The numbers 1260 (3x420) and 1290 (3x430) reflect these general principles but more specifically they point to a particular period; 3½ years (or 7 years?) at the time of the end (Dan.12:4).

THE TIME OF THE END, A 3½ YEAR PERIOD OR A SEVEN YEAR PERIOD?

There is no doubt that Scripture refers to two specific periods of 3½ years in divine history, it is however difficult to establish whether the seven yeas are continuous or discontinuous (or both?). Daniel's prophecy indicates that the seven years are divided into two (9:27).

If we consider the first 3½ year period as the Jewish war (AD 66½ - 70), then we are left with the following options:

A)

3½

JEWISH WAR

2000 YEARS

3½

AD 66½ - 70

FUTURE

B)

3½

JEWISH WAR

3½

BAR KOCHBA REVOLT

2000 YEARS

3½

3½

AD66½ - 70

AD132½ - 135 1

FUTURE

In scheme B first century events typify future events.

The 1335 days:

“Blessed is he that waiteth, and cometh to the thousand three hundred and five and thirty days. But go thou thy way till the end be: for thou shalt rest, and stand in thy lot at the end of the days” (= at the end of the 1335 days) (Dan.12:12,13).

The 1335 days is obviously referring to the resurrection “Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection” (Rev.20:6).

The number 1335 is representative of the number of the redeemed. In Numbers chapter 3 Moses and Aaron are commanded to number the Levites and to number the firstborn among Israel. The Levitical priests were used to redeem the firstborn in Israel, but obviously the numbers of priests and the numbers of the firstborn were not likely to be the same. The survey showed the following:

Number of priests (Levites) 22,000

Number of firstborn 22,273

Number of unredeemed 273

The 273 ‘unredeemed’ firstborn were to pay 5 shekels of the sanctuary in order to be redeemed.

273 x 5 shekels = 1365 shekels

But the Saviour did not require redemption by the Levitical priesthood for he redeemed himself, for he was God’s ‘firstborn’.

“And I said unto them, if ye think good, give me my price (valuation) and if not forbear. So they weighed for my price (valuation) thirty pieces of silver. And the Lord said unto me, Cast it into the treasury* (RV mg. Syriac version) a goodly price that I was priced at of them. And I took the thirty pieces of silver, and cast them into the treasury in the house of the Lord” (Zech.11:12,13).2

· The AV reads ‘cast it unto the potter’.

1365 – 30 = 1335 shekels

Thus 1335 represents the redemption money of the redeemed minus the one who was valued at 30 shekels.

It is interesting to note that the price (valuation) for Christ was six times that of a normal individual (5 shekels) in that he paid the price for Adam (made on the sixth day) and thus redeemed us all.

THE SEVENTY SEVENS PROPHECY (Dan.9:23-27)

In order to determine the 3½ year time period(s)? of Revelation, we would benefit greatly from an enhanced understanding of the seventy weeks prophecy of Daniel chapter 9.The seventy

weeks prophecy is difficult to understand and this is partly due to corruption of the text; this can be instantly observed by the amount of footnotes in the AV/RV margins and is largely due to the Jews trying to force the interpretation to fit the era of the Maccabees and their struggle against Antiochus.3

The 'seventy weeks' prophecy is usually regarded as the classic instance of 'a year for a day' in the understanding of prophetic time-periods. It is however a misconception, for the original phrase is 'seventy sevens' (not weeks), the unit of time not being specified, but undoubtedly referring to sevens of years in the context of the far reaching extent of the prophecy.4

When the two schemes are examined critically all sorts of problems arise:

1 Bro. Thomas has the prophecy terminate at the crucifixion (490 years after the 20th of Artaxerxes). He remarks that if he (Christ) had not voluntarily surrendered himself to death, the work of the last seven years would have been null and void 7 – he probably means by this the ministry of the Baptist (3½), followed by the ministry of Christ (3½). This would then equate the baptism and not the crucifixion as "confirming the covenant with many" for it is the baptism that happens in the midst of the week. In his scheme the end of the 69th seven does not mark any significant event – and bro. Thomas himself admits that his interpretation overruns the allotted time period: "This was two years and nine months after the end of the 69th heptade; and consequently so far advanced into the seventieth week".8 This would place the start of the Baptist's ministry before the end of the 69th heptade.

The traditional interpretation (scheme 2) does not fare much better – for the unused 3½ years, it is customary to point to the death of Stephen. After the rich prophecy concerning Messiah, is this not an anticlimax, great man though Stephen was? Is the prophecy so inaccurate as to leave an unexplained margin of 3½ years?

2 The prophecy runs 'unto Messiah the Prince'. This calls for a further reference long after the crucifixion.

3 What has the 'destruction of city and sanctuary and the desolation of Jerusalem' (v.26) got to do with the crucifixion?

4 Why should the 'abomination of desolation' (v.27), forty years after the crucifixion, come into a prophecy which runs only to the death of Christ?

5 The vision clearly runs until the Kingdom age:

a) To finish transgression (of Jerusalem), Jer.4:14.

b) To make an end (of the nation's) sin, Jer. 31:34.

c) To make reconciliation for (Israel's) iniquity, Jer. 31:34.

d) To bring in everlasting righteousness (the Kingdom), Jer.23:5,6 (= the righteousness of ages).

e) To seal up (conclude its usefulness) the vision and the prophecy, Dan.12:9 – compare the resurrection, Dan.12:12,13.

f) To anoint (the) a most holy.

The crowning of Christ as the bridegroom? (Song of Songs 3:11, Isaiah 62:5), or does this refer to his enthronement? (Heb.1:9).

6 The years used in the prophecy of Daniel are all lunar years of exactly 3609 days, not solar years of 365 days; this means the time periods are wrong for both schemes. Neither scheme has a satisfactory primary application, this is always an indication that the interpretation is incorrect. As we have seen the prophecy of Daniel presents us with two main problems:

a) Its starting point – "from the going forth of the commandment…"(v.25).

Is this the commandment (decree) of:

- Cyrus in his first year? (BC538)

- Darius Hystaspes in his second year? (BC 520)

- Artaxerxes in his seventh year? (BC 457)

- Artaxerxes in his twentieth year? (BC 444)

b) The termination of the 62x7 ….. unto the Messiah the Prince (v.25).

Does this run until:

- Christ's birth?

- Christ's baptism?

- Christ's crucifixion?

In order to answer these questions we have to understand the primary fulfilment of the prophecy. Daniel was aware from his understanding of the prophet Jeremiah that the seventy years of desolations were nearly over (9:2); he was praying for the restoration of the city of Jerusalem (v.16), the sanctuary (this also means the priesthood) (v.17) and also the return of the people (v.19). The answer to his prayer should therefore address all of his requests.

Daniel is told that from the first moment he prayed and confessed his sins, the commandment (v.23) went forth. This is not referring to any of the decrees or commandments issued by the various monarchs, but to the word (Heb. dabar) of God to his angels. Gabriel was immediately sent to explain the vision to Daniel.

The word (dabar) of the Lord had first come to Jeremiah (9:2). God had confirmed his words (dabar) against his people by punishing them (v.12) and now God's commandment (= word = dabar) had gone forth in the form of Gabriel in order to explain the vision to Daniel (v.23).

The question presents itself; What vision is the angel referring to, as chapter 9 does not describe any vision at all!? It obviously refers to the vision of the previous chapter of Daniel chapter 8 which 'belongeth to the appointed time of the end' (RV 8:19) in which the king of fierce countenance is broken without hand (cp. Dan.2:45) by the Prince of princes (8:25).

Daniel was praying because he knew that the 70 years of Jerusalem's desolations were nearly over. Instead he received a prophecy telling him that there would be a further 70x7 years of desolations before the vision of chapter 8 was fulfilled and the kingdom established!!

We will discuss the implications of this later ; Daniel's more immediate concern was the end of the 70 years of desolations and the re-institution of Temple worship. Daniel was no doubt reading Jeremiah 29:10:

“That after seventy years be accomplished at Babylon I will visit you and perform my good word (dabar) toward you, in causing you to return to this (Jerusalem) place.”

The starting point of the 70x7 prophecy should surely be from the destruction of the Temple, for this was the ultimate confirmation that God had abandoned the people of Israel (9:12). God says through the prophet Ezekiel: “There shall none of my words (dabar) be deferred (RV) any more, but the word (dabar) which I have spoken shall be done saith the Lord God” (Ezek12:28).

This word was the final overturning of Jerusalem and the destruction of the Temple: “I will overturn, overturn, overturn it; and it shall be no more (monarchy and priesthood) until he come 10 whose right it is; and I will give it him” (Ezek.21:27).

We are informed in both Chronicles and Ezra that Cyrus issued a decree to build God a house in Jerusalem because the Lord had stirred up his spirit in order that the word (dabar) of the Lord by the mouth of Jeremiah might be fulfilled (RV accomplished) (Ezra 1:1; 2 Chron.36:22).

The fulfilment therefore of God’s good word is the rebuilding of the Temple.

The rebuilding began in the second month of the second year (Ezra 3:8) of Cyrus with Zerubbabel appointed as governor and Joshua as the high priest.

This is exactly 49 years and 9 months after the destruction of the Temple. 11

To summarise:

BC 586

BC 537

7x7=49

Destruction of Temple by Nebuchadnezzar.

Rebuilding begun under proclamation of Cyrus.

God confirms His word as spoken by his prophets –

PUNISHMENT.

God’s good word.

RESTORATION

- a most holy (Christ)

- the most holy (Temple).

Daniel’s prayer: God’s word to Gabriel to answer the prayer.

The typical and primary fulfilment of this prophecy was the anointing of the most holy 12 (place) (9:24), the appointing of a priest, Joshua, and a governor, Zerubbabel.

Joshua was the first high priest after the captivity – God had as it were “plucked him out of the fire (of captivity) like a firebrand” and cleansed both Joshua (and the nation) in order that they might serve him.

The true fulfilment of the prophecy is our great high priest Joshua/Jesus who “put off the filthy garments” of the flesh (see Zech. chapter 3) and who is truly a most holy priest – anointed with the oil of gladness above his fellows on the day of his enthronement (Heb.1:9).

The second segment of Daniel’s prophecy (62x7) concerns the rebuilding of the walls of Jerusalem. Again it is in answer to another prayer, this time of faithful Nehemiah, who like Daniel confesses his sins, and the sins of his people, that the word of God goes forth. Note especially Neh.2:5,6: “So I prayed to the God of heaven. And I said unto the King…” His instant prayer was answered…. “And the king granted me, according to the good hand of my God upon me” (v.8). This prayer was answered in the twentieth year of Artaxerxes (BC 444) (v.1) and the prophecy must therefore be dated from this event. We have already remarked that the prophecy of Daniel is based on lunar years of 360 days and not solar years of 365. This means that 434 lunar years (62x7) equates to 365/360 x 434 = 440 solar years.13

This would terminate the prophecy in 4 BC (444 – 440) which is the birth date of the Messiah. The significance of this should not be lost on us, for it was the angel Gabriel who calling Daniel ‘greatly beloved’ (9:23) delivered the prophecy and who also announced the birth of Jesus to Mary with the words “Hail, thou that art highly favoured” (Lk.1:28). Moreover, Gabriel announced the birth of John to Zacharias and gently castigated him because he “believed not my words, which shall be fulfilled in their season” (Lk.1:20) [Alluding to Daniel’s prophecy?]

It was after the threescore and two weeks that the anointed one would be “cut off”. He was to suffer a violent death as contrasted to a natural one. The Hebrew verb employed here, is often used in the books of Exodus, Leviticus and Numbers of being sentenced to death. Compare also Isaiah 53:8 where a different verb of similar import is used – “he was cut off out of the land of the living”.

“And shall have nothing”, literally “and there is not in him”. We may supply the word ‘guilt’ and see in the testimony of Pilate “I find no fault in him”, as the fulfilment of this part of Gabriel’s message. Or possibly it is an allusion to his desertion by his apostles: “Ye shall be scattered every man to his own and shall leave me alone” (John 16:32).

Now contrast the typical or primary fulfilment in the time of Nehemiah with the true fulfilment in Christ: Page_10 Index_of_tables_and_diagrams

BUILDING THE WALLS OF (THE NEW) JERUSALEM

NEHEMIAH (TYPE)

CHRIST (TRUE)

“At that time I had not set up the doors on the gates” (6:1).

Possess the gates of his enemies, hell and death (Rev.1:18; Gen.22:17).

Asked 4 times to come down off the wall… “I am doing a great work, so that I cannot come down” (6:3).

Asked 4 times to come down off the cross (Mtt.27:41-43).

Accused of wanting to be king of the Jews (6:6).

Crucified as king of the Jews (Mtt.27:37).

“Their hands shall be weakened from the work, that it be not done. Now, therefore, O God, strengthen my hands” (6:9).

His hands strengthened for the cross.

“And there appeared an angel from heaven strengthening him” (Lk.22:43 – Gethsemane).

“And I said, should such a man as I flee? And who is there, that being as I am, would go into the Temple to save his life? I will not go in” (6:11).

“Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels? But how then shall the Scriptures be fulfilled, that thus it must be?” (Mtt.26:53,54).

“For they perceived that this work was wrought of our God” (6:16).

“Truly this was the Son of God” (Mtt.27:54).

62 x 7 = 434 (=440 solar)

“AFTER CUT OFF”

Rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem by Nehemiah.

Birth of the Messiah. Building the ‘NEW JERUSALEM’

commences.

The last segment of the prophecy, which is divided into two periods of 3½ years, presents many difficulties of interpretation.

1) Is ‘Messiah the Prince’ (v.25) the same person as ‘the prince that shall come’ who

will destroy the city and the sanctuary (v.26)?

2) This same ‘prince that shall come’ will confirm the covenant with many for one week (v.27).

3) He will also cause the sacrifice and oblation (meal offering) to cease after 3½ years (v.27).

4) He will also make it (the sanctuary) desolate because of the abominations (pollutions) and the promised punishment will be poured out on the desolator (polluter) (v.27).

5) This still leaves the last 3½ years of the prophecy about which not much is said, except that we know that the covenant (made in the middle of the seven) extends to and includes this last 3½ year period.

In order to interpret this last section of prophecy, we will have to attempt to answer the above points satisfactorily:

1. Nobody would argue that ‘Messiah the prince’ does not refer to Jesus Christ,

but does ‘the prince who shall come’ also refer to him?

It is interesting to note that John the Baptist uses this title in Luke 7:18-23: “Art thou he that should come? or look we for another”.

John wished to know whether Jesus was the one who would fulfil the prophecy of Daniel (destroy the Temple). John did not doubt that he was the “Lamb of God, which taketh away the

sin of the world" (John 1:29) but was he also the 'coming one' – "the Lord whom ye see, shall suddenly come to his Temple, even the messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in; behold he shall come, saith the Lord of hosts" (Malachi 3:1).

John had been warning about the impending judgment – "the axe is laid to the root of the tree" (3:9) and was preaching the baptism of repentance.

Jesus, however, answered John by showing John's disciples an array of healing miracles and telling them to relay these things to John (who was in prison).

"Go your way and tell John what things ye have seen and heard; how that the blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised, to the poor the gospel is preached" (Lk.7:22).

John, who was extremely familiar with the prophecy of Isaiah, would understand that this is what Jesus was referring to:

"The spirit of the Lord God is upon me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the broken hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound, to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord, and the day of vengeance of our God" (Isa.61:1,2).

We note that Jesus had deliberately neglected to mention two things in his response:

1 The opening of the prison.

2 The day of vengeance.

John the Baptist would have immediately recognised that the time had not yet come for the day of vengeance or the (final) release of the prisoner (resurrection) – nevertheless his question had been answered, Jesus was the coming one.

The same title is used in Hebrews 10:37:

"For yet a little while, And he that shall come will come, and will not tarry".14

Again, this is in the context of judgment:

"Vengeance belongeth unto me, I will recompense, saith the Lord. And again, The Lord shall judge his people. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God" (Heb.10:30,31).

Hebrews is warning that the day of judgment is near, and that the Temple and Mosaic system would soon be destroyed.

The prophet Ezekiel, who was contemporary with Daniel warns that Nebuchadnezzar) would overturn the Temple and the monarchy and that it would not be restored until he come whose right it is (21:26).

This is an obvious reference to Genesis 49:10: "Until Shiloh (peace) come".15 Jesus Christ would unite the functions of the priesthood and the monarchy in his person (king – priest): "And he shall be a priest upon his throne and the counsel of peace shall be between them both" (king/priest) (Zech.6:13).

We can safely say that Messiah (anointed priest) the Prince (king) is the same as the 'coming one', SHILOH.

2. Confirming16 the covenant with many for one week.

What better way of confirming (strengthening) the new covenant than by removing the old?

The destruction of the Temple would both verify the prophecy of Christ concerning the Temple and the warnings given in Hebrews – "the removing of those things that are shaken" (12:27). This would act as a powerful polemic for the first century Christians, and justify their faith in the new covenant.

It is interesting to note that Malachi refers to, ' the messenger of the covenant.... that suddenly comes to his Temple' 17 (3:1). Jesus did this when he cleansed the Temple at Passover time (John 2:13-15). A secondary fulfilment of this passage is the angel of Rev.10:1. The Hebrew word for messenger is malak, and often this refers to angels. The angel of 10:1 has a rainbow upon his head and commands John to measure the temple (11:1) – the association of the rainbow with the covenant, and with the measuring of the temple offer an interesting secondary fulfilment to the Malachi prophecy.

Is it coincidental that the 3½ years of witnessing is preceded by a vision of the rainbow covenant and terminates with a vision of the ark of the covenant (Rev.11:19)? The confirming (strengthening) of the covenant occurs in the midst of the seven, clearly dividing the period into 2 x 3½ years. Note the following comparison:

Page_13 Index_of_tables_and_diagrams

WITNESSING AND TIME PERIODS (THE SEVENTY SEVENS PROPHECY)

DANIEL (SEVENTY SEVENS)

REVELATION

GENESIS

GOSPELS

The end thereof shall be with a flood (9:26).

Tormented for 5 months (9:5,10).

Waters upon the earth18 five months (150 days, Gen.7:24).

As in the days of Noah...the flood came and destroyed them all (Lk.17:27).

Unto the end war (9:26).

Locust invasion (chapter 9).

Earth filled with violence (6:11).

Cp. Rev.9:20.

Wars and commotions...but the end is not by and by (Lk.21:9).

Gabriel (9:21) (God's strong one).

Strong (mighty) angel (10:1).

Rainbow covenant (9:13-16).

Contrast the sign of the Son of Man in heaven (Mtt.24:30).

Confirm the covenant (gabar briyth = strengthen? the covenant) (9:27).

A rainbow upon his head (10:1)19

In the midst of the week (3½) he shall cause sacrifice and oblation to cease (9:27);

Shall destroy the city and the sanctuary (9:26).

See 1260 days, Dan.12:7.

Outer court trampled by the Gentiles 42 months (=3½ years) (11:1).

Arphaxad lived 530 years and begat… (Alexandrian text 430 years).

Eber lived 430 years and begat Peleg and after he begat Peleg lived 430 years (11:12-17). (3x430= 1290, see Dan.12:9).20

Jerusalem trodden down of the Gentiles (Lk.21:24). Jerusalem compassed with armies…her desolation nigh at hand (Lk.21:20).

The abomination of desolation.

The image of the beast (13:13).

Tower of Babel in Shinar (chp.11, cp. Dan.3:1).

When ye shall see the abomination standing in the holy place (Mtt.24:24).

3. He shall cause the sacrifice and oblation to cease after 3½ years (v.27).

The Jewish war lasted 3½ years from AD 66½ to AD 70 culminating in the burning of the Temple21 by the Romans and the suicide at Massada.

The text in Daniel comments that the people of the prince that shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary (v.26). This refers either to the Romans, who acting under divine guidance, destroyed the city or more likely to the Jews themselves22 who through their own actions polluted the sanctuary. The RV has an interesting alternative reading in this place, the margin reads: and the Jews shall no more be his people. If this is a more correct reading then it is easy to see how it fell out of the text.

4. He shall make it (the sanctuary) desolate because of the abominations (pollutions)23 and the promised punishment will be poured out on the desolator (polluter). Jesus warned that their house would be left desolate (Mtt.23:38) that the Temple would be destroyed (Mtt.24:1,2) and he referred specifically to the abomination of desolation spoken of by Daniel the prophet (Mtt.24:15) all indicating that the first 3½ years of Daniel's prophecy were fulfilled in AD 70.

5. The last 3½ years, over which the covenant (made in the middle of the seven)

still extends, must be the 3½ years of Revelation chapters 11 and 12.

To summarise Page_14 Index_of_tables_and_diagrams

DANIEL

REVELATION

HISTORY

Sanctuary destroyed by a flood.

3½ years.

Locust invasion .

5 months torment.

Jewish war.

3½ years.

Siege 5 months.

Strengthened covenant.

(chapter 10)

Strong (angel)

(Rainbow)

Covenant.

Israel temporarily cast off.

Last 3½ years still not fulfilled.

Conclusion Page_15 Index_of_tables_and_diagrams

The prophecy of Daniel 9 is segmented because it is not continuous. There are specific events that trigger each section of the prophecy after long periods of seeming inactivity.

1x7

62x7

3½

3½

BC 586

BC 537

BC

444

BC

4

AD

66½

AD

70

AD

??

The prophecy adds up to a total of 490 years or 70 x7 years, but between each section there are ‘gaps’. This explains why the prophecy runs to the bringing in of the righteousness of ages (the Kingdom).

Both Daniel and Revelation depict the events of the last ‘seven’ as following directly one after the other without any time lapse; this is because the events of AD70 (and possibly AD 132½) are typical of the future, both the witnessing and the destruction have already happened and will happen again!!

NOTES

1 The BAR-KOCHBA REVOLT, AD 132 – 135.

There arose during this time period a Messianic claimant, a man named Simon. Simon might have not made much headway but for the fact that his Messianic claims were warmly supported by Akiba, the leading rabbi of the day. In vain did some of Akiba’s more cautious colleagues remonstrate with him. (Akiba, said one, grass will grow out of your jaws before the son of David comes); Akiba was sure that Simon was the Messiah, and hailed him as the ‘star out of Jacob’ celebrated in Balaam’s prophecy long centuries before (Num.24:17). For this reason Simon became known by the surname of Bar-Kochba, which is Aramaic for ‘son of the star’.

The suddenness of the rising (132) took the Romans unawares. Judea, since the late war, had been governed not by a procurator but by an imperial legate of independent status, with a stronger military force on the spot than Gessius Florus had in AD 66. Even so, it proved inadequate; Bar-Kochba was soon master in Judea. According to Dio-Cassius (150–235 AD, author of a Roman history in Greek), the defenders recruited soldiers from all countries of the Empire and beyond the Euphrates, inhabited by their ‘fellow nationals’. The solidarity of Jews elsewhere in the Empire with the Judean rebels under Bar-Kochba is also stressed by Dio. (Epitome 69:13).

To mark independence a new coinage was struck, bearing such legends as ‘Simon Prince of Israel’, ‘For the freedom of Jerusalem’, ‘Year one of the redemption of Israel’. The warfare was guerilla in character, as it had been in the days of the Maccabees, and it took the Romans a long time to put it down. Three and a half years severe fighting followed before the Roman general Julius Serverus succeeded in crushing the revolt. The records, although incomplete, indicate that during this period some form of worship was reinstated, an altar was erected on the temple mount for sacred worship. The Nazarenes had refused to take part in the Bar-Kochba rising, because they could not by any means recognise his Messianic claims. For them there could be not other Messiah than Jesus. Because of their refusal to join what seemed the patriotic cause, they suffered considerable persecution. From that time onwards, then, the distinctively Jewish Christian communities went their own way, isolated in religion from their fellow Jews, and to a large extent isolated from the main stream of Christianity. Justin Martyr (1 Apology 13) briefly referred to the timoriai deinai – the terrible punishments of Christians ordered by Bar-Kochba, unless they denied and blasphemed Christ. That the persecutions were simultaneously political and religious in nature lies in the character of Messianic wars (see Early Church History p.226 note 8 for references). Bar-Kochba was put to death at the end of the 3½ year revolt, along with

the other instigators, including the intrepid Akiba himself. And now Jerusalem was rebuilt as a Roman colony with a Temple duly consecrated to Jupiter Capitolinus – an order that was to endure until the time of Constantine, nearly two hundred years later.

The city was renamed AElia Capitolina after the Emperor's family name (his full name was Publius AElius Hadrianus) and Capitolina after the Roman Jupiter to whom the new temple was dedicated. It was a completely Gentile city; no Jew was permitted entry on pain of death.

Bar-Kochba's real patronymic was Ben-Kosebah (found in a cave in the Wadi Murabba'at). In Jewish sources his name is Bar Koziba, probably because his Messianic pretensions were never realised. Bar Koziba means 'son of a deceiver'.

The third trumpet (Rev.8:10,11) is possibly referring to Bar-Kochba:

"And the third angel sounded, and there fell a great star from heaven, burning as it were a lamp (i.e. the Messiah was a lamp – John 1:8,9) and it fell on a third part of the rivers, and upon the fountains of the waters; and the name of the star is called Wormwood: and the third part of the waters became wormwood; and many men died of the waters, because they were made bitter" (false prophet Deut.29:18).

Bibliography:

THE SPREADING FLAME, BRUCE.

EARLY CHURCH HISTORY, Stephen Benko & John J O'Rourke.

A Concise History of the Church. August Franzen/John P. Dolan.

From the Apostolic Community to Constantine (vol 1), Karl Baus.

Judaism and Christian Beginnings, Samuel Sandmel.

The Diaspora Story.

The Encyclopaedia Judaica (vol 1-16).

2 This is the money which Judas cast into the sanctuary (Matthew 27:5) with which the priest

bought the potter's field (Matt.27:7). Thus fulfilling both versions of the prophecy!!

3 Boutflower admits the following (In and Around the Book of Daniel, p.175):

The untrustworthy character of the Septuagint and the liberties taken by the translator are thus freely admitted by Driver, when comparing it with the received Hebrew text:

"The Septuagint, though in isolated passages it may preserve a more original reading, as a whole has no claim whatever to consideration beside it: the liberties which the translator has manifestly taken with his text being quite such as to deprive the different readings, which, if it were a reasonably faithful translation, it might be regarded as presupposing, of all pretensions to originality – except, indeed, in a comparatively small number of instances in which they are supported on strong grounds of intrinsic probability" – Cambridge Bible, p.g.11.

4 The 'seventy sevens' prophecy seems to have an intimate connection with Jewish feast days. The'feast of weeks'(or sevens) was celebrated (7x7) from Passover (49 days) and is better known as Pentecost– this was the harvest of the first fruits, when the loaf of bread was waved before the Lord. A perfect Jewish year had 354 days (lunar calendar) and a leap year 383 days (29

extra), so from Passover in a leap year to Passover in the next year was 383 days, Pentecost is 49 days later, inclusive reckoning totals exactly to 434 days! (62x7=434).

This would leave the last seven of Daniel's prophecy to be possibly equated with the last harvest feast (7 day feast) of Tabernacles, which celebrated the ingathering of the wine and oil harvest. Is this the harvest of Revelation 14 which describes the reaping of the earth (Israel) as follows:

"And the angel thrust in his sickle into the earth, and gathered the vine of the earth, and cast it into the great winepress of the wrath of God".

The last 'seven' of Daniel's prophecy is also a time of judgment and punishment.

5 The traditional date for the decree is usually given as 457(7th year of Artaxerxes not the20 th), marking the end of the first period in 408 BC. Boutflower remarks that more strictly the period begins in the year 458 BC. Bro. Thomas takes the 20th year of Artaxerxes as 456 BC+ 9 months (instead of the traditional 444 BC date) as his point of departure (see exposition of Daniel, p.36).

6 Jesus was 30 years old at his baptism (Lk.3:23). Bro. Thomas reckons a period of 485 years and 9 months between the 20th of Artaxerxes and the baptism (455 + 9 months + 30 = 485 + 9 months). This would date the birth of Christ in 1 BC (instead of 4/5 BC).

7 Exposition of Daniel, p.37.

8 Exposition of Daniel, p.36.

9 Dan.12:7: TIME, TIMES, AND A HALF.

This is 3½ years i.e. Time = 360 days; TIMES = 2 x 360 days; A HALF = 180 days. 360 + 720 + 180 = 1260 days. Therefore the years used in Daniel are Babylonian lunar years of 360 days each.

10 The expression 'until he come' refers to Christ and is found in Daniel's "seventy sevens prophecy -the prince that shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary…" (9:26).

11 The Temple was destroyed in the 11th year of Zedekiah in the 5th month on the 10th day of the month (Jer.52:13).This equates with the 19th (or 18th) year of Nebuchadnezzar (see Ezek.12:13;Jer.52:8), BC 586.

See also Josephus Apion i.21, Hag.2:18.

12 This expression is used 42 times in Scripture!! It refers to the anointing of a most holy high priest, or to the action of anointing the mercy seat with blood on the day of Atonement. Either way, a new and special act of priesthood is implied. The next verse promises Messiah the Prince: the divine priest/king.

13 The 49 years of the first segment of the prophecy equates to exactly 49 years 9 months in solar reckoning!

14 Hebrews 10:37 is quoting from the Septuagint (LXX) version of Habakkuk: The AV reads as follows: "For the vision is yet for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak, and not lie: though it tarry wait for it; because it (LXX = he that shall come) will surely come, it will not delay" (Hab.2:3). It is notable that the phrase, 'vision that is yet for an appointed time', refers to the passage in Daniel 10:14, and that the LXX translation personifies the vision as 'he that shall come', the same title is used in Daniel 9:26.

15 I have translated shiloh as peace. The Hebrew (7887) shî ylô h comes from a root word meaning tranquillity, security or rest (see 7954) shelâ h – the Hebrew word for peace is shâ lô m (7965). The essence of the meaning is the same: Jesus will bring tranquillity and peace i.e. no more friction between the role of king and priest.

16 Confirm (or make) the (a) covenant.

The word 'gabar' is only translated confirm (AV) in this verse. The sense of the word is strong or mighty (possibly strengthen the covenant?). It is obviously a play on the name of the angel Gabriel (cp. also Dan.10:16-20, strength(en) used 5 times).

Strongs gives the following definitions:

(Remember there are no vowels in the Hebrew)

1396 - gabar – to be strong, mighty

1397 - geber – mighty man, warrior

1399/1400 - geber – a man/a certain man

1401/1402 - gibbâ r – intensive plural for emphasis – valiant, mighty warrior

1403 - Gabrî yel – a cognate word, a combination of Gabar and el(ohim), literally STRONG

MIGHTY ONE, both words imply strength = the strong one of God

17 Suddenly comes to his temple: see 1 Thess.5:3: "sudden destruction cometh upon them", contrast the true temple "But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that the day should overtake you as a thief" (v.4).

18 The last 5 months of the siege of Jerusalem were particularly nasty and are recorded as lasting from April 14th to September 8th (5 LUNAR MONTHS). Josephus comments:

".....the city would either be swallowed up by the ground opening upon them, or been overflowed by water, or else been destroyed by such thunder as the country of Sodom perished by....for by their madness it was that all the people came to be destroyed" (Wars book 5.13.7).

19 As already mentioned in chapter 10 – the seven thunders (Rev.10:3) are connected with the seven voices of the Lord in Psalm 29, note especially the flood connection: "The Lord sat as king at the flood" (RV) (29:10).

20 Peleg: the name means division or earthquake, it was during Peleg's lifetime that the earth was divided i.e. the tower of Babel was destroyed, and the people (and their language) scattered. COMPARE:

"There was a great earthquake such as was not since men were upon the earth, so mighty an earthquake, and so great. And the great city was divided into three parts..." Rev.16:18,19.

21 Josephus comments as follows:

"And now the fatal day was come, according to the revolution of ages: it was the tenth day of the month Ab, upon which it was formerly burnt by the king of Babylon; although these flames took their rise from the Jews themselves, and were occasioned by them..." (Wars book 6.IV.5).

Josephus blames the Jews for the fire (although it was the Romans that actually started the incineration) and remarks that it happened on the same day as it was burned by Nebuchadnezzar!

22 Josephus recounts some of the omens that preceded the destruction of the city:

“I suppose the account of it would seem to be a fable, were it not related by those that saw it, and were not the events that followed it of so a considerable nature as to deserve such signals; for, before sun-setting, chariots and troops of soldiers in their armour were seen running about in the clouds, and surrounding of cities” (Wars book 6.V.3).

Are the ‘people of the prince that shall come’ the angels? Compare 2 Kings 6:17.

23 The literal translation is ‘wing of abominations’, or ‘overspreading of abominations’, often taken to refer to a wing or pinnacle of the Temple. More naturally it refers to the overspreading or wing of a cherubim, not the cherubim on the Ark of the Covenant, but in the context of Daniel a Babylonian cherubim (the Assyrian cherubim was depicted as a winged lion). The Assyrian invasion is depicted as an overspreading. c.p. Isa.18:1 contrast Ps.57:1, 61:4, 91:4.

The word Abomination is often used of idols in Scripture: “Neither shalt thou bring an abomination into thine house” (Deut.7:26).

In the context of Revelation it is the image of the Beast that constitutes the abomination (brought into the house of Israel?).

The Jews of the first century “repented not of the works of their hands, that they should worship devils (demons) and idols of gold, and silver, and of brass and stone and wood: which neither can see, nor hear, nor walk: Neither repented they of their murders, nor of their sorceries, nor of their fornication, nor of their thefts” (Rev.9:20,21).

The Temple itself had become an idol and a den of thieves and murderers, see Josephus (B.J.4.9.10).

The following is quoted from In and Around the Book of Daniel, Boutflower p.200-202:

“The Zealots, whom Josephus so sternly denounces as the direct cause of the destruction of Jerusalem (Wars of the Jews IV.3,3), received their name from their affected patriotism and pretended zeal for the law. In reality they were robber bands, cut-throats and murderers; and are more truthfully described by their other name, Sicarri or Assassins. Herod the Great in his early days did much to put down these robbers, who had made their strongholds in the precipitous hillsides of Galilee. But in the last years of the Jewish state this evil broke out afresh in the same quarter.

A strong band of these men had held the town of Gischala against the Romans; but when they saw its capture to be certain, they contrived by a stratagem to make their escape to Jerusalem under the leadership of John of Gischala. Having made their way into the capital, they set to work to corrupt the younger men, and stirred them up to rebel against the Romans. Meanwhile they were joined by many like characters from all parts of the country and were able, by making themselves masters of the Temple, to turn it into a fortress from which they could sally out into Jerusalem and commit any acts of tyranny and savage barbarity which might serve their purpose. There could be no better description of the prosperous career for the time being of atrocious wickedness, violence, murder, rapine and pollution, engaged in so lightly by the Zealot army, and of the terrible gloom which it cast over Jerusalem, than those brief words of Gabriel,

“Upon a wing of abominations shall come one that maketh desolate”. These bold, determined, desperate robbers – ruffians, who jested over holy things, and yet when it suited their purpose professed a zeal for the law and a belief in the prophets, sailed forth boldly on their career of crime like some powerful bird of prey, the terror of the flocks (Isa.8:8). Theirs was a wickedness which for a while prospered exceedingly. They seemed to be borne along on the wing of their own abominations, buoyed up by the various atrocities in which they indulged, by their acts of sacrilege and violence. Their crimes were

‘abominations’ in the truest sense, objects of detestation and horror, ‘desolating’ i.e. appalling those who witnessed them, for such is the force of the two Hebrew words here used. Thus they seized the appointment to the High Priesthood, and elected by lot to that sacred office a rustic clown, whom they decked with the priestly robes and brought him forth as if on the stage, indulging in uncontrolled merriment over his awkwardness, while the more earnest-minded of the priests shed hot tears of indignation at this horrid profanation (Wars of the Jews, book IV.3,8). Josephus, speaking of the Zealots, says that they ridiculed the oracles of the prophets which they themselves were instrumental in fulfilling, adding that “there was a certain ancient oracle of those men, that the city should then be taken and the sanctuary burnt, by right of war, when a sedition should invade the Jews, and their own hands should pollute the Temple of God” (Wars book IV.6,3).

Again, addressing his rival, John of Gischala, one of the principal leaders of the Zealots, just three weeks before the capture of the city, he says: “Who is there that does not know what the writings of the ancient prophets contain in them – and particularly that oracle which is just now going to be fulfilled upon this miserable city – for they foretold that this city should be taken when somebody shall begin the slaughter of his own countrymen! It is God, therefore, it is God himself, who is bringing on this fire, to purge that city and Temple by means of the Romans, and is going to pluck up this city, which is full of your pollutions” (Wars book VI.2,1).”

There is some reason for thinking that the special oracle referred to by the Jewish historian is this vision (i.e. seventy sevens) at which we are looking, for it will be noted that pollution is the keynote on which the Jewish priest and historian harps. The Zealots have filled Jerusalem with their pollutions. More particularly they have polluted the Temple of God. John had told Josephus that he had no fear of the city being taken because it was God’s city. In answer to which Josephus replied in a tone of bitterest satire “To be sure thou hast kept this city wonderfully pure for God’s sake. The Temple also continues entirely unpolluted” (Wars book VI.2,1).

Again and again we find references to the horrible pollution of the Temple. Thus: “Those men made the Temple a stronghold for themselves” (Wars book IV.3,7).

“When they were satiated with the unjust actions they had done towards men, they transferred their contumelious behaviour to God himself and came into the sanctuary with polluted feet” (Wars book IV.3,6).

Ananus, one of the high priests, is represented as saying to the multitude, “Certainly it had been good for me to die before I had seen the house of God full of so many abominations, or these sacred places that ought not to be trodden on at random, filled with the feet of these blood-shedding villains” (Wars book IV.3,10).

Jesus, the eldest high priest next to Ananus, addressing the Idumeans who had been invited to Jerusalem by the Zealots, speaks in the same strain. After denouncing the Zealots as the very rascality and offscouring of the whole country, he adds “They are robbers, who by their

prodigious wickedness have profaned this most sacred floor, and who are now to be seen drinking themselves drunk in the sanctuary”.... “These profane wretches have proceeded to that degree of madness, as not only to have transferred their impudent robberies out of the country and the remote cities into this city, the very face and head of the whole nation, but out of the city into the Temple also: for that is now made their receptacle and refuge, and the fountainhead whence their preparations are made against us. And this place, which is adored by the habitable world, and honoured by such as only know it by report, as far as the ends of the earth, is trampled upon (Rev.11:2) by these wild beasts (Rev.11:7) born among ourselves” (Wars book IV.4,3).

John Whenham (Christ and the Bible) comments as follows:

“Daniel 9:27; 11:31; 12:11. The cryptic reference to the desolating sacrilege standing ‘in the holy place’ cannot mean literally an entering of the Temple or city by the Romans, as this would be too late as a warning to those in Judea, though it would adequately represent the Jewish sense of horror towards the Roman ensigns as described by Josephus (Antiq.XVIII.3). Luke’s more straightforward description of the encircling armies might conceivably be understood of the invasion of the holy land, but this is not how a reader of the book of Daniel would naturally take it. R.T. France (following M.J. Lagrange, Matthieu, Paris, 1923, p.461,462) thinks that the profanation of the Temple by the Zealots as described by Josephus (Wars book IV.3) fits the prediction best. In the winter of AD 67/68, as Roman pressure against the Jewish rebels was increasing, Zealots took control of the city, set up their headquarters in the Holy Place and held a mock ceremony to install a bumpkin as High Priest. Carnage followed and the holy city was defiled with blood. The approach of the Roman armies tallies with Luke, and the desecration of the Holy Place tallies with Matthew (and Mark). Either of these would have provided an adequate warning to the Christians that it was time to flee”. (The above is note 4 from the chapter, Objections to the Claims of Jesus.)

11.2 Time periods and the little horn

DIGRESSION 11.2 – TIME PERIODS AND THE LITTLE HORN, CHAPTER 11

The object of this digression is to clarify the following propositions:

a) Daniel chapter 8 – the removal of the 'daily' is about the removal of the daily witnessing; it is an end time prophecy.

b) Daniel chapter 8 is a prelude to Daniel chapter 9. The 'vision' in chapter 8 is continued in chapter 9(the seventy sevens). The visions are complementary ie they are both end time visions of the same events but seen from different perspectives.

c) The 'coming one' in Daniel chapter 9 is the Messiah – in contrast, the 'little horn' of Daniel chapter 8 is the anti-type, the man of sin.

Let us then examine our first statement:

a) Daniel 8 is end time prophecy:

DANIEL 8

REVELATION

"And it waxed great, even to the host of heaven: and it cast down some of the host and of the stars to the ground and stamped upon them" (v.10).

"And his tail drew the third part of the stars of heaven and did cast them to the earth" (12:4).

"Yea he magnified himself even to the prince of the host" (MICHAEL1) (v.12).

"And there was war in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon" (12:7).

"Cast truth to the ground" (v.12).

"Did cast them to the earth" (12:4).

"How long shall be the vision" 2 (v.13).

"There should be time no longer" (10:6).

"The sanctuary and the host to be trodden underfoot" (v.13).

"Shall they tread underfoot forty and two months" (11:2).

"Removal of the daily" (v.13).

"Death of the witnesses" (11:7).

"I was in a deep sleep, my face toward the ground: but he touched me and set me upright" (v.18).

"The spirit of life from God entered into them, and they stood upon their feet" (11:11).

"A king of fierce countenance…. shall stand up" (v.23).

"Another beast coming up out of the earth" (13:11).

"And his power shall be mighty, but not by his own power" (v.24).

“And he exerciseth all the power of the first beast before him” (13:12).

“Shall cause craft to prosper.... shall corrupt many” (v.25).

“He deceiveth them that dwell on the earth by the means of those miracles” (13:14).

“Shall magnify himself in his heart” (v.25).

Who is like the Beast? (13:4).

The comparisons between Daniel 8 and Revelation are self evident, indeed similar comparisons can be drawn between all the prophetic passages in Daniel and Revelation. The prophecy itself informs us that the vision “belongeth to the appointed time of the end” (v.19 RV). The death and resurrection episode of v.18 indicates that these events pertain to the future. The king of fierce countenance would be ‘broken without hand’ (v.25, cp.2:34) and Daniel was told to “shut up the vision; for it shall be for many days” (v.26).

b) Digression 11.1 (the seventy sevens prophecy) has already introduced the observation that Daniel 9 is a continuation of the vision in the previous chapter. The salient points are:

1. Daniel 9:21: “ The man Gabriel, whom I had seen in the vision at the beginning” This is referring to the previous vision (8:15,16) “...as the appearance of a man...Gabriel, make this man to understand the vision”.

At the end of chapter 8 (v.26) the vision (châ zô wn) ‘is shut up’; in 9:24 the vision(same word) is ‘sealed up’ until the 70 x 7 time period is completed. (ie 70 x 7 would transpire before the vision would be completely fulfilled.)

We are told that Daniel was “astonished at the vision (of chapter 8), but none understood it” (RV “but there was none to make it understood”). Daniel was ‘astonished’– the prophet Jeremiah uses the same word to describe the apostasy of the people:

2.

“My people hath changed their glory for that which doth not profit (idols). Be astonished, O ye heavens, at this, and be horribly afraid, be ye very desolate, saith the Lord. For my people have committed two evils; they have forsaken me the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns that can hold no water” (Jer.2:12,13).

“And it shall come to pass at that day, saith the Lord, that the heart of the king shall perish, and the heart of the princes; and the priests shall be astonished, and the prophets shall wonder. Then said I, Ah Lord God! Surely

thou hast greatly deceived this people and Jerusalem, saying, Ye shall have peace; (by peace shall he destroy many, Dan.8:25) whereas the sword reacheth unto the soul” (Jer.4:9,10).

“...to make their land desolate, and a perpetual hissing; every one that passeth thereby shall be astonished, and wag his head” (Jer.18:16).

“NONE UNDERSTOOD THE VISION” – The word understood is used only once in Jeremiah:

“And I will make Jerusalem heaps, and a den of dragons, and I will make the cities of Judah desolate without inhabitant. Who is the wise man, that may understand this? and who is he to whom the mouth of the Lord hath spoken, that he may declare it, for what the land perisheth

and is burned up like a wilderness, so that none passeth through? And the Lord said, because they have forsaken my law…" (Jer.9:11-13).

All the Jeremiah passages had an initial fulfilment in the destruction of Jerusalem and the sanctuary in BC586; the 70 years of captivity were a consequence of the nation forsaking the fountain of living waters.

Daniel who was wiser than all the 'wise' men of Babylon understood – "none of the wicked shall understand; but the wise shall understand" (Dan.12:10). What he understood, was that the future would hold another huge apostasy (the revelation of the man of sin) and subsequent desolation before the revelation of the Messiah. The astonishment of Daniel was caused by the shock realisation that 'the mighty and the holy people' would once again be destroyed (corrupted), but none (of the wicked) understood.

The root cause of this apostasy was the rejection of their Messiah (Messiah would be cut off and shall have nothing, 9:26 RV). Jesus himself said: "I am come in my Father's name and ye receive me not: if another shall come in his own name, him ye will receive" (John 5:43).

Daniel chapter 8 is about the man of sin, Daniel chapter 9 continues the vision by informing the prophet that it would not be 70 years of desolation (compare the captivity) but 70 x7 years before these events would climax with the introduction of the kingdom. The prophecy of Daniel 8 helps us fill in the details of the second half of the last 'seven' of Daniel 9.

3½ years

AD66½ - 70

3½ years

Future

Man of sin.

Apostasy 'typified'.

Man of sin.

Apostasy.

A particular time period is attached to this apostasy (8:14):

"And he said unto me, unto two thousand and three hundred evenings and mornings (RV); then shall the sanctuary be cleansed" (justified).

HAW (Bible studies, An Anthology, p.110) comments as follows:

"Two elements of uncertainty about this need to be tidied up. Instead of 2300, the reading 2400 is very often adopted – which is a thing to wonder at, for the only place where this reading comes is in a single printed copy of the Vatican LXX. Every Hebrew and Greek manuscript has 2300. In other words, that 2400 depends entirely on a misprint. The Vatican LXX manuscript itself reads 2300. Also, the AV reading: '2300 days' is inexact, and may be incorrect. The literal translation of the Hebrew text is: "an evening-morning of 2300 and the sanctuary shall be justified". The reference here is to the 'continual' (v.13) – the sacrifice offered in the temple, without intermission, every morning and every evening. Thus, the period intimated could be one of 1150 twenty – four hour days.

It seems to have been overlooked that the translation “two thousand and three hundred evenings and mornings” depends entirely on the Hebrew word for ‘thousands’ appearing in the text in dual form (there is no separate word for ‘two’3 in this text). But this pointing is that of the rabbis who came centuries later. Thus, in effect, the reading 2300 is their interpretation of the text. With the slightest adjustment of this rabbinical pointing, the reading becomes: “thousands and three hundred evenings-mornings”. This would indicate a long indefinite time – ‘thousands’ terminating in a well-defined period of 150 days”.

HAW proceeds to identify this 150 days with the 5 months of Rev.9:5 which he equates with the last five months of the siege of Jerusalem, which resulted in the Jews polluting and desolating their sanctuary, ultimately leading to their conquest and the diaspora. The events of AD66½ - 70 typify the future revelation of the man of sin.4 While elements of the prophecy in Daniel 8 may have a first century application the final fulfilment still lies in the future.

c) The little horn of Daniel 8 (and the king of fierce countenance) typify the man of sin :

DANIEL 8

2 THESSALONIANS 2

“It cast down some of the host and the stars5 and trampled upon them” (v.10).

“Magnified himself to the prince of the host and took away the daily and the place of his sanctuary was cast down” (v.11).

“Exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself forth that he is God” (v.4).

“Cast truth down to the ground” (v.12)6.

“That they might be damned who believed not the truth” (v.12).

“His power shall be mighty but not by his own power” (v.24).

“Whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders” (v.9).

“Shall magnify himself, and by peace he shall destroy (corrupt) many” (v.25).

“God sendeth them a strong delusion, that they should believe a lie” (v.11).

It is not surprising to find that the man of sin imitates the true Messiah, with the same sort of signs and miracles etc.

Please note the following parallels:

ANTICHRIST

DANIEL CHAPTER 7 & 8

‘THE LITTLE HORN’

(King of fierce countenance)

CHRIST

DANIEL CHAPTER 9

‘THE COMING ONE’

(Messiah the Prince)

“Shall destroy (corrupt) wonderfully” (Dan.8:24).

“His name shall be wonderful counsellor” (Isaiah 9:6).

“By peace destroy (corrupt) many” (Dan.8:25).

“Prince of peace” (Isaiah 9:6).

“And his power shall be mighty” (Dan.8:24).

“Mighty God” (Isaiah 9:6).

“The place of his sanctuary cast down” (Dan.8:11).

“Sanctuary and host trodden1 underfoot” (Dan.8:13).

“The people of the prince that shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary” (Dan.9:26).

“Shall think to change the times and the laws” (Dan.7:25).

“And he (the coming one) shall confirm (strengthen) the covenant for one week” (Dan.9:27).

1260 days (Dan.7:25).

1260 days (½ WEEK) (Dan.9:25).

“By him the daily was taken away” (Dan.8:11).7

“Shall cause sacrifice and oblation to cease” (Dan.9:27).

The characteristics of the little horn, the king of fierce countenance and the man of sin have been compressed (by myself). It is sometimes difficult to differentiate between the roles. A.D. Norris (Apocalypse for Everyman, p.234) comments that the Beast closely resembles the ‘man of sin’ of 2 Thessalonians.

He shows the following comparison:

2 THESSALONIANS 2

REVELATION

The falling away must come first. The man of sin is the son of perdition (v.3).

He exalts himself against God (v.4).

A harlot will be seated on the Beast (17:3).

The Beast goes into perdition (17:11).

The world worships the Beast (13:14).

It speaks blasphemies (13:5).

All that dwell on the earth except the faithful shall worship it (13:8).

The false prophet ensures that all the world shall worship the Beast (13:12).

He sits in the temple of God, claiming to be God, opposing himself to all that is called God or worshipped (v.4).

It blasphemes God's name, His tabernacle, and those who dwell in heaven (13:6).

The mystery of iniquity is already at work (v.7).

The harlot is called mystery, the mother of abominations of the earth (17:5).

The Lord Jesus shall destroy him with the breath of His mouth, and bring him to nought by the manifestation of his coming (v.8).

The Lamb shall overcome the Beast with the ten kings (17:14).

His coming is according to the working of Satan, with all powers and signs and lying wonders (v.9).

He doeth great signs, that he should even make fire come down form heaven: it was given to him to give breath to the image of the Beast, that it should speak (13:13).

With all deceit of unrighteousness in them that are perishing, because they received not the love of the truth that they might be saved; For this cause God sends them a working of error, that they should believe a lie (v.10).

He deceives them that dwell on the earth by reason of the signs (13:14).

Everyone whose name has not been written in the book of life (13:8).

A.D. Norris remarks: "Some of the references in the Revelation column relate to the actions of the false prophet, but since these are performed on the Beast's account, they are included in the characteristics of the Beast itself".

I would add to his comment that sometimes the objectives of an imperial power and a religious power are the same, or overlap. This may explain why the characteristics are often interchangeable. A good example of this is when an imperial power (ROME) and a religious power (JUDAISM) worked together in order to crucify Christ. The imperial power allowed a certain amount of religious freedom, and the religious power colluded with the imperial power in order to achieve its own ends.

The hostility that the Jews showed towards Jesus in the first century might be partially explained by identifying him with, and confusing the roles of, the 'little horn' and the 'coming one'. It is interesting to note the accusations brought against him, specifically at his trial before the Sanhedrin.

THE TRIAL (MATTHEW 26)

DANIEL

"This fellow said, (false witness) I am able to destroy the temple (sanctuary) of God, and build it in three days" (v.61).

"And the people of the prince that shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary" (9:26).

"The place of his sanctuary was cast down" (8:11).

(The high priest) "Tell us whether thou be the Christ, the Son of God" (v.63).

“Messiah (Christ) the prince” (9:25).

(Jesus’ reply) “Hereafter shall ye see the Son of Man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven” (v.64).

“I saw in the night visions, and, behold, one like the Son of Man came with the clouds of heaven” (7:13).

(The high priest) “He hath spoken blasphemy….ye have heard his blasphemy” (v.65).

“And he shall speak great words against the Most High” (7:25).

“He shall magnify himself in his heart” (8:25).

During his ministry he was accused of trying to destroy the law:

“Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets” (Mtt.5:17). Compare Dan.7:25: “and he shall think to change the times and the law” (RV).

Jesus’ temple prophecy was probably misconstrued along the same lines of confusion reported in John 2:19-21. Jesus did, however, prophesy that the temple would be destroyed (Mtt.23:38; 24:2). The same accusation was brought against Stephen (Acts 6:13-14) “For we heard him say that this Jesus of Nazareth shall destroy this place, and shall change the customs which Moses delivered us”. Jesus was seen as a false prophet (Mk.14:65, cp. Deut.18:22) and a deceiver (Mtt.27:63). In the Talmud, Jesus is accused of practising magic and leading Israel astray.

The Daniel prophecy informs us that the king of fierce countenance would destroy (corrupt) wonderfully and would cause craft (deceit) to prosper (8:24,25). In these circumstances, it is natural that Jesus answers his protagonists with an allusion to Dan.7:13 – “The Son of Man…coming in the clouds of heaven”.

NOTES

1 The prince of the host is Michael the archangel to whom was especially committed the direction of the affairs of Israel (see Dan. 12:1; 10;13,21; Josh.5:14; Ex.23:20).

2 How long? This is the question implicitly implied in Revelation 11:13 – a tenth part of the city fell, compare Isaiah 6:11-13.

NOTES

3 The same word is translated ‘thousands’ on 46 occasions

---

4 The BAR-KOCHBA revolt also typifies the same event, as does the oppression under Antiochus Epiphanes and the Assyrian king Sennacherib.

---

5 The stars are: “They that are wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars forever” (Dan.12:3). Is this referring to the witnesses?

Thessalonians has no counterpart to this verse, but Isaiah 14 does, which relates the pride of Lucifer (= day star = Venus), the son of the morning, who exalts his throne above the stars of God (v.14). We are also informed that he ruled the nations in anger, with a persecution that none restraineth (v.6 RV).Paul tells us however, that in the first century, “there is one that restraineth now until he be taken out the way” (2 Thess.2:7). The full outworking of the man of sin was limited in the first century but will be fully revealed in the future. The prophecy in Isaiah 14 had its initial fulfilment in the king of Babylon (v.4) which was one of the titles of the Assyrian king Sennacherib.

---

6 Truth, always refers to the covenants of promise made to the patriarchs (concerning the Messiah, Micah 7:20). Jesus was the fulfilment of those promises, he was therefore able to say: “I am the truth, the way, and the life” (John 14:6). The man of sin, however, presents himself as the TRUTH (= the Messiah).

NOTE

7 These events were typified in the first century by the Jews (AD66½ - 70) who polluted and desolated ‘their house’ but the final judgment on the Jews was by Jesus himself (the prince that shall come) who destroyed the city and the sanctuary – the people of the prince that shall come, is possibly referring to the Romans (cp. the Assyrian – the rod of God’s anger, Isa.10:5). Other suggestions are discussed in Digression 11.1 In the future, there seems to be a literal down-treading of Israel, as well as the removal of the daily (witnessing) – indicating a persecution.

Chapter 12

THE BIRTH

“The Lord said unto me, Thou art my Son, This day have I begotten Thee” (Psalm 2:7)

THE BIRTH OF TWO SONS

“And there appeared a great wonder (sign) in heaven; a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars” (Rev.12:1).

This vision obviously refers to Joseph’s dream:

“I have dreamed a dream more; and, behold, the sun, the moon and the eleven stars made obeisance to me” (Gen.37:9).

In this vision Joseph was obviously the ‘twelfth star’, the sun was his father Jacob and the moon was his mother Rachel. This is why Joseph’s father says, “shall I and thy mother and thy brethren indeed come to bow ourselves down to thee to the earth?”

What surprised Jacob was not just his son’s audacity (in having ideas above his station), but the fact that Rachel was there – for Rachel had died in childbirth (Gen.35:19). This was therefore a vision of the Kingdom age – although it was partially fulfilled by his brethren paying obeisance to him in Egypt (Gen.43:26; 44:14).

Rachel was therefore a type of Israel, who was barren:

“And God remembered Rachel, and God hearkened unto her, and opened her womb. And she conceived and bare a son; and said, God hath taken away my reproach: and she called his name Joseph; and said, The Lord add to me another son”1 (Gen.30:22-24).

She did indeed have this other son, but she died in childbirth:

“And it came to pass, as her soul was departing (for she died), that she called his name Ben-oni (the son of my sorrow)2but his father called him Benjamin (son of the right hand)” (Gen.35:18).

She had two sons

1) Joseph – sold into slavery in Egypt, who becomes the saviour of his brethren.

2) Benjamin – the son of sorrow who was to become the son of the right hand (enthroned) of God. She died while delivering the ‘son of sorrow’

(“she cried, travailing in birth, and pained to be delivered” – Rev.12:2).

Conclusions

Both sons, typify Jesus. They also both typify the true ecclesia that would come forth out of the travailing of the nation. The nation died in AD 70 and will do so again in the future.

MATTHEW REVELATION 12

“Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, And they shall call his name Emmanuel” (1:23).

“A woman…travailing in birth, and pained to be delivered” (v.2)1

“Herod will seek the young child to destroy him” (2:13).

“The dragon2…sought to devour the child as soon as it was born” (v.4).

“Flee into Egypt…Out of Egypt have I called my son”3 (2:15).

“And the woman fled into the wilderness, where she had a place prepared of God” (v.6).

“Herod…was exceeding wroth” (v.16).

“The devil is come down unto you, having great wrath (v.12). The dragon was wrath with the woman” (v.17).

BORN AGAIN

The themes of birth and resurrection run as a thread through the beginning of the seventh trumpet, 11:15 – 12:5.

We have already seen that Psalm 2 is extensively paraphrased in the last section of Revelation 11. This Psalm relates to the Lord’s enthronement after his resurrection, we note that the language of birth is used: “This day I have begotten thee” (Ps.2:7).

Baptism represents death (Rom.6:4) but it also represents birth (John 3:7) to newness of life. When a child is born it is born of water (=the waters break) and spirit (=the breath of life), similarly when a new creation in Christ Jesus is born, it is born of water and spirit (John 3:5).

When the Israelites left the land of Egypt they were baptised unto Moses (my son) in the cloud and the sea. They also ate the same spiritual meat and drink (1 Cor.10:1-5).

Jesus himself had an EXODUS to undertake, he spoke about his EXODUS1 with the two witnesses (Moses and Elijah – Luke 9:31) and God declared? “This is my Son (Moses), my beloved, hear ye him” (v.35).

Conclusion:

We have then the following themes:

birth – death – resurrection (=birth = enthronement).

This is reflected in the Exodus:

Birth - the children of Israel were fruitful, and increased abundantly, and

multiplied, and waxed exceeding mighty; and the land was filled with

them (Ex.1:7)

Death - made their lives bitter with hard bondage (Ex.1:14), Egypt = death

(Ex.12:33)

- the Passover lamb (Ex.12:7)

- baptism in the sea (I Cor.10:1-15)

Resurrection (= birth)

- the nation saved from death (Ex.15:2)

Enthronement

- a nation brought before God's throne (Mt. Sinai) to become a kingdom of

priests, a holy nation (Ex.19:6).

- the firstbegotten of the dead (Rev.1:5)

- I am Alpha and Omega, which was, and which is to come (1:8)

- I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; I have the keys of hell and of death (1:18)

- the first and the last, which was dead, and is alive (2:8)

- the beginning of the creation of God (3:14)

- I am the first and the last; a lamb as it had been slain having seven horns and seven eyes (5:6)

THE BIRTH OF A NATION (Isaiah 66:8)

If ever the birth of a nation can be attributed to a single event, it is the Passover deliverance, and subsequent Exodus out of Egypt, which stands as the defining event in the salvic history of ISRAEL. What was a loose amalgamation of twelve tribes, became a nation, forged in the adversity of slavery, baptised into Moses, brought under the sovereignty of God and tested in the wilderness.

"Shall the earth be made to bring forth in one day?"

The answer to this question is an emphatic 'yes'.

"Shall a nation be born at once?"

Again the answer is 'yes'!

Just as the nation of Israel was born in one day (= Passover), so, too, a new nation was born at Passover (= crucifixion). "For as soon as Zion travailed she brought forth."

Isaiah says: "I am sought of them that asked not for me; I am found of them that sought me not: I said, Behold me, behold me, unto a nation that was not called by my name" (Is.65:1).

Once again, God wrought deliverance at Passover, a new nation was born comprising both Jew and Gentile.There is every indication that the future deliverance of Israel will again occur at a Passover. The 'little apocalypse' of Isaiah (chapters 22 – 29) has the following to say:

"Lord, in trouble have they visited thee, they poured out a prayer when thy chastening was upon them. Like as a woman with child, that draweth near the time of delivery, is in pain, and crieth out in her pangs; so we have been in thy sight, O Lord.

We have been with child, we have been in pain, we have brought forth wind; we have not wrought any deliverance in the earth; neither have the inhabitants of the earth fallen" (Is.26:16-18).

Religious independence and military self-reliance will not deliver the nation in its time of need, only recognition of God's son will bring the nation to the birth. In the time of Hezekiah (primary fulfilment) this deliverance (from the Assyrian) happened at a Passover:

“Yea, in the way of thy judgements, O Lord, have we waited for thee; the desire of our soul is to thy name and to the remembrance of thee1. With my soul have I desired thee in the night; yea, with my spirit within me will I seek thee early (RV diligently)” (Is.26:8,9).

The only feast celebrated at night was the Passover (Ex.12:8). It was to be kept as a memorial to the Lord (Ex.12:14). Note the words that Jesus used – “with desire, I have desired to eat this Passover with you” (Lk.22:15)... “this do in remembrance of me” (Lk.22:19).

The chapter continues with a resurrection scenario:

“Thy dead (ISRAEL’S?) shall live, together with my dead body (= my witnesses) shall they arise” (v.19)2.

The Passover features large in all the nation’s deliverances, and it is therefore appropriate that we should find the symbology of the Exodus linked with the birth theme. In fact the Exodus allusions are not limited to chapter 12, but also form part of Revelation chapters 13, 14 and 15.

EXODUS 15

REVELATION 12

“The Lord is my strength and song, and he is become my salvation” (v.2).

“Now is come salvation, and strength and the kingdom of our God” (v.10).

“Pharaoh’s chariots and his host hath he cast into the sea” (v.4).

“The accuser of our brethren is cast down (v.10)...the dragon cast unto the earth (v.12)...the dragon gives his authority to the beast of the sea” (13:1,4).

“Who is like unto thee, O Lord, among the gods?” (v.11).

Michael (= WHO IS LIKE GOD?) (v.7).

The Lord is a man of war (v.3).

Contrast the beast: “who is like the beast? who is able to make war with him?” (13:4).

“Thou has guided them in they strength unto thy holy habitation” (v.13).

“She hath a place prepared of God, that they should feed her 1260 days” (v.6).

“I bare you on eagles wings (the cherubim) and brought you unto myself” (Ex.19:4).

“And to the woman were given two wings of a great eagle” (v.14).

“Thou stretchedst out thy right hand, The earth swallowed them” (v.12).

“And the earth helped the woman, and the earth opened her mouth and swallowed up the flood which the dragon cast out of his mouth” (v.15).

“Give ear to his commandments and keep all his statutes” (v.26).

“Her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ” (v.17).

EXODUS 15

REVELATION 14

“Then sang Moses and the children of Israel this song unto the Lord” (v.1).

A new song (v.3).

(Song of Moses and the Lamb, 15:3).

“Thou shalt bring them in, and plant them in the mountain of thine inheritance” (v.17).

“And I looked, and, lo, a lamb stood on the mount Sion, and with him a 144,000 thousand” (v.1).

“Till the people pass over, which thou hast purchased” (v.16).

- which were redeemed (RV purchased) from the earth

- were redeemed (RV purchased) from among men (v.4).

EXODUS 19

“And mount Sinai was altogether on a smoke, because the Lord descended upon it in fire…

the whole mount quaked greatly… the voice of the trumpet… waxed louder and louder… God answered him by a voice” (v.18,19).

- contrast mount Sion (v.1) (see Hebrews 12:18-24).

“And I heard a voice from heaven, as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of a great thunder…(v.2).

“They washed their clothes. And he said unto the people, Be ready against the third day: come not at your wives” (RV near a woman) (v.15).

“These are they which were not defiled with women; for they are virgins” (v.4).

EXODUS 15

REVELATION 15

“Then sang Moses and the children of Israel this song unto the Lord” (v.1).

“And they sing the song of Moses the servant of God, and the song of the lamb” (v.2).

“With timbrels and with dances” (v.20).

“Having the harps of God” (v.2).

“The children of Israel went on dry land in the midst of the sea” (v.19).

“The sea of glass” (v.2).

“Glorious in holiness; fearful (LXX: thaumastos) in praises…” (v.11).

“Great and marvellous (Greek: thaumastos) are thy works” (v.3).

“Fear and dread shall fall upon them” (v.14-16).

“Who shall not fear thee, O Lord” (v.4).

Tabernacle in the wilderness erected (Ex.40:1).

Tabernacle in heaven opened (v.5).

The cloud covered the Tabernacle. Moses not able to enter (Ex.40:34,35).

The Tabernacle filled with smoke from the glory of God. No man able to enter (v.8).

Priests in white linen. The high priest girded about the breast with a golden girdle (Ex. 39:20,21).

Seven angels in white linen having their breasts girded with golden girdles (v.6).

H.A.W has the following comparisons (REVELATION A BIBLICAL APPROACH, page 162):

REVELATION 12

MOSES' DELIVERANCE OF ISRAEL

1. The Dragon.

Egypt (Ezekiel 29:3; Psalm 74:13,14; Isaiah 27:1 and 51:9).

2. The woman.

Israel.

3. The man-child to be destroyed.

Pharaoh's fiat against all male children (Ex.1:16).

4. The child caught up to God.

Israel at Sinai.

5. They overcame by the blood of the

lamb.

Deliverance through the Passover lamb.

6. The woman in the wilderness.

Israel in the wilderness (Ez.20:32; Hosea 2:14,19).

7. Provided with food there.

Manna given.

1. Wings of the great eagle (the cherub

of Rev.4:7).

"I bare you on eagles wings" (Ex.19:4; Deut.32:11).

2. The dragon persecuted (= pursued)

the woman.

Pursuit by Pharaoh's army.

10. The earth swallowed up the flood.

"The earth (quick-sand) swallowed them up" (Ex.15:12).

THE BIRTH OF THE FIRST CENTURY ECCLESIA

All births are a period of intense labour pain and sorrow followed by joy (John 16:21). Thus it was in the first century (sorrow, John 20:11 turned to joy, Lk.24:53). The birth of Jesus was a joyous occasion (Lk.2:13,14; cp. Job 38:7) and the beginning of his ministry a birth of water (Lk.3:21) and spirit (Lk.3:22).

The start of the ecclesia's ministry at Pentecost was also a birth of spirit (Acts 1:24, see John 15:26) and water (Acts 2:41). this ecclesia would, like its master, 'rule all nations with a rod of iron' (Rev.12:15). This was the promise given to the victorious in Thyatira (Rev.2:27)1. The 'man child' would be caught to God and his throne2. The destiny of this ecclesia was the same as its master3. Like its master this ecclesia would also suffer persecution (see WAR IN HEAVEN).

Just as the dragon tried to devour the infant Christ (who fled to Egypt), so the dragon also attempts to devour the new born first century ecclesia (which flees to Pella). The dragon, however, also sweeps a 'third part' of the stars of heaven (i.e. a third of the woman's crown) with its tail (Rev.12:4). This harks back to the trumpets (one third stars, Rev.8:12) and reminds us of Daniel's prophecy:

"And it waxed great to the stars of heaven; and it cast down some of the host and of the stars to the ground, and trampled (RV) on them" (Dan.8:10).

This 'trampling' of a 'third' is obviously referring to the down-treading of Jerusalem (Rev.11:3) and the refining of the people of Israel:

"I will bring a third part through the fire, and will refine them as silver is refined" (Zech.13:8,9). This has previously been described in detail in the trumpet section.

The dragon in this scenario represents human opposition to the kingdom of God; in the first century the dragon epitomises the imperial power of Rome invested in the 'divine emperor'.

The dating of Revelation can be accurately placed during the reign of Nero, who instigated the Jewish wars under his general Vespasian and also persecuted the Christians. Peter refers to this when he warns:

"Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion4, walketh about seeking whom he may devour" (1 Peter 5:8).

(The dragon sought to devour her child – Rev.12:4.)

There is evidence that the full description of the dragon has dropped out of the text of Revelation 12:3 and been interpolated as a gloss into Revelation 17:9,105. If our conclusion is correct, this definitely establishes Nero as the 'one that is' (17:10) and pinpoints the writing of Revelation during the reign of Nero.

Romes attempt to destroy the Jewish nation failed for she was preserved in the 'wilderness of the people' (Ezek.20:35), a diaspora which lasted nearly 2,000 years. Because Rome could not destroy the woman, Rome turned her attention to the 'seed of the woman', the Christians, who suffered a terrible persecution in ca AD 68 (Rev.12:17).

The birth and persecution of the first century ecclesia typifies the events that will occur in Israel prior to the Lord's return.

THE MOTHER OF THE LIVING

Genesis 3:1:

“Now the serpent was more subtle than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made. And he said unto the woman, Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?”

Revelation 12:3:

“And there appeared another wonder in heaven; and behold a great red dragon, having seven heads and ten horns, and seven crowns upon his heads.”

Genesis 3:5:

“For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil.”

Revelation 12:7:

“And there was war in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels,

Michael: Who is like God?”

Genesis 3:14:

“And the Lord God said unto the serpent, Because thou hast done this, thou art cursed above all cattle, and above every beast of the field; upon thy belly shalt thou go, and dust shalt thou eat all the days of thy life”.

Genesis 3:24:

“So he drove out the man; and he placed at the east of the garden of Eden Cherubims, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life.”

Revelation 12:9:

“And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him.”

Genesis 3:15:

“And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.”

Revelation 12:17:

“And the dragon was wroth with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.”

Genesis 3:16:

“Unto the woman he said, I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception; in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children; and thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee.”

Revelation 12:1-2:

“And there appeared a great wonder in heaven; a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars: And she being with child cried, travailing in birth, and pained to be delivered.”

The analogies with original sin and the fall from grace have a deep significance. It was through the mechanism of childbirth that deliverance and salvation would be achieved. The promise made to Eve in Gen.3:15 termed the ‘proto-evangilum’ by some commentators, is the core of the gospel message.

Eve would become the ‘mother of the living’ and her offspring are ‘the general assembly and church of the firstborn’ (Heb.12:23). All those who possess a similar faith in the promise of Messiah are ‘living’ for God is not ‘the God of the dead but of the living’ (Mtt.22:32).

The death and resurrection (= birth = enthronement) of Christ typifies the resurrection and enthronement (acceptance into covenant relationship) of a faithful Jewish ‘last days’ remnant. This new-born ecclesia (HER SEED) is a direct consequence of the promise to Eve, and only possible through the death and resurrection of Christ.

The life and death struggle with the serpent (that old serpent, 12:9) from which Christ emerged victorious is repeated in the first century ecclesia and also within the ‘last days Jewish ecclesia’.

The original lie espoused by the serpent “Ye shall be as gods (the elohim) knowing good and evil” (Gen.3:5) is reflected in the name of Michael which means ‘who is like God’.

THE SERPENT’S LIE

The following is an extract from COVENANT AND CREATION by W.J. Dumbrell, pages 36 – 39:

In the garden two trees were singled out for special mention, the tree of life which was in the ‘midst of the garden’ (Gen.2:9), where the phrase used seems designed to underscore the accessibility of that tree, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. It is described simply as being in the garden, and its fruit was forbidden. Since no such prohibition attached to the tree of life, but on the contrary, permission to eat of it seems to be entailed in the general permission granted to eat of every tree, apart from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (Gen.2:16), we may take it that in the garden man had eaten of the fruit of the tree of life. Only after the fall was access to it prohibited (Gen.3:24), and the motive advanced for that decision is that the knowledge of good and evil acquired by the fall made it expedient that man should be barred from the garden “lest he put forth his hand and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live for ever” (Gen.3:22). That is to say, the divine prohibition placed on entry to the garden is an act of grace designed to ensure that man’s fallen condition would not be perpetuated eternally.

The conditions by which fellowship in the garden was to be regulated, were, as we well know, not met. When the fruit of the forbidden tree was eaten, we were all somehow involved (Rom.5:19). What happened in Eden affected for ill the future of the human race. It will be necessary for us to review briefly at this point what constituted this infraction of covenant to which we have referred, for clearly any future renewal of the covenant arrangement would carry as inbuilt the same regulative conditions, and we should thus need to recognise as fully as we may the nature of this initial transgression.

We need first to recognise the transgression of Adam as a free act. The prohibition of Gen.2:17 presupposes the ability to choose between alternatives, as well as an understanding of the consequences which ensue from disastrous choice. There is no evidence within the biblical

account to suggest that prior to the fall the position of man was determined, either from within himself, or in virtue of his situation in the garden. He had been created as an autonomous moral being and stood presumably on the threshold of an advance towards fuller and more perfect moral personal expression. The story suggests that prior to the fall he was able to determine the course of action to be adopted; subsequent to the fall, as we are well aware, he is in the grip of the consequences of the course of action which was chosen.

What then was involved in the act of eating from the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil? Often, the prohibition on eating is construed simply as a test of obedience arbitrarily imposed. There is surely truth at this level, though simply to reduce the significance of the tree to that of a visible reminder of what was to be avoided does not do justice to what is pleaded by the serpent (Gen.3:5) and confirmed after the fall by God (3:22). In the eating of the fruit, enlightenment would follow and they would be "like God knowing good and evil" (Gen.3:5). To regard the tree simply as a touchstone by which obedience was to be measured, is thus to leave us in doubt as to how the eating of is fruit could enable the eater to be 'like God'. Similarly, the familiar interpretation of the terms 'knowledge of good and evil' as reflecting sexual understanding of each other is inadequate. True, the first reaction of the pair after the fall seems to support such a view. But to adopt this view is firstly to read into the narrative misplaced comparative material at that point from the ancient Near East bearing upon the mythical notion of a 'sacred marriage'. In such a ritual a primeval union was thought to be re-enacted whereby human well being, agricultural fertility and general fecundity was thought to be ensured. Secondly it also fails to explain how the acquisition of such knowledge could make the acquirer 'like God'. Again, the interpretation of the phrase 'knowledge of good and evil' as inclusive of total knowledge by references to opposite poles, is attractive, but id does not come to terms with the realities of the human situation after the fall. In our world we simply do not see man in possession of profound knowledge of the character that this interpretation would imply.

The phrase 'knowledge of good and evil' is better taken, following W.M. Clark1, as referring to the exercise of absolute moral autonomy, a prerogative which the Bible reserves to God alone. Clark is able to illustrate the point from a wide range of Old Testament contexts. Solomon, for example, prays (1 Kgs.3:9) for an understanding heart to govern his people that he 'may discern between good and evil'. This is an absolute for the task before which he is placed, since he continues in the test "for who is able to govern this thy great people?" The latter half of the same chapter offers a parade example of Solomon's judicial wisdom, and when Israel acknowledges the astuteness with which the matter of disputed motherhood of the child has been resolved, they perceive that 'the wisdom of God was in him, to render justice' (1 Kgs.3:28). What is clear from this passage is that final authoritative decisions of this nature, which affect the whole shape of life, require the mind of God. For the human being, wisdom of this character is derivative, not natural. It must be sought from God and its source must be acknowledged. The regulation of the decision-making processes for life on all levels will not proceed satisfactorily unless the limitations of human knowledge are recognised.

Clark's point that the determination of what was good and what was evil was ultimately a divine one is important and elucidates the context of Genesis 3, for it permits us to note what was the essential character of the fall. By eating of the fruit man was intruding into an area reserved for God alone, and the violation of the command is tantamount to an assertion of equality with God, a snatching at deity2. The decision of Adam to be self-legislating brought with it diverse consequences. Although thereafter he was the possessor by use of tremendous determinative power, and thus 'like God', yet he was 'unlike God' in that he would constantly be uncertain of

the nature of the issues before which he was placed. He would never be able to foresee the consequences of the choices which he would make. Having power to choose, he would continue throughout life and history to be the captive of his choices. Putting himself in a position of moral defiance to his Creator, he plunged himself into a life of tension and absolute moral uncertainty. Thus the command of Gen.2:17 was not merely probative. In refusing to submit to the moral government of God, he refused to know God (Rom.1:28). A reprobate mind resulted and as a consequence of the fall man became assertive, but was unable to control himself or his world.

Conclusion:

To be 'like God, knowing good and evil', is to be self-legislating – to exercise absolute moral autonomy.

WAR IN HEAVEN

"And there was war in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels and prevailed not; neither was their place found any more in heaven. And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world; he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him" (Rev.12:7-9).

This verse draws on two Old Testament texts:

1. Zechariah 3:2 quoted in Jude 9:

"Yet Michael the archangel, when contending with the devil he disputed about the body of Moses, durst not bring a railing accusation against him, but said, The Lord rebuke thee."

2. Daniel 12:1:

"At that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince which standeth for the children of thy people: and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that time: and at that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be written in the book."

Michael is the angel who administers the affairs of the nation of Israel. The Septuagint version of Deut.32:8 informs us "when the most High divided the nations, when he separated the sons of Adam, he set the bounds of the nations according to the number of the angels of God". The Daniel text (12:1) implies a time of trouble and deliverance, the Zechariah and Jude texts also show Michael 'at war', however what is portrayed is not a military battle but a legal court case.

We have a 'heavenly court case':

1) Satan (the adversary) is the devil (false accuser) or prosecutor (compare Satan

in Job).

2) Michael – angel for the defence.

3) God – the Judge.

4) The accused – Joshua (Jesus) the high priest.

5) The accusation: He is not fit to be high priest because he 'wears the filthy garments of Adam', like Adam he seeks equality with God by his own means. (Michael – who is like God?)

(The serpent – ye shall be like the elohim.)

6) The case for the defence:

“He (Jesus) also, himself likewise, partook of the same (nature as us); that through death he might destroy him that hath the power of death, that is the devil” (Heb.2:14)1.

- “Who being in the form of God, thought it not a thing to be grasped (RV) [like Adam grasping the fruit] to be equal with God, but made himself of no reputation and took upon him the form of a servant…and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross” (Phil.2:6-8).

7) The outcome:

The triumph of the cross:

“Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross: And having put off from himself his body (compare Jude 9), he made a show of the principalities and powers (angels who administered the law)2 openly triumphing over them in himself” (RV mg – Col.2:14-15).

The analogies with the Zechariah prophecy have already been highlighted in the ‘witnessing of the sons of oil’ section. The measuring of the Temple and the witnessing campaign are only possible through the triumph of the cross and the enthronement of our great high priest Joshua.

THE TRIUMPH OF THE CROSS

JOHN 12

REVELATION 12

“Then came a voice from heaven, saying, I have glorified it and will glorify it again” (v.28).

“With a loud voice Jesus yielded up the spirit” (Mtt.27:50).

“And I heard a loud voice in heaven, Now is the salvation, and the power and the kingdom, become our God’s, and the authority is become his Christ’s” (Rev.12:10, RV mg).

“Now is the judgement of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out” (v.31).

“And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent called the devil, and Satan which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth and his angels were cast out with him” (v.9).

See Digression 12.3 – THE DEVIL AND HIS ANGELS.

“And I, If I be lifted up from (out of) the earth will draw all men unto me” (v.32).

“The earth opened her mouth and swallowed up the flood which the dragon cast out of his mouth” (v.16)3.

In the place of the accuser who after the original fall had accused mankind incessantly (day and night) before God (12:10) now stands the redeemer who, raised to the throne of the sovereign Lord, appears there on their behalf (Heb.9:24).

WAR IN HEAVENLY PLACES

The war in heaven is not limited to the crucifixion for it is a battle undertaken by each individual and by the ecclesia as a whole. Jude mentions that the war in heaven was about the ‘body of

Moses'. He is commenting on the Zechariah text and alluding to the high priest Joshua, who was the 'body' (Gr. servant) of Moses. The high priest was indeed the representative of the people and the mediator of the law of Moses.

In contrast the war in heaven encountered in Revelation is fought over the ecclesia, the 'body of Christ'.

2 CORINTHIANS 11

REVELATION 12

Eve (v.3).

A woman (v.1).

The serpent (v.3).

Old serpent (v.9).

Devour you (v.20).

Devour her child (v.4).

Satan fashioneth himself into an angel of light (v.14).

Satan which deceiveth the whole world (v.4).

In this chapter Paul has a particular protagonist in mind: "Satan (the man of sin) who fashioneth himself into an angel of light" (a messenger of the Gospel)1. This opponent had become "a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to buffet me" (2 Cor.12:7). His ministers were false apostles, deceitful workers (v.13) who preached another Jesus (v.4) and another gospel (v.4). [See 1 John 2:18; 1 John 4:1-3.] The purpose of Satan was to devour the new-born ecclesia, to take them captive (v.20) back to the bondage of the law. Paul reminds them that unlike the man of sin, who "exalteth himself above all that is called God" (2 Thess.2:4), Paul had abased himself in order that the ecclesia might be exalted (v.7).

In Ephesians Paul assures the believers that we now sit in 'heavenly places'2 in Christ Jesus (Eph.2:6). This is a privileged position of access and fellowship. Paul, however, warns against the 'rulers of the darkness of this world' and against 'spiritual wickedness in heavenly places' (Eph.6:12 RV).

Similar to Revelation 12, Paul is drawing a contrast between events within the ecclesia and events in heaven. Although Paul's metaphor of a soldier going into battle is easily recognisable, the Passover allusions are often missed. (See comparison.)

EPHESIANS 6

PASSOVER ALLUSIONS

"We wrestle not against flesh and blood (v.12) but against principalities, against the powers" (v.12).

Jacob wrestling the angel.

God's angels (cp.Eph.3:10, I Peter 1:12; Rom.8:38,39; I Peter 3:22).

"Against the world rulers of this darkness" (Gr. kosmokrator)1 (v.12).

The destroyer (an angel) (RV mg Ex.12:13).

“Against wicked spirits2 (RV mg) in the heavenly places”3 (v.12).

A band of angels of evil sent on the Passover (Ps.78:49).

“Stand therefore” (v.14).

Passover eaten in haste (Ex.12:11).

“Having girded your loins” (v.14).

Passover eaten with loins girded (Ex.12:11).

“Your feet shod” (v.15).

Passover eaten with feet shod (Ex.12:11).

“Praying and watching thereunto” (v.18).

Passover a night of watching unto the Lord (RV mg Ex.12:42).

The allusions to the Passover and the reference to Jacob provide the clue to Paul’s meaning in this chapter. Jacob secured his birthright by deceit and all the troubles and circumstances that consequently followed from this event were providential, not man made but God directed. Jacob was forced to realise that he was not wrestling against man but wrestling against God. He was renamed Israel (God rules) after his wrestling with the angel. He was no longer the old Jacob (the supplanter – the one who catches by the heel) but he overcame his old nature (he did not overcome the angel, see Hos. 12:3-5) and this was acknowledged in the change of his name, henceforth God would rule in his life.

Jacob learnt that he could not manipulate events according to his own will, he was actually wrestling against principalities and powers, the angels of heaven.

We cannot overcome through our own power, only through the blood of the lamb (Rev.12:11).

In similar fashion the problems of the first century ecclesias, although manifest as trials, persecution and human opposition (man of sin) were God directed (we wrestle not against flesh and blood).

Just as Jacob had to overcome (sin in the flesh) so the believers had to overcome sin in the flesh – the real enemy!

The fiery darts of the wicked (Eph.6:16) are “lying lips and a deceitful tongue, the sharp arrows of the mighty. My soul hath long dwelt with him that hateth peace. I am a man of peace: But when I speak, they are for war” (cp. war in heaven) (Psalm 120).

The experience of David with Ahithophel, Jesus with Judas and Paul and the man of sin, are of betrayal from within the household.

“The words of his mouth were smoother than butter,

But war was in his heart,

His words were softer than oil,

Yet they were drawn swords” (Ps.55:21).

WAR IN HEAVEN – SUMMARY

The sin principal in Revelation symbolises both internal and external enemies.

EDEN

EX

EDEN

IN

ISRAEL

EX

ISRAEL

IN

CHRIST

EX

CHRIST

IN

FIRST CENTURY EX

FIRST CENTURY IN

SERPENT

CAIN

EGYPT

(BABYLON)

KORAH

REBELLION

HEROD

ETC

JUDAS

ROME

NERO

MAN OF SIN

* The serpent is actually both internal and external for it represents sin.

The war in heaven has an application to:

1. Christ, his defeat of sin in the flesh, the triumph of the cross representing victory

over the principalities and powers (angels) that administered the law.

2. The 'body of Christ' – the ecclesia, which in the first century wrestled against the

same principalities and powers this time manifesting itself as the 'man of sin' (the

lawless one) who sought to bring them back into the bondage of the law.

The war has been won, but there are still battles to be fought. The lawless one was restrained in the first century (2 Thess.2:6) and is still to be revealed and destroyed at the Lord's return (2 Thess.2:8). The destruction of the Temple and dispersion of the Jews curtailed the work of the 'man of sin'. The war in heaven therefore typifies the situation in the new-born last days' Jewish ecclesia.

This conclusion is reinforced because the same symbolism is used in Revelation 13. Note, however, the difference: the dragon (sin principle) is now represented by an empire (beast). The war is now no longer in heaven (ecclesiastical) but on earth.

(See Digression 12.2 HEAVEN AND EARTH).

REVELATION 12

REVELATION 13

Michael (who is like God?).

Who is like the beast?

War in heaven.

And his tabernacle……dwell in heaven.

The dragon warred (RV) and his angels.

To make war with the saints.

The devil (slanderer) which accuseth them day and night.

To blaspheme them that dwell in heaven.

They loved not their lives unto death.

And to overcome them.

THE VICTORY HYMN

"And I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, Now is come salvation and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ" (Rev.12:10).

As it happened so far with every salvation event, this one too is celebrated in heaven with a hymn and thereby its meaning is unfolded. This time it occurs in a solo which is rendered by a representative of redeemed humanity – probably one of the elders (cp.4:4) – in the name of all ('our brethren'). He announces the turning point in the history of mankind which has occurred with the sacrificial death of the Messiah and son of God ('the lamb'). With him the breakthrough battle has been fought which assured the victory of Christ; the time of salvation in God's kingdom has 'dawned' which although not consummated can never be reversed and of necessity moves towards its completion.

“For the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night. And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony (witness); and they loved not their lives unto the death. Therefore rejoice, ye heavens, and ye that dwell in them” (Rev.12:10 – 12).

For redeemed mankind this means that the just claim of Satan, which originates from the mistaken decision of the first human couple, which Satan incessantly (‘day and night’) asserts before God, is now lifted (cp.Rom.8:33); the relationship of bondage has now expired. Not merely legally, but also practically a change has occurred for mankind through the redemptive act of Christ. ‘By the blood of the lamb’, with the help of the grace which Jesus Christ has earned for them on the cross, they themselves have received the ability to master evil; the victory of Christ is victory for all.

The clearest and most convincing proof of this is demonstrated by Christians in the attitude of superiority with which they seal their loyalty to the faith by death. By virtue of the grace of Christ, no demand, not even the extreme of bloody martyrdom, means an overstrain. To impart such an unconditional consciousness of superiority is the main purpose of this vision and this purpose is effective down to the formulation, when in the form of the prophetic perfect (‘they have conquered’), even the individual victories in every Christian life are asserted not only as possible but as already actual.

THE WILDERNESS WANDERINGS

Rev.12:12-14:

“Woe to the inhabiters of the earth and of the sea! for the devil is come down unto you, having great wrath, because he knoweth that he hath but a short time. And when the dragon saw that he was cast unto the earth, he persecuted the woman which brought forth the man-child. And to the woman were given two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness, into her place, where she is nourished for a time, and times, and half a time, from the face of the serpent.”

John does not mention that the scene has changed from heaven to earth; the wilderness is therefore not a geographical place but a symbol. The wilderness is the arena in which trial and testing takes place:

“And I will bring you into the wilderness of the peoples, and there will I plead with you face to face. Like as I pleaded with your fathers in the wilderness of the land of Egypt, so will I plead with you, saith the Lord God. And I will cause you to pass under the rod, and I will bring you into the bond of the covenant: and I will purge out from among you the rebels, and them that transgress against me; I will bring them forth out of the land where they sojourn, and they shall not enter into the land of Israel: and ye shall know that I am the Lord” (Ezek.20:35-38).

The wilderness wanderings were for the purpose of killing off the wicked (purging the nation)1 and also the scene of conflict (trial) between the Lord and the devil.

In similar fashion the dragon (serpent) principle is at work among the wilderness of the peoples.

THE BEAST AND SATAN (REV.13)

JESUS AND SATAN (MTT.4)

“The dragon gave him his power and his seat (throne RV) and great authority” (v.2).

“sheweth him all the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them…all these things will I give thee” (v.8)

“all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him” (v.8) (THE BEAST).

“if thou wilt fall down and worship me” (Satan)

The woman experiences the wilderness wanderings in order to bring her to a ‘place prepared by God’, the place being Jerusalem (= THE NEW JERUSALEM) as the place (= Jerusalem, Deut.12:21) is clearly the destination of Israel’s wilderness wanderings.

The symbolism is, however, not limited to the Exodus but also to the woman named ‘lawlessness’ in Zechariah 5. This is consistent with the typology that we have already explored in the previous chapter.

ZECHARIAH

REVELATION

chapter

chapter

2

measuring the Temple

11

3

Satanic dispute over legitimacy of Joshua

12

4

witnessing mission

11

5

removal of wicked woman

12

It is instructive to examine how Jesus used the prophecy of Zechariah 5 against the Jews of his day:

MATTHEW 23 & 24

ZECHARIAH 5

A den of thieves (21:13).

Stealing (23:23-25).

Corban (Mark 7:11).

The house of the thief (v.4).

Swearing (23:16-22).

Swearing (v.3).

Your house left desolate (23:28).

Not one stone upon another (24:1-3).

Timber and stones of the house consumed (v.4).

Leviticus 14 proscribes the procedure that the priest must follow in order to cleanse a leprous house. If the house could not be cleansed, the following took place:

“And he shall break down the house,

the stones of it, and the timber thereof,

and all the mortar of the house: and

he shall carry them forth out of the

city into an unclean place” (v.45).

The priest would inspect the house three times before pronouncing his final verdict – similarly Jesus inspected the Temple three times during his ministry, culminating in the last inspection during his final week (Mtt.21:12,13; Lk.19:43-48).

The woman incorporates two communities with diametrically opposing characteristics. The wilderness wanderings enhance and emphasise the difference between the ‘virtuous woman’ and the ‘wicked woman’ until she emerges as a separate entity in Revelation chapter 17.

REVELATION 12

EXODUS

ZECHARIAH 5

REVELATION 17

woman (virtuous)

Israel

woman (in ephah)

woman (whore)

wilderness

wilderness

wilderness

two wings of a great eagle1

cherubim

two women (ISRAEL AND JUDAH) with wings of a stork

protected by a beast

- her place

- a place prepared

Jerusalem (Deut.12:21)

- to build her an house

- land of Shinar

Great Babylon

nourished

manna

drunk with blood

The first section of Zechariah's prophecy is therefore clearly applicable to the Jews and the Temple.

All the tennents of sound Scriptural exegesis demand that the second portion of Zechariah's prophecy also concerns the Jews. A paraphrase of Zechariah's prophecy should demonstrate this clearly:

The people who returned from Babylonian exile will rebuild the Temple and the priesthood will be reinstated (Zech.chapter 3, BC 520-515, Joshua/Zerubbabel). But because of their wickedness God will send a curse (written on a scroll) into the Temple. I had become a den of thieves and hypocrites and was no longer God's house. God would destroy their house (AD 70).

Even though their house was destroyed, this was not the end of the matter for the two unclean women (Israel and Judah) would take their lawlessness back to Babylon (where they came from) from whence they would establish the principles of their new religion.

The destruction of the Temple and the end of sacrificial worship in AD 70, coupled with the diaspora, should have extinguished what had become a self-serving religion – instead it promoted a renaissance of the Jewish religion and Judaism emerged from the religious academies in Babylon.

(See Digression 12.4 – THE ESTABLISHMENT OF INIQUITY UPON ITS BASE)

The language of the last woe reflects the warning issued by Christ to the inhabitants of Jerusalem:

"Woe unto them (woe to the inhabitants of the earth, 12:12) that are with child (woman travailing in birth, 12:2) and to them that give suck in those days! for there shall be great distress in the land (RV earth) and wrath (the devil is come down unto you having great wrath, 12:12) upon the people. And they shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led away captive into all nations: and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled" (Lk.21:23,24).

"And except those days be shortened" (Mtt.24:22).

(the devil…hath but a short time, 12:12)

The wilderness wanderings of the woman are not unlike the experiences of the captives during the Assyrian invasion of Sennacherib:

“Be in pain, and labour to bring forth, O daughter of Zion, like a woman in travail: for now shalt thou go forth out of the city, and thou shalt dwell in the field, and thou shalt go even to Babylon; there shalt thou be delivered; there the Lord shall redeem thee from the hand of thine enemies” (Micah 4:10).

“Therefore will he give them up, until the time that she which travaileth hath brought forth: then shall the remnant (Shear Jashub – Isaiah 7:3) of his brethren return unto the children of Israel” (Micah 5:3).

The captives of Sennacherib were sent back from Babylon at the defeat of his army by divine intervention in the time of Hezekiah. It is from Babylon (symbolically) that the people of God are saved:Come out of her my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues” (Rev.18:4).

THE RIVER OF LIES

“And the serpent cast out of his mouth water as a flood (river RV) after the woman, that he might cause her to be carried away of the flood. And the earth helped the woman, and the earth opened her mouth, and swallowed up the flood which the dragon cast out of his mouth” (Rev.12:15,16).

John reverts again to the Exodus typology. Just as the Israelites were pursued by the Egyptian dragon and the ‘earth swallowed them’ (Ex.15:12 – the salt marshes bogged down the chariots), so now the earth ‘swallows’ the serpent’s invective. That which comes from the mouth of the serpent, is poisonous lying words:

“Their throat is an open sepulchre; with their tongues they have used deceit; The poison of asps is under their lips: whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness” (Rom.3:10-18)1.

In the wilderness the poisonous lying words were those of KORAH, DATHAN and ABIRAM – “all the congregation are holy, every one of them” (Num.16:3).

These were words of rebellion against Moses and Aaron and therefore a direct challenge to the authority of God himself.

They were in fact stating that they were ‘like the elohim’ (Moses and Aaron) and were therefore exalting themselves to a position to which they had no right2 repeating the folly of Adam and Eve when they listened to the lie of the serpent: “Ye shall be like the elohim” (contrast Michael – who is like God?).

As a consequence the earth opened up and swallowed KORAH and his lies (Num.26:33).

In the previous chapter we have already encountered the possibility that the apostle Paul typified the serpent power in his persecution of the early ecclesia. The poison of the asp is no doubt a reference to his ‘breathing out threats and slaughter’ (Acts 9:1) against the brethren (= THE FLOOD OUT OF THE SERPENT’S MOUTH). Paul was under the misconception that the early ecclesia was ‘the serpent’ and he saw himself as the ‘saviour’ of Judaism, doing battle with and ‘kicking with his heel against the sting [of the serpent]’ (Acts 9:5)3.

The earth opened up in the form of the risen Christ and swallowed up the persecution of Saul. Once again we are reminded of the serpent but this time the serpent on the pole (Num.21:8) – crucified flesh – "that everyone that is bitten, when he looketh upon it , shall live".

We cannot, however, limit the 'river of lies' to Paul's persecution. In the letters to Smyrna and Philadelphia, there had been trouble from 'Satan's synagogue', "liars who claim to be Jews when they are not". Slanderous attacks from without, false teaching designed to corrupt the ecclesia's faith and to destroy it from within – this is the river of lies which the serpent spewed from his mouth.

The epistle to the Hebrews, written after the book of Revelation and before the fall of Jerusalem, makes an indirect reference to the 'river of lies' and the KORAH rebellion.

HEBREWS 12

NUMBERS 16

Sons of God (v.7).

Levites (v.8,9) 4.

Father of spirits (v.9).

God of the spirits of all flesh (v.2)5.

Partakers of his holiness (v.10).

All the congregation are holy (v.3).

Root of bitterness (v.15)6.

Korah, Dathan and Abiram.

Spirits of just men made perfect (v.23)7.

Moses and Aaron.

Refuse not him that speaketh (v.25)8.

Moses spake unto the congregation (v.26).

Removing the things that are shaken (v.27)9.

The earth swallowed them and all their goods (v.32).

God is a consuming fire (v.29).

Fire from heaven (v.35).

The situation in Hebrews draws on the example of the Korah rebellion, the provocation in the wilderness (Heb.3:15-19, citing Ps.95:8-11) and the fall from grace in the garden of Eden (Heb.4:11-13, the sword = the sword of the cherubim in Gen.3:24). All these themes are found in Revelation chapter 12.

It is significant that those who possessed spirit gifts were now turning back to justification by works (Heb.6:1-8). This is the lie of the serpent – man can be morally autonomous – like God. Similarly, in the Korah rebellion, Moses appealed to the 'God of the spirits of all flesh' for had God not recently put his spirit upon the seventy elders (SANHEDRIN) (Num.11:25) and were not

at least some of these elders involved in the rebellion10 – would God now destroy those in whom his spirit resided? Korah had established his own tabernacle (mishkan) – the tabernacle of Korah, Dathan and Abiram, with their own instruments, 250 censers for burning incense. The apostasy of Korah had already proceeded far down the road to hell.

NOTES

4 The Levites were separated for God's service and taken in lieu of the firstborn (Num.3:41). They were God's (Num.8:14) and as such they were 'sons of God'; the whole congregation were in fact 'sons of God' (RSV Deut.14:1).

5 Father of spirits, the Old Testament equivalent is ' the God of the spirits of all flesh'. This unusual

title is used only twice in the Old Testament, both times by Moses during prayer. The context of both prayers is rebellion against God.

Numbers 16:22 – The Korah rebellion.

Numbers 27:16 – The rebellion at Meribah.

The rebellion at Meribah, was the rebellion of Moses himself. "Must we (Moses and Aaron) fetch you water out of this rock?" It was an act of unbelief and rebellion (Num.20:12). The context (as in the Korah rebellion) is the appropriation of the rights of God (to be 'like the elohim'), see also Psalm 106:33. In Deut.32:51, 'trespass' carries the idea of appropriation of another's rights (Num.5:6). Presumably Aaron encouraged Moses to flout the instruction of the angel and to smite the rock instead of speaking to it. Therefore Moses did not believe the words of the angel. The title 'God of the spirits of all flesh' is no doubt derived from Gen.6:3:

"And the Lord said, My spirit shall not always strive (abide in) with man, for that he is also flesh: yet his days shall be an hundred and twenty years."

Scripture informs us that Moses was 120 years old when he died (Deut.34:7).

Such was the humility of the man Moses, that he did not hesitate to use this title when addressing God, thereby acknowledging his own rebellion. By doing so Moses recognised that "The spirit that dwelleth in us lusteth to envy" (James 4:5) for the "flesh lusteth against the spirit and the spirit against the flesh" (Gal.5:16,17).

Moses was indeed a great man, for not only does he refuse to justify himself or appropriate blame (unlike Adam and Eve), he also sets his own exclusion from the land over against the faith and inheritance of five women (Num.27:12-23).

The fact that the title 'the God of the spirits of all flesh', is derived from Genesis is significant. This was also a time when man rebelled against God and misappropriated his prerogatives. "Men began to call themselves by the name of God" (RV mg Gen.4:26).

The rebellion of the 'sons of God' whose descendants, the 'men of renown' (Gen.6:4), became the mighty men of old – men like Nimrod (Gen.10:9), who built their own cities (Babel) to make a name for themselves (Gen.11:4). Men like Korah (men of renown, Num.16:2), who challenged the authority of God.

6 Root of bitterness. This term originates from Deut.29:18. The context being those who turn away

from God in order to serve false gods. In the context of Hebrews those who tun back to Judaism and strive to be 'like God' through their own efforts (the law) (Heb.6:1-8).

The very next verse introduces the example of Esau who sold his birthright – the Korah rebellion consisted of Levites and Reubenites (Num.16:1). The tribe of Reuben had also lost its birthright – the excellency of dignity (priesthood) and the excellency of power (kingship) (Gen.49:5-6). No doubt this formed part of the motivation behind the Korah rebellion, the tribe of Reuben thought it should have been their birthright to be leaders and priests in the congregation. Together with disaffected Levites they fermented rebellion.

7 Moses is mentioned in the previous chapter (Heb.11:23-29). These men do not live as

disembodied 'spirits in heaven' for says Hebrews "they without us should not (have not been) be made perfect" (Heb.11:40).

The suggestion is then that the 'spirit' is the spirit that the 'God of the spirits of all flesh' withdraws from man at death and reserves until the time of resurrection. When God raises those 'written in heaven' (Heb.12:23), he will again breathe back all the characteristics of that man (or woman) until they become a living being made perfect (immortal) after the judgement. "The judge of all" (Heb.12:23).

This is not an immortal soul; man has no independent life outside his own body (or outside of God) but God remembers us and restores our very spirit for even the dead are already 'enrolled (written) in heaven' and in effect they are already members of the heavenly Jerusalem, for God is not a God of the dead but of the living.

8 "Refuse not him that speaketh". This is a reference to Moses and to Christ.

"This Moses whom they refused, saying, who made thee a ruler and a judge?" (Acts 7:35).

The Hebrews were now being warned not to refuse Christ – "This is my beloved son (play on

Moses) hear ye him" (Lk.9:35). A direct reference to the message of Revelation (see also 2 Peter

1:16-21, also a late epistle written after Revelation).

NOTES CONTINUED

The Israelites had refused to listen to God at Sinai (Heb.12:19), they refused to listen to Moses (Acts 7:35 – Exodus 2:14) and now they were refusing to listen to Christ.

"For if they escaped not who refused him that warned them on earth (Moses), how much more

shall we not escape who turn away from him that warneth (speaketh) from heaven" (Christ).

It is God's command to listen to him.

9 The tents of Korah were swallowed, similarly the Jewish 'tent' (their house) would be swallowed.

10 The account says that Korah gathered all the congregation. Moses and Aaron are instructed to

separate themselves from among this congregation and they pray for all the congregation.

“And the dragon was wrath with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ” (Rev.12:17).

The protagonist in this sense is no longer a serpent but a dragon. The serpent represents the sin principle, the original lie and the false propaganda of those whose intention is to subvert the truth. The serpent was an internal problem in the Edenic ecclesia of Adam and Eve, the ecclesia in the wilderness, and in the first century ecclesia. The serpent now undergoes a metamorphosis into a dragon. The dragon represents external human opposition to the truth, usually in the guise of imperialistic antagonism1. This is confirmed by the dragon transferring his power to the beast empire (13:1).

The expression ‘the rest of her seed’ is obviously an Edenic reference and meant to contrast with the man-child brought forth in v.5. By this time there is an important distinction between the woman’s seed and the daughters of the harlot. The distinction is that these “keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony (witness) of Jesus Christ”.

In John’s gospel and his epistle to ‘keep the commandments of God’ has a very particular meaning. It means to love God (Jesus) and the brethren. It refers to the love (agape) – feast of the breaking of bread2. Jesus had instructed his disciples to “do this in remembrance of me” (Lk.22:19).

To keep the commandments of God can be summed up as loving God and loving your neighbour (Lk.10:27-28)3. This is expressed in the sacrament (breaking of bread). To remain steadfast in the breaking of bread is then to be equated with bearing witness.

REVELATION 12:7

REVELATION 14:12

Those who keep the commandments

of God

and maintain the testimony

of Jesus.

Those who keep the commands

of God

and (maintain) faith

in Jesus.

(literal translation)

If our conclusion is correct, then maintaining the faith and testimony (witness) in Jesus is obedience to the ‘agape command’.

“Who is a liar but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ? The antichrist that denieth the Father and the Son. Whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father” (1 John 2:22,23).

The dragon is then specifically an anti-Christian power that demands worship and forbids Christians to maintain their witness to Jesus as the Messiah (= the breaking of bread). In this

context the dragon/beast power which has its ‘seat’ in the Middle East must be persecuting Jewish Christian converts that remain within this region. The remnant are those who repented at the preaching and vindication of the witnesses and “gave glory to the God of heaven” (11:13).

TYPE OR MEANING

ARENA

CHARACTER

VERSE

ISRAEL

CHRIST

ECCLESIA IN 1ST CENTURY

ECCLESIA IN LAST DAYS

THEME

Heaven

Woman

1-2

(Eve/

Rachel)

Israel –

Red Sea

Mary

Nativity

Death of Christ =

Birth of

ecclesia

Death of witnesses =

Birth of

ecclesia

Birth

Heaven

Red dragon

7 heads

10 horns

3-4

Israel – Egypt

(Israel – Babylon)

Herod

Pilate etc

Rome

Nero

Beast –

Rev.13

Persecution

Heaven

God's

throne

Man

child

5a

5b

Israel at Sinai

Pentecost

Baptism

(resurrection)

Pentecost Spirit gifts?

The new Israel at Mount Zion

Enthronement1

Wilderness 1260 days nourished

Woman

6

Israel wilderness wanderings

42 campsites

Christ – wilderness ministry 3½ years

Ministry of apostles and ecclesia2

Ministry of witnesses and ecclesia (3½)

Exodus

(trial)

Heaven

Michael

Great

Dragon3

7-9a

Israel –

Yahweh Nissi4

(Babylon – body of Moses

Joshua – Satan

Zech.3)

Crucifixion

Body of Christ -

internal struggle

Warfare

Accusation

Who is like God?

(Serpent's lie)

Earth

Dragon

9b

Israel – serpent on a pole

Mediator – Moses

No accuser in heaven, now a mediator – Christ

Man of sin expelled in AD 70

Man of sin to be expelled (future)

Triumph of the cross

Satan expelled

Heaven

Loud voice

10-12a

VICTORY HYMN (Exodus 15)

Saints now able to overcome; even death and persecution no obstacle.

Passover

Deliverance

Blood of the lamb

Earth

Short time

(1260 days)

Earth

Devil

Dragon

Woman

12b

13

ISRAEL

Flying scroll

House destroyed, Zech.5.

‘The curse over the face of the whole earth’.

1ST CENTURY

Jewish war 3½ years.

Destruction of Jewish religion.

LAST DAYS

Harlot burned

Rev.17

Woe

Great wrath

Wilderness 1260 days nourished5

Woman

Serpent

14

‘Faithful woman’

Joshua

Caleb

ISRAEL ‘wicked

wilderness woman

genera-

tion that

perished

‘Faithful woman’

Saints flee to Pella

‘wicked’ woman in Ephah

Babylon

revival of Jewish religion, Zech.5.

Preservation of remnant outside the land?

Emergence of harlot woman

Mystery Babylon

Rev.17.

Exile

Diaspora

Protection

Separation

Wilderness

Woman

Serpent

15-16

Korah rebellion

Bar Kochba Rebellion

= false Messiah

(3½ years)

Lamb that speaks as a dragon (13:11)

Man of sin

River of lies

?

Remnant of

her seed

17

Remnant of Eve's seed

Remaining Jewish Christians in the land?

Remaining Jewish Christians (in the land?)

Continued Persecution6

NOTES

1 Did the seventy elders of Israel (Sanhedrin) also receive the spirit at Pentecost? (Ex.24:9). They

certainly received it on a later occasion (Num.11:25). The true enthronement of Christ was his resurrection but this was typified by his baptism where the holy spirit descended upon him in the form of a dove (Lk.3:22) with the announcement "Thou art my beloved son" – the same announcement as at his enthronement in Psalm 2. The 1st century ecclesia was enthroned as a 'holy nation' (1 Peter 2:9) at Pentecost – 50 days after Passover (just like Israel). They also received the Holy spirit (Acts 2:3).

2 The internal struggle in the 1st century is well documented in Paul's epistles. Judaist elements

turning the early Christians back to the law. Another interesting suggestion is the early witnessing of the apostolic ecclesia culminating in the trial and death of Stephen. The trial and death of Stephen is a type of the trial and death of Christ.

Harnack, Turner, Ramsay and Lightfoot all date the ascension of Christ as AD 29 or 30 and the

conversion of Saul as resp. 30, 35/36, 33, 34. This makes a 1st century witnessing ministry of 3½

years culminating in the death of Stephen very plausible. The apostle James refers to Stephen and

the fact that the Jews were jealous of his spirit power ("Stephen full of wisdom and the holy

spirit") drawing on the example of Eldad (friend of God) and Medad (more than a friend).

[Num.11:24-29, see James 4:4-6]

Both Jesus and Stephen were 'not of the seventy' but were condemned by them. Just as they had

killed Christ so now they had killed 'the righteous one' (James 5:6) – Stephen. However, James

exhorts the brethren to be forgiving like Stephen and pray for the conversion of the sinner (James

5:19; Acts 7:60). The prayer was heard – the conversion of Saul.

Note James specifically mentions 3½ years (James 5:17).

3 The great dragon is given all his different names: old serpent, devil, Satan. The dragon has

imperial connotations – sinful human empires. Old serpent – this is Edenic human nature with its striving to God-like equality – human religion. Devil – the accuser who stands before God and makes the case against human sinfulness. Satan – the enemy of man who tests his true intentions (Job 1:9).

4 YAHWEH-NISSI: The Lord my banner. The warfare against Amalek symbolises the war against

sin. Amalek (sin) always attacks the vulnerable (Deut.25:17,18). Saul lost his kingdom because he did not destroy Agag the king of Amalek (1 Sam.15:20). By contrast David smote Amalek "from the twilight even unto the evening of the next day" (1 Sam.30:17). Mordecai refused to bow down to the Agagite (Amalekite) Haman (Esther 3:2). In similar fashion Jesus refused to bow down to Satan (Mtt.4:9).

"The Lord hath sworn that the Lord will have war with Amalek from generation to generation" (Ex.17:16).

The banner is obviously the cross, symbolised by the outstretched arms of Moses (Ex.17:11).

5 The events of verses 12b and 13 are obviously contemporary with those of verse 14. While the city of Jerusalem and Judaism is being destroyed, a remnant of Jews is preserved. These emerge as two distinct groups – the faithful Jewish Christians and the Parthian Babylonian Jews who reinvent Judaism.

6 We are not told the location of this last persecution (v.17), only that the dragon 'went away (RV)

to make war…'. The next chapter, however, makes it apparent that it is the beast empire in the Middle East that does the persecuting (Rev.13:1-10).

Summary

Revelation chapter 12 recounts the story of the birth of a latter day Jewish ecclesia in the land of Israel. The divine pattern repeats itself. It does this in the terms of the nations Exodus out of Egypt and Jesus Christ's Exodus out of sin and death. Just as the triumph and vindication of the cross resulted in the birth of the first century ecclesias, so the death and vindication of the witnesses results in the conception of a latter day Jewish ecclesia. The dragon symbolises the power that attempted to destroy Christianity at conception, and again in it's infancy, as it had tried to destroy the newly redeemed Israel when leaving Egypt.

The war in heaven was won through the victory of the cross, there is no longer one who accuses us day and night, but one who mediates on our behalf. Although the war has been won there are still battles to be fought. Within the first century ecclesia a 'civil war' was being fought for control of the 'body of Christ.' The sin principle is still at work in the guise of human religion and empires. (Never the less the saints share in their Lords victory even death cannot deter their witness)

The climax of the sin principle in the first century resulted in the outpouring of great wrath against the nation of Israel culminating in the destruction of the Temple. This was a time of trial and testing , during which divine protection was afforded to the faithful (the saints flee to Pella). The duration of the wilderness wanderings (3½ years exile) served to emphasise and expose the

difference between the sheep and the goats. In the first century the wicked woman restored the self serving religion that God had destroyed, she did this in Babylon (Judaism – the Babylonian Talmud) the place where she had originated. She emerges in the latter day as the great whore of Revelation chapter 17, controlling a beast empire. In the first century she was characterised by the serpent propaganda (river of lies) by which she tried to subvert the ecclesia internally. Her motivation is as old as Eden, to be, "like the elohim" typified by the man of sin – finally manifesting itself in open rebellion against God. The first century false Messiah was Bar – Kochba, supported by the rabbis, his anti – Christian persecution and lies were swallowed up in the land of Israel by the Romans. In the latter days the false Messiah is a lamb that speaks (lies) as a dragon(serpent). The beast is the latter day reincarnation of the dragon power – it's hostility is directed in particular towards Jewish Christians in the land of Israel: the power that at one time belonged to the dragon is now transferred to the beast.

"Little children, it is the last time: and as ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last time. They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us: but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us."

1 John 2:18-19

---

1 There is a play on words here: God hath taken away ('asaph) my reproach (see Isaiah 53:6). The Lord add (Yasaph) to me.

2 Son of sorrow, see Isaiah 53:4.

NOTES

1 The woman in this symbol represents Rachel (Mtt.2:18), but she also represents Mary (Mtt.1:20,21).

2 The dragon, having seven heads, and ten horns, and seven crowns upon his heads (Rev.12:13).

The dragon in the O.T. often represents Egypt (Ezekiel 29:3; Psalm 74:13,14; Isaiah 27:1 and 51:9). Pharaoh tried to destroy all the male children (Ex.1:16). Here the dragon symbolises world powers opposed to the birth of the Messiah. It is interesting to note that Luke enumerates seven authorities (Lk.3:1,2):

"Now in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar, Pontius Pilate being governor of Judea, and Herod being tetrarch of Galilee, and his brother Philip tetrarch of Ituraea and of the region of Trachonitis and Lysanias tetrarch of Abilene, Annas and Caiaphas being the high priests."

These are the same authorities that are ranged against "thy holy child Jesus, whom thou hast anointed, both Herod, and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and the people of Israel, were gathered together" (Acts 4:27).

3 Just like the new born nation of Israel (Hosea 11:1) so, too, the Lord was called out of Egypt the

land of bondage and slavery (sin).

"Out of Egypt have I called my son."

The name Moses means ‘my son’ and originates from the Egyptian Meses (compare Rameses, son of Ra). The name Moses does not mean drawn out.

“And he (Moses) became her son (Pharaoh’s daughter). And she called his name Moses (my son) and she said, because I drew him out the water” (Ex.2:10).

She is in fact saying, I found him therefore he is my son (Meses).

The comparison is of God drawing the nation of Israel out of the waters (of the Red Sea) and calling them ‘his son’. Similarly, Jesus was drawn out (the waterless pit, Gen 37:24) of the land of sin and death, on completion of his Exodus, at his resurrection he was enthroned:

“Thou art my Son (Moses), This day I have begotten Thee” (Psalm 2:7).

NOTES

1 The word decease in Lk.9:31 is actually exodos in the Greek.

NOTES

1 RV Translation: to thy name and to thy memorial is the desire of our soul.

NOTES

2 The earth shall cast out the dead (v.19) Passover (v.20), reference to Abel (Christ) (v.21).

NOTES

1. According to some commentaries, Thyatira means ‘she who continues in sacrifices’. If that is the case, she represents the ecclesia that has come out of Judaism.

“We have an altar, whereof they have no right to eat which serve the tabernacle” (Heb.13:10).

It is also the ecclesia of Jezebel, the ‘false prophetess’ (Rev.2:27).

2 “Him that overcometh, to sit with me in my throne” (Rev.3:21) – promise to Laodicea.

3 Psalm 110:2:

“The Lord shall send the rod of thy strength out of Zion” (to rule with a rod of iron).

This ecclesia is destined to become a nation of king priests (a royal priesthood, 1 Pet. 2:9) like

Jesus after the order of Melchizedek (Ps.110:4) and he shall strike through the head (wound the

head) over many countries (cp. Rev.13:3 – one of his heads as it was wounded unto death). This

ecclesia will sit at the right hand of God (like Jesus, Psalm 110:1):

“and I saw thrones, and they that sat upon them, and judgement was given unto them…they lived

and reigned with Christ a thousand years” (Rev.20:4).

4 The Christians were thrown to the lions in the Colleseum at Rome.

5 See Digression 12.1: A TALE OF TWO CITIES – JERUSALEM VERSUS ROME.

1 A Legal Background to the Yahwist's Use of "Good and Evil" in Gen.2-3 JBL 88 (1969), pp. 266- On the general relationship of Gen.2:4-3:24 and the view that sin was an attack upon and a breach of the harmony of the created order cf. also Jerome T. Walsh, 'Gen.2:4b-3:24 A Synchronic Approach', JBL 96 (1977) PP. 161 – 177.

2 A counterpart of Adam's action is clearly the attitude of Jesus referred to in Philippians 2:6.

NOTES

1 "Him that hath the power of death that is the devil."

This is a reference to the destroying angel who killed the firstborn at Passover. Note the following correspondence:

HEBREWS 2:14-15

EXODUS 12

The children.

Children (v.26).

Partakers of flesh and blood.

Passover meal, blood on the lintel (v.22).

He also himself (sharing our nature).

Let him, and his neighbour next unto his house take it (a lamb) (v.4). (Sharing a lamb.)

Destroy him that hath the power of death, that is, the devil.

The destroyer (v.23).

(The angel of evil not the evil angel.)

And deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.

Passover eaten with bitter herbs (v.8), a reminder that their lives were made bitter with hard bondage "in mortar, and in brick, and in all manner of service in the field: all their service, wherein they made them serve was with rigour" (Ex.1:14).

2 The law was administered by angels:

"who have received the law as it was ordained by angels (Gr. unto ordinances of angels) and have not kept it" (RV Acts 7:53).

See also Gal.3:9, Heb.2:2, Acts 7:38, Deut.33:2. The events described in Rev.12:7-9 which occur 'in heaven' are symbolic of earthly events. The characteristics of Satan, are those of his earthly representatives. Jeremiah had compared Nebuchadnezzar to a dragon that gulped Jerusalem down whole (Jer.51:34). Ezekiel had pictured Pharaoh as "the great dragon lying in the midst of the streams" (Ezek.29:3). We have already observed that the dragon bore similarities with Herod.

Everything that John sees in heaven is the counterpart of some earthly reality. When victory is being won in heaven, Christ is on earth on the cross.

The earthly events that conspired to crucify Christ were allowed to happen and were indeed pre-arranged from heaven:

“Thou couldest have no power over me, except it be given thee from above: therefore he (Judas? or the high priest?) that delivered me unto thee hath the greater sin” (John 19:11).

It is interesting to note that although the outcome is already arranged from heaven this in no way infringes upon freewill or personal responsibility. (God hardened the heart of Pharaoh but this merely re-enforced his own inclinations.)

When Jesus was arrested he said: “this is your hour, and the power of darkness” (Lk.22:53).

The ‘power of darkness’ is no doubt a reference to the destroyer or waster, the angel of death who at the Passover killed the firstborn (RV Ex.12:13). This was indeed the Passover night (darkness) when a band of angels of evil (Psalm 78:49) had been sent out to accomplish God’s work – but, “the prince of this world cometh; and hath nothing in me” (John 12:3).

The death of Christ on the cross was therefore a triumph not only over worldly powers but also over heavenly powers.

(See Bible Studies, An Anthology: Principalities and Powers 16.05 page 375 for further reading.)

3 The lifting up or ‘out of’ the earth refers to the crucifixion and resurrection. All men (both Jew

and Gentile, without distinction) were drawn to Christ when the risen Christ appeared to Saul on the road to Damascus and stopped the flood of persecution, at the same time commissioning Saul to preach to the Gentiles.

NOTES

1 The ‘angel of light’ is no doubt intended to remind us of Lucifer, the morning star (King of

Babylon) who exalted his throne above the stars of God (angels) (Is.14:13). Sennacherib probably had a throne erected on the Mount of Olives overlooking the Temple mount.

2 To sit in ‘heavenly places’ or ‘among heavenly beings’. The word ‘places’ not in the original, see note 3, page 19.

NOTES

1 KOSMOKRATOR – World ruler in the context (not flesh and blood) it must refer to the angel of

death, the destroyer ‘of this darkness’ ie the present dispensation. Possibly a reference to the Passover night (Lk.22:53), used by the rabbis for the angel of death (cp. Abaddon and Apollyon, Rev.8:11).

2 AV = spiritual wickedness

RV = spiritual hosts of wickedness

RV mg = wicked spirits

Should probably read ‘spirits of wickedness’. This would give the same meaning as ‘angels of evil’. Angels whose tasks are the dispensation of evil (not evil angels).

3 H.A.W. has the following to say about ‘heavenly places’ (The Epistle to the Ephesians, p.89):

“The strange assumption is constantly encountered that the Greek original of this phrase is epourania, neuter plural. Yet in none of the passages cited is a reading of the neuter form inevitable, for in each instance the termination may be read as a genitive or dative plural, which has the same masculine termination in both masculine and neuter form. This once observed, leaves the way open to read the phrase with reference to ‘heavenly beings’; and it has already been shown that such a reference to angels makes a world of difference to the intelligibility of every passage when it occurs.”

Also, the Greek preposition ‘en’, in all these places translated ‘in’, carries several other meanings, one very common usage being ‘among’. The reader may verify this for himself by reference to such passages as:

Eph.2:3,7,21 Col.1:23, 27, 16 Phil.2:15

3:8 2:20, 3

5:3 3:1, 7

This means that ‘spiritual wickedness in high places’ (AV) [the word ‘places’ is not in the original], becomes spirits of wickedness (angels of evil) among the heavenly beings.

NOTES

1 Deuteronomy 8:15-20.

NOTES

1. See Ps.91:4 – a Psalm of Moses reflecting the wilderness experience.

NOTES

1 The apostle Paul is quoting from Psalm 14:1-3, Psalm 5:9 and Psalm 140:3. The ‘poison’ that Paul

is referring to, is the slanderous report (same chapter): “Let us do evil, that good may come” (Rom.3:8). Paul’s opponents were ‘wresting’ his gospel and twisting his words. Note also that his opponents are Jewish.

2 The man of sin exalts himself to this same position (and did so in the 1st century), see 2 Thess.2:4.

Jesus Christ, however, although in the form of God (Adam made in the image of the elohim), counted it not a thing to be grasped at (unlike Adam, who grasped at the opportunity to be ‘like God’) to be on an equality with God (Phil.2:6).

3 Not ‘kicking against the pricks’. Paul saw himself as the Messiah of Judaism, crushing the head of

the serpent (Christ and his ecclesia). On this, see H.A.W. – Studies in the acts of the apostles, p.128. The blindness of Paul prophesied in Isaiah 59:9 and the lifting up of a standard against him in Isaiah 59:19.

NOTES

1 The dragon in Revelation v.3 (great red dragon) represents Rome (Egypt/Babylon) but in v.7

(= war in heaven) it represents the 'sin principle' in the heavenly court case, but also human opposition to God (Rome and the Jewish state).

As we have observed the heavenly court case is concurrent with the crucifixion on earth.

"In that day the Lord with his sore and great and strong sword shall punish leviathan the piercing serpent, even leviathan that crooked serpent; and he shall slay the dragon that is in the sea" (Isaiah 27:1).

The serpent was slain on the cross but the dragon will only be slain at the Lord's return (Rev.19:20-21).

2 See John 15:9-14 context: continue in my love, keep my commandments, love one another,

sacrificial love (= breaking of bread). See also John 14:15,21.

1 John 2:4-12 context: keeping his commandments, abiding in Christ, loving the brethren, forgiveness of sins (= breaking of bread). See also 1 John 3:22,24, 1 John 5:2,3.

3 Jesus was the 'good Samaritan'. He was in fact 'the neighbour' who had come to bind up the

wounds of the nation (Lk.10:29). Loving God and 'your neighbour' is in fact loving God and Jesus (expressed in the sacrament). It is impossible to hate your brother and love Jesus.

---

4 The Levites were separated for God's service and taken in lieu of the firstborn (Num.3:41). They were God's (Num.8:14) and as such they were 'sons of God'; the whole congregation were in fact 'sons of God' (RSV Deut.14:1).

5 Father of spirits, the Old Testament equivalent is ' the God of the spirits of all flesh'. This unusual

title is used only twice in the Old Testament, both times by Moses during prayer. The context of both prayers is rebellion against God.

Numbers 16:22 – The Korah rebellion.

Numbers 27:16 – The rebellion at Meribah.

The rebellion at Meribah, was the rebellion of Moses himself. "Must we (Moses and Aaron) fetch you water out of this rock?" It was an act of unbelief and rebellion (Num.20:12). The context (as in the Korah rebellion) is the appropriation of the rights of God (to be 'like the elohim'), see also Psalm 106:33. In Deut.32:51, 'trespass' carries the idea of appropriation of another's rights (Num.5:6). Presumably Aaron encouraged Moses to flout the instruction of the angel and to smite the rock instead of speaking to it. Therefore Moses did not believe the words of the angel. The title 'God of the spirits of all flesh' is no doubt derived from Gen.6:3:

"And the Lord said, My spirit shall not always strive (abide in) with man, for that he is also flesh: yet his days shall be an hundred and twenty years."

Scripture informs us that Moses was 120 years old when he died (Deut.34:7).

Such was the humility of the man Moses, that he did not hesitate to use this title when addressing God, thereby acknowledging his own rebellion. By doing so Moses recognised that

“The spirit that dwelleth in us lusteth to envy” (James 4:5) for the “flesh lusteth against the spirit and the spirit against the flesh” (Gal.5:16,17).

Moses was indeed a great man, for not only does he refuse to justify himself or appropriate blame (unlike Adam and Eve), he also sets his own exclusion from the land over against the faith and inheritance of five women (Num.27:12-23).

The fact that the title ‘the God of the spirits of all flesh’, is derived from Genesis is significant. This was also a time when man rebelled against God and misappropriated his prerogatives. “Men began to call themselves by the name of God” (RV mg Gen.4:26).

The rebellion of the ‘sons of God’ whose descendants, the ‘men of renown’ (Gen.6:4), became the mighty men of old – men like Nimrod (Gen.10:9), who built their own cities (Babel) to make a name for themselves (Gen.11:4). Men like Korah (men of renown, Num.16:2), who challenged the authority of God.

6 Root of bitterness. This term originates from Deut.29:18. The context being those who turn away

from God in order to serve false gods. In the context of Hebrews those who tun back to Judaism and strive to be ‘like God’ through their own efforts (the law) (Heb.6:1-8).

The very next verse introduces the example of Esau who sold his birthright – the Korah rebellion consisted of Levites and Reubenites (Num.16:1). The tribe of Reuben had also lost its birthright – the excellency of dignity (priesthood) and the excellency of power (kingship) (Gen.49:5-6). No doubt this formed part of the motivation behind the Korah rebellion, the tribe of Reuben thought it should have been their birthright to be leaders and priests in the congregation. Together with disaffected Levites they fermented rebellion.

7 Moses is mentioned in the previous chapter (Heb.11:23-29). These men do not live as

disembodied ‘spirits in heaven’ for says Hebrews “they without us should not (have not been) be made perfect” (Heb.11:40).

The suggestion is then that the ‘spirit’ is the spirit that the ‘God of the spirits of all flesh’ withdraws from man at death and reserves until the time of resurrection. When God raises those ‘written in heaven’ (Heb.12:23), he will again breathe back all the characteristics of that man (or woman) until they become a living being made perfect (immortal) after the judgement. “The judge of all” (Heb.12:23).

This is not an immortal soul; man has no independent life outside his own body (or outside of God) but God remembers us and restores our very spirit for even the dead are already ‘enrolled (written) in heaven’ and in effect they are already members of the heavenly Jerusalem, for God is not a God of the dead but of the living.

8 “Refuse not him that speaketh”. This is a reference to Moses and to Christ.

“This Moses whom they refused, saying, who made thee a ruler and a judge?” (Acts 7:35).

The Hebrews were now being warned not to refuse Christ – “This is my beloved son (play on

Moses) hear ye him” (Lk.9:35). A direct reference to the message of Revelation (see also 2 Peter

1:16-21, also a late epistle written after Revelation).

The Israelites had refused to listen to God at Sinai (Heb.12:19), they refused to listen to Moses (Acts 7:35 – Exodus 2:14) and now they were refusing to listen to Christ.

"For if they escaped not who refused him that warned them on earth (Moses), how much more shall we not escape who turn away from him that warneth (speaketh) from heaven" (Christ).

It is God's command to listen to him.

9 The tents of Korah were swallowed, similarly the Jewish 'tent' (their house) would be swallowed.

10 The account says that Korah gathered all the congregation. Moses and Aaron are instructed to separate themselves from among this congregation and they pray for all the congregation.

NOTES

1 Did the seventy elders of Israel (Sanhedrin) also receive the spirit at Pentecost? (Ex.24:9). They certainly received it on a later occasion (Num.11:25). The true enthronement of Christ was his resurrection but this was typified by his baptism where the holy spirit descended upon him in the form of a dove (Lk.3:22) with the announcement "Thou art my beloved son" – the same announcement as at his enthronement in Psalm 2. The 1st century ecclesia was enthroned as a 'holy nation' (1 Peter 2:9) at Pentecost – 50 days after Passover (just like Israel). They also received the Holy spirit (Acts 2:3).

2 The internal struggle in the 1st century is well documented in Paul's epistles. Judaist elements turning the early Christians back to the law. Another interesting suggestion is the early witnessing of the apostolic ecclesia culminating in the trial and death of Stephen. The trial and death of Stephen is a type of the trial and death of Christ.

Harnack, Turner, Ramsay and Lightfoot all date the ascension of Christ as AD 29 or 30 and the conversion of Saul as resp. 30, 35/36, 33, 34. This makes a 1st century witnessing ministry of 3½ years culminating in the death of Stephen very plausible. The apostle James refers to Stephen and the fact that the Jews were jealous of his spirit power ("Stephen full of wisdom and the holy spirit") drawing on the example of Eldad (friend of God) and Medad (more than a friend).

[Num.11:24-29, see James 4:4-6]

Both Jesus and Stephen were 'not of the seventy' but were condemned by them. Just as they had killed Christ so now they had killed 'the righteous one' (James 5:6) – Stephen. However, James exhorts the brethren to be forgiving like Stephen and pray for the conversion of the sinner (James 5:19; Acts 7:60). The prayer was heard – the conversion of Saul.

Note James specifically mentions 3½ years (James 5:17).

3 The great dragon is given all his different names: old serpent, devil, Satan. The dragon has

imperial connotations – sinful human empires. Old serpent – this is Edenic human nature with its striving to God-like equality – human religion. Devil – the accuser who stands before God and makes the case against human sinfulness. Satan – the enemy of man who tests his true intentions (Job 1:9).

4 YAHWEH-NISSI: The Lord my banner. The warfare against Amalek symbolises the war against

sin. Amalek (sin) always attacks the vulnerable (Deut.25:17,18). Saul lost his kingdom because he did not destroy Agag the king of Amalek (1 Sam.15:20). By contrast David smote Amalek "from the twilight even unto the evening of the next day" (1 Sam.30:17). Mordecai refused to bow down to the Agagite (Amalekite) Haman (Esther 3:2). In similar fashion Jesus refused to bow down to Satan (Mtt.4:9).

"The Lord hath sworn that the Lord will have war with Amalek from generation to generation" (Ex.17:16).

The banner is obviously the cross, symbolised by the outstretched arms of Moses (Ex.17:11).

5 The events of verses 12b and 13 are obviously contemporary with those of verse 14. While the city of Jerusalem and Judaism is being destroyed, a remnant of Jews is preserved. These emerge as two distinct groups – the faithful Jewish Christians and the Parthian Babylonian Jews who reinvent Judaism.

6 We are not told the location of this last persecution (v.17), only that the dragon 'went away (RV)

to make war…'. The next chapter, however, makes it apparent that it is the beast empire in the Middle East that does the persecuting (Rev.13:1-10).

12.1 Jerusalem vs. Rome

DIGRESSION 12.1 - A TALE OF TWO CITIES – JERUSALEM VERSUS ROME

We suggested in chapter 12 page that part of the description of the dragon in Rev.12:3 had dropped out of the text and been interpolated as a gloss into Revelation 17:9,10. The present author is all too aware that the book of Revelation comes with a warning from Jesus himself:

“For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book: and if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book” (Rev.22:18,19).

These words hold validity for the whole Scriptures, not just for the book of Revelation, for, says God:

“Ye shall not add unto the word which I command you, neither shall ye diminish aught from it, that ye may keep the commandments of the Lord your God which I commanded you” (Deut.4:2).

This has, however, not prevented errors creeping into the text, sometimes deliberately and sometimes accidentally.

Here follow a few examples where either accidental or deliberate manipulation of the text has occurred:

1 Accidental Copyists Error

The passages in I Chron.9:34 and I Chron.8:28 are identical, this is due to a copyists error, in the words of J. PATERSON SMYTH (The old documents and the New Bible):

“There is the old copyist seated at his desk patiently transcribing letter by letter the wearisome names in I Chronicles chapter 8 and chapter 9 – name after name in monotonous succession. At last he stops and lays down his pen. He has just written the words, “THESE DWELT AT JERUSALEM”. This will do nicely for a catchword to find his place again when he returns, and so repeating the words to himself the old man retires to rest.

See him next day resuming his task. He arranges his parchments, he looks at the catch-word, the last he has written, and raising his eyes to the manuscript before him, they light on the words, but at the top of the preceding page, ‘THESE DWELT AT JERUSALEM’ and calmly he goes on from that, in blissful unconsciousness that he is writing over again his yesterday’s work.”

2 Deliberate Manipulation

Judges 18:30:

“And the children of Dan set up the graven image: and Jonathan, the son of

Gershom, the son of Manasseh, he and his sons were priests to the tribe of Dan until the day of the captivity of the land.”

The RV text has the name Moses. This Jonathan was a descendant of Moses; he became the first in a line of priests who officiated at the shrine of the stolen idol all the time that the tabernacle was in Shiloh, till the captivity of the land or district. Jonathan had dishonoured his descent from Moses, and accordingly the letter nun (N) was inserted in the Hebrew word for Moses (M S

S) changing it to Manasseh (M N S S). The inserted letter was not incorporated into the text, but was suspended above the line. (Manasseh means forgetting his father's house.)

3 Accidental Inclusion Of Commentary

Daniel chapter 11:1-39 is a genuine prophecy interpolated and overlaid by real or supposed fulfilments.

The present author has always found Daniel chapter 11 to be unlike any other Biblical prophecy; it is extremely elaborate, very political in nature and moreover it describes an obscure period of Israel's history, the inter- testamental period of the Maccabees, a period during which no prophet appeared to Israel, a period from which we have no prophetic books.

In his book 'In and around the book of Daniel' (p.5-7), Boutflower discusses the work of Dr. C.H.H. Wright who examined this phenomenon, he comments

as follows:

"The eleventh chapter of Daniel is, then, in the first place, a translation from the original; and, in the second place, it is a translation that has been added to by way of interpolation; and to this is due the form which it has come down to us. What has happened to the Greek Septuagint translation has also happened to the Hebrew translation of chapter 11; it has been added to, and the nature of the additions resembles to some extent the expository comments which we meet in the Hebrew Targums.

The writers of the Targums, or ancient Aramaic commentaries on the Scriptures of the Old Testament, loved to introduce into Scripture prophecies fulfilments, actual or supposed, in such a way that they appear as parts of the original prophecy. In such paraphrases, writes Dr. Wright, phrases of the original are retained, although often so modified and obscured by expository comments that if we possessed only the Targum it would be often impossible to restore the original text."

4 Deliberate Misinterpretation

Isaiah chapter 45 –Thirtle has pointed out in 'Old Testament Problems' that the prophecy concerning Cyrus is a deliberate misinterpretation.

He shows that the name for Cyrus (Kô rê sh) is virtually identical with the Hebrew for workmen (Châ râ sh) used in the previous chapter (44:11; same word 45:16).

The contrast is between the 'workmen' who fashion idols (44:11-20) who has a "lie in his right hand" and the Lord's 'workman', "whose right hand I have holden" (= strengthened RV, 45:1).

The anointed of the Lord, whose right hand was strengthened, was, of course, Hezekiah whose name means 'strengthened of Yah' and who features so extensively in the background of all the Isaiah prophecies, including that of

Isaiah 53. A very strong case against this prophecy referring to Cyrus is made in H.A.W.'s book 'Isaiah'.

The prophecy is obviously about Hezekiah who was called by name (45:4) from his mother's womb (44:24), thus fulfilling the Emmanuel prophecy of Isaiah 9:6 for he truly represented the nation (44:1) and as such typified Jesus Christ who would, "build my city and let go my captives" (45:13).

It is inconceivable that such language be used of a foreign, idol worshipping king, but it is easy to see how Jews of the captivity would use this text to their advantage by re-interpreting Châ râ sh (workman W(r!H!) to read Kô rê sh (Cyrus W(R@(K); this could be achieved by only changing one letter in the Hebrew, for now they could approach Cyrus with a prediction from their holy book, that it would be Cyrus who would return them to their land.

Although the text of Scripture is remarkably well preserved, it is obvious that we must always scrutinise what we read critically and with intellectual honesty and that we must always place our interpretation in context. If this results in us having to reject long cherished beliefs on how certain passages are to be interpreted, so be it, for we have observed (from these few examples) that Scripture has been added to (whether deliberately or otherwise).

Having established that Scripture has been added to in the past, let us now turn to the verses that concern us in Revelation chapter 12 and chapter 17 (shown in bold type).

REVELATION 12:1-17

REVELATION 17:1-18

1

2 And she being with child cried, travailing in birth, and pained to be delivered.

3 And there appeared another wonder in heaven; and behold a great red dragon, having seven heads and ten horns, and seven crowns upon his heads.

4 And his tail drew the third part of the stars of heaven, and did cast them to the earth: and the dragon stood before the woman which was ready to be delivered, for to devour her child as soon as it was born.

5

6

7

8

9

10 Therefore rejoice, ye heavens, and ye that dwell in them. Woe to the inhabiters of the earth and of the sea! for the devil is come down unto you, having great wrath, because he knoweth that he hath but a short time."

5 I will tell thee a mystery of the woman, and of the beast that carrieth her, which hath the seven heads and ten horns.

6 The beast that thou sawest was, and is not; and shall ascend out of the bottomless pit, and go into perdition: and they that dwell on the earth shall wonder, whose names were not written in the book of life from the foundation of the world, when they behold the beast that was, and is not, and yet is.

7 And here is the mind which hath wisdom. The seven heads are seven mountains, on which the woman sitteth.

8 And there are seven kings: five are fallen, and one is, and the other is not yet come; and when he cometh, he must continue a short space.

And the beast that was, and is not, even he is the eighth, and is of the seven, and goeth into perdition.

The chapters should read as follows:

REVELATION 12:1-5

REVELATION 17:5-12

1 “And there appeared a great wonder in heaven; a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars:

2 And she being with child cried, travailing in birth, and pained to be delivered.

3 And there appeared another wonder in

heaven; and behold a great red dragon, having seven heads and ten horns, and seven crowns upon his heads. And here is the mind which hath wisdom. The seven heads are seven mountains, And there are seven kings: five are fallen, and one is, and the other is not yet come; and when he cometh, he must continue a short space.

4 And his tail drew the third part of the stars of heaven, and did cast them to the earth: and the dragon stood before the woman which was ready to be delivered, for to devour her child as soon as it was born.

5 And she brought forth a man child, who was

to rule all nations with a rod of iron: and her child was caught up unto God, and to his throne……

12 Therefore rejoice, ye heavens, and ye that dwell in them. Woe to the inhabiters of the earth and of the sea! for the devil is come down to you, having great wrath, because he knoweth that he hath but a short time.”

5 “And upon her forehead was a name written,

MYSTERY,BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH.

6 And I saw the woman drunken with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus: and when I saw her, I wondered with great admiration.

7 And the angel said unto me, Wherefore didst thou marvel? I will tell thee the mystery of the woman, and of the beast that carrieth her, which hath the seven heads and ten horns.

8 The beast that thou sawest was, and is not; and shall ascend out of the bottomless pit, and go into perdition: and they that dwell on earth shall wonder, whose names were not written in the book of life from the foundation of the world, when they behold the beast that was, and is not, and yet is.

11 And the beast that was, and is not, even he is the eighth, and is of the seven, and goeth into perdition.

12 And the ten horns which thou sawest are ten kings, which have received no kingdom as yet; but receive power as kings on hour with the beast."

The logic of this change is immediately obvious:

1) Chapter 17 now flows and is no longer disjointed, whereas before this chapter

referred to seven kings and ten kings, it now refers to only ten kings.

The fact that verses 9 and 10 are not even missed, is proof enough that we are dealing with an interpolation.

2) Chapter 12 now informs us what the seven crowns represent. It would be very unusual for a symbol to be introduced without explanation, now that is no longer the case. Moreover we have a secondary point of contact with the words "he must continue a short space", which are repeated in the same chapter (v.12) so confirming that our analysis is correct.

HOW AND WHY DID THE INTERPOLATION TAKE PLACE?

The interpolation must have occurred very early for we have no manuscript variations on these verses. This can only be explained if Revelation had a very early date (pre AD 70) and especially if these verses refer to the Nero persecution.

The "five that are fallen" (Rev.17:10 which belongs in 12:3) are then the following:

1. Julius Caesar the first Roman Emperor (101 – 44 BC).

2. Augustus (27 BC – AD 14).

3. Tiberius (AD 14 – 37).

4. Gaius (AD 37 – 41).

5. Claudius (AD 41 – 51)

This means that the "ONE THAT IS" refers to Nero (AD 54 – 68) and definitely establishes the writing of Revelation during his reign. The seven mountains (hills) are obviously referring to the city of Rome, built on seven hills: Capitol, Aventine, Caelian, Esquiline, Quirinal, Viminal.

This means that "the one that is not yet come; and when he cometh, he must continue for a short space", is still future; he is the established protagonist or the 'man of sin' that must be revealed before Christ returns. Nero, the persecutor of the early ecclesia, was a type of the man of sin and there is every evidence that his anti-Christian stance was aided and abetted (if not suggested in the first place) by his wife Poppea, who may have been a Jewish proselyte, but was in any case very well disposed towards the Jews (Josephus Antiquities Book 20.8.11).

Under the circumstances it is understandable and perhaps inevitable, that the first century ecclesia should apply the future prophecy of Revelation 17 to Rome, and that a possible marginal reference to Revelation 12:3 should enter the text of Revelation 17 as an interpolation.

After the death of Nero, who was much feared and hated, the rumour circulated that he had not really committed suicide, but was in exile in Parthia and that he would return to Rome in command of the Parthian hordes to wreak vengeance on his enemies. According to the modernist critics, the legend of Nero Redivivus (Nero living again) has been adapted to the book of Revelation. The reasoning behind this is as follows:

Nero is the head that was wounded to death and afterwards healed (13:3,12,14). He is as it were slain, like the lamb (5:6). For as the latter continues to live on in heaven, so does Nero prolong a shadowy existence in hell. Out of the Abyss (17:8) he will again return from the regions of Parthia (ie Babylon, 13:2) with the kings of the East (9:14-16), and as Roman Emperor demand adoration1. Then will be the days of the great future struggle. The above reasoning by the critics seems to be justified by the number of the beast which is given as 666. Out of the many possible solutions to this enigma, a very plausible one is NERON KAISAR2. But a number of the old manuscripts preserve a different reading: 616, a number which would be yielded if the alternative form of the name were used: NERO CAESAR.

John Robinson states the following: The reference to Nero who killed himself with his own sword, is further confirmed by the fact that Suetonius cites a parallel puzzle based on the aggregate of the letters in Greek (1005), as current in Nero's lifetime:

"Count the numerical values

Of the letters in Nero's name,

And in 'murdered his own mother':

You will find that their sum is the same" 3

This strongly suggests that Revelation 13:18 is the Christian version of a familiar game. Further for the naming of Nero as 'the beast' there is the interesting parallel, from Philostratus' Appollonius of Tyana. Appollonius is represented as saying upon his arrival in Rome at this time:

"In my travels, which have been wider than ever man yet accomplished, I have seen many, many wild beasts of Arabia and India; but this beast, that is commonly called a Tyrant, I know not how many heads it has, nor if it be crooked of claw, and armed with horrible fangs. However they say it is a civil beast, and inhabits the midst of cities; but to this extent it is more savage than the beasts of mountain or forest, that whereas lions and panthers can sometimes by flattery be tamed and change their disposition, stroking and petting this beast does but instigate it to surpass itself in ferocity and devour at large. And of wild beasts you cannot say that they were ever known to eat their own mothers, but Nero has gorged himself on this diet."

As early as the year 69 AD, a pseudo – Nero had raised commotions in Asia Minor and Greece, the Roman historian Tacitus records the following:

"About this time Achaia and Asia were upset by a false alarm. It was rumoured that Nero was on his way to them. There had been conflicting stories about his death, and so numbers of people imagined or believed that he was alive. I shall describe the adventures of the other claimants in their chronological context as my story develops. On this occasion the man concerned was a slave from Pontus, or, according to other accounts, a freedman from Italy. The circumstance that he was a harpist and singer by profession, when added to a facial resemblance, made the imposture all the more plausible. He was joined by some army deserters who had been roaming about in destitution until he bribed them to follow him with lavish promises...." (for the full story see Tac. Hist. 28f; Dio Cassius, 64g; Zonaras,1115).

During the reign of Titus a second pseudo – Nero showed himself on the Euphrates (Zonaras 1118) and was acknowledged by the Parthian king Artabanus (Mommesen, 5521). About 88 AD a third pseudo – Nero again made his appearance, also amongst the Parthians, and threatened the Roman Empire (Seut. Nero; Tac. Hist. 12).

SUMMARY

As early as AD 39, the half mad tyrant Gaius Caligula ordered his governor Petronius to place his statue (image of the beast) in the Temple at Jerusalem, this catastrophe was only averted by his death4.

We should not be surprised then to find that the first century believers saw the Roman Emperors as the embodiment of the beast of Revelation 13, this is apparent from the manuscript change of 666 to 616, undoubtedly meant to reflect Nero's name. However the first pseudo – Nero appeared as early as 69 AD; this indicates that Revelation 13 contributed to the Nero legend and not vice versa. In other words Revelation was not a Vaticinium ex eventu (prophecy after the event) but was written in advance of the Nero persecution and was the driving force behind the Nero Redivivus legend.

It is entirely understandable how the early Christians (and those affiliated with them) would recognise Nero as being the "beast whose number is 666". Bible prophecy always has a short term typical fulfilment and a longer term true fulfilment – centuries earlier Antiochus Epiphanes had typified the antichrist: "a king of fierce countenance and understanding dark sentences" (Dan.8:23). The apostle Paul, however, taught that the final manifestation of the antichrist would only be revealed shortly before the second advent and that he would sit in the Temple (= true ecclesia) of God. Those who persecuted God's people through the centuries typify the antichrist (Pharaoh, Antiochus, Nero etc) but the final manifestation will come out of the true ecclesia.

CONCLUSIONS

1) Revelation is to be dated to Nero's reign before the persecution.

2) Revelation chapter 13 gave rise to the Nero Redivivus legend (Nero lives again) and is therefore to be dated before the first impostor in AD 69.

3) Revelation 17:9,10 belong naturally in Revelation chapter 12.

4) There is no longer any contradiction between Revelation 11:8, (The great city = Jerusalem) and Revelation 17:9,10 (Rome).

5) Revelation 12 now refers to the circumstances concerning the first century ecclesia prior to AD 70.

6) The events in Revelation 12 typify the still future revelation of the man of sin as described in Revelation chapters 13 to 17.

7) The events of the first century show that it was a combination of an imperialistic power (Rome) and a religious power (Jerusalem) that put Jesus to death and persecuted the early ecclesia.

DIGRESSION 12.1

---

1. Caligula proclaimed himself divine and tried to have a statue of himself as Jupiter placed in the

Temple at Jerusalem in AD 39.

2. The Hebrew form 'Nron qsar' is now further confirmed from Qumran; cf. Discoveries in the

Judean desert of Jordan II, ed. P. Benoit, J.T. Milik and Dr. de Vaux, Oxford 1961, 18, plate 29. The alternative reading 616 (already known to Irenaeus, Adv. haer. 5.28.2) neatly fits the Latin form ‘Nero Caesar’.

3 Nero 39, tr. R. Graves, The Twelve Caesars, 1962.

4 Josephus Antiquities 18.261-309. For the horror of the alarm this raised amongst the Jews, cf. Philo, Leg. ad. Gaium, 184-348.

12.2 Heaven and earth

DIGRESSION 12.2 - HEAVEN AND EARTH

“In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.” (Gen.1:1)

“Thus the heavens and earth were finished, and all the host of them. And on the seventh day God ended his work which he had made; and he rested on the seventh day from all the work which he had made.” (Gen.2:1)

“And I saw a new heaven and earth: for the first heaven and earth were passed away; and there was no more sea.” (Rev.21:1)

How are we to understand heaven and earth in Revelation? Various interpretations have been suggested including the political heavens and earth (the world of European politics) as proposed by the continuos historical approach and the equation of heaven with Jerusalem in, ‘Revelation a Biblical approach’,by H.A.W. pg 165. The suggestion by H.A.W. does indeed have some merit, for Jerusalem was the place of the sanctuary and therefore by inference “heaven” is used as Bible idiom for Jerusalem, whereas “earth” is a frequently used Old Testament idiom for the land of Israel.[1]

To apply “heaven” exclusively to Jerusalem is however an oversimplification as Revelation makes apparent that it is the place were John is transported “in the spirit” in order to observe the throne room. (Rev. chpt.4) The earthly Temple and Tabernacle were after all, only shadows and patterns of the heavenly. (Heb.8: 4,5)

Scripture makes it clear that God’s dwelling place cannot be limited to heaven for it is part of our physical world; even the heaven of heavens cannot contain him. (2 Chron.2:6) He is simultaneously far away and very near (Ps 139:7-18, Jer.23:24) in him everything lives and moves and has it’s being (Acts 17:28) and yet he chooses to make his habitation with him that is poor and of a contrite spirit. (Jesus –Isa.57:15) Even heaven itself is therefore only a metaphor for God’s dwelling place, “for all these things hath my hand made.” (Isa.66:1) We have then the unusual circumstance that the Temple (and by association Jerusalem) is used as a metaphor for “heaven” (1 Kings 8: 30 2 Chron.30: 27) which is itself a metaphor for God’s dwelling place.

The heavens were populated with various heavenly bodies, for specific purposes. The sun, moon and stars were for signs and seasons (Gen.1: 14) and these are associated with feast days (see pg. note 2 chpt.11) The stars are often used as idiom for the angels (i.e. the sons of God in Job 38:7 2 and also for the seed of Abraham, who one day, will be like the angels. (Gen.22: 17; 37: 9 Dan.12: 2,3)

Diagrammatically:

CELESTIAL BODY SYMBOL TYPE

Heaven God’s dwelling place

Tabernacle, Temple – Ecclesiastical Israel

Earth God’s footstool

The land of Israel

Sun Greater light

Signs of Messiah

Moon Lesser light

The law and feast days

Stars Angels

Administrators of the law

The epistles of Paul and Peter confirm that this understanding of the symbolism is correct. Paul substitutes sun and moon with "the elements (of the world)."3 In both epistles (Galatians and Colossians) these "elements" are associated with the law and with feast days.

GALATIANS 4 COLOSSIANS 2

Bondage under the elements of the world (v.3)

Tradition of men, elements of the world (v.8)

The law and the

Weak and beggarly elements (v.9,10)

Ordinances (v.20,21)

[see Heb. 9:10]

"Jewish world"

Observe days, months, times years (v.10)

Holy day, new moon, Sabbath (v.16)

Feasts regulated by the moon this

represents the law.

According to Peter it is these elements (R.V.mg. heavenly bodies) that shall, "melt with a great heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up." (2 Peter 3:10)

[works – those who seek justification by works – same word; Rom.9:23; Gal.3:10; Eph.2:9; described as the works of the law, eg., Gal.2:16; 3:2,5; dead works, Heb.6:1; 9:14]

Peter continues by informing us that the "heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat" (v.12) reminding us of the Old Testament prophecy; "all the host of heaven shall be dissolved, and the heavens shall be rolled together as a scroll." (Isa.34: 4 - 8) This can be nothing else but the passing away of the Mosaic order – the moon (law) as administered by the stars (angels). This was predicted by Christ – "the sun shall be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken" (Mtt.24:29).5 See also Joel 2:31; 3:15.

"Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away" (Mtt.24: 35). 6

The underlying argument of both Colossians and Galatians is that Christ has triumphed over the "principalities and powers" (angels) that administered the law.(Col 2: 15) The Galatians were warned against "a voluntary humility and worshipping of angels" (v.18)7

This “voluntary humility” combined with the mention of “holy days” (v.16) and “neglecting the body” (v.23) brings to mind the Day of Atonement (ye shall afflict your souls – Lev.16: 29). This feast was no longer of any value and constituted the worshipping of angels (= the law administered by angels) for Christ is now, “the head of all principality and power.” (v.10)

Heaven is the dwelling place of God and the Lamb, but also of the saints (Rev.13:7). It is the place where the women is found, but also the dragon (Rev.12:1–3). It can be dissolved (Isa.34: 4 –8) it’s stars can fall down (Rev.6: 13) and it’s elements can melt (2 Peter 3:12) in fact it can pass away altogether (Mtt.24:35)

Clearly, the meaning of heaven can only be determined by the context. It is both the dwelling place of God and a metaphor for the ‘ecclesiastical heavenly Israel’ (also the dwelling place of God).

A good example of this is the “war in heaven” that happens both in God’s dwelling place (= the heavenly court case) and in the ‘ecclesiastical heavenly Israel’ (the triumph on the cross)

In a similar fashion the seals are opened by the lamb who resides in “heaven” and as a consequence, “the heaven was removed as a scroll.” (Rev.6: 14) This is obviously not the same heaven, but the ‘ecclesiastical heavenly Israel’, represented by the “elements” of the law.

It is notable that the “New heavens and earth” of Revelation do not possess the elements of the “heavens that passed away”, for there is no temple, no sun and no moon present, for it is illuminated by the glory of the lamb.(Rev.21:22)

Thus the primeval condition of Genesis is restored, where light existed before the creation of the sun and the moon, confirming that God is the origin of all light (moral purity) and that the law is an inferior creation, made for the sole purpose of guiding men through their darkness to the source.

---

[1]“I beheld the earth, and, lo, it was without form and void; and the heavens and they had no light. I beheld the mountains, and, lo, they trembled, and all the hills moved lightly. I beheld, and, lo, there was no man, and all the birds of the heaven were fled. I beheld, and, lo, the fruitful place was a wilderness, and all the cities thereof were broken down at the presence of the Lord, and by his fierce anger. For thus hath the Lord said, The whole land shall be made desolate; yet will I not make a full end. For this shall the earth mourn, and the heavens above be black; because I have spoken it, I have purposed it, and will not repent, neither will I turn back from it.” (Jer.4: 23-28)

God’s message to the ‘earth’ (nation of Israel) through the mouth of the prophet Jeremiah is a complete reversal of the Genesis creative act. The earth (Israel) is to be totally destroyed, it is again without ‘form and void’ (Gen.1:2) there is no man (Adam – Gen. 1:27) no birds (Gen.1: 20) and no fruitful trees (Gen. 1: 11). This is one of the many places were ‘earth’ functions as a metaphor for the land of Israel.

---

2 These are the same angels who sang for joy at the new creation, “Jesus Christ” (Lk.2: 13-14).

---

3 ta stoicheia (tou kosmou) : the elements (of the world). The word stoicheia (stoiceia) means primarily things placed side by side in a row; it is used of letters of the Alphabet, the ABCs, and then, because the learning of the ABC s is the first lesson in a literary education, it comes to mean 'rudiments', or 'first principles' (as in Heb.5: 12). Again, since the letters of the Alphabet were regarded as the 'elements' of which words and sentences were built up, stoicheia comes to be used of the elements which make up the material world (2 Peter 3:10,12). These 'elements' the sun and the moon (= the law) were meant to guide the Jews to Christ. The Law was a schoolmaster (Gal.4:2) teaching the Jews the first principles, or ABC s of the truth. The Dictionary of Paul and his letters (I.V.P. 1993) pg. 231 has the following to say:

"From second temple Judaism there comes ample evidence of speculation about the universe and how the heavenly bodies were related to angels. The book of the Heavenly Luminaries in 1Enoch 72-78, a work dating from perhaps the first century B.C., testifies to Jewish astrological ideas and the association of an angel, Uriel, with the stars. This is set within a context in which particular attention is paid to times and seasons. (my emphasis) It is of some significance that Josephus could say that the woven veil separating the 'holy place' from the outer vestibule of the Herodian Temple was 'a kind of image of the universe.' It's four colours symbolised fire, earth, air and sea, and embroidered upon it was a 'panorama of the heavens' excepting 'the signs of the zodiac.' The latter, however, were represented by the twelve loaves upon the table, while the seven lamps represented the seven planets.(Jos.J.W.5.5.4-5) Thus even at the heart of the Jerusalem Temple cultus there were symbols which suggested a necessity of penetrating the heavens in order to reach the throne of God in the Holy of Holies. The earliest extant extra biblical Jewish evidence for the word stoicheia (elements) being associated with both spirits and stars is later than the first century (second and third centuries A.D.), but is well attested and may very well represent beliefs contemporaneous with Paul."

---

4 In Gal.8: 4, Paul refers to the time when, "Ye knew not God, ye did service unto them which by nature are no gods." These are the heathen deities whom the Galatians had formerly served. Jewish bondage to the law, as being bondage to angels (as custodians of the law) and Gentile service of strange gods as being bondage to demons, are alike slavery to the powers of the world.

---

5 This quote refers to the passing away of the Mosaic dispensation. The stars (sons of God) that fall from heaven are therefore the earthly counterpart of the angels. It was the duty of the priestly Levitical class to act as custodians and administrators of the law, just as the angels had first given the law to Moses. (Gal.3:19)

---

6 This clearly means that Christ's words did not achieve their complete fulfilment in A.D. 70 – heaven and earth must pass away one more time before these words are accomplished

---

7 Worshipping of angels. Is this why Stephen specifically mentions them worshipping the “host of heaven” (Acts 7: 41 – 43) Although the context is the worship of foreign idols, Stephen is no doubt playing on the “angel which spake to him (Moses) in the mount Sinai.” (v.38) Note also the reference to the golden calf incident (v.41). The golden calf was an imitation of the cherubim (ox-lion-man-eagle) and therefore an image of one of the living creatures.

“Thus they changed their glory into the similitude of an ox that eateth grass.” (Ps 106:20)“Who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature (living creature = cherubim ?) more than the creator.” (Rom 1: 24)

See Bible Studies. H.A.W. pg. 305 for further reading.

12.3 The devil and his angels

Digression 12.3 - THE DEVIL AND HIS ANGELS

“Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels.” (Mtt.25: 41)

When he died on the cross, the Lord Jesus Christ triumphed over ‘heavenly powers’ as well as over ‘earthly powers.’

The accusation, that man aspires to equality with God (Michael – who is like God?) was thrown out of the heavenly court because it was nullified by the death of Christ. This is however, not the end of the matter for the desire for equality still lives on in our nature and is expressed by human empires.

This explains why Satan and the Devil represent both the accuser – God’s Holy Angel (see note on Heb.2:14 and Col.2:14-15) and also those world empires (or people – see 2 Cor 11: 14) that embody the principles of those accusations. When the dragon (that old serpent, which is the Devil and Satan) is bound for a thousand years and cast into the abyss (Rev 20: 2) it is not the angel that is bound, but the ambition to be ‘like God’ that is suppressed.

This has already been described in the previous chapter with the destruction of the beast (19: 20,21).

The empire of the beast destroyed. (Rev.19)

The principle suppressed. (Rev.20)

The beast

Dragon

False prophet

Old serpent, the devil

Deceived them

Devil, deceive the nations

Cast alive into a lake of fire

Bound in the abyss

It is notable, that although it is God that binds and looses this principle, when it re-emerges from the abyss, it is again in the form of a man made empire (Gog and Magog) that challenges the saints (20:7).

The Lord Jesus Christ describes the judgment in three different parables recorded in Matthew chapter twenty-five. In the separating of the sheep and the goats (Mtt.25:31-46) he refers to “the devil and his angels” who are reserved for “everlasting fire” (v.41). This is obviously a reference to “the dragon and his angels” (Rev.12:7) whose ultimate fate is the lake of fire:

“And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are..” (Rev.20:10)

The “devil” in this passage is a particular human that personifies the ambition of equality with God, and tempts the nations to challenge divine authority. In the first century the “devil” was the “divine emperor Nero” who sought to throw Christians to the lions (1 Pet.5:8). In Revelation chapter thirteen the beast is also personified by a particular man (it is the number of a man 13:18). When the apostle Paul refers to the “man of sin” it is apparent that he has a particular opponent in mind (2 Thess.2:3) who was restrained in the first century (v.6) by the destruction of Judaism. The antagonist is again restrained when the beast and his allies are destroyed, only to be unleashed at the end of the thousand years.

In Matthew chapter 25 Jesus separates the sheep and the goats. These are Jews from every nation1 the criteria that is used is the treatment meted out to the witnesses.2 Those who have mistreated his witnesses are condemned to the same fate as the “devil and his angels.” That fate is eternal (everlasting) punishment.3 The same fate awaits the false prophet(s):

“Have we not prophesied in thy name? And in thy name cast out devils? And in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.”

For the context see Mtt.7:15-29. This is the escatalogical false prophet of Revelation 13:11-14 who, “doeth great wonders so that he maketh fire come down from heaven on the earth in the sight of men.”

1 “and before him shall gather all nations; and he shall separate them one from another.” (Mtt.25:32) The word ‘nations’ are neuter and therefore are regarded collectively, whereas the word ‘them’ refers to individuals, because it is masculine. The ellipsis that should be supplied in this passage is, “men from all nations.” (see John 12:32 where a similar ellipsis occurs – the word men is not in the original, it is italicised in the A.V. the ellipsis that should be supplied is; all men [without distinction i.e. both Jew and Gentile]) The parable of the sheep and the goats is from Ezek.34:17,20 which has a clear Jewish context. Jesus is addressing the parable to a Jewish audience – it is therefore natural to understand the men from all nations as Jews, in the sense of Acts 2: 5 – “And there were dwelling at Jerusalem Jews, devout men, out of every nation under heaven.” For a full discussion on the objections to regarding the judgment as a separation between “nation states” see Studies in the Gospels by H.A.W. pg. 623, 624.

---

2 In Matthew chapter ten, Jesus sends his disciples on a spirit gifted witnessing mission. He warns that they will be persecuted and even murdered for their witnessing (v.28) We have already observed that the witnessing of the disciples is a type of the final witnessing mission described in Revelation chapter eleven. Jesus says the following to his disciples:

“He that receiveth you receiveth me, and he that receiveth me receiveth him that sent me. He that receiveth a prophet shall receive a prophet’s reward; and he that receiveth a righteous man shall receive a righteous man’s reward. And whosoever shall give to drink unto one of these little ones a cup of cold water only, in the name of a disciple, verily I say unto you, he shall in no way loose his reward.” (Mtt.10:40-42)

The Lords criteria for judging his own countrymen is how they have treated his witnesses. Those who have murdered them (Rev.11: 7) will be condemned to eternal punishment.

---

3 Eternal judgment (Heb.6:2) and eternal redemption (Heb.9: 12) alongside eternal punishment (Mtt.25: 46) and eternal torment (Rev.20:10) do not mean that they are tormented eternally, but

that the consequences are eternal. The wicked only suffer torment at Judgment day. (Mtt.8:12; 13:40-42, 49-50. Lk.12: 47,48)

12.4 Establishment of iniquity on her base

DIGRESSION 12.4 - THE ESTABLISHMENT OF INIQUITY ON IT'S BASE

"To build her an house in the land of Shinar: and it shall be established, and set there upon her own base." (Zech.5:11)

The history of Israel after A.D. 70

At the time of the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70, the Babylonian Jews had lived for 200 years under Parthian rule. The homeland of the Parthians was the mountainous region south—east of the Caspian Sea (now in northern Iran). Noted for their martial skill as horsemen and archers, they swept through Persia and Mesopotamia and estab1ished a new empire. When Rome moved into the Near East during the 1 century B.C., and occupied Palestine and Syria, its further expansion eastward was blocked by the Parthians.

The Jews found themselves on both sides of the imperial power struggle, but the Babylonian community maintained its close links with the land of Israel. The government of Babylonian Jewry for the first 12 centuries A.D. lay in the hands of the Exilarch or "the prince of David." The Exilarch was the official head of the Babylonian community. It was a hereditary office with its incumbents claiming descent from King David. The Exilarchs lived in princely style, wore an ornamental sash of a high official and had an honoured position at the courts of the rulers.

During the period that the Mishna and the Talmud were compiled they exercised great power and even managed to expand their power in A.D. 642 in the wake of the Islamic conquests. The Exilarchs played an important role in political, social, judicial and religious affairs. They represented the Jewish minority to the Caliph, took part in public religious debates, appointed the leaders of the various religious Academies as well as the judges, supervised the punishment of lawbreakers, interceded between the various Jewish communities when difficulties appeared and controlled money that had been gifted for charitable purposes. Income was derived from the taxes paid by the communities under his jurisdiction and which received government protection. The Exilarch also derived incomes from divorce bills. The Jews paid him 1/5 of their income, as well as redemption fees for male children and animals!!

Rabbinic traditions trace the origin of the institution to the last years of the exile of Jehoiachin on the basis of 2 Kings 25:27 Further data were derived from 1 Chron 3:17. Whether such an institution existed before Parthian times is not known, and certainty is impossible. It seems likely however that the Parthian government under Vologases I (died 79 A.D.) probably established a feudal regime to govern Jewry as part of its reorganisation of the Arsacid administration. The consensus seems to be that around the time of Jesus 2/3 of Jewry lived outside Palestine especially in adjacent areas in the eastern Mediterranean. Jacob Neusner conjectures that at this time the Jews must have formed minority communities in almost every city of the Euphrates valley and throughout the western satrapies of Parthia. Josephus speaks of, "not a few myriads" of Jews in the Babylonian area under Parthian rule.

After the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 the Jews had two focal points; the Exilarch in Parthian controlled Babylon and the Sanhedrin in Roman controlled Palestine. The survival of the Jewish polity after the destruction of Jerusalem was due in large measure to Yohanan the son of Zakki, who amid the disaster received Roman permission to set up a school of rabbinical study at Jamina in western Palestine. Here the Sanhedrin was reconstituted. The old Sanhedrin, consisting of the chief priests and the elders of the people had come to an end. The new

Sanhedrin, established at Jamina, consisted, like the old one of seventy one members, but these elders were all doctors of the law, and their president was regularly one of the most distinguished rabbis of the day.

The Parthians, perhaps earlier contented to allow local Jewry to receive instruction from Jerusalem, certainly took advantage of the change in Palestinian politics and the anti-Roman turn in Jewish world opinion, to establish local control of Jewry under close supervision. In the next century Jews were the most loyal supporters of the Parthian cause against Trajan, Septimus, Serverus and Alexander Severus. In Palestine, circles of Jewish Messianists were prepared to cooperate with the Parthians against Rome. (= THE BAR KOKHBA REVOLT.)

After the Bar-Kokhba revolt many survivors in Palestinian Rabbinic Jewry began to look toward Parthian Babylon for solace and the hope of a brighter future. The community in Babylon numbering at least a million ran its own internal affairs. The Exilarch known in Jewish records by the Aramaic "Resh Galuta" or head of the exile remained intact through the change of the new Persian Sassanid dynasty in A.D.226 and survived in somewhat modified form the conquest of the country by the Arab followers of Mohammed in A.D. 642. The intellectual leadership no longer resided with the Exilarch but with the goan, the head of the Academy.

The Babylonian Jews felt no need to reconcile their Judaism with Persian culture. All their intellectual and spiritual energies were funnelled into the task of developing and enriching the Jewish Legacy they had received from the land of Israel. The mainstream of the Oral law of Talmudic and rabbinic Judaism passed_through Babylon and from there spread throughout the Jewish world. That process was facilitated by the Arab conquest the double organisation under goan and Exilarch continued until the 11th century. Tamerlane ended the Exilarch in 1401.

THE TALMUD

With the suppression of the revolt of A.D. 66-70, the Zealots who had formed its spearhead were crushed. The Essenes, with their quietest outlook, exercised little or no influence on public life. The Sadducees, who had supported the interests of the chief priestly families, disappeared as a party with the end of the old order. Most of the rabbis belonged to the party of the Pharisees. And it was precisely this party, because of its relative detachment from the temple order, which proved its capacity to survive the catastrophe and reorganise religious life in Israel.

The chief point in the Pharisee's code wherein they differed from the Sadducees was their insistence on the validity of a mass of oral tradition. (Mtt.15:2; Mk.7: 3) which had accumulated in the course of the centuries as a supplement to the written law. This oral matter had largely originated among the scribes since the time of Ezra, although most of the literary class undoubtedly believed that it descended from Moses. They consequently went so far as to lay down the principle that, in case of a contradiction between a written and an oral precept the preference must be given to the oral.

When the oral traditions were written down is not certain, it is generally assumed that this happened about 200 A.D. but some of the material may have been written down earlier. It had in any case assumed a fixed shape or arrangement by A.D. 200; and thenceforth it became the discussion both in the Palestinian and the Babylonian schools.

· The Mishna (A.D. 200) is the interpretation of the written law.

· The Gemara (300-600 A.D.) is a collection of commentaries on the Mishna.

· Mishna and Gemara together constitute the Talmud or Talmuds.

Chapter 13 - The Beast of the Sea

THE BEAST

“And they shall drive thee from men, and thy dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field: they shall make thee to eat grass like the oxen, and seven times shall pass over thee, until thou know that the MOST HIGH ruleth in the kingdom of men and giveth it to whomsoever He will.” (Dan.4: 32)

THE BEAST OF THE SEA

“And I stood upon the sand of the sea, and saw a beast rise up out of the sea, having seven heads and ten horns, and upon his horns ten crowns, and upon his heads the name of blasphemy.”

(Rev.13: 1)

The exposition of this chapter comes with the inherit danger of being either too vague to be helpful, or too specific, and therefore wrong. The present author will attempt to expound this chapter using hermeneutical principles, and will offer a number of suggestions. Real flesh will be attached to the bones of this exegesis in a separate chapter on current events.

The R.V. reads: “and he (= the dragon) stood on the sand of the sea” The dragon is waiting to transfer his power to the new monster that is about to emerge from the sea. The word used for sea here is thalassa – no doubt to draw us to Daniel 7: 3 “four great beasts came up from the sea.” The sea here is interchangeable with the “bottomless pit” (abussos). The sea is often used generically for the Gentile nations1 but in the light of the features displayed by the beast, it is most probably the Persian gulf.

John draws us immediately to Daniel by mentioning that the beast has seven heads, which is the totality of the heads of the monsters in Daniel chapter seven. Unlike Daniel, John is concerned with a single kingdom rather than with a succession of four kingdoms. The beast represents therefore the kingdom of men – the whole image is standing! It is interesting to note that in the original, this verse (which the R.V. renders) mentions the ten horns first, which is the reverse order of Daniel:

“having ten horns and seven heads, and on his horns ten crowns.”

The vision, is then, focused on the ten horns. The ten horns are ten independent powers, who at some point pool their sovereignty, “ten kings give their power and strength to the beast” (17: 12). Peter Watkins astutely remarks:

“This means that ten kings ask the beast to be king over them. Because they are themselves kings, they virtually invite the beast to be King of Kings. Hence the comment: The Lamb shall overcome them: for he [not the beast] is Lord of Lords and King of Kings.” (17: 14)2

This is why the horns of the beast in 17: 3 have no crowns.

These ten kings no doubt correspond with the “ten toes” on the feet of Nebuchadnezzar's image. So we are witnessing things immediately before the God of heaven sets up his kingdom.

“And whereas thou sawest the feet and toes, part of potters' clay, and part of iron, the kingdom shall be divided; but there shall be in it of the strength of the iron, forasmuch as thou sawest the iron mixed with miry clay. And as the toes of the feet were part of iron, and part of clay, so the

kingdom shall be partly strong, and partly broken. And whereas thou sawest iron mixed with miry clay, they shall mingle themselves with the seed of men: but they shall not cleave one to another, even as iron is not mixed with clay. And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever." (Dan. 2:41-44)

We note that, they shall mingle themselves with the seed of men and they shall not cleave one to another. In this passage we find two references to Genesis:

2: 24: Therefore shall a man (Adam) leave his father and mother (God) and cleave unto his wife. (Eve)

6: 2: The sons of God saw that the daughters of men were fair; and they took them wives of all which they chose.

The above connections suggest an allegiance between the sons of God (Jews) and the surrounding nations.1 The emphasis is not necessarily on intermarriage but on making covenants with strangers;

"But king Solomon loved many strange women, together with the daughter of Pharaoh, women of the Moabites, Ammonites, Edomites, Zidonians, and Hittites; Of the nations concerning which the LORD said unto the children of Israel, Ye shall not go in to them, neither shall they come in unto you: for surely they will turn away your heart after their gods: Solomon clave unto these in love." (1 Kings 11:1-2)

Solomon was in the first instance, "a son of God" (2 Sam.7: 14 not the Son) and he saw that the daughters of men were fair, and married them for political reasons (1Kgs.3: 1). This brought temporary stability to his empire, but eventually turned his heart to idol worship [image of the beast]. What began as the kingdom of God, drawing admiration from the surrounding nations, ended as a parody of itself, an over taxed, self indulgent, idolatrous kingdom raising an income of 666 talents of gold per annum for Solomon. (1 Kgs.10: 14, 2Chron.9: 13)

Solomon, with all his God given wisdom should have known better; "thou shalt make no covenant with them, neither shalt thou make marriages with them…for they shall turn away thy son from following me, that they may serve other gods….Neither shalt thou bring an abomination [idol = image of the beast] into thine house." (Deut.7: 3,4,26)

This corresponds with the marrying and giving in marriage in the synoptics (Mtt.24: 38; Lk.17: 27), which is a reference to the intermarriage of the sons of God and the daughters of men in the days of Noah (Gen.6: 2) – so shall it be also in the days of the Son of man.

Marriage is viewed in scripture as a covenant, made not only with the person involved but also with their gods.

The feet of Daniel's image represents a marriage between strong (iron) and brittle (clay) nations. A mixing of nations who were once part of the iron of the Roman empire (like Syria and Israel) and those who were made from the clay of the Euphrates (like Parthia). It is the mixing of a privileged, elect nation, (sons of God) with the seed of men – but they shall not cleave. What God has joined let not man put asunder – but God has not blessed this union.

This beast has on its heads the name (R.V. names) of blasphemy, 1 as it does in 17: 3.

Later these names of blasphemy are transferred to the woman who rides the beast, for she is called; MYSTERY BABYLON (17: 15)

THE LION MOUTH

“And the beast which I saw was like unto a leopard, and his feet were as the feet of a bear, and his mouth as the mouth of a lion: and the dragon gave him his power, and his seat, and great authority.” (Rev.13 :2)

Once again John lists the characteristics of Daniel’s beast in reverse order: like a leopard, it’s feet like a bear’s and it’s mouth like a lion’s mouth. What is notable about this description is the emphasis on the middle-eastern elements. The leopard representing the Greek- Persian Seleucid empire, a bear representing Media and the Lion representing Babylon. All these empires centred around Babylon, and all possessed the land of Israel within their jurisdiction. While it might be argued that the beast has seven heads and therefore the fourth beast (Rome) is indirectly included – it is not however to the fourth beast that John directs our attention, but to the ten horns. These ten horns (ten kings Dan.7: 24; Rev.17: 12) arise out of this kingdom (out of the fourth beast).1 The beast is then in it’s latest incarnation a loose confederation of ten kings.

The important aspect of this beast is the lion-like (Babylonian) mouth-piece. This mouth speaks great things and blasphemies (13: 5). The lion mouth (Nebuchadnezzar) said ;

“Is this not great Babylon, that I have built for the house of the kingdom by the might of my power and for the honour of my majesty?” (Dan.4: 30)

This is also modelled on the little horn of Daniel 8: 9, which speaks “words against the Most High (7: 25) and who magnifies himself in his heart (8: 25) 2

The dragon gave him his power, and his seat, and great authority – this transfer of power constitutes a brief “enthronization” scene, in which it is revealed that the beast is an agent or plenipotentiary of the dragon or more specifically Satan (12: 9). The power of the beast empire is therefore satanic in origin. In the first century this monster was embodied by the red dragon with seven heads, ten horns and seven crowns (12: 3) – representative of the Roman Empire, ruled from seven hills and under the emperor Nero, the sixth Caesar at the time of writing (five fallen, one is 17: 9-10 see digression 12.1) There was, however one more still to come, who would continue a short while (3½ years). This is the beast of (13: 1) who is the scarlet beast (17: 3), deriving power from the same source – dragon (satan).

SCARLET BEAST =

10 KING EMPIRE

FUTURE

Opposition to God is embodied in these human empires. After the devil showed Jesus all the kingdoms of the world, he makes the following statement ;

“And the devil (satan) said to him, “To you will I give all this authority and their glory; for it has been delivered to me, and I give it to whom I will.”

We note the following parallels:

JESUS BEAST EMPIRE

1. Emerges from the waters of Baptism 1. Emerges from the sea

2. Receives the holy spirit 2. Given power to do great signs

3. Tempted in the wilderness 3. Beast and rider in the wilderness

4. Lamb, as though it had been slain 4. One of its heads slain to death

5. Is, was, is to come 5. Was, is not, shall ascend

6. The world is gone after him (Jhn.12: 19) 6. All the world wondered after him

7. Worship me (Satan) 7. Worship the beast and his image

8. Satan promises the kingdoms of the world 8. Dragon (satan) gave him his power

9. Ministry 3½ years 9. Exists a 'short time' 42 months

Jesus answered; "Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve." Jesus refused the overtures of Satan. In 2 Thess.2: 9 it is claimed that the coming of the lawless one will be by the activity of Satan1 with all power and signs and lying (pseudos) wonders. The lie, is that man is God – shewing himself that he is God (v.4). This is the original sin of Genesis 3: 5. [see chpt.12 pg.13,14]

As in the trumpet visions, it is the Babylonian aspect that is highlighted (the lion mouth). The monster, is Babylonian in type, and the woman who controls the monster is also MYSTERY BABYLON.

The woman represents a particular city. That city is the archetypal Babylon. It is the glory of kingdoms (Isa.13: 19) it is the temporary dwelling place of God's people, who are encouraged to plant and build until God performs his good word (Jer.29:5-10), it is full of graven images (Jer.51: 47) and vaunting pride (Isa.14:13, Dan.4:30). Its ultimate destiny is destruction (Rev.14: 8) but not before God's people come out of her (Rev.18: 4). In the first century she was both Jerusalem and Rome, whose powers conspired together to crucify the Son of God. However, even here the Jews carry the greater responsibility, for they ought to have known better. The future witnesses die in Jerusalem, as did the son of God. The Lion and the Lion mouth are symbolic for Babylon, but the lion is also used as a symbol for the city of Jerusalem.

"Woe to Ariel, to Ariel, the city where David dwelt! add ye year to year; let them kill sacrifices. Yet I will distress Ariel, and there shall be heaviness and sorrow: and it shall be unto me as Ariel. And I will camp against thee round about, and will lay siege against thee with a mount, and I will raise forts against thee. And thou shalt be brought down, and shalt speak out of the ground, and thy speech shall be low out of the dust, and thy voice shall be, as of one that hath a familiar spirit, out of the ground, and thy speech shall whisper out of the dust." (Isa.29:1-4)

This verse plays on the word for lion, Ariel [Strongs 739] and the word for altar [Strongs 741] which are virtually identical in the Hebrew. The lion (Jerusalem – Babylon) will become an altar of sacrifice.

"Mine heritage is unto me as a lion in the forest; it crieth out against me: therefore have I hated it." (Jer.12:8)

She crieth out against me – uttereth her voice against me (R.V.) – this is the hubris of the lion mouth.

THE WOUNDED HEAD

“And I saw one of his heads as it were wounded to death; and his deadly wound was healed: and all the world wondered after the beast.” (Rev.13: 3)

This is a parody of the Lamb standing as though it had been slain (5: 6). The Lamb is the one that liveth and was dead (1: 18) the beast also, “was and is not; and shall ascend out of the abyss.” (17: 8)

One of the heads appeared to be fatally wounded, but it’s mortal wound healed.

Which head was wounded? Here the cardinal number one can also be an ordinal number: the first head appeared to be fatally wounded. This is the Babylonian head of the beast. Whilst in verse 3 it is only the first head that is wounded, later this becomes a metaphor for the whole monster: “the first beast whose deadly wound was healed” (v.12) “the beast which had the wound by a sword and did live.” (v.14)

This fatally wounded head whose mortal wound was healed is none other than the resurrected Babylon:

JEREMIAH 51

REVELATION

They shall roar together like lions. (v.38) Mouth like a lion. (13v.2)

I will make them drunken, that they may rejoice. (v.39) Woman drunk with the blood of witnesses. (17v.6) rejoicing at the death of the witnesses (11v.10)

The sea is come upon Babylon: she is covered with the multitude of the waves thereof. (v. 42)

Emerges from the sea. (13: 1)

A sword upon Babylon. (50:35,37) Wounded by a sword. (13: 14)

How is Sheshach taken! How is Babylon become an astonishment among the nations! (v.41)

The nations marvel at the swiftness and completeness of Babylon’s destruction.

Contrast: I wondered with great admiration (astonishment) And the angel said unto me wherefore didst thou marvel?

John is astonished at Babylon’s resurrection.

Babylon shall become heaps, a dwelling place for dragons1, an astonishment and a hissing. (v.37)

Lamb that speaks like a dragon. (13: 11)

I will do judgement on the graven images of Babylon.(v.37) Image of the beast. (13: 15)

The whole world wondered after the beast because although it was once mortally wounded, now it had risen phoenix like from the ashes.

“It shall be no more inhabited for ever; neither shall it be dwelt in from generation to generation.” (Jer.50: 39)

“The beast thou sawest was, is not; and shall ascend out of the bottomless pit.” (Rev.17: 8)

The whole world (earth R.V.) wondered after the beast. John uses the same phrase in his gospel:

“The Pharisees therefore said among themselves, perceive ye how ye prevail nothing? Behold, the world is gone after him.” [Jesus] (John.12: 19)

The “world” is Johannine idiom for the Jewish nation.

1. Show thyself to the world (John.7: 4) jeered his brothers.

2. This is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men (Jews) loved darkness rather than light. (John.3: 9)

3. See also 1: 29; 8: 26; 15: 19; 17: 14.

“I am come in my Father’s name, and ye receive me not: if another shall come in his own name (666), him ye will receive.” (John.5 : 43)

The 144,000 follow the Lamb wherever he goes (14:14) even if this means martyrdom, in contrast the world (Jewish world) follows the beast. The O.T. comments as follows; “this people played the harlot [and followed] after strange gods” (LXX Deut.31: 16)

The context of Deuteronomy 31 is the introduction of the song of witness (v.21) to be used as a testimony against the people, because after the death of Moses they would break covenant and worship strange gods. The song of witness that follows in chapter 32, is prophetic, “will befall you in the latter days” (v.29). The whole chapter should be read against the backdrop of Revelation:

DEUTERONOMY 32

REVELATION 13

See now that I, even I, am he,

And there is no god with me:

I kill, and I make alive;

I wound and I heal:

Neither is their any that can

Deliver out of my hand. (v.39)

Power was given him (the beast) to give life to the image of the beast. (13: 15)

One of his heads as though it were wounded unto death ; and his deadly wound was healed. (13: 3)

WHO IS LIKE UNTO THE BEAST?

“And they worshipped the dragon which gave power unto the beast: and they worshipped the beast, saying, Who is like unto the beast? who is able to make war with him?” (Rev.13:4)

This is obviously an allusion to Ex. 15:11 a chapter that is extensively alluded to, or paraphrased in Revelation. (see chapter 12) In Exodus 15 Moses and the people celebrate their Egyptian deliverance by singing a song of praise to God. He is praised for doing wonders (v.11) for guiding them into the land (v.13), it is recorded how the surrounding nations were amazed and afraid.

(v.14-16). In a similar fashion the beast (by proxy) does wonders (13: 14) and inspires fear and awe by the people.

Who is able to make war with him? This was the promise made to Israel.

“There shall no man be able to stand before thee, until thou have destroyed them” (Deut.7: 24) and, “God shall lay the fear of you and the dread of you upon all the land that ye shall tread upon.” (Deut.11: 25)

We have already observed that Deuteronomy 7 has a latter day context. We find a similar rhetorical question that is an expression of impotence and despair in Samuel.

“Who can deliver us from the power of these mighty gods?” (1 Sam.4: 8). This was the cry of the Philistines when confronted with the Israelite army, who were accompanied by the Ark of the Covenant. The plural “gods” is no doubt a reference to the two, ox-faced cherubim on the ark. This allusion to Samuel is meant to draw our attention to the similarities between the sons of Belial and the man of sin (beast?).

1 SAMUEL REV. 13 & 2 THESS. 2.

Sons of Belial. [sons of wickedness] (2:12)

Then shall that wicked be revealed. (2 Thess.2:8)

They abhorred the offering of the Lord. (2:17)

Who believed not the truth(JESUS CHRIST) but had pleasure in unrighteousness. (2 Thess.2:12)

Hophni – fighter, pugilist - took what belonged to God by violence.

Who is able to make war with him? (13:4)

Phineas – mouth of a serpent

That they should believe a lie[lie of the serpent = showing himself that he is God] (2 Thess.2:11)

Spake as a dragon. [serpent] (Rev.13: 11)

Who shall deliver us out of the hand of these mighty gods? (4: 8)

Who is able to make war with him? (13:4)

For the iniquity which he knoweth and he restrained them not. (3: 13)

Mystery of iniquity. That which restraineth to the end….there is one that restraineth now. (2 Thess.2: 6,7)

Eli sat upon a seat by a post of the temple of the Lord. (1:9)

Sitteth in the temple of God. (2 Thess.2: 4)

HANNAH’S PRAYER:

Talk no more so exceeding proudly: Let not arrogancy come out of your mouth. (2:3)

Who opposeth and exalteth himself. (2 Thess.2:4)

A mouth speaking great things. (13:5)

The Lord killeth, and maketh alive: He bringeth down to the grave and he bringeth up. (2:6)

Smitten to death and his death stroke was healed. (13:13)

We note that the man of sin, the beast of the earth, the beast of the sea and, the image of the beast share many characteristics – often they are difficult to distinguish because they are all a manifestation of the of the same thing.

Eli and his sons represented a corrupt priesthood. Eli suffered the fate of a broken neck, (and his sons were killed) this was the consequence dictated by the law for an unredeemed ass. (Ex.34: 20) The ass was a symbol of royalty. Israel was meant to be a royal-priesthood.

The essence of this verse, "who is like the beast?"- is the desire to be like God – this is original sin (Gen.3: 5), it is a parody of the meaning of the archangel Michael's name: "who is like God?"

Original sin is embodied as a beast, an empirical-religious system. In the first century the unification of empirical and religious aspirations occurred when Roman (empirical) and Judaistic (religious) powers conspired to crucify the Son of God. The common cause, rebellion against God, had the effect of uniting enemies – "And the same day Pilate and Herod were made friends together: for before they were at enmity between themselves." (Lk.23: 12)

The two religions that believe in works as a means of justification are Judaism and Islam – this is original sin – man can, "be like God" through his own efforts.

The full manifestation of original sin is at the very last displayed in an individual - a man, (it is the number of a man, 666), as it was in the beginning with Adam. We have then a progressive revelation of human sinfulness in all its "glory", which God has allowed to develop unchallenged, right at the end of human history.

BLASPHEMY

"And there was given unto him a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies; and power was given unto him to continue forty and two months." (Rev.13:5)

was given to him (this phrase is used 4x) "God rules in the kingdom of men" The dragon may well have transferred his power to the beast, but ultimate sovereignty and control of world events come from God. Even political authority has been instituted by God. (Rom.13: 1-2)

The twin motifs of vaunting pride or hubris and blasphemy are mentioned in this verse. The hubris motif is based on Dan.8: 10-11 (Antiochus Epiphanes) and Lucifer (Sennacherib) in Isa.14: 13-14. The blasphemy motif is found in Dan.7: 25. This monster would continue 42 months, this is the "short time" of 12: 12 and the "continuation for a short space" of 17: 10.

This period of forty-two months was referred to earlier in 11: 2 as the period of time when the nations would hold the holy city under subjection. The two witnesses are also said to be granted 1,260 days to prophesy (42 months of 30 days). The woman in 12: 6 was protected in the wilderness for 1,260 days, referred to in 12: 14 as "a time, times, and half a time" (an allusion to Dan.7: 25; 12: 7). It is clear that John intends the reader to understand that the period during which the first beast is active coincides with the period during which the holy city will be trampled on by the nations and the period during which the two witnesses will prophesy. Their death must therefore coincide with the end of this predestined period of time.

BLASPHEMING THE TABERNACLE

“And he opened his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme his name, and his tabernacle, and them that dwell in heaven.” (Rev.13:6)

The monster blasphemes Gods name, and his tabernacle, and those that dwell in heaven. (A.V.) However, the best MSS omit ‘and’ and the Chester Beatly papyrus reads “his dwelling in heaven” the R.V. renders ‘and’ as ‘even’. One of the fundamental rules of textual criticism is that the hardest reading is always best (translators have a penchant for simplifying or interpreting a reading).

The most probable reading is then:

Gods name, and his tabernacle (skê nê), them that dwell (skê noo) in heaven.

In Rev.21: 3 skê nê is used almost as the equivalent of the Hebrew shekinah , to denote God’s tabernacling presence, and we are told that with the descent of the new Jerusalem this presence is at last among men. The tabernacle was a temporary dwelling place – the word skê nê is used in the Septuagint for the tabernacle in the wilderness. The tabernacle could be dismantled and erected, it signified in the first instance the indwelling of the shekinah in mortal flesh. 1

Not only are these people Gods dwelling place, but they themselves (metaphorically) “dwell in heaven.” He abides in them and conversely they abide in his dwelling place – for, “their citizenship is in heaven.” (Phil.3: 20) In the streets of Philadelphia the dwellers in heaven rub shoulders with the, “inhabitants of earth.”

The monsters attack is a blaspheming of the “shekinah”, which divine presence dwells in the collective “body” of the Lord. It is the slandering of Gods people.

WAR WITH THE SAINTS

“And it was given unto him to make war with the saints, and to overcome them: and power was given him over all kindreds, and tongues, and nations.” (Rev. 13:7)

We are not permitted to forget that the monster acts only by divine permission, and that all he does is foreseen and provided for in the grand strategy of God. He is only allowed to attack the witnesses after they have finished their ministry –“shall make war against them, and shall overcome them, and kill them.” (11:7)

This verse alludes to Dan.7: 21 and probably to the LXX Dan.7:8 “and he waged war against the saints” In Dan.7:21, it says that the little horn, “made war with the holy ones and was prevailing over them.”

The extent of the monsters authority is over every tribe, people tongue and nation. The tribes of the earth are the Jews (see 1: 7 R.V.) people tongue and nation are rendered in the singular (R.V.) – this is no doubt to remind us that, “the people is one, and they have all one language; and this they begin to do: and now nothing will be restrained from them, which they have imagined (R.V. purposed) to do.” (Gen.11: 6)

The monster is building the tower of Babel.

THE BOOK OF LIFE

“And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him, whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.” (Rev.13: 8)

Only the inhabitants of earth, whose abode is Babylon, are worshipers of the beast. The phrase, “inhabitants of the earth” occurs nine times in Revelation, but only here are all that dwell upon the earth mentioned. This does not refer to the past or present situation but to the future when the role of the beast will include the entire Jewish nation and surrounding countries. The next portion of the verse is understood by the translators in two different ways :

1. Whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world. (AV; NIV; REB)

2. Whose name has not been written from the foundation of the world in the book of life of the Lamb that was slaughtered. (RSV; NSRV)

Option 1 – refers to the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world. This corresponds with 1 Pet.1: 19; “a lamb predestinated before the foundation of the world.” The Word Biblical Commentary says, “While it is possible to think of Christ as destined to die for the sins of the world, it is quite another thing to say he was slain before the creation of the world.”

This conclusion stems from a failure to recognise that “world” is Johannine idiom for the “Jewish world.”

Abraham was the founder of the “Jewish world” (by faith in the covenant promises made by God): “And Abraham, rejoiced to see my day: and he saw it, and was glad” (John 8: 56). Abraham “saw” the slain lamb on Mt. Moriah – on the mountain of the Lord it (the Lamb) shall be seen (Gen.22: 14). From the foundation of the “Jewish world” the Lamb was slain (in type) and Abraham the father of the Jews “saw” it.

Option 2 – refers to believers written from the foundation of the world. This interpretation finds support from 17: 8 which is a doublet.

13: 8 17: 8

whose name was not written whose name was not written

in the book of life in the book of life

of the Lamb slaughtered -

from the foundation of the world from the foundation of the world

This seems to support the doctrine of predestination and election espoused by Paul. (Rom. 9:10-23) The mind of the spirit has no interest in qualifying the seemingly contradictory doctrines of election and freewill.

While it is possible to be written in the book of life, it is also possible for a name to be erased (3: 5); and when the last judgement comes, there are record books to be opened as well as the book of life (20: 12). We see then that either option is valid, however, the present author prefers option 1.

MESSAGE TO THE ECCLESIA

“If any man have an ear, let him hear.” (Rev.13: 9)

In each of the seven letters to the ecclesias these words accompanied the promise to the conqueror. By their solemn repetition here at the heart of his book John indicates that he is turning once again to give the ecclesia its marching orders. If God allows the monster to wage

war on his people and conquer them, what must Gods people do? They must allow themselves to be conquered as their Lord has done, so that like their Lord they may win a victory not of this world.

KILLING WITH THE SWORD

“He that leadeth into captivity shall go into captivity: he that killeth with the sword must be killed with the sword. Here is the patience and the faith of the saints.” (Rev. 13:10)

This verse is based on an allusion to LXX Jer.15: 2;

“Those who are destined for pestilence, to pestilence, those who are destined for the sword to the sword; those who are destined for famine to famine; those who are destined for captivity, to captivity.”

(See also LXX Jer.50: 11 and M.T. Jer.43: 11)

John is adapting Jeremiah’s prophetic warning against Jerusalem (of impending Babylonian invasion) towards the saints (the new Jerusalem).

Whoever is for prison, to prison he goes. Whoever kills with the sword must with the sword be killed.

John is in fact repeating the words of Jesus, spoken to Peter, when he was arrested in Gethsemane.

“All who take the sword, shall perish by the sword.” (Mtt.26: 52)

This is extremely fitting, for Peter exhorts the brethren on how to behave when arrested and accused. Citing the example of Christ he says:

“Who did no sin, neither was guile (deception) found in his mouth: who when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously.” (1 Pet.2: 22,23)

This is a theme that Peter emphasises throughout his epistle. He refers to “guile” three times (1 Pet.2: 1; 2: 22; 3: 10) he uses Abraham as an example of a husband, who is worthy of his wife's respect (3: 6) – and this despite him using guile to deceive Pharaoh and Abimelech about his wife’s status. He cites Psalm 34, with the title – “A Psalm of David when he changed his behaviour before Achish.” Ultimately David and Abraham were not saved out of their predicament by guile, but by divine intervention. (1 Pet.3: 10-12)

Finally Peter exhorts:

“Let none of you suffer as a murderer (Barabbas) or as a thief (thief on the cross) or as a meddler (R.V.) [= spy like Judas] in other men’s matters. Yet if any man suffer as a Christian let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God in this name (R.V.) [i.e., in Christ’s name]. For the time has come that judgement (human judgement) must begin at the house of God: and if it first begin at us (the apostles), what shall the end of them be that obey not the gospel of God? [i.e., divine judgement]

(1Pet.4:15-17)

How appropriate that Peter should exhort the brethren in this matter. He had declared that he was willing to go to prison, nay, even to die for his Lord, yet when the time came he used guile to avoid arrest.

This experience qualified him to "feed my sheep" (John 21: 17) and later in his life Peter became an example of Christian martyrdom when he was crucified upside down. (John 21: 18)

Here is the patience and the faith of the saints – the word patience should be rendered endurance. For the prospect of retribution on an ungodly world calls for no such endurance of faith. What calls for loyal endurance is that the saints must submit without resistance to the conquering attack of the monster, like their Lord did. This passive martyrdom is an outward display of faith in Gods justice and retributive judgement – it does honour to his name. And this is why the death of Christ on the cross and the great ordeal (of the saints) is also a great victory.

THE BEAST OF THE EARTH – THE FALSE PROPHET

"And I beheld another beast coming up out of the earth; and he had two horns like a lamb, and he spake as a dragon. And he exerciseth all the power of the first beast before him, and causeth the earth and them which dwell therein to worship the first beast, whose deadly wound was healed." (Rev.13:11-12)

As Ramsay pointed out, whatever comes from the sea is foreign, and whatever comes from the land is a native product. Peter Watkins comments: These words come straight after the description of the beast whose deadly wound is healed. From all the information given in Revelation 13, it can be seen that this second beast is not an independent political power that exists at the same time as the beast. Rather, it is a publicity agent for the first beast. It "causeth the earth and them which dwell therein to worship the first beast, whose deadly wound was healed." 1

He had two horns like unto a lamb (arnion) – a ram has horns, a lamb does not have horns – this is probably Johns way of indicating that although he had horns like a ram, he looked like a lamb, but spoke as a dragon. John is no doubt alluding to Dan 8: 20 – the ram with two horns, who are the kings of Media and Persia. However, what John sees is not a political, but a religious power (lamb) consisting of two prominent groups of people. (Jews and Muslims – Israel and Palestinian state?)

This Lamb speaks as a dragon (serpent) and repeats the age old lie, "ye shall be as the Elohim" (Gen.3: 5). The only two religions based on the concept of works and self- justification are Judaism and Islam.

The Lamb, who speaks like a serpent, is elsewhere referred to as the "false prophet." (16: 13; 19: 20; 20: 10) The false prophet is then contemporary with the sea monster and acts as his mouth-piece. The false prophet gives the sea monster religious legitimacy.

Christ also issued warnings about the false prophet:

Mtt.24: 11 ; "Many false prophets shall arise and shall deceive many."

Mtt.24: 24 ; "For there shall arise false Christ's and false prophets, and shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect." (to seduce [like the serpent], if it were possible the very elect – Mk.13: 22)

Matthew 7: 15-23 Revelation 13

Beware of false prophets THE FALSE PROPHET

which come to you in sheep's clothing Like a Lamb. (13:11)

inwardly ravening wolves Speaks like a serpent. (13:11)

By their fruits ye shall know them. Instructs inhabitants of the earth to make an image to the beast. (13:11)

Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied Doeth great signs and wonders. (13:13)

In thy name? And in thy name cast

out devils? And in thy name done

many wonderful works?

And then will I profess unto them, The false prophet cast into the lake of

I never knew you: depart from me, fire. (19:20)

ye that work iniquity.

From the beginning of their history the people of Israel were warned not to be led astray by false prophets.

DEUTERONOMY 13

REVELATION 13

If there arise among thee a prophet or a dreamer of dreams (13:1)

Two horns like a lamb but spoke as a dragon. (13:13)

And give thee a sign or a wonder, and the sign or wonder come to pass, (13:2)

And he doeth great wonders, so that he maketh fire to come down from heaven. (13:13)

Whereof he spake unto thee saying (13:2)

Saying to them that dwell on earth (13:14)

Let us go after other gods, which thou hast not known, and let us serve them (13:2)

That they should make an image to the beast (13:14) and cause as many as would not worship the image to be killed (13:15)

Thou shalt surely smite the inhabitants of that city with the edge of the sword destroying it utterly, and all that is therein.....and shall burn with fire the city. (13: 15,16)

These shall hate the whore (that great city 17:18) and shall make her desolate and naked, and shall eat her flesh, and burn her utterly with fire.1 (17:17)

False prophets are equated with false teachers by the apostle Peter. Their ministry was motivated by monetary gain (like Balaam) and not by a love of the truth.

2 Peter 2: 1-3 Revelation 13

False prophets among the people The false prophet

False teachers among you

Who, with feigned words Lamb speaking like a serpent

(v.11) saying to them…that

they should make an image.

(v.14)

make merchandise of you that no man might buy or sell,

save he that had the mark. (v.17)

The apostle Paul warns Timothy that in the last days (of the Jewish dispensation) perilous times would come. This had a fulfilment in the first century but will be fully realised in the future.

2 TIMOTHY 3 REVELATION 13

In the last days perilous times shall come

lovers of their own selves

(sinful man becomes a substitute for God)

lovers of money

boasters, proud blasphemers

disobedient to parents

implacable (refusing to break hostilities)

fierce

slanderers – despisers of those that are good

puffed up

having a form of godliness

denying the power thereof

The serpents (dragons) lie. (v.11) MAN IS GOD

no man buy or sell, save he that had the mark.(v.16)

a mouth speaking great things and blashemies.(v.5)

The parents are Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Abraham is our father. If ye were Abraham's children, ye would do the works of Abraham. (John 8:39 see also Malachi 4:6)

Who is able to make war with him? (v.4)

The devil is come down to you having great wrath.(12:12)

To blaspheme them that dwell in heaven. (v.6)

Upon his heads the names of blasphemy. (v.1)

Looks like a lamb. (v.11)

Speaks like a serpent, does great wonders. (v.14)

2 TIMOTHY 3 REVELATION 13

For of this sort are they which creep into houses

[for there are many vain talkers and deceivers, specially they of the circumcision: whose mouths must be stopped, who subject whole houses, teaching things which they ought not, for filthy lucre's sake. Titus 1:10-11]

and lead captive (seduce) silly (foolish) women

laden with sins, led away with divers lusts

ever learning never able to come to a knowledge of the truth

Now as Jannes and Jambres withstood Moses

But they shall proceed on further: for their folly shall be manifest unto all men, as theirs also was.

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

This women is seduced while her husband was absent, it is the woman of 12: 13-16

She becomes the great harlot, committing fornication with the kings of the earth. (17: 2)

Who believed not the truth (Jesus Christ) but had pleasure in unrighteousness. (2 Thess.2:12)

FALSE WITNESSES: And he decieveth them that dwell on the earth by the means of those miracles which he had power to do in the sight of the beast. (v.14)

That he might be revealed in his own time [season]. (2 Thess.2:6) this is the revelation of the man of sin – 666 (v.18)

He that leadeth into captivity [prison] shall go into captivity: he that killeth with the sword must be killed with the sword. Here is the patience [endurance] and faith of the saints. (v.10)

COMMENTS ON 2 TIMOTHY 3

Not all the vices in chapter 3 find their exact counterpart in Revelation chapter 13, but they speak for themselves – unthankful : they are ungrateful either to God or man - unholy : profane or irreligious, counting nothing sacred – without natural affection – unfeeling, callous as the brethren of Joseph were when they sold him into bondage - implacable : irreconcilable; lit., "without a libation or drink- offering" ; then, "without a truce", which was ratified by a libation; then "admitting of no truce" or refusing to break hostilities – incontinent : without self control, profligates, licentious – traitors : like Judas – heady, high-minded: headstrong – stubborn like Balaam and Cain – lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God – these bow down and worship their own flesh. SILLY WOMEN - the Hebrew counterpart means to deceive, flatter and entice, therefore a silly woman: Ephraim is a silly dove:

"Ephraim, he hath mixed himself among the people; Ephraim is a cake not turned. Strangers have devoured his strength, and he knoweth it not: yea, grey hairs are here and there upon him, yet he knoweth not. And the pride of Israel testifieth to his face: and they do not return to the LORD their God, nor seek him for all this. Ephraim also is like a silly dove without heart: they call to Egypt, they go to Assyria. When they shall go, I will spread my net upon them; I will bring them

down as the fowls of the heaven; I will chastise them, as their congregation hath heard." (Hosea 7:8-12)

MIRACLE WORKER

"And he doeth great wonders, so that he maketh fire come down from heaven on the earth in the sight of men, And deceiveth them that dwell on the earth by the means of those miracles which he had power to do in the sight of the beast; saying to them that dwell on the earth, that they should make an image to the beast, which had the wound by a sword, and did live." (Rev.13:13-14)

The false prophet – the "two horned" lamb is the counterfoil to the two witnesses. They mimic the ministry of the witnesses (reproducing the signs of Elijah) for they are the forerunners of the antichrist. It is not clear whether deceived means that the miracles are fraudulent, or genuine manifestations of power.

Let us consider both options:

(1) Fraudulent signs – Moses and Aaron did signs and wonders before Pharaoh, and were opposed by false witnesses:

"Then Pharaoh also called the wise men and sorcerers: now the magicians of Egypt, they also did in like manner with their enchantments." [secret arts] (Ex.7: 11)

These became known as JANNES and JAMBRES – two legendary Egyptian sorcerers whose names appear in various sources as the adversaries of Moses. They are also mentioned in Jewish traditional sources as the sons of Balaam and as having played a part in the incident of the golden calf (compare image of the beast)after joining the mixed multitude that accompanied Israel in the exodus from Egypt. (Tanh., Ki Tissa, 19)

(2) Genuine manifestations of power – the false prophet was permitted (was given power) to do miracles (v.14). In the first century the situation existed that Jewish Christians, who had received spirit gifts, were rejecting the faith, and turning back to Judaism.

"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. For the earth which drinketh in the rain that cometh oft upon it, and bringeth forth herbs meet for them by whom it is dressed, receiveth blessing from God: But that which beareth thorns and briers is rejected, and is nigh unto cursing; whose end is to be burned." (Heb.6:4-8)

The fate of those who possessed spirit gifts, yet rejected the truth is to be burned. The false prophet receives the same punishment. (19: 20) The author suggests that the scenario we have before us is similar to the first century situation. The ministry and vindication of the true witnesses results in the birth of a Jewish ecclesia (as did the ministry of Christ and his apostles), yet within that ecclesia we have 'false brethren' who abuse their spirit gifts. They are impostors, who 'fall away' and, 'crucify to themselves the son of God afresh.'

They are like the 'son of perdition' (Judas) who, 'sits in the temple of God' despite possessing spirit gifts (like Judas) they betray the son of God and 'exalt themselves.' The spirit gifts embolden them to believe the lie of the serpent, that man is God.

“shewing himself that he is God” (2 Thess.2:3-12)

These have a form of godliness (religion) but deny the power (dunamis) thereof. The word power usually denotes miraculous power in the New Testament. The word for power in Revelation 13:14,15 is didomi, which means to give : “by means of those miracles (signs R.V.) which he had power to do (it was given him to do R.V.).” The A.V. renders this as power, but the R.V. is more exact – “the signs it was given him to do.” These false witnesses are permitted to do signs – just as Satan was permitted to test Job. “And the Lord said unto Satan, Behold, all that he hath is in thy power.” (Job 1:12)

Whether the miracles are genuine or fraudulent is irrelevant, the true test is doctrine (what they preach). Any spirit (man with a spirit gift) who leads astray, and encourages worship of strange gods or who teaches falsehood concerning God, man, and the nature of Christ, is the spirit of antichrist.

“Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God: And every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God: and this is that spirit of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world.

Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them: because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world. They are of the world: therefore speak they of the world, and the world heareth them. We are of God: he that knoweth God heareth us; he that is not of God heareth not us. Hereby know we the spirit of truth, and the spirit of error.” (1 John 4:1-6)

The purpose of these signs is to induce worship of the beast, who at some past stage had suffered a mortal wound and had miraculously recovered. We saw earlier that Babylon was the mortally wounded head, this now becomes a metaphor for the complete beast. The false prophet (like the true witnesses) based their ministry on that of Elijah, for this is a contest between true religion and apostate religion. Elijah’s name means El is Yah. Only Yahweh is God, all other manifestations are vanity.

THE IMAGE OF THE BEAST

“And he had power to give life unto the image of the beast, that the image of the beast should both speak, and cause that as many as would not worship the image of the beast should be killed.” (Rev.13: 15)

Man was made in God’s image in order to reflect his glory (just as the woman is meant to reflect mans glory). The image of the beast is meant to reflect the glory of the beast. The language used here is reminiscent of Gen.2: 7, where God breathed into man’s nostrils and he became a living soul. The theme of this verse is creation. The theme of the previous verse is resurrection. The mortally wounded beast was resurrected by the creation of an image, an image that reflected the beast’s glory. The inhabitants of the earth are forced to worship the beast on pain of death. John wishes to draw us to Daniel chapter three.

“Nebuchadnezzar the king made an image of gold, whose height was threescore cubits, and the breadth thereof six cubits: he set it up in the plain of Dura, in the province of Babylon.” (Dan.3: 1)

“Therefore at that time, when all the people heard the sound of the cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, and all kinds of musick, all the people, the nations, and the languages, fell down and worshipped the golden image that Nebuchadnezzar the king had set up.” (Dan.3: 7)

The golden image that Nebuchadnezzar made was probably the golden Babylonian head that he had previously seen in his dream (2:32) – the head of this man image probably had the features of the king himself – “thou art this head of gold.” (2: 38)

It was therefore the image of a mans face, reflecting the glory of man, and constructed with the dimensions of 60 x 6 cubits.

The prophet Zechariah had warned that once the house had been destroyed (this was the Temple in A.D. 70) that a resurgence of wickedness would occur in the land of Shinar (Babylon): “and it shall be established, and set there upon her own base.” (Zech.5: 11) We have already noted that Judaism was resurrected in Babylon very soon after the destruction of the Temple, but Revelation chapter 13 speaks of a particularly virulent form of false religion in the land of Israel, right at the end, lasting three and a half years. Israel and her allies have become Babylon, Jerusalem has become Sodom and Egypt.

The prophet Jeremiah has the following to say about this image:

“Every man is become brutish (like a beast i.e., like Nebuchadnezzar) and is without knowledge; every goldsmith is put to shame by the graven image: for his molten image is falsehood, and there is no breath in them.” (Jer.51: 17)

No matter how hard man tries to breathe life into the image, it remains falsehood. All mans endeavours to “be like God” end up with him being like a beast of the field.

The prophet Habakkuk also draws our attention to the construction of this image:

Habakkuk 2:12-19

REVELATION

Woe to him that buildeth a town with blood, and stablisheth a city by iniquity! Behold, is it not of the LORD of hosts that the people shall labour in the very fire, and the people shall weary themselves for very vanity? For the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea.

And their dead bodies shall lie in the street of the great city, which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where also our Lord was crucified.

(11: 8)

The Harlot (city) destroyed:

And the ten horns which thou sawest upon the beast, these shall hate the whore, and shall make her desolate and naked, and shall eat her flesh, and burn her with fire.

(17:16)

Woe unto him that giveth his neighbour drink, that puttest thy bottle to him, and makest him drunken also, that thou mayest look on their nakedness! Thou art filled with shame for glory: drink thou also, and let thy foreskin be uncovered: the cup of the LORD'S right hand shall be turned unto thee, and shameful spewing shall be on thy glory.

The woman controls the beast for a time:

And the woman (a city) was arrayed in purple and scarlet colour, and decked with gold and precious stones and pearls, having a golden cup in her hand full of abominations and filthiness of her fornication. (17:4)

For the violence of Lebanon shall cover thee, and the spoil (destruction) of beasts, which made them afraid, because of men's blood, and for the violence of the land, of the city, and of all that dwell therein.

The beast (1: 1) The violence of the woman (city):

And I saw the woman drunken with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus: and when I saw her, I wondered with great admiration. (17:6)

What profiteth the graven image that the maker thereof hath graven it; the molten image, and a teacher of lies, that the maker of his work trusteth therein, to make dumb idols? Woe unto him that saith to the wood, Awake; to the dumb stone, Arise, it shall teach! Behold, it is laid over with gold and silver, and there is no breath at all in the midst of it.

It was given him to give breath to the image of the beast. (R.V. 13:15)

The prophet Isaiah also warns against worshipping vanity:

ISAIAH 46 REVELATION

Their idols were upon the beasts. A burden to the weary beast. (v.1)

Image of the beast. (13: 14)

To whom will ye liken me, and make me equal, and compare me, that we may be like? (v.5)

Who is like God?

Who is like the beast? (13: 4)

He maketh it a god: they fall down, yea, they worship. (v.6)

Causeth the earth and them that dwell therein to worship the first beast. (13:.13)

Yea one shall cry unto him, yet can he not answer, nor save him out of his trouble. (v.7)

That the image of the beast should speak. (13: 15)

Remember this and shew yourselves men.1 (v.8)

Here is the patience and faith of the saints.(13: 10)

Calling a ravenous bird from the east, the man that executeth my council. (v.11)

And I saw an angel standing in the sun; and he cried with a loud voice, saying to all the fowls that fly in the midst of heaven, Come and gather yourselves together unto the supper of the great God; That ye may eat the flesh of kings, and the flesh of captains, and the flesh of mighty men, and the flesh of horses, and of them that sit on them, and the flesh of all men, both free and bond, both small and great. And I saw the beast, and the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against him that sat on the horse, and against his army. And the beast was taken, and with him the false prophet that wrought miracles before him, with which

he deceived them that had received the mark of the beast, and them that worshipped his image. These both were cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone. (Rev.19:17-20)

The ministry of the witnesses is copied by the false prophet:

EXODUS 4: 27-31 REVELATION 13

And all the signs which he had commanded him

Of the signs which it was given him (v.14)

Moses and Aaron gathered together all the elders of Israel

All them that dwell on the earth (v.14)

Aaron spake all the words which the Lord had spoken unto Moses

Saying….that they should make an image (v.14)

Did the signs in the sight of the people

To do in the sight of the beast

And the people believed: they bowed their head and worshipped

Causeth the earth and them that dwell therein to worship the first beast (v.12)

The apostle Paul also exhorts the brethren against changing the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man. In this instance he is speaking about the golden calf incident, in which, during the absence of Moses, a copy was made of the ox cherubim. The cherubim represented God's glory in creation, they were therefore worshipping the creation (the pinnacle of which is man) rather than the creator.

ROMANS 1: 18-32

For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness;

Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath shewed it unto them. For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse: Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, And changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and four-footed beasts, and creeping things. Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonour their own bodies between themselves: Who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever. Amen. For this cause God gave them up unto vile affections: for even their women did change the natural use into that which is against nature: And likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another; men with men working that which is unseemly, and receiving in themselves that recompense of their error which was meet. And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient; Being filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder,

debate, deceit, malignity; whisperers, Backbiters, haters of God, despiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, Without understanding, covenant breakers, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful: Who knowing the judgement of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them.

GOD HATH SHEWED IT UNTO THEM =

SHEW US THE FATHER – He that hath seen me hath seen the Father. (Jhn.14:8-9) GOD IS MANIFEST IN CHRIST. In times past God shewed himself in types such as the tabernacle and sacrifice.

Creation of the world = Jewish world

Hebrews 8:5 Who serve unto the example and shadow of heavenly things, as Moses was admonished of God when he was about to make the tabernacle: for, See, saith he, that thou make all things according to the pattern shewed to thee in the mount. Exodus 32:1 And said unto him (Aaron) Up, make us gods, which shall go before us; for as for this Moses, the man that brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we wot not what is become of him. Exodus 32:6 And they rose up early on the morrow, and offered burnt offerings, and brought peace offerings; and the people sat down to eat and to drink, and rose up to play.

Psalm 106:20 Thus they changed their glory into the similitude of an ox that eateth grass.

PROUD BOASTERS = LAMECH INVENTORS OF EVIL = TUBAL CAIN (also the preacher: Ecc.7:29 who was king Uzziah: 2 Chron.26:15 – who exalted himself in Gods temple and was given the mark of Cain in his forehead.[v.26]) DISOBEDIENT TO PARENTS = ESAU (married foreign women) The Jews disobedient to Abraham's faith. WITHOUT NATURAL AFFECTION = Sodom. UNMERCIFUL = Joseph's brethren. Levi and Simeon, (the priests and scribes) who slew a man in their anger.

The difficulty with this exegetical approach comes when synchronising chapter17 into the scheme of things. Chapter 17 must be viewed as progressively parallel with chapter13.

Chapter 13 can be summarised thus:

(1) Beast – Imperial, persecuting and blaspheming – consists of ten kings.

(2) False prophet – spokesman for the beast – false religion

(3) Image of the beast – totalitarian dictatorship.

The revelation of the man of sin is progressive, starting with mans desire to have dominion, it then graduates to mans desire to be like God, and culminates in the worship of man himself. Into this scheme must be fitted the woman (city) of chapter 17, who for a time controls the beast, and epitomises false religion. This city is eventually destroyed by her allies. The false prophet cannot be equated with the woman, even though they share similar characteristics, for whereas the false prophet is destroyed by Christ (19: 20), the woman (city) is annihilated by her allies.(17: 16,17) It is possible however, that once the woman (city) is destroyed, the spirit that animated her (false prophet) is used to reconstruct another empire, similar to the first, but based on force, not on mutual agreement – and presided over by a dictator who demands worship.

AND HIS NUMBER IS 666

“And he causeth all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and bond, to receive a mark in their right hand, or in their foreheads: And that no man might buy or sell, save he that had the mark, or the name of the beast, or the number of his name. Here is wisdom. Let him that hath understanding count the number of the beast: for it is the number of a man; and his number is Six hundred threescore and six.”

(Rev. 13:16-18)

The imprint of Babylon is indisputable in the book of Revelation. The Chaldean Empire was called Leb – kamai (Jer.51: 1) 1 which means the heart of them that rise up against me – it was from Babylon that Adonikam (Lord of the uprising or enemy) returned from captivity with his 666 children. (Ezra 2: 13) 2 Once again this strongly suggests that we are looking for a Jewish fulfilment of this passage – the rebellious children have returned from Babylon to their homeland, but in fact they never really left. We have already encountered 666 in relation to Solomon’s kingdom, which became a travesty of the real thing. It is a number that recurs in scripture and it signifies open rebellion against God. Goliath was 6 cubits and a span. His spear head weighed 600 shekels of iron. He had six pieces of armour. Nebuchadnezzar's image was 60 x 6 cubits. It was worshipped when 6 instruments were heard. The numerical value of all the words describing the image in Daniel 3 is 4662 (7 x 666). The number 666 is the sum of all numbers from 1 to 36. The number 36 is the square of 6. The number 6 is itself a triangular number.

1

2 3

4 5 6

This triangle has three numbers on each side, 666 is also triangular with 36 numbers on each of the three sides. This suggests the unholy trinity of the beast, the false prophet and the image worshipers. (19: 20)

It is the second beast, the lamb with two horns, that forces everyone to receive the mark of the first beast. Receiving the mark should be seen as metaphorically erecting an image to the first beast. The all is socially comprehensive and describes every strata of society. They are placed under economic bondage. The Greek word for beast (therion) when transliterated into the Hebrew has the numerical value 666. (t = 400; r = 200; y = 10; w = 6; n = 50) There are ambiguities in the original text which do not make matters easier, a man in verse 16 could be rendered simply “man”, for there is no indefinite article in the Greek. This latter is the translation adopted by the NIV (cf. RSV). If this is correct then it rules out all those interpretations which explain 666 as signifying the name of one particular individual. In favour of the NIV rendering is the fact that “man” is the Greek anthropos, which usually has the generic sense of mankind. If it had one male person in mind then we would expect aner. Never the less, the first century Christians understood Nero as typifying the beast. It would only be natural for them to believe this, especially as Revelation was widely in circulation before the Nero persecution. This also gave rise to the Nero revidius legend, as discussed earlier in this book. Undoubtedly alternative readings such as 616 (Nero Caesar [666] could equally be spelt Neron, the final n having the value of 50) can be attributed to this fact, and is found in some ancient Greek manuscripts. The present author will leave the many other solutions referring to the Pope or the Catholic Church

to other commentators, as they are not valid in this context. Bible students are aware that 7 represents completeness, that 8 represents a new beginning, for Christ was raised on the first day of the new week – 6 is therefore the number of man in a generic sense, for he was made on the sixth day. In contrast with the mark of the beast, we have the 144,000 who bare “his name and his fathers name on their foreheads.” The name of the Lamb is Jesus, meaning Yahweh saves. It therefore also includes the name of the Father. In Greek Jesus is Iesous - which gives the numerical value of 888. The triple six of the beast’s name is yet a further example of anti-Christian parody, this time on the name of Jesus which is triple eight.

It is unlikely that the mark of the beast will be a literal, visible sign on the right hand or the forehead. We do not suppose that the 144,000 have “Jesus” or “888” stamped on their foreheads! It may well denote the thinking of the flesh (forehead) and the works of the flesh (hand). This is probably a parody of Deuteronomy 6: 8;

“And thou shalt bind them (the law) for a sign upon thine hand, and they shall be as frontlets between thine eyes.”

The Jews took this literally making tefillin or phylacteries – leather boxes or amulets containing Scripture passages, which are bound to the hand or the forehead during worship. Traditionally this is worn on the left hand (facing the heart) the mark of the beast is however on the right hand. Despite this slight discrepancy, the wearing of tefillin could be a model for the mark of the beast.

TABLE OF THE NUMERICAL VALUES OF LETTERS

No.

Hebrew

Letter

Greek

Letter

No.

1

X Aleph (a)

a

Alpha (a)

1

2

B Beth (b)

b Beta (b)

2

3

g

Ghimel (g)

g

Gamma (g)

3

4

d

Daleth (d)

d

Delta (d)

4

5

h

He (h)

e

Epsilon (e)

5

6

v

Vav (v or w)

CROSS STIGMA

OBSOLETE

7

z

Zayin (z)

"

Final sigma (s)

6

8

H

Cheth (ch)

z

Zeta (z)

7

9

F

Teth (t)

h Eta (e)

8

10

y

Yodh (y)

q

Theta (th)

9

20

k

Kaph (k)

i

Iota (I)

10

30

L Lamedh (l)

k

Kappa (k)

20

40

M Mem (m)

l

Lambda (l)

30

50

n Nun (n)

m

Mu (m)

40

60

Samekh (s)

Nun (n)

50

70

f

Ayin

x

Xi (x)

60

80

Pe (ph)

o

Omricon (o)

70

90

c

Tsadhe (ts)

Pi (p)

80

100

q

Qoph (q)

(koppa)

90

200

r

Resh (r)

r

Rho (r)

100

300

w

Shin (sh)

Sigma (s)

200

400

t

Tau (th)

t

Tau (t)

300

u

Upsilon (u)

400

f

Phi (ph)

500

C

Khi (ch)

600

y

Psi (ps)

700

w Omega (o)

800

(sampi)

900

It is worth mentioning that the number 666 is represented in the Greek by the letters Chi – Xi – Stigma [see Strongs 5516]. Stigma is an obsolete letter which had the shape of a cross, it was intermediate between the fifth and sixth letter. I have represented it here as sigma ["] (not stigma): C (600) x (60) " (6)

The obsolete letter stigma is also a Greek word meaning tattooed mark, or a brand. It is translated “marks” in Gal.6 :17. Paul was probably comparing the marks (stigma) of his physical sufferings in Christ Jesus (the proof of his loyalty), against the mark of circumcision (a body mark which cost the Judaisers nothing)as proof of obedience to the law. The religious devotee branded himself with the peculiar mark of the god whose cult he affected; so was Paul branded with the marks of his devotion to the Lord Jesus. It is true that such marks were forbidden by the law, Lev.19: 28, but then Paul had not inflicted these on himself.

The fact that no person is permitted to buy or sell without the mark (v.17) is clearly indicative of a totalitarian state. Be warned – those who receive the mark will, together with the beast itself and the false prophet, be cast into the lake of fire. (19: 20)

“And thou, O deadly wounded wicked one, the prince of Israel, whose day is come, in the time of the iniquity of the end.” (Ezek.21: 25 RV)

NOTES

1 The swine (beast) in the parable of legion drowned in the sea (thalassa – Mk.5: 13) in the synoptic account this becomes the abyss (abussos – Lk.8: 31) : this was the sea of Galilee in Galilee of the Gentiles. Therefore the sea represents the Gentiles – the wicked are like the sea and have no peace (Isa.57:20) which is proscribed within limits, thereby revealing earth [Israel]. (Gen 1: 9) Revelation 13 describes, “the distress of nations, with perplexity; the sea and waves roaring” (Lk.21: 25) - this sea can only be calmed (Peace be still Mk.4: 39) when Jesus returns and joins his disciples in the boat (ecclesia) – “and immediately the boat was at the land whither they were going.” (John 6: 17-22)

---

2 Exploring the Apocalypse and the Future - page 64.

NOTES

1 “For they have taken of their daughters for themselves , and for their sons; so that the holy seed have mingled themselves with the people of those lands.” (Ezra 9: 2) “Ephraim he hath mixed himself among the peoples.” (Hos.7: 8) The phrase mingled people (Jer 25: 20) is the Hebrew [ereb] – Arabia – the mingled people.

NOTES

1 This is probably the, “blasphemy of those who say they are Jews, and are not, but are the synagogue of Satan.” (Rev.2: 9) Paul argues that the failure of the Jews to keep the law causes the name of God to be blasphemed amongst the Gentiles.(Rom.2: 24-29 see also Isa.52: 5; 2 Sam.12: 14; Ezek.36: 20,23) “For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly” External rites like circumcision do not make one Jewish (those who say they are Jews) – to claim to be a Jew, and then not keep the law is blasphemy. Making covenants with the surrounding nations and

worshipping idols [image of the beast] is blasphemy, for the essence of the law, is to love God, and to love God, is to love the one that he sent.

NOTES

1 The two main schemes of interpretation for the book of Daniel are – the Grecian scheme and the Roman. The Grecian scheme equates the iron legs with the Grecian Empire of Alexander and his successors. In this scheme the ten kings are the Greco-Syrian predecessors of Antiochus Epihanes – the little horn persecutor of the Jews. In the Roman scheme the iron legs are the Roman Empire and the feet and toes are a subsequent phase after the disintegration of that empire. According to this scheme the little horn is still Antiochus Epiphanes, but chapter (8) is a detailed reflection of the situation after the disintegration of the Grecian Empire and this little horn (Antiochus : which sprang up amongst four horns) is not to be equated with the little horn of chapter 7 (which sprang up among ten horns – still future). In the Roman scheme chapter 8 is an expansion of the Leopard – phase (Greek) of chapter 7, and therefore subordinate to it. It must also be remembered that the text (especially the Septuagint version) has been substantially corrupted by the Jews of the Maccabean period, who saw in the person of Antiochus and the circumstances of their day, the fulfilment of Daniel's visions. The present author holds the Roman scheme to be correct and understands the detailed prophecies concerning Antiochus as typical of the anti-Christ (as was Pharaoh and Sennacherib etc.) he also recommends the exposition: In and around the Book of Daniel by Charles Boutflower as a first class conservative exposition of the book of Daniel, and essential to any Chrisadelphian library.

---

2 The little horn in 7: 25 is different in nature but not in substance to the little horn in 8: 25 – who is Antiochus Epiphanes. See the above note.

NOTES

1 Tempted by Satan: The present author considers that temptation always consists of an external and internal element. Scripture differentiates between temptation and sin. Temptation is not sin. In the wilderness the internal element was caused by the Lord's (and our) human nature. The external element was Satan. Who was Satan? Satan in this instance could only have been the angel of God, sent by God, and given power by God to prove [not tempt]men. (Job 1: 12) To worship Satan is the same as indulging our fleshly nature.

NOTES

1 Babylon and Assyria (capital Nineveh) are terms that are often interchanged by the prophet Isaiah, and both cities experienced similar judgements. (see Isa.13: 19-22 and H.A.W. Isaiah pg.194-203 see also chapter note) The Isaiah passage uses the word satyr translated as demons in the LXX of Isa.34: 14 see also the A.V. Lev.17: 7 and 2 Chron.11: 15 (same word) cp. Rev.18: 2 and 9: 20. See Andrew Perry: Demons magic and medicine pgs. 243-253.

NOTES

1 Hebrews makes a distinction between the first tabernacle (Grk., protos skê nê – Heb.9:3,7) and the second tabernacle (Grk., deuteros skê nê – Heb.9:6). The first tabernacle is the outer

court (Hebw., hê kAl) and the second tabernacle is the most holy place (Hebw., dê bIr). This probably explains the choice of phrase to John's Semitic mind (even though he wrote in Greek):

" And the word [Grk., logos] (Hebw., dâ bâ r) was made flesh and tabernacled [Grk., skê nê] (Hebw., debir) amongst us and we beheld his glory [Grk., doxa] (Hebw., shekinah), the glory of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." (John 1: 14)

NOTES

1 Exploring the Apocalypse. Pg. 60

NOTES

1 To be burnt with fire is the fate of a priest's daughter who played the whore. (Lev.21: 9 see also Gen.38: 24 and Deut.22:21) The priest is Jesus Christ and the Jewish ecclesia of the latter days is his daughter. The nation was meant to cleave (in marriage) to God [and Christ] see Deut.13:4.

NOTES

1 This refers to the occasion of 1 Sam 4: 9, when the Philistines saw the ark of the covenant with the two ox-faced cherubim, (who shall deliver us out of the hand of these mighty gods?) they exhorted each other and rallied their courage with the words: Be strong and quit yourselves like men, O ye Philistines. The Jews were using the ark as a talisman, this was completely inappropriate and may indicate how the nation will abuse their heritage in the future. Paul uses similar words to exhort the brethren in 1 Cor.16: 13.

NOTES

1 Leb – kamai is an artificial name (like Sheshach), which when the consonants are exchanged according to the system called Athbash, yields KSDIM, that is, Chaldeans. Sheshach is a cyper for Babel. The letters of the alphabet were numbered both in their regular order (A=1….T=22) and in reverse order (A=22….T=1). B is the 2nd letter of the alphabet and S or Sh the 2nd from the end in reverse order. The B of Babel becomes then Sh and so forth. (Hebrew has no vowels) Sheshak suggests a wordplay on the Hebrew root shakak – to sink or bow down, implying the humiliation and punishment of Babel.

---

2 The parallel passage in Neh.7: 18 has 667 children, no doubt a scribal alteration due to the stigma attached to this number.

Chapter 14

THE HARVEST

“The harvest is the end of the world and the reapers are the angels.” (Mtt.13: 39)

THEMES IN CHAPTER 14

(1) Exodus deliverance: see the comparison between Revelation 14 and Exodus 15 and 19 in chapter 12 page 7.

(2) The 144,000: they are Jewish converts – see chapter 7 of this book.

(3) Martyrdom: they, “follow the lamb withersoever he goeth.”

(4) The unsealing of the seven thunders: the seven thunders that John was instructed to seal up (chpt. 10 page 7) are the seven pronouncements by the angels.

- 1 st thunder : another angel with a loud voice. (14:7)

- 2 nd thunder : another angel saying [he cried mightily 18:2] (14:8)

- 3 rd thunder : third angel with a loud voice. (14:9)

- 4 th thunder : another angel with a loud voice.(14:15)

- 5 th thunder : another angel [he cried with a loud voice 19:2] (14:17)

- 6 th thunder : another angel with a loud cry. (14:18)

- 7 th thunder : And I heard a great voice out of the temple. (16:1)

(5) The eternal gospel: the eternal or everlasting gospel – this is the proclamation; “Fear God, and give glory to him; for the hour of his judgment is come.” (v.7)

The mystery of God is about to be finished. The good tidings (gospel) is the imminent demise of Babylon and the inauguration of the eschaton. It is the same gospel message preached by Christ and his apostles – the good news of the kingdom: see the comparison between Revelation 10 and 14 in chapter 10 page 11.

THE STRUCTURE

In order to place chapter 14 in the correct chronological order, it has to be realised that the trumpets, vials and chapter 14 are progressively parallel. The visions all overlap. In order to demonstrate this, we only have to list the contacts with the other visions:

Chapter 14:

v.8 Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great 18:2

who gave all nations to drink 17:2; 18:3

v.9 If anyone worships the beast or 13:15; 16:2

his image and receives his mark 19:20; 20:4

13:16; 16:2; 19:20;20:4

v.10 wine of the wrath of God 16:19; 19:15

fire and sulphur 19:20; 20:10;21:9

v.19 the great winepress of Gods wrath 19:15

Now consider the following: one of the vial angels shows John the destruction of the harlot in chapter 17 indicating that this occurs during the outpouring of the vials in 16. The destruction of the harlot by ten kings is not immediately followed by the kingdom. The sixth vial deals with the Euphrates invasion. It is during these vial-trumpet visions, that Christ returns and destroys the beast, a vision which is expanded in chapter 19. All the above indicates that we are dealing with a progressively parallel picture.

THE LAMB AND THE 144,000

“And I looked, and, lo, a Lamb stood on the mount Sion, and with him an hundred forty and four thousand, having his Father's name written in their foreheads. And I heard a voice from heaven, as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of a great thunder: and I heard the voice of harpers harping with their harps: And they sung as it were a new song before the throne, and before the four beasts, and the elders: and no man could learn that song but the hundred and forty and four thousand, which were redeemed from the earth. These are they which were not defiled with women; for they are virgins. These are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth. These were redeemed from among men, being the firstfruits unto God and to the Lamb. And in their mouth was found no guile: for they are without fault before the throne of God.” (Rev.14:1-5)

In the opening verse the Lamb is depicted as standing on Mt. Zion. This is a reference to Ps.2: 6. The Psalm describes the rebellion of the surrounding nations against God, and tells of God’s plan to entrust the suppression of the revolt to his son, the anointed king - “I have set my king on Zion, my holy hill”, and it ends with an appeal to the rulers of the earth to do homage before they are overtaken by God’s final day of reckoning.

This Psalm already had a first century application (Acts 4: 27) but will realise it’s full potential in the eschatological “Day of the Lord.” It is extensively paraphrased in Revelation 11 and 12. (see chapter 11 page 33)

The Lamb is accompanied by his army, the 144,000. They do not represent the totality of the redeemed for they are “firstfruits”. The case has already been made, in chapter 7 of this book, for the 144,000 representing Jewish Christians.

The name in their foreheads is the spiritual counterpart to the mark of the beast. Just as the mark indicated that “no man could buy or sell”, without it (13: 17), so too “no man could learn the song” on the lips of the 144,000 unless their forehead bore the necessary name.

These 144,000 have now been gathered to, “mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly of the firstborn, which are written (enrolled RV) in heaven, and to God the judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus the mediator of a new covenant.” (Heb.12: 22-24)

This army has fought the same battle as their Lord – they follow him, “withersoever he goeth”. This is the language of martyrdom and we should not be surprised to find its counterpart in John’s gospel.

JOHN 12

REVELATION 14

If any man serve me, let him follow me; and where I am, there also shall my servant be. (v.26)

These are they that follow the Lamb withersoever he goeth. (v.4)

Verily, verily, except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it bringeth forth much fruit. (v.24)

These were redeemed from among men, being the firstfruits unto God and unto the Lamb. (v.4)

He that loveth his life shall loose it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal. (v.25)

From henceforth saith the spirit, (RVmg), yea, blessed are the dead which die in the Lord, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them. (v.13)

A voice from heaven saying. (v.28)

The people said that it thundered, others said, an angel spake to him. (v.29)

Saying with a loud voice (the voice of an angel)

The voice of a great thunder. (v.2)

For this cause came I unto this hour.(v.27)

Now is the judgment of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out. (v.31)

The hour of his judgment is come. (v.7)

The theme of John chapter 12 is the crucifixion. The "judgment of the world" occurred when Jesus was "lifted up." (v.32) In the same way the judgment of the world is present in the death and martyrdom of the saints. The point that John emphasises repeatedly is that the initial victory of Jesus needed to be repeated in the victory of the conquerors. (those that overcome)

Hebrews 12 plays on the contrast between old and new covenant, between Moses and Christ, between Sinai and Zion. Similarly, 14: 3-4, draws on the Exodus experience, this time however, the new Israel has come to Mt. Zion – not to receive the law, but in order to be justified by Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant. Israel was inaugurated at Sinai as holy nation, a royal priesthood, and failed – but now we have the "firstfruits" of a new nation, which will include Jew and Gentile.

They are virgins (compare Ex.19: 15) for they have not been contaminated by the seductions and fornication of the great whore of Babylon. They sing a new song – the song of Moses the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb. (15: 3) – this is the song of Exodus 15, which is extensively paraphrased in Revelation, for now it has also become the song of the Lamb. A new song to an old tune.

No one could learn the song except the 144,000. The learning process is the martyrdom.

FIRSTFRUITS

The Greek term used for first fruits here is aparchf, (avparchv) the Hebrew equivalent is the masculine plural form bikkurIm (MyrUKB) from the root bekOr (fem.bekorOt) meaning "firstborn". Though bikkurIm can mean first-fruits, it is inexplicably never translated with aparchf in the LXX but is rendered by a different term, protogenemata (prwtogenhvata) – literally the first coming into being (Ex.23: 16, 19; 34: 26; Lev.2: 14; 23:17,20; Num.18: 13; 2Kgs.4: 42). Once by

arche (archv) –“beginning” (Ex.34: 22), once by prodromoi (provdromoi) – “forerunners” (Num.13: 20), and once by Ta nea (ta neva), “the new things” (Num.28: 26).

A cognate term is used in the Septuagint of Jeremiah 2:3;

Israel is holy to the Lord, the first-fruits (arche- gené má ton) of his produce. All who eat it will transgress.

The AV renders this as follows:

“Israel was holiness unto the Lord, and the firstfruits of his increase: all that devour him shall offend; evil shall come upon them saith the Lord.”

The Targum of Jeremiah paraphrases this as follows:

“The house of Israel are holy before the Lord – in respect of those who plunder them – like first fruits of heave offering of harvest, of which whoever eats is guilty of death; and like firstlings of harvest, the sheaf of the heave offering, of which everyone who eats, before the priests the sons of Aaron offer it as a sacrifice upon the altar, is guilty. Even so are all those who plunder the house of Israel guilty: evil shall come upon them says the Lord.”

Jeremiah chapter 2 has other connections with Revelation 14.

JEREMIAH 2

REVELATION 14

The firstfruits of his increase. (v.3)

Firstfruits unto God.(v.4)

The love of thy espousals; thou (Israel) wentest after me in the wilderness. (v.2)

They are virgins (betrothed to be married) they follow the Lamb withersoever he goeth.(v.4)

All the families of the house of Israel.(v.4)

The 144,000 [12,000 from every tribe] (v.1)

Through a land of drought and the shadow of death.(v.6)

That had been purchased out of the earth.(v.3)

How art thou then turned into a degenerate plant of a strange vine unto me? (v.21)

And the angel thrust in his sickle into the earth, and gathered the vine of the earth, and cast it into the great winepress of the wrath of God.(v.19)

The whole of Jeremiah chpt.2 has a latter day context – the above comparison is limited to comparisons with Revelation 14.

The idea behind the offering of firstfruits was that all living things belong to God and must not be put to secular purposes without a recognition of his rights. The dedication of the firstfruits “redeemed” the harvest, and so released it for common use, God’s rights in the whole being guaranteed by his special possession of the part. (Ex.34: 22; Lev.23: 15-22; Num.28: 26; Deut.16: 9-12)

In the same way the first-born sons of men properly belong to God; but provision was made for their redemption, because God had accepted the Levites in their place (Num.8; 14-18), to be a symbol of the holiness to which the whole nation was called. In the New Testament Jesus is called firstfruits because his resurrection was the token and guarantee of a greater ingathering (1 Cor. 15: 20,23), and the Spirit is called firstfruits because it is the pledge of the full inheritance to come (Rom.8: 23; 2 Cor.1: 22; 5: 5; Eph.1: 14). Thus when John says that the martyrs have been ransomed from all mankind to be firstfruits, he cannot conceivably mean that they 'alone from the whole world have been ransomed' (NEB). He must mean that the offering of their lives to God in sacrifice is to be the opening ceremony of a great harvest home. This conclusion is confirmed by the quotation that follows from Isa.53: 9. Like Jesus (1 Pet.2: 22-24), the martyrs are to fulfil the Old Testament prophecy of the innocent sufferer, numbered with the transgressors although no lie has been found on their lips; for it is God's will that their death is an acted preaching and precursor to an even greater ingathering. As Jesus had been a lamb without blemish or spot, offered for the salvation of the world (1 Pet.1: 19; cp.Heb.9: 14), so they are without blemish; they are to prove by their unwavering loyalty their fitness to be offered on the altar of sacrifice.

WITHOUT GUILE

Unlike the lamb who speaks like a dragon (that ancient serpent the devil), these are found without guile in their mouths. This is a reference to Zeph.3: 13 an Old Testament prophecy with numerous latter day connections.

ZEPHENIAH 3

REVELATION

Therefore wait upon me saith the Lord, until the day when I rise up for a witness.[LXX] (v.8)

Resurrection of the witnesses (11: 11)

For my determination is to gather the nations, that I may assemble the kingdoms, to pour upon them mine indignation. (v.8b)

Pour out the vials of wrath of God upon the earth.(16: 1)

For then I will take away out of the midst of thee them that rejoice in thy pride, and thou shalt no more be haughty in my holy mountain. (v.11. RV)

They have no rest day and night, who worship the beast and his image, and whosoever receiveth the mark of his name. (14: 11)

I will also leave in the midst of them an afflicted and poor people, and they shall trust in the name of the Lord. (v.12)

The 144,000. (14: 1)

The remnant of Israel shall not do iniquity, nor speak lies; neither shall a deceitful tongue be found in their mouth: for they shall feed and lie down and none shall make them afraid. (v.13)

And in their mouth was found no guile: for they are without fault before the throne of God.(14: 5)

NOTES: Zephaniah 3 also has a first century application – 3: 3 "her judges are evening wolves." – this is a reference to the apostle Paul from the tribe of Benjamin. (see Gen.49: 27) Zeph.1: 7-10

compare Rev.19: 17. Zeph.2: 4 note the mention of Gaza – the source of much of Israel's troubles.

The word guile is used in association with David's adultery with Bathsheba, and his subsequent forgiveness.

Psalm 32:1-11

"A Psalm of David, Maschil. Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man unto whom the LORD imputeth not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile. When I kept silence, my bones waxed old through my roaring all the day long. For day and night thy hand was heavy upon me: my moisture is turned into the drought of summer. Selah. I acknowledged my sin unto thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid. I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the LORD; and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin. Selah. For this shall every one that is godly pray unto thee in a time when thou mayest be found: surely in the floods of great waters they shall not come nigh unto him.

Thou art my hiding place; thou shalt preserve me from trouble; thou shalt compass me about with songs of deliverance. Selah. I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go: I will guide thee with mine eye. Be ye not as the horse, or as the mule, which have no understanding: whose mouth must be held in with bit and bridle, lest they come near unto thee. Many sorrows shall be to the wicked: but he that trusteth in the LORD, mercy shall compass him about. Be glad in the LORD, and rejoice, ye righteous: and shout for joy, all ye that are upright in heart."

Forgiveness is possible if there is true repentance. David was forgiven his adultery. Even at this late stage it is possible for those who committed fornication with the great whore to be forgiven – God is able to justify them and make them blameless, as he did to David.

THE EVERLASTING GOSPEL

"And I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people," (Rev.14: 6)

John saw "another angel flying in midheaven" , this is unusual since no previous angel has been mentioned to which the adjective another can reasonably be thought to refer. It is possible that the phrase should be amended to another eagle which would then refer back to 8: 13.A comparison of these verses shows that they are a doublet.

Rev.8: 13 Rev.14: 6

Then I saw Then I saw

and heard ----------

an eagle another angel

flying in midheaven flying in midheaven

---------- with an eternal gospel

saying with a loud voice to proclaim

Woe, woe, woe, ----------

to the inhabitants of the earth to the inhabitants of the earth

The message is proclaimed in midheaven so that it could be seen and heard by everyone on earth. We have already examined 8: 13 in chapter 8 page and we have observed that it is linked with the covenant given to Abraham in Genesis 15. This is another indication that we are dealing with events concerning the nation of Israel.

The angel proclaims the gospel (euangelion). This is the only place where “euangelion” occurs without the definite article (i.e. gospel not the gospel). For this reason many commentators assure us that gospel should have a neutral translation as “message” rather than “good-news.” Whether it has an article or not, the word “euangelion” can only mean “good-news”, and it is improbable that John should have thought of using it in a cynical sense.

The “good- news” is the announcement that the hour of his judgment is come. The “good-news” is the fall of Babylon. The “good-news” is the introduction of the kingdom. The “good-news” (glad-tidings) is an eternal gospel for, its effect is everlasting, and it had previously been “declared to his servants the prophets.”(10: 7)

ISAIAH 52 REVELATION 14

My name continually every day is blasphemed.(v.5)

Blasphemy against God, to blaspheme his name and his tabernacle. (13: 6)

Therefore my people shall know my name. (v.6)

Having his name, and the name of his Father written in their foreheads. (14: 1)

.....good tidings [gospel], that saith unto Zion, thy God reigneth! (v.7)

The everlasting gospel.(14: 6)

Thy watchmen shall lift up the voice: with the voice together shall they sing: for they shall see eye to eye, when the Lord shall bring again Zion. (v.8)

They sing as it were a new song. (14: 3)

Depart ye, depart ye, go ye out from thence, touch no unclean thing: go ye out of the midst of her. (v.11)

Come out of her my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues. (18: 4)

ISAIAH 40

REVELATION

Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God. Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem, and cry unto her, that her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned: for she hath received of the LORD'S hand double for all her sins. (v.1, 2)

Reward her even as she rewarded you, and double unto her double according to her works: in the cup which she hath filled fill to her double. (18:6)

The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the LORD, make straight in the desert a highway for our God. Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low: and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain: (v.3, 4)

And there were voices, and thunders, and lightnings; and there was a great earthquake, such as was not since men were upon the earth, so mighty an earthquake, and so great. (18: 6)

And the glory of the LORD shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together: for the mouth of the LORD hath spoken it.

The voice said, Cry. And he said, What shall I cry? All flesh is grass, and all the goodliness thereof is as the flower of the field: The grass withereth, the flower fadeth: because the spirit of the LORD bloweth upon it: surely the people is grass. The grass withereth, the flower fadeth: but the word of our God shall stand for ever. (v.5-8)

[Jesus saith unto him, Thou hast said: nevertheless I say unto you, Hereafter shall ye see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven. Mtt. 26:64]

And another angel came out of the temple, crying with a loud voice to him that sat on the cloud, Thrust in thy sickle, and reap: for the time is come for thee to reap; for the harvest of the earth is ripe.

(14:15)

O Zion, that bringest good tidings, get thee up into the high mountain; O Jerusalem, that bringest good tidings, lift up thy voice with strength; lift it up, be not afraid; say unto the cities of Judah, Behold your God! Behold, the Lord GOD will come with strong hand, and his arm shall rule for him: behold, his reward is with him, and his work before him. (v. 9, 10)

And I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people, (14:6)

He shall feed his flock like a shepherd: he shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young. (v.11)

For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes. (7:17)

This was the eternal or everlasting gospel preached beforehand to Abraham (Gal.3: 8), and confirmed by the covenant made with Abraham in Genesis 15.

“Brethren, I speak after the manner of men; Though it be but a man's covenant, yet if it be confirmed, no man disannulleth, or addeth thereto. Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ. And this I say, that the covenant, that was confirmed before of God in Christ, the law, which was four hundred and thirty years after, cannot disannul, that it should make the promise of none effect. For if the inheritance be of the law, it is no more of promise: but God gave it to Abraham by promise. Wherefore then serveth the law? It was added because of transgressions, till the seed should come to whom the promise was made; and it was ordained by angels in thehand of a mediator. Now a mediator is not a mediator of one, but God is one.” (Gal. 3:15-20)

The covenant was unilateral –Abraham did not walk between the pieces. It relies solely on the faithfulness of God not on the faithfulness of the nation. Paul contrasts the covenant of promise with the law, a covenant ordained by angels in the hand of a mediator. (Moses)

The law was an inferior covenant, one that relied on the righteousness of the people, and therefore it could not be kept. The Jews will therefore inherit the land (Gen 15: 8) despite their unfaithfulness, because God has sworn by himself.

This “gospel” is proclaimed not only to “them that dwell on earth” but to, “every nation, and kindred, and tongue and people.”

“And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed.” (Gal.3:8)

The judgment and reconciliation of the Jews will effect the redemption of the whole world. The distinctive fact about John’s gospel is not that it is a different gospel, but that he believes proclamation to mean martyrdom. The gospel was first proclaimed by Christ himself “the faithful witness” ; and the function of the martyr-witness is to preserve and repeat the testimony of Jesus. The great martyrdom, which happens at the fall of the nation, is the earthly reality which corresponds to the flight of the angel-eagle.

“For, wheresoever the carcass is, there will the eagles be gathered together.” (Mtt.24: 28)

THE HOUR OF JUDGMENT

“Saying with a loud voice, Fear God, and give glory to him; for the hour of his judgment is come: and worship him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters.” (Rev.14: 7)

The content of the gospel (euangelion) proclaimed by the angel is a call to repentance in view of Gods judgment, which has arrived. The conversion of the inhabitants of the city who escaped destruction in 11: 13 is described with similar language “and they gave glory to the God of heaven.

”

On that occasion God took his “tithe” from the city – this as compensation for the maltreatment of his witnesses. This action resulted in the birth of a Jewish ecclesia. Now however, a more serious punishment is initiated against that same city, this time for maltreating the infant Jewish ecclesia – a third is destroyed, and with it, “all the cities of the nations fell.” (16: 17)

The hour of his judgment has come – the hour of judgment has already arrived, there is an urgency to this call for conversion, even at this late stage God urges repentance ; “come out of her my people, that ye may not be partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues.” (18: 4)

The hour has come is a phrase intimately linked with the crucifixion of Jesus. His death was Gods judgment on adamic nature, but also a judgment of the (Jewish) world (John 12: 23). It culminated in the passing away of the Mosaic dispensation, and the subsequent diaspora of the Jews. Likewise, the meaning of the angels proclamation must be that the judgment is also present in the death of the martyrs in the same way as it was present in the cross.

The great Babylon vented her wrath on the saints. In so doing she intoxicated the surrounding nations with the “wine of the wrath of her fornication” (14: 8). This final act of rebellion – the death of the saints, seals her fate, for now God will make her drink “the wine of the wrath of God” and that “undiluted.” (14: 10) What happened to Jesus and to his saints – is now about to occur to the nation. This is now Israel’s Gethsemane – and she will be forced to drink a full

draught from the cup of wrath. The nation will now experience the same suffering and death that she inflicted on Jesus, on his two witnesses, and on his saints.

JESUS IN GETHSEMANE –LUKE 22

CONTRAST THE NATION – REV.14

His disciples also followed him. (v. 39)

Which follow the Lamb withersoever he goeth. (v.4)

Gethsemane: the oil press.(Mtt.26: 40)

The winepress. (v.20)

Remove this cup from me. (v.42)

The cup of his indignation.

The wine of the wrath of God. (v.8)

Sweat as great drops of blood falling down to the ground. (v.44)

[Jesus the true vine - John 15: 1]

The blood came out of the winepress.(V.20)

[every branch that beareth not fruit he purgeth-John 15: 1]

Could ye not watch with me one hour? (Mtt.26: 40)

This is your hour and the power of darkness. (v.53)

The hour of his judgment is come. (v.7)

Jesus also, that he might sanctify the people with his own blood, suffered without the gate. Let us go forth therefore unto him without the camp, bearing his reproach. (Heb.13: 12)

And the winepress was trodden without the city. (v.20)

The twin motif of fear and judgment are drawn from Psalm 96:

O sing unto the LORD a new song: sing unto the LORD, all the earth. Sing unto the LORD, bless his name; shew forth his salvation from day to day. Declare his glory among the heathen, his wonders among all people. For the LORD is great, and greatly to be praised: he is to be feared above all gods. (image of the beast) For all the gods of the nations are idols: but the LORD made the heavens. Honour and majesty are before him: strength and beauty are in his sanctuary. Give unto the LORD, O ye kindreds of the people, give unto the LORD glory and strength. Give unto the LORD the glory due unto his name: bring an offering, and come into his courts. O worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness: fear before him, all the earth. Say among the heathen that the LORD reigneth: the world also shall be established that it shall not be moved: he shall judge the people righteously. Let the heavens rejoice, and let the earth be glad; let the sea roar, and the fullness thereof. Let the field be joyful, and all that is therein: then shall all the trees of the wood rejoice Before the LORD: for he cometh, for he cometh to judge the earth: he shall judge the world with righteousness, and the people with his truth. (Ps.96: 1-13)

THE FALL OF BABYLON

“And there followed another angel, saying, Babylon is fallen, is fallen, that great city, because she made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication.” (Rev. 14: 8)

The fall of Babylon will mean the redemption of the world. She will no longer be the source of intoxication and seduction. This connection between redemption and the fall of Babylon was as old as the Exile, when Israel was waiting for the end of her captivity. One prophet conceived himself to be a sentry on a watchtower, eagerly awaiting the couriers who would bring the news of Babylon’s fall and Israel’s release (Isa.21: 8, 9). Another had depicted Babylon as a “golden cup in the Lord’s hand, making all the earth drunken”, a cup which must be dashed to the ground if her victims were to go free (Jer.51: 6-10). Yet another had spoken God’s promise to those “who are drunk, but not with wine.....See, I am taking from your hand the cup of staggering; never again shall you drink the bowl of my wrath; I will put it into the hands of your oppressors” (Isa.51: 21-23) John is weaving his own patterns out of these Old Testament themes, but there is no reason to suppose that he has departed from the original intention of his scriptural texts, in which the fall of Babylon brought the salvation, not the doom, of those who had been made drunk with her wine.

The wine of the wrath of her fornication – this is an unusual phrase – thymos, here translated wrath, can also mean passion. In verse 10 two different words are used to express anger – the cup of his anger [RV] indignation [AV] (orge) and the wine of the wrath (thymos) of God.

The difference between the two, is that orge expresses deliberate, controlled anger and thymos anger of a more passionate nature. The fornication of Babylon the great culminates in her venting a fierce passionate wrath against the saints – Jewish converts in this case. She has unleashed her thymos against God’s people, therefore, God will vent his orge and thymos against her.

Babylon the Great is none other than Jezebel – the whore, who sought to kill the witness (forerunner) Elijah.

“Then Jezebel sent a messenger unto Elijah, saying, So let the gods do to me, and more also, if I make not thy life as the life of one of them by to morrow about this time.” (1 Kings 19:2)

Jezebel was a foreign queen, the result of political alliances between Israel and her neighbours. As such she represents the nation, and in particular the “great city” Jerusalem, which has before, and will again prostitute itself.

It was not enough to attempt to kill Elijah (= the witnesses) she also exercised her passion on Naboth (= Christ) and his children.

2 KINGS 9

REVELATION

And it came to pass, when Joram saw Jehu, that he said, Is it peace, Jehu? And he answered, What peace, so long as the whoredoms of thy mother Jezebel and her witchcrafts are so many? (v.22)

The mother of harlots (17: 5), committing fornication and sorcery (18: 23)

Surely I have seen yesterday the blood of Naboth, and the blood of his sons, saith the LORD; and I will requite thee in this plat, saith the LORD. Now therefore take and cast him into the plat1 of ground, according to the word of the LORD. (v.26)

And I saw the woman drunken with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus.... (17: 6)

The same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation..... (14: 10)

And when Jehu was come to Jezreel, Jezebel heard of it; and she painted her face, and tired her head, and looked out at a window. (v.30)

How much she hath glorified herself, and lived deliciously, so much torment and sorrow give her: for she saith in her heart, I sit a queen, and am no widow, and shall see no sorrow. Therefore shall her plagues come in one day, death, and mourning, and famine; and she shall be utterly burned with fire: for strong is the Lord God who judgeth her. (18: 7-8)

And he said, Throw her down. So they threw her down: and some of her blood was sprinkled on the wall, and on the horses: and he trod her under foot. (v.33)

And the winepress was trodden without the city, and blood came out of the winepress, even unto the horse bridles, by the space of a thousand and six hundred furlongs. (14: 20)

And they went to bury her: but they found no more of her than the skull, and the feet, and the palms of her hands.2 (v.35)

And he causeth all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and bond, to receive a mark in their right hand, or in their foreheads: (13: 16)

(even the dogs would not eat her hands and feet!)

Jezebel was the daughter of Ethbaal, king of the Zidonians. She worshipped Baal, (image of the beast) and since her husband was weak and irresolute, she ruled over him and made him also a Baal worshiper. She turned the children of Israel away from God – this was the foreign influence. She forced Baal worship on the nation killing the prophets of God. As a consequence the nation suffered 3½ years of drought – predicted by the witness Elijah. The iniquity of Ahab and Jezebel was made full to overflowing by the affair of Naboth's vineyard.

It was Ahab, together with the king of Damascus and other neighbouring kings, who resisted the approach of the Assyrian king Shalmaneser. (is this typical?) After this, hostilities with Damascus were soon renewed, and a joint expedition with the king of Judah ended in the death of Ahab, as predicted by the prophet Micaiah. (A lying spirit was put in the mouth of his prophets –1Kgs.22: 22 compare the unclean spirit in the mouth of the false prophet in order to gather them to war – Rev.16: 13,14)

Jezebel is also the "false prophetess" in the ecclesia of Thyatira. She seduced members to commit fornication and eat things sacrificed to idols. She is therefore archtypical of those whose seduction leads to the worship of the image of the beast.

According to Strongs Jezebel Iyzebû l means chaste [348] the present author believes this etymology to be wrong. A meaning more consistent to the type is obtained from the cognate term Iy [338 – yx9] literally meaning a howler – a solitary creature that makes a doleful sound and Zebû l [2083 – lb@z9] meaning a dwelling or habitation. Babylon is described as a habitation of devils, the hold of every foul spirit and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird. (18: 2) Isaiah describes Babylon as the dwelling place of doleful creatures and satyrs. (Isa.13: 22)

The only one that is chaste is the bride of Christ.

PUNISHMENT OF THE BEAST WORSHIPERS

“And the third angel followed them, saying with a loud voice, If any man worship the beast and his image, and receive his mark in his forehead, or in his hand, The same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation; and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb: And the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever: and they have no rest day nor night, who worship the beast and his image, and whosoever receiveth the mark of his name. Here is the patience of the saints: here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus. And I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them.” (Rev.14:9-13)

Babylon is a corrupting force that lures the nations into a kind of insane immorality. The background is the picture of a prostitute persuading a man into immorality by filling him full of wine, so that he could no longer resist her wiles. The other picture is the cup of the wrath of God. Job says of the wicked man: “Let him drink of the wrath of the Almighty” (Job 21: 20). The Psalmist speaks of the wicked having to drink the dregs of the red cup in the hand of God (Psalm 75: 8). Isaiah speaks of Jerusalem having drunk the cup of God’s fury (Isa.51: 17) God instructs Jeremiah to take the wine cup of his fury and to give it to the nations to drink (Jer.25: 15)

We might paraphrase by saying that Babylon made the nations drink of the wine which seduces men to fornication and which brings as its consequence the wrath of God. We have already been warned about the power of the beast and the mark that the beast will seek to set upon all men who fall under it’s jurisdiction. Now there is a warning to those who fail in that time of trial. It is significant that this is the fiercest warning of all. Of all dooms, that of the apostate is the worst. The reason is that the ecclesia is battling for its very existence. If it was to continue, the individual believer must be prepared to face suffering and trial, imprisonment and death. If the individual believer yielded, the ecclesia died.

Verse 12 is an exhortation to endurance. A literal rendering would be “Hither (hode) the endurance of God’s people.” John uses hode on three other occasions, twice in chapter 13 (v.10, 18), hither (hode) is the wisdom – inviting the reader to apply his intelligence to calculating the number of the beast. And once in 17: 9, hither (hode) the mind of wisdom – again inviting the reader to apply his wits to his cryptic description of the woman on the beast. So here the angel is inviting the people of God to summon up all their endurance to meet the crisis he is describing.

If they keep God’s commandments (i.e., to break bread) and their faith in Jesus, they will face death in confidence, for henceforth saith the spirit, they may rest from their labours and their works do follow them. What they have done goes with them, not as merit, nor as personal satisfaction, but in a more solid fashion; for they are to win an innumerable host of converts.1

These have “died in the Lord” i.e. in his service – now they have rest from their labours. Rest is never so sweet as after the most strenuous toil. They await the resurrection, when they will enter into Gods rest, and permanently cease from labouring in the millennial Sabbath. This is contrasted with the beast-worshipers who have no rest day or night.(v.11)

If men remain impenitent to the end, their consciences untouched by the death of the martyrs and the redemptive love of Christ, of which that death is an acted preaching – what then? For these there will be no mitigation. They will endure the "lake of fire" (19: 20). The traditional fate of Sodom and Gomorrah (Gen.19: 24) was also fire and brimstone, and metaphorically the same destiny awaits the "great city" which is figuratively called Sodom (11: 8).

The punishment and the torment is eternal, in that the consequences are everlasting. They face oblivion, and their torment is the knowledge that the city they loved and lived for, that they identified with, is fallen never to rise again, for the smoke will rise for ever and ever.

This city will never be restored, or built again, instead it will be replaced with the "heavenly Jerusalem." We do well to remember that the metaphorical and literal often complement each other in scripture. The "lake of fire" may well be a permanent fixture in the geography of the region, after the "great earthquake." The earthquake is also to be understood metaphorically and literally. (Zech.14: 1-4) Such a "lake of fire" (molten magma) would be consistent with a great tear in the rift valley, and would serve as a constant reminder of the fate of the wicked.

In grim parody of the worship of the heavenly choir (4: 8) we are told that the beast worshipers have no rest day or night; even their self imposed torment is a caricature of what they might have been.

SEVEN ANGELS AND THE HARVEST OF JUDGMENT

"And I looked, and behold a white cloud, and upon the cloud one sat like unto the Son of man, having on his head a golden crown, and in his hand a sharp sickle. And another angel came out of the temple, crying with a loud voice to him that sat on the cloud, Thrust in thy sickle, and reap: for the time is come for thee to reap; for the harvest of the earth is ripe. And he that sat on the cloud thrust in his sickle on the earth; and the earth was reaped. And another angel came out of the temple which is in heaven, he also having a sharp sickle. And another angel came out from the altar, which had power over fire; and cried with a loud cry to him that had the sharp sickle, saying, Thrust in thy sharp sickle, and gather the clusters of the vine of the earth; for her grapes are fully ripe. And the angel thrust in his sickle into the earth, and gathered the vine of the earth, and cast it into the great winepress of the wrath of God. And the winepress was trodden without the city, and blood came out of the winepress, even unto the horse bridles, by the space of a thousand and six hundred furlongs." (Rev. 14:14-20)

"Hereafter shall ye see the son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven."

(The words of Jesus spoken to the High Priest at his trial. Mtt.26: 64)

This section has six angels that are specifically called angels. If the one like the son of man is also to be called an angel there are seven; in which event it is tempting to identify them with "the seven angels having seven plagues, which are the last", of chapter 15 : 1. This is made more likely by the fact that one of the present group is "he that hath power over fire" (14: 18), which seems to refer to the angel of the fourth vial in 16: 8, "and it was given to him to scorch men with fire." Since we should always try to picture what John actually saw in his vision, it looks as though what happened was that John saw a succession of angels assembling themselves. The first flies in with the message that the gospel is to be preached for the last time: the second follows him and announces the pending doom of Babylon: then a third arrives with the warning against becoming compromised with the activities of the Beast; then a fourth, the one like a son

of man, with the promise that the wicked world is about to be reaped; then the fifth, encouraging the fourth to start his work; then a sixth to support him, and a seventh to urge him to action. All these fly in and assemble before the throne of God, the one on the cloud with the crown in the centre, and to each of them is given by one of the "living creatures", his vial to pour out on earth.

If the scene is actually pictured like this, then the need to assign a particular task to each angel in chapter 14 falls away. The angels are to get ready for work yet to be done, and going through motions suggestive of what will happen as they do so. The actual doing of it is quickly to follow, but first we have an interlude scene of the final harvest.

Another way of considering this, would be that chapter 14 and 16 are parallel, with chapter 14 concentrating on events in the land of Israel, and 16 emphasising the consequences on the surrounding nations. Which ever way we view this, both chapters end with the same reaping.

Significantly, the angel who announces the punishment of the wicked came out from the altar (v.18). In the heavenly tabernacle the altar is associated with two things – the blood (6: 9) and prayers (8: 3) of the saints. It would seem that the destruction of the ungodly is out of vengeance for the persecutions that the elect had received at their hands. This is another prominent theme in the Apocalypse. (6: 10, 19: 2)

The final vision of this chapter is of judgment depicted in pictures which were very familiar to Jewish thought. It begins with the picture of the victorious figure of one like the son of man from Dan.7: 13,14:

"I saw in the night visions, and, behold, one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before him. And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed." (Dan. 7: 13-14)

John depicts the judgment in two metaphors familiar to scripture. The judgment is the ingathering of the harvest. It is here however that our problems begin. We have a grain harvest and the harvest of the vintage. Do these two different harvests depict the same retributive judgment, or can we distinguish between them? Is the grain harvest the ingathering of the saints and the vintage the punishment of the wicked? Both harvest and vintage are regularly used as symbols of divine judgment.

John is obviously drawing on Joel's vision of all the nations gathered for judgment in the valley of Decision, which involves, as here a double harvest.

"Let the heathen be wakened, and come up to the valley of Jehoshaphat: for there will I sit to judge all the heathen round about. Put ye in the sickle, for the harvest is ripe: come, get you down; for the press is full, the fats overflow; for their wickedness is great." (Joel 3:12-13)

The LXX has the plural sickles, suggesting that the grain is harvested at the same time as the treading of the vintage. It should also not be forgotten that Zion was originally a threshing floor (2 Sam.24: 18). The context of these verse deserves further consideration. Earlier in Joel chapter 3 we are informed that the nation experienced captivity, and that this latest stage of the holy- war (jihad – sanctify war- 3: 9RVmg.) was the climax of a process of subjugation.1 In verse 16 we have the return of the Lord – "for he shall roar out of Zion, and utter his voice from Jerusalem."

In this light we must conclude that an interval exists between the captivity of Jerusalem and the return of Christ to the mount of Olives in Zech.14: 1-4. Scripture often compresses events (disregarding the time element) into a single eschatological "Day of the Lord."

Despite the Joel passage being singularly focused on retributive judgment, closer examination shows that John does distinguish between the harvest and the vintage.

(1) Whereas the vintage is trodden – signifying punishment, no mention is made of the fate of the grain harvest.

(2) The 144,000 were "first fruits." The offering of the 'omer or first sheaf by the priest in the temple set free the rest of the crop for general use, and was therefore the signal for the reaping to begin; and this is no doubt why the command, "ply your sickle and reap", is given by an angel who came out of the temple. The implicit suggestion is that the "firstfruits" is a portion of a much lager harvest to the Lord – a harvest of joy, not of wrath.

(3) The noun therismos (harvest) and the verb therizo, though they could perfectly well have been used of the mowing down of enemies, are never so used in the Septuagint, even in the passages where judgment is likened to reaping.2

A partial exception to this is Mtt.13: 24-431 since the weeds are reaped along with the wheat, and the reaping is a prelude to their destruction. But even here the object of the reaping is the storing of the crop, not the bonfire.

All things considered, there seems to be a distinction between the harvest and the vintage. What happens then to the harvest? It seems that the ingathering of both the harvest and the vintage occur simultaneously.

"For they are the spirits of devils, working miracles, which go forth unto the kings of the earth and of the whole world, to gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty. (Behold, I come as a thief. Blessed is he that watcheth, and keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked, and they see his shame.) And he gathered them together into a place called in the Hebrew tongue Armageddon." (Rev.16: 14-16)

The above verse speaks to us of a harvest and a vintage. The harvest is the ingathering of the saints as indicated by parenthesis in the AV.

If the parenthesis is extended to the end of the verse, this would make THEM refer to the saints instead of kings of the earth; And he gathered them (= the saints) together into a place called in the Hebrew tongue Armageddon. This challenges our normal understanding of HAR – MAGEDON. It is a composite Hebrew word meaning the mountain of precious (meged) fruit or things. The word precious (merged) is found in Deut.33: 15-16 and Psalm 133.

"And of Joseph he said, Blessed of the LORD be his land, for the precious things of heaven, for the dew, and for the deep that coucheth beneath, And for the precious fruits brought forth by the sun, and for the precious things put forth by the moon, And for the chief things of the ancient mountains, and for the precious things of the lasting hills, And for the precious things of the earth and fullness thereof, and for the good will of him that dwelt in the bush: let the blessing come upon the head of Joseph, and upon the top of the head of him that was separated from his brethren." (Deut.33:13-16)

These are the "precious (merged) fruits brought forth by the sun" - they are the "precious (merged) ointment" on the head of the High Priest (Ps.133: 2), the blessing that adorns the head

of Joseph – “the crown on the head of him that was separate (a Nazarene) amongst his brethren.” (Deut.33: 16)

It is the blessing of brethren dwelling together in unity (Ps.133: 1), this represents the ingathering of the saints, the crowning glory of Christ at the mountain of precious fruits. (HAR –MAGEDON)

Let us now examine the vintage:

1. The vine is always used as a symbol of Israel, not of the heathen. The vine was a traditional Old Testament symbol for Israel.1

2. The branches of the vine that do not abide in Christ are destined for destruction (not for purging): “I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman. Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away: and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit. Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you. Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me. I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing. If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned.” (John 15:1-6)

3. The vintage is trodden outside the city. This is poetic justice – the place where Christ suffered – the place where the saints are exhorted to separate themselves to – “without the gate” (Heb.13: 12), thus disassociating themselves with temple worship (compare worship of the beast), is the very place where the nation will meet it’s Gethsemane. This confirms that reward and retribution happen at the same location. “The body of those beasts .....are burned without the camp.” (Heb.13: 11) – this beast will also be slain (and burnt in the lake of fire) without the camp. Their refusal to accept the purifying waters of separation prepared outside the camp (Num.19: 9) will cause them to forfeit their own lives outside the city. The city is, of course, Jerusalem – “The Lord flouted all the mighty men in the midst of me.....the Lord has trodden as in a winepress the virgin daughter of Judah.” (Lam.1: 15)

4. The Old Testament refers to this last downtreading in Isa.63: 3; “I have trodden the winepress alone; and from the peoples no one was with me; I trod them in my anger, and trampled them in my wrath.” This passage speaks of Jesus Christ: “And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and he that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he doth judge and make war. His eyes were as a flame of fire, and on his head were many crowns; and he had a name written, that no man knew, but he himself. And he was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood: and his name is called The Word of God. And the armies which were in heaven followed him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean. And out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron: and he treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. And he hath on his vesture and on his thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS.” (Rev.19:11-16)

Christ is mounted on a white horse, and when he tramples the winepress the blood reaches the bridle of the horse.(14: 20). The armies that are with him are probably the angels and not the saints (who are simultaneously ingathered), for he treads the winepress “alone” i.e., without the help of the “peoples.”

The picture ends with a river of blood flowing from Jerusalem, and encompassing the whole region. This river of blood, will however be turned into a pure river of water of life proceeding out of the throne of God (Jerusalem) and this for the purification and healing of the nations. (22: 1)

This will be the last time that any foreign power enters the land of Israel to destroy them. The wicked in Israel will perish, but ultimately the nation will be saved from out of their time of trouble. Jesus will reign in Jerusalem and the captivity (prisoners of war) will be ingathered.

“And the nations were angry, and thy wrath is come, and the time of the dead, that they should be judged, and that thou shouldest give reward unto thy servants the prophets, and to the saints, and them that fear thy name, small and great; and shouldest destroy them which destroy the earth.” (Rev.11:18)

“Awake, awake, stand up, O Jerusalem, which hast drunk at the hand of the LORD the cup of his fury; thou hast drunken the dregs of the cup of trembling, and wrung them out. There is none to guide her among all the sons whom she hath brought forth; neither is there any that taketh her by the hand of all the sons that she hath brought up. These two things are come unto thee; who shall be sorry for thee? desolation, and destruction, and the famine, and the sword: by whom shall I comfort thee? Thy sons have fainted, they lie at the head of all the streets, as a wild bull in a net: they are full of the fury of the LORD, the rebuke of thy God. Therefore hear now this, thou afflicted, and drunken, but not with wine: Thus saith thy Lord the LORD, and thy God that pleadeth the cause of his people, Behold, I have taken out of thine hand the cup of trembling, even the dregs of the cup of my fury; thou shalt no more drink it again: But I will put it into the hand of them that afflict thee; which have said to thy soul, Bow down, that we may go over: and thou hast laid thy body as the ground, and as the street, to them that went over.” (Isaiah 51:17-23)

NOTES

1 This plat or portion was the vineyard of Naboth, that Jezebel had stolen for her husband.

---

2 Her hands and feet were probably dyed with henna, and her face was thick with cosmetics.

NOTES

1 For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble; Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is. If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire. (1 Cor. 3:11-15) WORK = DISCIPLE

NOTES

1 Joel is contemporary with Hezekiah, and the Assyrian invasion by Sennacherib. He (and his allies) destroyed 42 cities and deported captives. The captives were returned when the angel of the Lord destroyed the Assyrian army outside Jerusalem.

---

2 Then saith he unto his disciples, The harvest truly is plenteous, but the labourers are few; (Matt. 9:37) But when the fruit is brought forth, immediately he putteth in the sickle, because the harvest is come. (Mark 4:29) Therefore said he unto them, The harvest truly is great, but the labourers are few: pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he would send forth labourers into his harvest. (Luke 10:2) Say not ye, There are yet four months, and then cometh harvest? behold, I say unto you, Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields; for they are white already to harvest. And he that reapeth receiveth wages, and gathereth fruit unto life eternal: that both he that soweth (John the Baptist) and he that reapeth (Christ) may rejoice [see John 3: 29] together. And herein is that saying true, One soweth, and another reapeth. I sent you to reap that whereon ye bestowed no labour: other men laboured, and ye are entered into their labours. (John 4:35-38)

1

Another parable put he forth unto them, saying, The kingdom of heaven is likened unto a man which sowed good seed in his field: But while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat, and went his way. But when the blade was sprung up, and brought forth fruit, then appeared the tares also. So the servants of the householder came and said unto him, Sir, didst not thou sow good seed in thy field? from whence then hath it tares? He said unto them, An enemy hath done this. The servants said unto him, Wilt thou then that we go and gather them up? But he said, Nay; lest while ye gather up the tares, ye root up also the wheat with them. Let both grow together until the harvest: and in the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, Gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them: but gather the wheat into my barn. Then Jesus sent the multitude away, and went into the house: and his disciples came unto him, saying, Declare unto us the parable of the tares of the field. He answered and said unto them, He that soweth the good seed is the Son of man; The field is the world; the good seed are the children of the kingdom; but the tares are the children of the wicked one; The enemy that sowed them is the devil; the harvest is the end of the world; and the reapers are the angels. As therefore the tares are gathered and burned in the fire; so shall it be in the end of this world. The Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity; And shall cast them into a furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth. Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Who hath ears to hear, let him hear. (Matthew 13:24-43)

1

Israel is an empty vine, he bringeth forth fruit unto himself: according to the multitude of his fruit he hath increased the altars; according to the goodness of his land they have made goodly images. (Hosea 10:1) Now will I sing to my wellbeloved a song of my beloved touching his vineyard. My wellbeloved hath a vineyard in a very fruitful hill: And he fenced it, and gathered out the stones thereof, and planted it with the choicest vine, and built a tower in the midst of it, and also made a winepress therein: and he looked that it should bring forth grapes, and it brought forth wild grapes. And now, O inhabitants of Jerusalem, and men of Judah, judge, I pray you, betwixt me and my vineyard. What could have been done more to my vineyard, that I have not done in it? wherefore, when I looked that it should bring forth grapes, brought it forth wild grapes? And now go to; I will tell you what I will do to my vineyard: I will take away the hedge thereof, and it shall be eaten up; and break down the wall thereof, and it shall be trodden down:

And I will lay it waste: it shall not be pruned, nor digged; but there shall come up briers and thorns: I will also command the clouds that they rain no rain upon it For the vineyard of the LORD of hosts is the house of Israel, and the men of Judah his pleasant plant: and he looked for judgement, but behold oppression; for righteousness, but behold a cry. (Isaiah 5:1-7) Yet I had planted thee a noble vine, wholly a right seed: how then art thou turned into the degenerate plant of a strange vine unto me? (Jeremiah 2:21) And the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, Son of man, put forth a riddle, and speak a parable unto the house of Israel; And say, Thus saith the Lord GOD; A great eagle with great wings, longwinged, full of feathers, which had divers colours, came unto Lebanon, and took the highest branch of the cedar: He cropped off the top of his young twigs, and carried it into a land of traffic; he set it in a city of merchants. He took also of the seed of the land, and planted it in a fruitful field; he placed it by great waters, and set it as a willow tree. And it grew, and became a spreading vine of low stature, whose branches turned toward him, and the roots thereof were under him: so it became a vine, and brought forth branches, and shot forth sprigs. There was also another great eagle with great wings and many feathers: and, behold, this vine did bend her roots toward him, and shot forth her branches toward him, that he might water it by the furrows of her plantation. It was planted in a good soil by great waters, that it might bring forth branches, and that it might bear fruit, that it might be a goodly vine. (Ezekiel 17:1-8) Thou hast brought a vine out of Egypt: thou hast cast out the heathen, and planted it. Thou preparedst room before it, and didst cause it to take deep root, and it filled the land. The hills were covered with the shadow of it, and the boughs thereof were like the goodly cedars. She sent out her boughs unto the sea, and her branches unto the river. Why hast thou then broken down her hedges, so that all they which pass by the way do pluck her? The boar out of the wood doth waste it, and the wild beast of the field doth devour it. (Psalm 80:8-13)

Chapter 15

THE VICTORIOUS SAINTS

“The justice of your decree stands revealed” (Rev.15: 4.REB)

Introduction to Revelation 15

In Revelation chapter 14 we saw a vision of the 144,000 with their harps, a multitude of redeemed saints gathered to Mt. Zion (not Mt. Sinai). A people ready to be inaugurated as king-priests after their Exodus. Chapter 15 presents us with another vision of the victorious (with harps) standing on the glassy sea. These have also undergone an Exodus, and passed through the waters (of death and baptism) to emerge as conquerors on the other side.

Both visions are complimentary, using similar metaphor and language. Can we conclude that both groups are the same? Perhaps. The 144,000 (14: 1) are Jewish converts, but the context of chapter 16 seems to be directed at the surrounding Gentile nations. It is in this chapter that the “kings of the earth and the whole world” (16: 14) are gathered together, and the final punishment involves not only the “great city”, but also the “cities of the nations.” (16: 19)

We have already observed that the vials of chapter 16 are similar to the trumpets of chapter 8 and 9, but whereas the trumpets are narrowly focused on Israel, the vials are more panoramic. The victorious in chapter 15 should therefore probably be thought of along the vein of the “mixed multitude” (Ex.12: 38) that went up out of Egypt, composed of Jew and Gentile. They sing the song of Moses and the Lamb, there follows but one song, indicative of the unity between the Old Testament and New Testament ecclesias – both Jew and Gentile. We are moving away from concentrating on the Jewish element in earlier chapters, to the consequences for all mankind.

As in chapter 14 we see a vision of the redeemed first, before we see a vision of the vial tribulations. God declares the end from the beginning. The martyrs who experience persecution and tribulation for the testimony of Jesus, will be saved. The object of this proleptical vision, is therefore to encourage the saints by showing them the ultimate outcome of their sufferings.

ANOTHER SIGN IN HEAVEN

“And I saw another sign in heaven, great and marvellous, seven angels having the seven last plagues; for in them is filled up the wrath of God.” (Rev.15: 1)

John commences the chapter with “And I saw another sign in heaven”. The word sign (semeion) establishes the link with 12: 1 which, together with the customary rubric, reinforces the fact that we are still in the same series. Rev.15 forms the seventh and final section in the series, and, as with the seventh seal (8: 1) and seventh trumpet (11: 15), it introduces us to a further series of seven – the vials. Chapters 12-14 consisted of a parenthesis, half recapitulatory, half anticipatory. Hence Rev.15 is both the continuation and expansion of the closing verses of chapter 11, where we witnessed the opening of the temple in heaven. The seven angels John beheld had “the seven last plagues” with which “the wrath of God is completed” (v.1). Although described as plagues, the Greek word plege, a cognate of the verb plesso (to strike), simply denotes a “blow”. Thus here are the seven last punitive, of an assorted nature as we shall see, that God has to deliver against mankind. Fair warning has been given, but neglected. Now is the time for the divine wrath to be finally exhausted upon the ungodly of the world.

THE CRYSTAL SEA

“And I saw as it were a sea of glass mingled with fire: and them that had gotten the victory over the beast, and over his image, and over his mark, and over the number of his name, stand on the sea of glass, having the harps of God.” (Rev.15: 2)

From the angels John’s attention is next drawn to a sea of glass mingled with fire and to the conquerors. These represent the whole multitude of the redeemed who did not succumb to the beast during its reign of persecution. We have already been informed of those among Israel who were delivered from the beast –ie, the 144,000 of 14:1. But the dominion of the beast is to be extended over “every tribe and people and tongue and nation” (13: 7), not just over Israel. Thus those seen by John symbolise those believers among the nations who have remained faithful during the 1,260 days.

The presence of the sea of glass in the heavenly tabernacle has been commented on in chapter 4 page 9 and comes from Rev.4: 6. It’s inclusion here in 15: 2 is doubly appropriate since not only does it form part of the background to the heavenly throne scene, but also has overtones of the Exodus out of Egypt (see chapter 12 page7) an event being drawn upon as a source of typology in this passage. Back in 4: 6 the sea was likened to crystal, such was its clarity, while here it is mingled with fire, denoting judgment. There comes upon Egypt hail mingled with fire (Ex.9: 24); the chaffis to be consumed in the fire (Mtt. 3: 12); our God is a consuming fire (Heb.12: 29). The whole scene is grimly illuminated with the lurid light of the fire of judgment which is to descend upon the earth – “another angel came out from the altar, which had power over fire.” (14: 18) Rivers of fire are flowing from the throne:

“A fiery stream issued and came forth from before him: thousand thousands ministered unto him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him: the judgment was set, and the books were opened. I beheld then because of the voice of the great words which the horn spake: I beheld even till the beast was slain, and his body destroyed, and given to the burning flame.” (Dan.7:10,11)

The heavenly reality is the fiery stream of judgment, the earthly counterpart is the holocaust of the beast in the lake of fire (19: 20; 20: 10). This is a clear crystal, shot through with fiery red. Like the Red Sea its purpose is not just to purify God’s chosen ones through their “baptism” (1 Cor 10: 1), but to separate the wicked from the righteous, and to finally destroy them. The fact that the saints are depicted as standing on1 the sea can only mean they have already overcome this obstacle.

When it says “having harps of God” it implies that even the musical instruments themselves which accompany the following praise are provided by God, underlying the truth that we can render nothing to him whom created all things. This is in keeping with the content of the song in v.3 which is totally God-centred. The saints do not make any reference to themselves.

THE SONG OF MOSES AND THE LAMB

“And they sing the song of Moses the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying, Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints. Who shall not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name? for thou only art holy: for all nations shall come and worship before thee; for thy judgments are made manifest.” (Rev.15: 3,4)

This is the song which Moses sang when the children of Israel had come triumphantly through the dangers of crossing the Red Sea. The martyrs have come safely through the sea of martyrdom and have arrived at the shore of heaven. It is said that the martyrs have emerged

victorious from their contest with the forces of Antichrist. There is something very significant here. The martyrs died the most savage deaths and yet they are said to have emerged victorious. It was the very fact that they had died that made them victors; if they had remained alive by being false to their faith, they would have been defeated. Again and again early records describe a day of martyrdom as a day of victory. “The day of their victory dawned, and they walked from prison to the amphitheatre as if they were walking to heaven, happy and serene in countenance.” Jesus said: “Whoever would save his life will loose it, and whoever looses his life for my sake will find it” (Mtt.16: 25). The real victory is not prudently to preserve life but to face the worse that evil can do and if need be to be faithful to death.

Those standing upon the sea join together in “the song of Moses the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb.” There are two passages in the Old Testament deserving the title “song of Moses” – Exodus 15, exulting over the Red Sea incident, and Deuteronomy 32, shortly before Moses’ death. Both have connections with Rev.15. Along with the self evident context of Ex.15, the very verse preceding the song introduces Moses as the “servant” of God (14: 31). The other song, interestingly, was taught to the people by Moses and Joshua together. (Deut.32: 44) Joshua is the Hebrew form of the Greek Jesus. The deliberate placing of Moses and the Lamb side by side demonstrates that these two are in no way in opposition to each other. They stand together as type and anti-type, shadow and substance. Moses is classed as a servant (doulos) of God along with the Christian saints to whom Revelation was addressed (1: 1). Both Moses and Christ were entrusted with leading the chosen out of bondage to the promised inheritance. Hence, while the title may be “the song of Moses…and the song of the Lamb”, there follows but one song, indicative of the unity between the old and new covenant.

THE PSALM OF MOSES AND THE LAMB

The “song of the Lamb” is no doubt a reference to the fact that Psalm 118 which is based on Exodus 15, is one of the Passover Psalms, known as the “Paschal Hallel” (Passover praise), these were sung at Passover (Ps.113-118). Psalm 118 was literally the “song of the lamb”. It, together with Psalm 117 perhaps, was very probably the hymn sung by the Lord and his disciples at the Last Supper. (Mtt.26: 30)

EXODUS 15

PSALM 118

The children of Israel cried out unto the Lord. (14: 10)

I cried unto the Lord (Yah) in my distress. (v.5)

[distress is almost identical to Egypt in Hebrew]

The Lord (Yah) is become my strength and my song, and he is become my salvation. (v.2)

The Lord (Yah) is my strength and song; and he is become my salvation. (v.14,21)

The right hand of the Lord. (v.6,12- three times)

The right hand of the Lord.(v.15,16 – three times)

My father’s God, and I will exalt thee. (v.2)

Thou art my God, I will exalt thee. (v.28)

According to the Talmud, the “Hallel” recorded five things: “The coming out of Egypt, the dividing of the sea, the giving of the law, the resurrection of the dead, and the lot of the Messiah.” The theme of Passover deliverance is continued in Revelation chapter 19 which is based on Psalm 113. (see page 53 of the introduction to Rev.) The vision of the redeemed, based on Passover deliverance is in contrast with what is about to happen to the wicked. The central theme to chapter 15 and 16 is Atonement not Passover. This is demonstrated with the following scheme:

INTENTION

Encouragement of the saints in light of the coming tribulation – a vision of the end time bliss of the redeemed.

No atonement possible for the wicked – the angels leave the tabernacle to pronounce ‘wrath’ not forgiveness.(see page 52 of the introduction to Rev.)

The wicked make ‘atonement’ with their own blood (16: 6)

CHAPTER 15

15v.3-4

THANKSGIVING FOR

PASSOVER DELIVERANCE based on Exodus 15 and Psalm 118 THE HALLEL

15v.5-8

THEME ATONEMENT

CHAPTER 16

16v.1-11

Punishment of the

Nations

16v.12-21

ARMAGEDDON

Ingathering of the saints and the judgment of the nations

We have already noted the similarities between Psalm 118 - part of the “Hallel” and the song of Moses celebrating passover deliverance in Exodus 15.

The prophet Isaiah also bases his song of praise, “the wells of salvation”, in Isaiah chapter 12, on Exodus 15.

ISAIAH 12

EXODUS 15

Behold, God is my salvation; I will trust, and not be afraid: for the LORD JEHOVAH is my strength and my song; he also is become my salvation. (v.2)

The LORD is my strength and song, and he is become my salvation: he is my God, and I will prepare him an habitation; my father's God, and I will exalt him. (v.2)

Therefore with joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation.(v.3)

And they came to Elim, where were twelve wells of water, and threescore and ten palm trees: and they encamped there by the waters. (v.27)

And in that day shall ye say, Praise the LORD, call upon his name, declare his doings among the people, make mention that his name is exalted

Sing unto the LORD; for he hath done excellent things: this is known in all the earth. (v.4 -5)

Then sang Moses and the children of Israel this song unto the LORD, and spake, saying, I will sing unto the LORD, for he hath triumphed gloriously: the horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea. (v.1)

The context of Isaiah is the Passover deliverance during Hezekiah's reign.1 Hezekiah had constructed a tunnel to the Gihon spring in order to secure the cities water supply in times of siege (2 Chron.32: 30). It was not this water that saved the city, but the outpouring of Gods spirit in retributive action against the Assyrian. The prophet Joel, also contemporary with Hezekiah, records how the spirit was also poured out on the general population of Jerusalem, for "in mount Zion and in Jerusalem shall be deliverance" (Joel 2: 28-32). Isaiah 12 celebrates Passover deliverance. The captives that were deported from the conquered cities (not from Jerusalem) were returned after the Assyrian defeat. This is the new Exodus that Isaiah describes in 11: 11-16. The redeemed draw from the "wells of salvation":

"But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life." (John 4:14)

But the wicked drink blood:

"For thou hast given them blood to drink for they are worthy." (16: 16)

This shows the depth and beauty of scripture for we have progressed from Ex.15 celebrating the Passover deliverance from Egypt, to the Passover Psalm 118 (sung at the last supper), then to Isaiah 12 celebrating Passover deliverance from the Assyrian and lastly to the song of Moses and the Lamb sung by the redeemed in Revelation.

The martyr's song has many other Old Testament references, many of them either directly or indirectly connected with the Passover.

Great and wonderful are your works, Lord God Almighty;

O Lord, how great are thy works! (Ps.92: 5); The works of the Lord are great (Ps.111: 2); he has done marvellous (wonderful) things (Ps.98: 1); Wonderful are thy works (Ps.139: 14).

Just and true are your ways, you King of saints.1

The Lord is just in all his ways, and kind in all his doings (Ps.145: 17)

Who shall not fear and glorify your name, O Lord?

All the nations thou hast made shall come and bow down before Thee, O Lord; and shall glorify thy name (Ps.86: 9).

You alone are holy.

There is none holy like the Lord (1 Sam.2: 2); Let them praise thy great and terrible name! Holy is he! (Ps.99: 3); Holy and terrible is his name (Ps.111: 9).

All the nations will come and worship before you.

All the nations thou hast made shall come and bow down before thee, O Lord (Ps.86: 9).

Your righteous judgments are made manifest.

(The justice of your decree stands revealed –REB)

The Lord has made known his victory, he has revealed his vindication in the sight of the nations (Ps.98: 2).

This is also a reference to Romans chapter 3 and it behoves us to examine this more closely. It is found in Romans 3: 4, which is itself a quote from Psalm 51: 4.

ROMANS 3

REVELATION 15

God forbid: yea, let God be true, but every man a liar; as it is written, That thou mightest be justified in thy sayings, and mightest overcome when thou art judged. (v.4)

Who shall not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name? for thou only art holy: for all nations shall come and worship before thee; for thy judgments are made manifest. (v.4)

To declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus. (v.26)

Just and true are thy ways. (v.3)

Is he the God of the Jews only? is he not also of the Gentiles? Yes, of the Gentiles also: Seeing it is one God, which shall justify the circumcision by faith, and uncircumcision through faith. (v.29,30)

Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God. (v.19)

All nations shall come and worship before thee. (v.4)

The importance of Romans 3: 4 cannot be over emphasised. The argument that Paul establishes, is that no man can justify himself. He quotes this verse from Psalm 51:4 – this is the Psalm with the title, “When Nathan the prophet came unto him, after he had gone in to Bath-Sheba.” In this Psalm, David realises that there is nothing that he can do to atone for his sin:

“For thou desirest not sacrifice; else would I give it: thou delightest not in burnt offering.” (Ps.51: 16)

There was no provision under the law of Moses for David’s sin, the reason for this is that God (not man) “mightest be justified when thou speakest, and be clear when thou judgest.” The divine assessment of human nature, and the subsequent judgments – are justified by human sinfulness. All hope is not lost however, for there is atonement for sin, not by the works of man, but as a gift from God. God is a justifier of him that believeth in Jesus. (Rom.3: 26)

This was the salvation of David, who saw a vision of the risen Christ (Psalm 110) 1 and was justified by his faith in the promise concerning him (2 Sam.7).

All his life David had desired but one thing – to ask God a question:

“One thing have I desired of the LORD, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the LORD, and to enquire in his temple.” (Ps.27: 4)

That wish was granted when he “sat before the ark”:

“Then went king David in, and sat before the LORD, and he said, Who am I, O Lord GOD? and what is my house, that thou hast brought me hitherto? And this was yet a small thing in thy sight, O Lord GOD; but thou hast spoken also of thy servant's house for a great while to come. And is this the manner of man, O Lord GOD?”

(2 Sam. 7:18-19)

David realised that he was not a Levitical priest (what is my house?) and therefore had no right to sit in front of the ark. In fact his question was:

“Is this the manner (torah or law) of man (adam), O Lord God?

To paraphrase;

Where is it in the law concerning man, that he can sit before the throne of God? Even the High Priest did not sit before the ark, and when he did approach, it required shrouding in a cloud of incense. This is exactly the point that Paul picks up in Romans 3: 27,28:

“Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? (what manner of law RV) of works? Nay: but by the law of faith. Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law. “

The conclusion that Paul, David and the saints of Revelation 15 reach, is that neither sin nor unbelief nullifies the faithfulness of God. The opposite is true, for human sinfulness reinforces the justice of his judgments.

“And mightest overcome when thou comest into judgment.” (Rom.3: 3RV)

Jesus overcame the sinfulness of his flesh – this was Gods judgment on the world.

Therefore, when the martyrs sing the justice of your decree stands revealed, they are applauding, not the sentence of doom which the seven angels are about to execute, because it is given as the reason for the confidence of the singers that all nations will be brought to the worship of God. The best way to discover what John meant by God’s just decrees is to ask by what means he thought the nations would be drawn to God, for to that question there can only be one answer: it was God’s decree that the death of the innocent should bear eloquent and persuasive witness to the redeeming love of the Lamb. By implementing this decree God has proved to the world that he is “both just and the justifier of anyone who puts faith in Jesus” (Rom.3: 26) The justice of his decree stands fully revealed at the resurrection:

“I will declare the decree: The Lord hath said unto me, Thou art my Son, This day I have begotten thee” (Ps.2: 7). This is valid not just for Christ, but for all the saints.

There is not one single word in this song about their own achievement; from beginning to end it is a lyric outburst to the greatness of God. In the perfect vision of God self is wholly forgotten. In the presence of God the martyrs forget themselves; their thoughts are absorbed by the new wonders that surround them; the glory of God and the mighty scheme of things in which their own sufferings form an infinitesimal part are opening before them; they begin to see the great issue of the world- drama, and we hear the doxology with which they greet their first unclouded vision of God and his works.

THE AVENGING ANGELS

“And after that I looked, and, behold, the temple of the tabernacle of the testimony in heaven was opened: And the seven angels came out of the temple, having the seven plagues, clothed in pure and white linen, and having their breasts girded with golden girdles. And one of the four beasts gave unto the seven angels seven golden vials full of the wrath of God, who liveth for ever and ever.” (Rev.15: 5-7)

The angels emerge from the very presence of God himself, from whence no doubt they have received their instructions. They are clad in white linen, denoting righteousness. Purity of motive is being stressed. The angels perform their tasks out of righteous concern for justice and nothing more. In verse 5 we witness a reversal of the liturgy enacted on the Day of Atonement. (Lev.16) The angels do not come forth to pronounce forgiveness and bestow a priestly blessing upon the people, but rather to punish. Atonement can no longer be obtained by means of the blood of animals, nor even the blood of the Lamb; now only the shedding of the sinner’s own blood will suffice. The earth can only be sanctified and cleansed from iniquity through the pouring out of the seven vials, imitating the ritual of Lev.16: 19.

An interesting detail we are given in 15: 7 is that the angels receive the seven vials from one of the four living creatures. If we are correct in understanding these four as representative of the creation then this act has a certain appropriateness in view of the universal nature of these final judgments.

The word phiale, generally rendered “vial”, has sacrificial connotations, being commonly used in the Septuagint for certain sacred bowls employed in the sanctuary (Ex.27: 3, Num.4: 14). It may also denote a “cup” (Prov.23: 31) for drinking wine. In Rev.16: 7 the vials are described as being “full of the wrath of God”. Here then we perceive the “cup of his indignation” mentioned earlier in 14: 9 as the counterpart to the cup of the harlot. The word also has connections with 5: 8 where an identical vessel contained the prayers of the saints. We have already noted that the Apocalypse establishes a relationship between the prayers of the saints and the judgment of the wicked.

THE UNAPPROACHABLE GLORY

“And the temple was filled with smoke from the glory of God, and from his power; and no man was able to enter into the temple, till the seven plagues of the seven angels were fulfilled.” (Rev.15: 8)

The idea of the glory of God being symbolised by smoke is a reference to the cloud of incense, which shrouded the shekinah and protected the High Priest on the Day of Atonement. In the vision of Isaiah the whole house was filled with smoke (Isa.6: 4). Further, the idea that no one could approach while the smoke was there is also common in the Old Testament. This was true both of the tabernacle and of the temple. Of the tabernacle it is said:

“Then a cloud covered the tent of the congregation, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle. And Moses was not able to enter into the tent of the congregation, because the cloud abode thereon, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle.” (Ex.40: 34-35)

This happened at the dedication of the tabernacle and also at the dedication of the temple.

“Now when Solomon had made an end of praying, the fire came down from heaven, and consumed the burnt offering and the sacrifices; and the glory of the LORD filled the house. And the priests could not enter into the house of the LORD, because the glory of the LORD had filled the LORD'S house.” (2 Chron.7: 1-2)

The idea presented to here is the dedication of a new temple the sacrifices that are offered are two-fold – the martyrdom of the saints and consequentially, the death of the beast, described as the supper of the great God (19: 17), thrown into the lake of fire, a burnt offering indeed!

No man is able to enter into the temple – Immortality can not be granted until after the martyrdom of the saints and the destruction of the beast. Then the saints will be able to approach God and acting as king – priests themselves, they will participate in reconciling the remaining mortal population to their God and his King.

“For as the new heavens and the new earth, which I will make, shall remain before me, saith the LORD, so shall your seed and your name remain. And it shall come to pass, that from one new moon to another, and from one Sabbath to another, shall all flesh come to worship before me, saith the LORD. And they shall go forth, and look upon the carcasses of the men that have transgressed against me: for their worm shall not die, neither shall their fire be quenched; and they shall be an abhorring unto all flesh.” (Isa.66: 22-24)

NOTES

1 The word “upon” (epi) is sometimes translated beside (RSV). This is not its literal meaning. In the light of the parallel vision of 14:1, where epi plainly means “upon”, we can safely assume the same for 15:2.

NOTES

1 Isaiah 12: 2; YAHWEH is my STRENGTH and song; he also is become my SALVATION. Hezekiah means strengthened of Yah, Isaiah means salvation of Yah.

NOTES

1 Alternative readings exist in the manuscript tradition for the expression “King of saints”. The RV has “King of the ages” and the RVmg has “King of nations” – the author suggests that “King of nations” is correct as this is a reference to Jeremiah 10: 7. Jeremiah chapter 10 is prophetic. The main points of contact are listed below, but it is recommend that the complete chapter be read in this light.

JEREMIAH 10

REVELATION 15

Who would not fear thee, O King of nations? (v.7)

Thou King of nations. Who shall not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name. (v.3,4)

But they are altogether brutish and foolish. (v.8,14)

The beast worshippers. (v.2)

Every founder is confounded by the graven image.

Image worshippers.(v.2)

Pour out thy fury upon the heathen that know thee not, and upon the families that call not on thy name: for they have eaten up Jacob, and devoured him, and consumed him, and have made his habitation desolate. (v.25)

And I heard a great voice out of the temple saying to the seven angels, Go your ways, and pour out the vials of the wrath of God upon the earth.

(16: 1)

NOTES

1 David saw this vision when he was sat before the ark.(2 Sam.7: 18)

Prelude to Chapter 16

IT IS DONE. (Rev.16: 17)

THE TRUMPETS AND THE VIALS AND THE END TIME SCENARIO

We have already observed that the seals began on a specific feast day (= the Passover AD 30-31) and that the duration of each seal is seven years, culminating in the seven year Jewish war and the fall of Massada forty two (6x7) years later.

The trumpets are also identified with a feast day – the Day of Atonement or Yom Kippur (see introduction page) – the author proposes that these also follow the same pattern of 6x7 years, with the final seven introducing the kingdom.

The only significant Day of Atonement in recent salvic history is the 1973 Yom Kippur war. The war broke out when Egypt attacked Israel on its day of fasting and prayer. At the outbreak of war the Egyptians and Syrians broke through Israeli defences, but by 9 October the Syrian advance had been repelled.

On 10 October the American President Richard Nixon began an airlift of advanced weapons to Israel; two days later the Israeli's engaged in a counter attack on Egypt and moved toward victory. On 24 October a cease-fire came into operation. The rumours are that Israel threatened to "go nuclear" in order to garner American support. Israel very nearly lost the war, and as a consequence the nation came to the realisation that a negotiated peace was the only way forward.

The Yom Kippur war was a watershed, and Israel has been increasingly forced to recognise that a "lasting peace" can only be achieved by compromise. Israel cannot hope to attain security and regional stability by force, the nation would not survive a defeat, whereas her enemies have.

Let us then examine the trumpets in this new light:

1973-1980 (FIRST SEVEN)

Oct 1973 Yom Kippur war breaks out when Egypt attacks Israel on its day of prayer and fasting. Initial Egyptian success followed by Israeli counter-attack, ending in UN cease-fire and inconclusive Geneva peace talks. Israel's 1967 territorial gains unchanged. 1977: President Sadat of Egypt makes historic trip to Jerusalem. Camp David peace accord negotiated by Sadat and Menachem Begin, the Isreali prime minister, with president Carter mediating ending in the Egyptian-Israel peace treaty of 1979. Second part of the accord, on Palestinian self rule not implemented. 1978: Israeli incursion into Lebanon across the Litani river to root out Palestinian gunmen.

1980-1987 (SECOND SEVEN)

1980: Israel and Egypt exchange Ambassadors to the dismay of the Arab world. 1982: Israeli invasion of Lebanon, ending in 1985 with PLO expulsion to Tunis, an Israeli withdrawal, and the establishment of an Israeli controlled "security zone" in southern Lebanon as a buffer against attacks. Oct 1985: Israel bombs PLO headquarters in Tunis.

1987-1994 (THIRD SEVEN)

1987: Palestinian uprising against Israeli occupation, the intifada, begins in the Gaza strip and swiftly spreads to the West Bank. 1988: PLO for the first time acknowledges Israel's right to exist

and renounces terrorism, although acts of terror by splinter groups continue. 1989: Yitzhak Shamir, the Isreali prime minister, formulates Israeli plan for Palestinian autonomy. America seeks to use that as basis for renewed peace process, but plan founders on problem of Palestinian representation and the Jerusalem question. Oct 1990: The killing of at least 19 Palestinians on the temple mount draws widespread international condemnation. 1991: In the aftermath of the Gulf war against Iraq, during which Israel suffers scud missile attacks but refrains from retaliation, America builds on new regional alignments and changed Soviet role to persuade Syria, Jordan, Lebanon and Israel to attend a peace conference, with a Palestinian team acceptable to Israel forming part of the Jordanian delegation. The PLO is formally excluded.

1994-2001 (FOURTH SEVEN)

Oct 1994: Peace treaty with Jordan. 1995: Yitzak Rabin assassinated. Seven years of Oslo talks come to an end when the uprising recommences as a response to Ariel Sharon's protest walk on the temple mount. Sharon elected on security issue.

2001-2008 (FIFTH SEVEN)

ABYSS OPENED

2008-2015 (SIXTH SEVEN)

THREE PLAGUES

2015-2022 (SEVENTH SEVEN)

THE VIALS – SEVEN PLAGUES

The vials are the seven "last plagues" (15:1) which together with the "three plagues" (9: 18) constitute the ten plagues on Egypt. It is interesting to note that the first three plagues effected both the Jews and the Egyptians, but with the last seven God differentiated. (Ex.8: 22) Never the less, the last plague (death of the firstborn) did effect unfaithful Jews, who refused to put blood on the doorposts.

The sixth trumpet unleashes "three plagues" with the attack from the Euphrates – the sixth vial does the same.

"And the sixth angel poured out his vial upon the great river Euphrates; and the water thereof was dried up, that the way of the kings of the east might be prepared."

(Rev. 16:12)

The trumpets effect one third of the area's that are designated in this section. It is significant that Israel is effectively split into three parts – Gaza, West-Bank and Israel proper.

THE VIALS OF WRATH

The vials have a central theme that is often overlooked and is more literal than we realise. The motif that unites the chapter is water.

(v.3) Sea water – like blood

(v.4) River water, spring water – like blood

(v.8) Scorching sun – drought

(v.12) Euphrates dried up

The one resource that has caused friction in the Middle East since the time of Abraham is not oil, but water. The poisoning of water is occurring at the moment in Israel. The Times supplement of July 4 –2000 contained an article under the heading – Poisoning the Promised land: how the chosen people are killing Israel. It begins as follows:

“It took the chosen people 2,000 years to end their exile and return to the promised land. It has taken them only 52 years to turn the land of milk and honey into a country of foaming rivers, carcinogenic water and dying fish.

Surrounded by enemies, Israel has become aggressively self sufficient, greening its deserts and increasing industrialisation. But in doing so, it has poisoned its own land so badly that, if Christ were born today, his first miracle would be to survive his own baptism. In fact the holy River Jordan, where Jesus was baptised, is officially an “effluent channel” – or stinking ditch – by the time it reaches the lower Jordan Valley.

Most of the rivers in Israel are now so badly polluted that fish can live in them for minutes only, and the fishermen’s flesh is rotting. Already, admits Dalia Itzik, the country’s Environment Minister, 40 per cent of water piped to Israeli and Palestinian homes is “undrinkable”. Some scientists have already warned that carcinogens are turning up in tap water.

“The situation is catastrophic,” says Itzik. “we simply do not have enough water to meet the needs of the population.”

It is estimated that by the middle of the century global temperatures could rise 2-5 degrees Celsius. Global warming (power was given to the sun to scorch men with fire-16: 8) will result in sea level rises, changes to patterns of precipitation, increased variability in the weather and famines. On average the Northern Hemisphere is already 0.84°C warmer at night and 0.28°C during the day.

The effect of increasing population pressure coupled with a warmer climate will make water an even scarcer resource in the Middle East. The food supply is also effected; Jordan is already importing some 91% of its grain, Israel 87%, Libya 85%, Saudi Arabia 50%, and Egypt 40%.

Israel uses five times as much water as it’s neighbour Jordan, and is abstracting water from the mountain aquifer, which lies predominantly in the limestone and dolomite hills of the West Bank. This water is some 10,000 years old, from a time when rainfall was plentiful, but it is no longer being replenished. This water is a shared resource with Jordan. Israel is also extracting water from the coastal aquifer which lies some 3-5 meters above sea level, but because of over-pumping this now suffers from permanent saline intrusion and is contaminated by sewage and agricultural chemicals.1

Sharing fresh water sources is becoming as important a political issue for countries as it is an environmental one. Israel wants a guarantee from Syria that a withdrawal from the Golan Heights would not effect the supplies, either from the Sea of Galilee or tributaries of the Jordan.

After six years of below normal rainfall, the Sea of Galilee is at its lowest level since 1908 and Israel is dealing with the regions worst drought of the century. Turkey has offered to sell Israel water from the Manavgat River, but the BBC reported that such a deal could alarm neighbouring Arab countries that are long-time political foes of Israel.1

Work is underway or complete on 22 dams on the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers. Turkey says the dams will enable hundreds of thousands of hectares of land to be irrigated, and generate electricity for the underdeveloped and arid south-east of the country. Turkey controls the Tigris and Euphrates headwaters, which Iraq and Syria depend on for fresh water. Both Baghdad and Damascus have complained about the amount of water they have been getting since the completion of the first Turkish dams at the beginning of the 1990s.

They fear Turkeys ability to shut off their water supply in any possible conflict.2

The twelve page report on the internet by Hilal Ever: Emerging water conflict in the Middle East? The case of the Euphrates and the Tigris Rivers basin- makes intriguing reading.3 Here follow some quotes:

“For one month (in 1990) Turkey held back the main flow of the Euphrates River, which cut the downstream flow in Syria to about a quarter of its normal rate.”

“Nevertheless, in October 1989, late Prime Minister Turgut Ozal indicated that Turkey might impound the rivers water if Syria failed to restrain the PKK (Kurdish terrorists) from operating within its territory. Although Ozal later withdrew this threat, the underlying tensions have not been resolved, and there are currently no significant high-level talks on water sharing.”

“The ability of Turkey to shut off the flow of the Euphrates, even temporarily, was noted by political and military strategists at the beginning of the Gulf conflict. In the early days of the conflict during the crisis preceding the war, there were behind-the-scenes discussions at the United Nations about using Turkish dams on the Euphrates River to deprive Iraq of a significant fraction of its fresh water supply in response to its invasion of Kuwait. While no such action was ever taken, the threat of the “water weapon” was again a part of the diplomatic setting. Turkey has never yet used water as means of political pressure and it declined to do so during the Gulf War.”

“Syria and Iraq agree absolutely only on one thing – the threat to their future that is being posed by Turkish action to harness the resources of the Tigris and the Euphrates under the predominant control of Ankara. Despite their deep political cleavages with each other, officials from both states, along with other Arab countries, endorsed a Damascus Declaration accusing Turkey of releasing contaminated water downstream to Syria.”

“The three riparian countries, during the past two decades, have engaged in aggressive political attacks upon each other. For instance one of the Turkish officials, has responded against Syria in strong language that “we will dry them up” or “they need additional water to wash the blood of terrorism from their hands.”

“In sum, this multi-dimensional and multiphase controversy over the water allocation rights with its complex interplay of environmental, economic, cultural, political and ethnic aspects, poses a severe threat to peace and a comprehensive security in the region.”

The extraction of groundwater from the regions aquifers may also have another undesired consequence – earthquakes. The yield strength of rock drops sharply with dehydration. During a dehydration period, carbon dioxide and other gases may erupt in some cases, because limestone and other rocks dissolve; earthquake sound may release due to underground gas disturbance. Once the yield strength drops sufficiently an earthquake occurs.

“And there were voices, and thunders, and lightnings; and there was a great earthquake, such as was not since men were upon the earth, so mighty an earthquake, and so great.” (Rev.16: 18)

This earthquake is not just metaphorical but also literal:

“And his feet shall stand in that day upon the mount of Olives, which is before Jerusalem on the east, and the mount of Olives shall cleave in the midst thereof toward the east and toward the west, and there shall be a very great valley; and half of the mountain shall remove toward the north, and half of it toward the south. And ye shall flee to the valley of the mountains; for the valley of the mountains shall reach unto Azal: yea, ye shall flee, like as ye fled from before the earthquake in the days of Uzziah king of Judah: and the LORD my God shall come, and all the saints with thee.” (Zech.14:4-5)

This coincides with what is known about the geography of the region.

The two arms of the Y are the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden. The stem of the Y is the Great Rift Valley, which is tearing Africa apart. Eventually, as the rift deepens and widens, surrounding waters will rush in to create a new gulf, or sea, as Somalia breaks away from Africa to form the new Somali plate. Notice how the small island of Madagascar fits snugly into the African mainland. The rift was formed by an up-welling of magma heating the continental crust above, and forcing up a dome, which then cracks open to form a clear Y –shaped triple rift.

Rift Valley or Great Rift Valley, depression, extending more than 4830 km (more than 3000 miles) from Syria in South-western Asia to Mozambique in South-eastern Africa. The valley is believed to have been formed by the sinking and tearing apart of the earth's crust along a 50-million-year-old zone of weakness.

Elevations of the Rift Valley vary from 395 m (1296 ft) below sea level at the shore of the Dead Sea to about 1829 m (about 6000 ft) above sea level at cliffs in Kenya. The width of the valley ranges from a few miles to more than 160 km (more than 100 miles). In eastern Africa the valley separates into two branches: the Eastern Rift and the Western Rift. In the latter is Lake Tanganyika, one of the largest lakes of the continent. Other bodies of water within the Rift Valley include Lake Tiberias, the Jordan River, the Red Sea, the Gulf of Aqaba, and the Gulf of Aden.

Jesus warned that there would be earthquakes in diverse places; this is in preparation for a seismic catastrophe of absolutely unknown magnitude. One can only imagine that this will have global consequences, with fault lines everywhere shifting and many of the world’s cities collapsing. The prophet Isaiah informs us that the Nile will run dry (Isa.19: 5) and also the prophet Ezekiel – it will be an utter waste from the tower of Syene to the border of Ethiopia (Ezek.29: 10). The tower of Syene is the current Aswan (so translated in NIV), site of the Aswan dam at lake Nasser. The ultimate fate of the Egyptians is however to be blessed together with Assyria. (Isa.19: 25)

It is clear then, that the topography of the Middle East will change dramatically, rivers will be diverted, the desert will bloom (Isa 35:6-7), Jerusalem will be elevated (both literally and metaphorically – Isa.2: 2 cp. Ps.125: 2). Water will flow from Jerusalem via the eastern Arabia (desert) to the sea. (Ezek.47: 8) No more will the Jordan flow through Adam into the Dead Sea, for it will also be elevated (compare Joshua entering the land – Josh.3: 16).

The Jordan falls 913 meters over a distance of 190 kilometres. See geological cross sections:

Moreover, the fate of the false prophet, the beast, and the beast worshippers, is to be cast alive into the lake of fire (19: 20) burning with brimstone. This lake of fire will probably be a permanent feature – one imagines that it will be similar to the magma flow on the surface of the Hawaii Island chain. This magma flows constantly to the sea creating new land. This will be a permanent reminder of the fate of the wicked – a type of kingdom holocaust memorial.

“The earth is utterly broken down, the earth is clean dissolved, the earth is moved exceedingly. The earth shall reel to and fro like a drunkard, and shall be removed like a cottage; and the transgression thereof shall be heavy upon it; and it shall fall, and not rise again. And it shall come to pass in that day, that the LORD shall punish the host of the high ones that are on high, and the kings of the earth upon the earth. And they shall be gathered together, as prisoners are gathered in the pit, and shall be shut up in the prison, and after many days shall they be visited. Then the moon shall be confounded, and the sun ashamed, when the LORD of hosts shall reign in mount Zion, and in Jerusalem, and before his ancients gloriously.” (Isa. 24:19-23)

THE WELLS OF SALVATION

We have observed that water is a major source of conflict in the Middle-east, it has been so since the time of Abraham and Isaac. It is instructive to examine these incidents once again, for they are acted parables.

GENESIS 21

JOHN 3

Abraham reproves Abimelech over a well that was violently taken away. (v.25)

Christ is that well…..whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him…(Jh.4:10-14)

Abimelech claims to know nothing about it.(v.26)

…art thou a teacher in Israel and understandeth not these things? (v.3)

God is with thee. (v.22)

We know that thou art a teacher come from God; for no man can do these signs except God be with him. (v.2) IMMANUEL

…..that it may be a witness to thee that I have digged this well. (v.30)

He that receiveth his witness hath set his seal to this, that God is true. (v.34)

GENESIS 26 - ISAAC

JESUS

Isaac’s goods increase greatly.

Behold…..all men come to him. (Jh.3:26)

The Philistines envy him.

The Jews envy him. (Mtt.27:18)

They block Abraham’s wells.

Ye shut up the kingdom of heaven.(Mtt.23:13)

Isaac leaves for the valley of Gerar. [=earthenware vessel]

The valley of the shadow of death. (Ps.23:4)

Isaac unblocks Abraham's wells.

Justification by faith in Christ. He that openeth and none shall shut. (Rev.3:7)

They found there a well of springing water. (RV=living water)

The pit is no longer dry! (cp.Gen.37: 24) Living water dispensed by Christ, springing up to eternal life. (Jh.4:14)

There is also a wonderful comparison between Isaiah 49 and Isaac. Note particularly the meaning of the wells names.

ISAIAH 49

ISAAC A TYPE OF CHRIST

....and I will give thee for a covenant of the people. (v.8)

Isaac offered as a sacrifice. (Gen.22:2)

...lift up thine eyes. (v.18)

Rebekah lifted up her eyes when she saw Isaac. (Gen.24:64) And when these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh. (Lk.21:28)

....gird thyself with them like a bride. (v.18)

Rebekah.[= to fetter or tie]

....even by the springs of water shall he guide them. (v.25)

Isaac unblocking Abraham's wells.

Justification by faith. (Gen.26:18)

I will contend with them that contend with thee.(v.25)

ESEK = contention: SITNAH=enmity.

The gospel preached to the Jews. (Gen.26:20,21)

....the place is too straight for me give me place that I may dwell.(v.20)

....who have begotten these?

....who have brought up these? (v.21)

REHEBOTH = to enlarge or broad places (Gen.26:22).

The covenant extended to the gentiles

GENESIS 26 THE KINGDOM TYPIFIED

Isaac went up to Beersheba [well of the oath] and receives a blessing of fruitfulness.

The Lord's ascension?

Multiply thy seed....builds an altar....pitches his tent there.

I will place them and multiply them...and set my sanctuary in the midst of them...my tabernacle shall also be with them. (Ezk.37:27)

Wherefore are ye come unto me seeing you hate me, and have sent me away from you? (v.27)

Christ's words to his brethren.

(compare Joseph)

.....do us no hurt....(v.29)

Compare Joseph in Gen.50:15

The Lord is with thee. (v.28)

IMMANUEL

Isaac makes a feast...they depart in peace.(v.31)

Blessed are they which are bidden to the marriage supper of the Lamb. (Rev.19:9)

I will make a covenant of peace with them, it shall be an everlasting covenant with them. (Ezk.37:26)

THEY FIND WATER THE SAME DAY.(v.32) IN THAT DAY there shall be a fountain opened to the house of David and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, for sin and uncleanness. (Zech.13:1)

Called: BEER -SHEBA

THE WELL OF THE OATH: all the promises to the patriarchs have been fulfilled – the gentiles (queen of SHEBA) also in covenant relationship.

To this we might add that in Genesis 21:27-32 Abraham made a covenant with Abimelech and gave him seven ewe lambs as a witness that he had digged the well. The seven ewe lambs – represent the seven ecclesias of Revelation – a witness that God has digged the well of the oath. (BEER –SHEBA)

"To perform the mercy promised to our fathers, and to remember his holy covenant; The oath which he sware to our father Abraham."(Lk.1:72,73)

We have seen that water is both literally and metaphorically a bone of contention (ESEK) and a cause of hatred (SITNAH) but in the future that will no longer be the case:

"And in that day thou shalt say, O LORD, I will praise thee: though thou wast angry with me, thine anger is turned away, and thou comfortedst me. Behold, God is my salvation; I will trust, and not be afraid: for the LORD JEHOVAH is my strength and my song; he also is become my salvation. Therefore with joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation. And in that day shall ye say, Praise the LORD, call upon his name, declare his doings among the people, make mention that his name is exalted. Sing unto the LORD; for he hath done excellent things: this is known in all the earth. Cry out and shout, thou inhabitant of Zion: for great is the Holy One of Israel in the midst of thee." (Isa.12:1-6)

REGIONAL POLITICS

Israel is a nuclear power. Seymour M. Hersh has written a book called the Samson option. (1993) In it he recounts the story of the Israeli nuclear weapons programme and it's influence on world events. He traces Israel's clandestine nuclear mission, from the building of the Dimona reactor site in the remote Negev desert during the late 1950s, to the establishment by the late 1970s of a sophisticated underground nuclear production facility that targeted and threatened Israel's enemies in the Middle East as well as the Soviet Union itself.

The Samson option 1 shows Israel's determination to prevent any future enemy from carrying out another holocaust. Just as Samson brought down the temple and killed himself along with his enemies, so Israel would destroy those who would bring it down. The message is stark: the next Middle East war may well be nuclear.

The nuclear deterrent has been code named the "Temple" weapons (pg.226) the whole house of Israel being the "Temple." Truly we can lament with the prophet Jeremiah; "My people hath changed their glory for that which doth not profit." (Jer.2: 11)

They have changed the radiating shekinah for radiation and the Most Holy for a nuclear reactor.

According to Hersh, Israel has also developed hundreds of low-yield neutron warheads capable of destroying large numbers of enemy troops with minimal property damages.

"The size and sophistication of Israel's arsenal allow men such as Ariel Sharon to dream of redrawing the map of the Middle East aided by the implicit threat of nuclear force." (pg.319)

This was written before the election of Sharon. It must be remembered that Sharon instigated the Lebanon war in order to create a friendly Christian buffer state between Syria, and to destabilise Jordan, thus creating a Palestinian homeland and ridding himself of the internal Palestinian problem once and for all. How will he respond to continued terrorism? With war or peace? The past suggests war. Is Ariel Sharon the lion-mouth? (Rev.13: 2) Perhaps.

According to the Sunday Times News Review (Feb.25-2001) Iraq is also a nuclear power. Sadam Hussein has supposedly already tested a nuclear weapon in a cave under lake Rezazza. Intelligence suggests that Iraq now possesses three Hiroshima type bombs, three implosion weapons and three thermonuclear weapons. Israel delayed the Iraqi nuclear programme when it bombed the nuclear reactor at Osirak, which lies twelve miles south-east of Baghdad in 1981.

Sadam Hussein has outlasted all his foes. Even if he does not possess nuclear weapons, he most certainly has chemical weapons at his disposal. He is attempting to obtain a more reliable means of delivery than the scud missiles. The Mail on Sunday Review (Oct 1 2000) had the following to say in an article entitled, Sadam the Survivor:1

"The ancient city of Babylon has always been a monument to the supreme egotism of man. It was here that the great tower of Babel was built to reach up to heaven, only to be struck down by God for arrogance. It was here that great King Nebuchadnezzar reigned supreme over one of the greatest empires of the Middle East. Little seems to have changed in these past few millennia. When I travelled here to attend the 12th Babylon Festival, I discovered a city which has been rebuilt as a temple to the glory of the present strongman who runs this ancient territory, the Iraqi President Saddam Hussein who, despite being one of the world's most demonised leaders, is also one of it's greatest political survivors."

Is he the head whose mortal wound (Rev.13: 3) has healed? Perhaps. More likely he is only part of the jig-saw, but a large part. He certainly sees himself as the liberator of the Palestinian people;

“Long live Iraq the Great – immortal for it’s values and the significance of it’s deeds! Long live our glorious Arab nation. Contempt and shame for the enemies! Long live Palestine-free, proud and Arab from the sea to the river! Long live every loyal freedom fighter everywhere! God is great! God is great! And let the debased be dispised!”2

REGIONAL ALLIANCES

The following quotation from an article by Amos Perlmutter (a US-based political scientist and Middle East analyst) has some valid points to make:

Middle East security: What next? 3

(September 24-2000) – An independent Palestinian state will certainly be declared by 2001, but will not bring an end to the Arab-Israeli conflict. The argument of some strategists that peace with Palestinians will mean the end of the conflict is unrealistic.

Certainly, Palestinian peace is imperative for stability in the area, but it is insufficient. Israelis must think of what will be required of Israeli security once the Palestinian issue has been settled. It is quite clear that our north-eastern frontier is not secure. There are two revisionist powers in the area – Iran and especially Saddam’s Iraq – that pose an existential and security danger to Israel. Peace with Syria is still not in sight, and no strategic thinker should overlook a tacit coalition between Iraq and Syria in challenging Israel’s north-eastern frontier. Middle East security cannot be achieved without Israel, nor can it be fulfilled without a partnership with the Arabs.

Israel is faced with two choices. The short-term choice is peace with Syria and a closer Israeli-Jordanian strategic relationship that may eventually become the second long-term choice, ie, a north-eastern states regional security arrangement. That would mean a complex arrangement between Israel, Jordan, Syria, and a post-Saddam Hussein regime in Iraq. I will not spell out the exact balance of the relationship. It is easier to discover contradictions than enlighten mutual benefits.

The regional security of the north-east would give the Arab states of Syria, Iraq, and Jordan a greater leverage in their relationship with Egypt. The rivalry between Iraq and Egypt goes back to Nasser of Egypt and Nuri a-Sud of Iraq. The struggle between the Fertile Crescent and the Nile Valley goes back to time immemorial and have not changed geographically and strategically in modern times. The north-eastern regional security arrangement would not be designed to challenge Egypt, but to ensure that the current Egyptian-Palestinian entente cordiale will not challenge the territorial integrity of Jordan- still a Palestinian goal.

Obviously, the Middle East is not Western Europe, where the historical balance of power prevailed. The absence of an Israeli role in helping to form the security arrangement could create the very conditions for an unnecessary Iraqi-Syrian coalition war against Israel, which could seriously threaten Jordanian security.

Rather than going into specifics, I lay down a strategic condition for Israeli security after a Palestinian state has been declared. Once it is established there should be no raison d’ê tre for an Arab coalition against Israel, unless there is an unforeseen expansionist regime in Iraq. In

fact, Iraq today poses the greatest danger to Middle East security. As long as Saddam is in power, the regional arrangement will not be able to fall in place. Peace between Israel and Syria is imperative for this regional alliance to have a chance.

Israeli diplomacy and strategy must be very cautious in presenting the idea of north-eastern regional security lest it be interpreted on the part of Syria, Jordan, or Iraq as an effort on the part of Israel to strategically dominate the region.

There is a power in the Middle East that can help usher in this regional security and remove the burden of concern in Iraq, Syria, or Jordan that Israel is trying to establish its hegemony through the regional security arrangement. This power is Turkey. Turkey has good relations with Iraq, has improved its relationship with Syria now that there is no Assad to forment Kurdish revolutionaries, and certainly its strategic relationship with Israel and strong economic ties with Jordan can dissipate a fear of Israel on the part of north-eastern Arab countries. I would certainly not dismiss the role of Saudi Arabia, if it so desires, to become a partner as well.

It is extremely interesting to note that Turkey is increasingly seen as a friend of Israel. As we have noted it is Turkey who has the power to "turn off the tap" and "dry up the Euphrates." This would certainly provoke the "kings of the East" to take action.

Arab-Israeli war

There is no logic in going to war before every possible concession has been wrung out of the enemy by peaceful means – and for all their public opposition to the peace process, those in the Arab-Iranian war party have always understood that negotiating a return of the Gaza Strip, West Bank, and possibly the Golan Heights made much more sense than fighting for them.

The neutralisation of Israel's nuclear deterrent

The main deterrent to another Arab-Israeli war is the Israeli nuclear programme. If however, Iraq has already developed a nuclear capability this could neutralise the threat. Syria also has far more conventional Scud-C missiles (armed with advanced chemical warheads) than previously thought. It also has an unusually high proportion of launchers to missiles (2:1 instead of the usual 10:1). This will enable Syria to launch a barrage of missiles at Israel in one go. With such a capability, Syria might legitimately think that Israel would dare not use its nuclear arsenal. To this scenario we have to add Iran's development of ballistic missiles with Russian (and Chinese?) support.

Neutralising American involvement

The Bush administration is already proving more reluctant in becoming involved in Middle East politics. This is in marked contrast to the Clinton era. It may well be that this reflects a more permanent change in American political attitudes – if Europe increases its military independence, this may push America further towards isolationism. The question America is increasingly asking itself about foreign policy is; "What's in it for us?" This attitude would be reinforced by the threatened use of the "oil weapon" by the Arab states. American involvement could well be limited by the use of economic blackmail.

OPENING THE ABYSS

I have already suggested that the 5th trumpet starts in 2001 with the opening of the Abyss. The Times supplement Nov.24-2000 contained an article entitled: Middle East meltdown. The end game. The article commences as follows:

(September 11 has occurred before this was published confirming the start of the 5th trumpet)

Israeli analysts predict that the Middle East is one third of the way towards Armageddon.

Deep in the bowels of Ha Kiryah, the Israeli Ministry of Defence headquarters whose bristling antennae dominate Tel Aviv's skyline, a small and elite team of computer wizards, military analysts and political experts are playing a war game.

It could be called Doom or Armageddon. But the simulations are no fun. They are playing out the worse case scenarios of a Middle East meltdown in which everyone, and they mean everyone, is a loser. The conclusions of the geeks who live in a virtual world are based on reality. About a third of the End Game scenario has already been played out. The analysts are not alone in fearing that what began as a semi-popular, semi-spontaneous uprising of Palestinians against continued Israeli occupation has already mutated into a mini-war of growing intensity which now threatens to spin out of control and suck the whole of the Middle East into its vortex. United Nations diplomats, William Cohen, the United States defence secretary, moderate and immoderate Arab leaders, members of the Israeli cabinet and Yasser Arafat's senior advisors can agree on little. But they are unanimous in the fear that the region is teetering on the brink of an unthinkably horrible abyss.

The children of this world are indeed wiser than the children of light. Why are Christadelphians fixated on Europe?

POST SCRIPT:

DECEMBER 2001 – I am still busy editing this publication and the situation has changed so rapidly since September 11- that it deserves a mention. I was certain that 2001 would see the start of the 5th trumpet, and that something was required to shake America out of isolationism. We have surely seen the smoke rising from the abyss and darkening the sun (the twin towers burned for 100 days) – next we will see a beast emerge from the abyss. It seems that America is even more pro-Israel and is determined to remove terrorism from the Middle East; this will prepare the way for the formation of the beast-empire.

NOTES

1 Wells of conflict on the West Bank. Fred Pearce. New Scientist 1 June 1991

NOTES

1 Israeli-Syrian peace talks highlight Middle East water shortages 27 Dec 1999:

http://www.disasterrelief.org/Disasters/991216 watershortage/

---

2 BBC online network: Middle East Turkish dam gets UK support.
http://news.bbc.co.uk/hi/english/world/middle_east/newsid_288000/288183.stm

---

3 http://gurukul.ucc.american.edu/maksoud/water 98/present 8.htm

NOTES

1 This is very appropriate for Samson is a type of the nation, led astray by foreign women. Compare Deuteronomy chapter 28 with aspects of Samson's life.

NOTES

1 The Guardian supplement G2 (Jan.3-2001) contains a similar article under the heading: REMEMBER ME? Brian Whittaker on the dictator who won't go away. See also: Evading UN resolutions and failure to disarm. http://usinfo.state.gov/regional/nea/iraq/iraq 99b.htm

---

2 Speech on Iraqi satellite TV Jan. 17-2000 marking the 9th anniversary of the Gulf war.

---

3 http://www.jpost.com/Editions/2000/09/24/Opinion/Opinion.12737.html

Chapter 16

THE VIALS OF WRATH

“Behold, I come as a thief. Blessed is he that watcheth, and keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked, and they see his shame.” (Rev.16: 15)

ALL THE PLAGUES OF EGYPT

As indicated in the prelude to chapter 16, what follows is a combination of natural and political disasters. The Middle East is known for a scarcity of fresh water, this coupled with global warming (scorching sun) will lead to famine, water conflicts and “grievous sores” (melanoma – sun induced cancer).

We cannot, however, limit this chapter to natural disasters, for it also describes the fall of the Harlot and destruction of the beast in political and spiritual terms.

All the vial plagues find their basis in the Exodus account. Much of the story of Moses in Egypt is held inside the realities of that ancient land, and this especially in the descriptions of the plagues. As Moses confronts Pharaoh in the terrible contest that finally forces Egypt to let the people of Israel go, the storyteller accurately describes some of the ecological realities of the ancient Egyptian environment, that rainless land locked along the sides of a great river. Here, indeed, the Bible’s eye is typically acute. As Moses’ prophecies unfold one by one, they combine to give us a picture of a genuine ancient catastrophe.

With the very first plague, the Nile flows red with blood caused by grotesquely large red micro-organisms.1 Some of these micro-organisms are poisonous, others deplete the oxygen; as a consequence the fish die. The stagnant water would cause frogs to search en mass for fresh spawning grounds. All the dead creatures would, in turn give rise to insect plagues and disease. Such abnormal seasons also brought freak storms with them; dust storms that blot out the sun, storms in which locusts, frogs and even fish might be whisked into the air, then dropped dead and cold upon the earth. And all this Moses prophesied. (Exodus: from chpt.7-12)

In the eighteenth century B.C, such a disaster, continuing over several years, brought down the government of a Pharaoh; his subjects would probably have thought that he was quite unfit to rule. For Pharaoh, they believed, held the balance between men and gods, and ensured prosperity in Egypt.

In this world, then, the plagues that Moses prophecies would never have been seen as punishment for enslaving the Israelites, but as part of a contest between two deities, Pharaoh and Yahweh. And, when, as the book of Exodus describes, the staff of Aaron, is transformed into a serpent at Moses’ command, all Egypt would have understood the challenge for the serpent was an emblem of Pharonic power; golden spitting cobras sat on the front of every one of Pharaoh’s crowns. In common Egyptian symbolism, Moses and his God joined battle with the king of Egypt.

With the tenth and final plague, Yahweh reaches right into ancient Egypt’s heart. For the death of the firstborn is a specifically Egyptian curse that goes far beyond the limits of its more obvious tragedy. In traditional Egyptian society, a family’s eldest son - not only inherited his father’s position in the world - but, by careful attention to the cult of the dead, ensured continuity between this world and the next. The destruction of this link would have dropped ancient Egyptians into rootless, unstructured oblivion, cosmic chaos.

The expulsion of Moses (who seemed to be the author of the plagues) with all his followers, would have been viewed by the Egyptians as an act of national preservation. Yahweh displays an astounding understanding of the Egyptian mind.

All these plagues except the last one could be understood as a catalogue of natural disasters. This is significant, for if men harden their hearts (like Pharaoh) and refuse to repent (Rev.16: 9,11,21) they will justify these catastrophes in natural (or political) terms. When the last and final plague comes, and God openly reveals his hand, it will be too late.

VIALS PLAGUES OF EGYPT

1. A grievous sore.

1.Boils.

2. The sea as the blood of a dead man.

2.Pharaoh's army drowned in the sea.

3. Rivers become blood.

3. Nile turned to blood.

4. Sun scorches men with fire.

4. The Shekinah glory?

5. Darkness.

5.Darkness.

6. Unclean spirits like frogs.

6. Frogs.

7. Hail, with fire.

The effect: they repented not, they blasphemed God. (16: 9,11,21)

7. Hail and lightning – "fire ran along the ground." (Ex.9: 23)

The effect: Pharaoh hardened his heart.

THE FIRST VIAL

"And I heard a great voice out of the temple saying to the seven angels, go your ways, and pour out the vials of the wrath of God upon the earth. And the first went, and poured out his vial upon the earth; and there fell a noisome and grievous sore upon the men which had the mark of the beast, and upon them which worshipped his image." (Rev.16: 1-2)

In the first verse John hears a loud voice from the temple telling the seven angels to pour out their vials upon the earth. The origin of the vials is significant, otherwise such a detail would not be included. The voice, thundering from the holy temple, probably represents that of the Lord God Almighty (16:17), or possibly the Lamb, who only are able to issue the final command to punish the wicked of the earth. The angels, we remember, had left his presence just a short while before (15: 6).

Each of the angels was ordered to “pour out” his vial. This metaphor for meeting out judgment is commonplace in the Old Testament (Ps.69: 24; Ezek.9: 8; Hos.5: 10). Of most relevance to our present passage is the appearance in Psalm 79, which has previously been cited with reference to Rev.11. Here the Psalmist wrote:

“Pour out thy wrath upon the heathen that have not known thee, and upon the kingdoms that have not called upon thy name. For they have devoured Jacob, and laid waste his dwelling place.” (Ps.79: 6,7)

It is surely not merely coincidental that in the same Psalm the judgment on these nations is described as “sevenfold” (v.12).

The first plague is described as a “noisome and grievous sore” (harmful and festering). The resemblance to the plague of Egypt is unmistakable even the same word (helkos) as the Septuagint is used [sore] (Ex.9: 8-12).

The sore seems to be the counterpart of the mark- charagma of the beast on the forehead. Helkos is a word commonly associated with leprosy, the sin disease in the LXX (Lev.13: 18). King Uzziah was stuck with leprosy in his forehead when he was profane (2 Chron.26: 19).

God had placed a different kind of mark or sign (LXX semeion) on Cain as a warning that whoever slew Cain would be punished sevenfold. This despite Cain murdering his righteous brother (Gen.4: 15).

THE SECOND VIAL

“And the second angel poured out his vial upon the sea; and it became as the blood of a dead man: and every living soul died in the sea.” (Rev.16: 3)

The unusual phrase, blood of as a dead man (RV) is used here. The A.V renders a more exact translation, the word man is not in the original and is denoted by italics. Literally it says, hos nekros – as (like a) dead. The author believes, however that the RV establishes the correct sense: blood as of a dead man.

This is a direct allusion to the effect of the last plague on Egypt:

“And the Egyptians were urgent upon the people, that they might send them out of the land in haste: for they said, we be all dead men.” (Ex.12: 33).

The nation of Israel was God’s wife and she had been taken by another man.

“But God came to Abimelech in a dream by night, and said unto him, Behold, thou art but a dead man, for the woman that thou has taken; for she is married to a husband”

(Gen.20: 3RVmg)

God will punish the heathen nations that have taken his bride, but he will also punish the nation for being a harlot. Unlike Sarah, this wife proved to be unfaithful, for as soon as she was free from Egyptian bondage she worshipped the image of the beast (golden calf – Ex.32: 8).

Moses took the calf they had made, burnt it with fire, ground it to powder, sprinkled it on the water and made them drink it. (Ex.32: 20) This was done in accordance with the law concerning the water of jealousy in Numbers 5.

“But if thou hast gone aside to another instead of thy husband, and if thou be defiled, and some man have lain with thee beside thine husband: Then the priest shall charge the woman with an oath of cursing, and the priest shall say unto the woman, The LORD make thee a curse and an oath among thy people, when the LORD doth make thy thigh to rot, and thy belly to swell; And this water that causeth the curse shall go into thy bowels, to make thy belly to swell, and thy thigh to rot: And the woman shall say, Amen, amen. And the priest shall write these curses in a book, and he shall blot them out with the bitter water: And he shall cause the woman to drink the bitter water that causeth the curse: and the water that causeth the curse shall enter into her, and become bitter.” (Num.5: 20- 24)

The next vial describes how the harlot is made to drink blood because of her unfaithfulness. Every living soul (life) 1 in the sea is affected by these judgments – the punishment is not limited to the harlot- city.

The sea (heathen nations) become like the Dead Sea – lifeless, or like the Red Sea:

“And Israel saw the Egyptians dead on the Sea shore.” (Ex.14: 30)

“And the waters covered their enemies there was not one of them left.” (Ps.106: 11)

THE THIRD VIAL

“And the third angel poured out his vial upon the rivers and fountains of waters; and they became blood. And I heard the angel of the waters say, Thou art righteous, O Lord, which art, and wast, and shalt be, because thou hast judged thus. For they have shed the blood of saints and prophets, and thou hast given them blood to drink; for they are worthy. And I heard another out of the altar say, Even so, Lord God Almighty, true and righteous are thy judgments.” (Rev.16: 4-7)

The vial punishment in these verses is enlarged upon in the vision shown to John in chpt.17.

CHAPTER 16 CHAPTER 17

The third poured his vial upon the rivers.(v.4) And there came one of the seven vial angels….I will shew thee the judgment

The angel of the waters. (v.5) …of the great whore that sitteth upon many waters.(v.1)

Give them blood to drink for they are worthy.(v.7) And I saw the woman drunken with the blood of the saints.(v.6)

The angel that shows John the fate of the harlot in chapter 17, is one of the vial angels. The comparison makes it likely that the vial angel of 17: 1 is the same as the angel of the waters in 16: 5.

The third vial is therefore a description of the destruction of the harlot- city. She is the source of intoxication for all the surrounding nations. The “many waters” that she sits upon are now turned into rivers of blood. The waters are, “ peoples, and multitudes nations and tongues” (17: 1).

Then I heard another out of the altar say – the RV, NSRV and NIV have the altar itself responding, thereby personifying the altar itself. This is wrong for the verb, “I heard” is linked with a partitive genitive, the AV translation is therefore correct – another (or someone) out of the altar. This is

obviously a reference to the martyrs of 6: 10, whose blood lies poured out at the base of the altar. God responds with the principle of lex talionis, an eye for an eye.

In this context Psalm 79 is illuminating:

“They have shed their blood like water round about Jerusalem” (v.3)

(they have shed the blood of saints and prophets 16:5)

“Let him [God] be known among the nations in our sight by revenging of the blood of your servants which has been shed.” (v. 10)

Thus the shed blood to be avenged definitely includes that of Israeli Jews in these last days, besides that of the martyrs.

In the day that Israel is “darkened”, Egypt will also be extinguished and the Nile will be turned red with the blood of the slain.

“will also water with thy blood the land wherein thou swimmest, even to the mountains; and the rivers shall be full of thee. And when I shall put thee out, I will cover the heaven, and make the stars thereof dark; I will cover the sun with a cloud, and the moon shall not give her light.” (Ezek. 32: 6-7)

In the day that Israel is “darkened”, the rivers of Edom (Jordan) will also turn blood red with the slain.

“And I will fill his mountains with his slain men: in thy hills, and in thy valleys, and in all thy rivers, shall they fall that are slain with the sword.” (Ezek. 35:8)

The punishments in the third and fourth vial are also found in the song of witness.

“And it shall come to pass, when many evils and troubles are befallen them, that this song shall testify against them as a witness; for it shall not be forgotten out of the mouths of their seed: for I know their imagination which they go about, even now, before I have brought them into the land which I sware.” (Deut.31: 21)

The song of witness is Deuteronomy 32 – we have already mentioned that this has parallels with the song of Moses and the Lamb in the previous chapter. (chapter 15 page 5)

REVELATION 16 DEUTERONOMY 32

Men which had the mark of the beast and worshipped his image. (v.2)

They sacrificed to devils (demonsRV) not to God.(v.17)

THIRD VIAL: For they have shed the blood of saints and prophets, and thou hast given them blood to drink. (v.16)

Rejoice, O ye nations, with his people: for he will avenge the blood of his servants, and will render vengeance to his adversaries, and will be merciful unto his land, and to his people. (v.43)

Even so, Lord God Almighty, true and righteous are thy judgments. (v.7)

For all his ways are judgment: a God of truth without iniquity, just and right is he. (v.4)

FOURTH VIAL: And the forth Angel poured his vial upon the sun; and power was given him to scorch men with fire. (v.8)

For a fire is kindled in mine anger, and shall burn unto the lowest hell, and shall consume the earth with her increase, and set on fire the foundations of the mountains. I will heap mischiefs upon them; I will spend mine arrows upon them. They shall be burnt with hunger, and devoured with burning heat, and with bitter destruction: I will also send the teeth of beasts upon them, with the poison of serpents of the dust. (Deut. 32:22-24)

God had threatened to punish them "seven times more for your sins" (Lev.26: 18), if they remained disobedient. God said that he would "break the pride of your power" (v.19). This is, however, not just the final punishment of Israel, it is also the punishment of the heathen nations. Israel will confess their iniquity and God will remember his covenant and save them (Lev.26: 40-42).

"And thou shalt be brought down, and shalt speak out of the ground, and thy speech shall be low out of the dust, and thy voice shall be, as of one that hath a familiar spirit, out of the ground, and thy speech shall whisper out of the dust." (Isa. 29: 4)

This is the punishment of Ariel the city where David dwelt (Isa.29: 1).

"The crown of pride, the drunkards of Ephraim, shall be trodden under feet." (Isa. 28:3)

The drunkards, who are intoxicated with the blood of the saints, will now be made to pay.

THE FOURTH VIAL

"And the fourth angel poured out his vial upon the sun; and power was given unto him to scorch men with fire. And men were scorched with great heat, and blasphemed the name of God, which hath power over these plagues: and they repented not to give him glory." (Rev. 16: 8,9)

This vial places the emphasis on heat and scorching men with fire. This is the ultimate fate of the harlot-city, which will be "utterly burned with fire" (17: 16). Her former lovers (10 kings) will turn against her and completely destroy her.

"Therefore shall her plagues come in one day, death, and mourning, and famine; and she shall be utterly burned with fire: for strong is the Lord God who judgeth her." (Rev.18: 8)

This may well be the meaning of Isa.30: 26: "The light of the sun shall be sevenfold as the light of seven days", this is in connection with, "the day of the great slaughter."

While the worshippers of the beast suffer pain and thirst and are fearfully scorched by the sun, the martyrs have gone where "they shall never be hungry or thirsty again; never shall the sun strike them or any scorching heat." (7: 16), where, "pain shall be no more" (21: 4).

"The Lord will do his work his strange work; and bring to pass his act, his strange act." (Isa.29: 21)

God will save them, once they have been humbled, he will not give the heathen opportunity to despise his name.

"He will surely be gracious unto thee at the voice of thy cry; when he shall hear it, he will answer thee." (Isa.30: 19)

To the people of Israel it will all seem like a bad dream – they will awake from their self-induced nightmare and it will be all over. (Isa.29: 8)

These vials effect those who are too deeply involved in Babylon's sins to be disassociated from her fall, those who had the mark of the beast, which worshipped his image, who shed the blood of saints and prophets, who blasphemed the name of God.

The last phrase is of peculiar importance, because, outside the present chapter, John in the prophetic part of his book attributes blasphemy only to the beast. (13: 1,5,6; 17: 3). The thrice-repeated statement that men blasphemed (16: 9,11,21) can only mean that they have wholly taken on the character of the false god they serve. There can be no question about John's belief that in some men the mark of the beast might become indelible and earn for them final reprobation and annihilation (14: 10-11; 20: 15; 21: 8; 22: 15).

"They repented not to give him glory." This is in stark contrast with the death and vindication of the witnesses, which resulted in a repentant remnant, and the birth of an ecclesia. (Rev.11: 14)

THE FIFTH VIAL

"And the fifth angel poured out his vial upon the seat of the beast; and his kingdom was full of darkness; and they gnawed their tongues for pain, And blasphemed the God of heaven because of their pains and their sores, and repented not of their deeds." (Rev.16: 10-11)

This is a time of natural and political disasters. The harlot-city has been destroyed in the previous vial, and her people taken captive. She has been destroyed by her allies, who now cede their power completely to the beast (17: 7). It is now the turn of the beast and the ten kings to feel God's wrath, for this vial is poured out on his throne.

Not only his headquarters, but his whole kingdom is now in complete darkness. The apocryphal book, Wisdom 17: 21 comments (alluding to the plague of darkness in Egypt):

"While over those men alone heavy night was spread, an image of the darkness that was destined to receive them; but still heavier than darkness were they to themselves."

These men have spiritually darkened minds, they refuse to repent in the face of the current disasters – in fact they "blaspheme the God of heaven." (16: 11)

Before we propose a possible scenario for this vial we will examine Ezekiel 30 and Joel chapter 2 in a comparison with Revelation 16.

REVELATION 16

EZEKIEL 30

His kingdom was full of darkness.(v.10)

For the day of the Lord is near, even the day of the Lord is near, a cloudy day, it shall be the time of the heathen. (v.3)

Gnawed their tongues for pain.(v.10)

And great pain shall come upon them, as in the day of Egypt: for, lo, it cometh. (v.9)

Image of the beast.(v.2)

I will cause the images to cease. (v.13)

The great river Euphrates and the water thereof was dried up. (v.12)

I will make the rivers dry. (v.12)

Context of Ezekiel chapter 30:

The punishment of Egypt, Ethiopia, Cush (upper Nile region), the mingled people (Arabia) and the children of Israel. The RV margin renders this as, “the children of the land of the covenant that is in league (with Egypt)” (v.5). This was Pharaoh Hophra, called Apries by the Greeks, cp. Jer. 44: 30. He besieged and captured Gaza (Jer.47: 1): attacked Zidon and encountered the prince of Tyre on the sea (Herodotus, ii, 161; cp.2 Kgs.24: 7; Jer.46: 2); and said, “no god could deprive him of his kingdom.” (Herodotus, ii.169) Zedekiah relied on him, see Jer.37: 5-8. Egypt was the cause of Jerusalem’s destruction see Jer.44: 30; and cp.Jer.46: 25,26. Egypt was like a staff of reed to the house of Israel (Ezek.29: 6) ready to break as soon as they supported their weight on it. Nebuchadnezzar not only destroyed Jerusalem he went as far as Egypt, which was also given to him by God as “wages for his army” (Ezek.29: 19). The political power of Egypt symbolised by the Nile, was therefore, “dried up.”

REVELATION 16

JOEL 2

His kingdom was full of darkness. (v.10)

A day of darkness and of gloominess, a day of clouds and of thick darkness, as the morning spread upon the mountains: a great people and a strong; there hath not been ever the like, neither shall be any more after it, even to the years of many generations. (Joel 2:2)

The earth shall quake before them; the heavens shall tremble: the sun and the moon shall be dark, and the stars shall withdraw their shining: (Joel 2:10)

Men scorched with great heat. (v.9)

A fire devoureth before them. (v.3)

Gnawed their tongues for pain.(v.10)

Before their face the people shall be much pained.(v.6)

Repented not of their deeds. (v.11)

Turn ye unto me with all your heart. (v.12,13)

Context of Joel

The Assyrian invasion under Sennacherib, the land of Israel was destroyed but Jerusalem and Hezekiah were saved.

The harlot-city (Jerusalem) that is destroyed is spiritually Egypt (11: 8) and therefore she shares the plagues of Egypt. The destruction of the city precipitates a chain of events that lead to HAR – MEGIDDON.

We must return to Biblical history to reconstruct certain parallels. It is apparent that Judah came under Babylonian control several years before Zedekiah rebelled and Jerusalem was destroyed in c.587BC. In the first century Judea was occupied by the Romans and held by a garrison at the time of the Jewish revolt. When the Jews destroyed this relatively small force it provoked Rome into despatching several legions to besiege Jerusalem. The events of the last

days seem to follow a similar pattern. On both occasions there were two Babylons; the Jewish and the Gentile Babylon. In the sixth century BC this was Jerusalem and Babylon itself. In the first century this was Jerusalem and Rome. On both occasions the "two Babylons" were persecutors of God's people and they were both punished.

The Israeli ministry of defence has already produced scenarios of "Armageddon" (prelude to chapter 16 page 13) – here the author also offers a possible scenario, conscious of the speculative nature of the subject, and fully aware that it probably contains errors.

(1) The beast kingdom – a Middle Eastern phenomena – a power block which incorporates Israel. Jerusalem is the religious capitol. Political pressure and terrorism force Israel into agreement. (or is Jerusalem captured at this stage?)

(2) Agreement short lived, Israel betrayed by 'ten kings' – Jerusalem destroyed. Iraq emerges as champion of the Palestinian people, recovered from "death blow" and defiant towards the Western world. The West is reluctant to intervene because OPEC threatens an oil embargo. This time no consensus amongst semitic peoples for a coalition against Iraq, they distrust America's pro-Israeli stance.

(3) The balance of power greatly disturbed in the Middle East. Egypt, Syria and Turkey see Iraq as a threat. Egypt has always harboured pan-arabic ambitions. Western and Jewish pressure on Turkey causes it to stop the flow of the Euphrates.

(4) War in the Middle East – Iraq greatly weakened, both literally and politically the Euphrates "dried up". Rumours of a great military leader in Israel – the Jews winning back their independence.

(5) Iran decides to act (kings of the East) with its old enemy Iraq weakened, it determines to march on Jerusalem and impose its own brand of fundamentalism.

(6) Har-Megiddon – Christ returns. The saints ingathered and the nations destroyed at Jerusalem.

The above programme is a hypothetical illustration of the possibilities. The Middle East is on the edge of an abyss, and although the picture presented may be wrong in certain details, it is most certainly correct in it's intent. In this cameo the "two Babylons" would be Jerusalem (Israel) and Babylon (Iraq). The fifth trumpet caused both darkness (9: 2) and pain (9: 5) to Israel, now the roles are reversed and the beast suffers darkness and pain in the fifth vial.

Verse 11 makes it clear that the first five vials are not simply a succession of plagues, but cumulative in effect. Even at this stage men are still complaining about sores of the first vial. This despite the fact that the sun (which caused the sores?) is now darkened. We are obviously meant to understand this in a metaphorical sense.

In this respect these last plagues are more grievous than those which fell upon Egypt. Despite this there is not a trace of repentance.

THE SIXTH VIAL

"And the sixth angel poured out his vial upon the great river Euphrates; and the water thereof was dried up, that the way of the kings of the east might be prepared." (Rev. 16:12)

It is surely significant that these kings come from the east, their way facilitated by the "drying of the Euphrates." God sent Adam and Eve to the east, and placed a guardian at the eastern

entrance of Eden (Gen.3: 24). The idea presented here is that the Promised land is “Eden”. Abraham sent his sons by Keturah (the concubine) “eastward, unto the east country” (Gen.25: 6). He also gave them gifts, this was a substitute for the inheritance that was reserved for Isaac. In Matthew’s gospel wise men appear from the east bearing gifts for Christ (Mtt.2: 2,11). These were the sons of Abraham, who recognised Christ (Isaac) as the true heir.

The kings of the east are therefore Semitic peoples, sons of Abraham, who were sent away (like Ishmael) because of their hatred toward their brother. The names of the twelve sons of Keturah carry meanings that suggest contention and strife.

The kingdom will initially consist of the Semitic peoples, for there will be a highway from Egypt to Assyria and both nations will be blessed (Isa.19: 23-25). They will again bring Christ gifts (Isa.60: 6) in recognition of his sonship, but at this stage their hatred towards their brethren draws them from the east to seek revenge.

THE SIXTH VIAL

“And I saw three unclean spirits like frogs come out of the mouth of the dragon, and out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet.” (Rev. 16:13)

All the plagues are associated with water or drought – it is fitting therefore, that the Egyptian plague of frogs is the basis of this verse.

“The frogs came up out of the river.” (Ex.8: 13)

The Tigris, Euphrates and Nile are the rivers that border on the furthest extent of the Promised land. Perhaps we are meant to identify the regional powers of Egypt, Turkey and Iraq with these “frog spirits.”

It is significant that these “frog spirits” come out of the mouths of the three protagonists. The Greek for frog (batrach`s) is similar to a word used only once by Jesus himself – batt`logeo - vain reasoning (words), or vain repetitions.1

Vines dictionary, describes the unusual word batt`logeo as onomatopoeic in character, 2 probably from an Aramaic phrase. The rendering of the Siniatic Syriac is, “Do not be saying battalatha, idle things” i.e., meaningless and mechanically repeated phrases, a reference to pagan modes of prayer. The author suggests that the word batt`logeo, which can also mean to stammer, is derivative from the word frog, because of the repetitious croaking sound that they make. The cacophony made by frogs in the mating season, are like the vain repetitions of the heathen. On this occasion the vain reasoning of the heathen gathers the kings of the earth to battle.

These frogs are also unclean spirits. In Zoroastrianism, the Persian religion, frogs are the bringer of plagues and the agent of Ahriman, the power of darkness, in his struggle against Ormuzd, the power of light. The unclean frog spirit that gathers the kings to battle is reminiscent of the “lying spirit in the mouth of the prophets” (1 Kgs.22: 22). The context was also a council of war, this time between Jehosophat king of Judah and Ahab king of Israel. Their deliberations led them to form an allegiance against Syria.3 Ahab refused to heed the words of God’s prophet, preferring the “lying spirit” of the false prophet. As a consequence he died in battle, his bloody chariot cleaned at the pool where the harlots washed themselves (v.38).

The unclean spirits originate in the mouths of the three protagonists, we do well to remember that the dragon no longer exists as a political entity – it represents a principle. The dragon ceded its power to the beast (13: 3) and represents Satan (12: 9).

The actual mouthpiece of the beast is the false prophet, who looks like a lamb, but speaks like a dragon (13: 11), that ancient serpent the devil. We should probably understand this verse as follows: Urged on by the reasoning of the false prophet (false religion) the beast empire issued propaganda to gather its allies to battle. This lying (seducing) spirit is the work of Satan.

In the first century this principle was embodied in the Roman Empire, empowered to do God's work and destroy Jerusalem. This was under the supervision of his angel, Satan. We must not forget that it is God's will that this battle takes place. He allows men to be tempted by their own human reasoning – "a lying spirit" and sends out his angel to arrange the opportunity for men to show their true ambitions.

"I have hardened the heart of Pharaoh, and the heart of his servants, that I might shew these my signs before him." (Ex.10: 1)

"For the scripture saith unto Pharaoh, even for this same purpose have I raised thee up, that I may shew my power in thee, and that my name might be declared throughout the earth. Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth" (Rom. 9: 17,18). 1

Beyond a certain point God gives men over to their own vain reasoning, and seemingly even manipulates events to strengthen their prejudices and obstinacy.

Pharaoh, a man who thought of himself as a god (= man of sin) was a "vessel of wrath" destined, and created for destruction. His pride hardened his heart, even after Satan had destroyed the firstborn in the land.

"For they are the spirits of devils, working miracles, which go forth unto the kings of the earth and of the whole world, to gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty. Behold, I come as a thief. Blessed is he that watcheth, and keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked, and they see his shame. And he gathered them together into a place called in the Hebrew tongue Armageddon." (Rev.16: 14,16)

The spirits of devils – RV margin demons. Demons are always associated with idol worship in the Old Testament. In this case they are associated with the image of the beast – the beast religion. We are obviously meant to make a connection between this verse and Rev.9: 20,21:

"And the rest of the men which were not killed by these plagues yet repented not of the works of their hands, that they should not worship devils, and idols of gold, and silver, and brass, and stone, and of wood: which neither can see, nor hear, nor walk: Neither repented they of their murders, nor of their sorceress, nor of their fornication, nor of their thefts" (Rev.9 : 20-21).

The "demon" is therefore the "unclean spirit" associated with the idol.1 We are not to look for supernatural beings, rather it is the worshippers themselves that have wholly taken on the character of their "god" and become unclean. The "demons" work all kinds of signs, and so seduce the kings of the earth and the whole world. This is the work of the false prophet (Rev.13: 14) [is this a hybrid Islamic – Judaist religion?], who possessed by a "lying spirit" urges all the kings to protect the image of the beast.

God allows the seduction to occur in order to gather his enemies to the “great day of God Almighty”. Elsewhere this is called: “the great supper of God” (RV) or the “supper of the great God” (AV). (Rev.19: 17) We have, as it were, the last- supper of God’s enemies, this is in contrast to “the marriage supper of the Lamb.”(Rev. 19: 9)

The two events occur more or less simultaneously, the salvation of the faithful and the destruction of the wicked. This is exactly what happened on the Egyptian Passover night. The next verse confirms this view, for the saints are warned that Christ will come as a thief. A blessing is promised to those who keep their garments.2 John is alluding to the situation in the Garden of Eden, where Adam and Eve, seduced by the serpent, became aware of their nakedness before God. Nakedness does not necessarily carry a sexual meaning, it is Bible idiom for sinfulness. To be naked, is to be completely vulnerable. It is the realisation that man is completely sinful and dependant on God – this is a direct contrast with the “lie of the serpent” that man can be like God. Adam and Eve realised the complete desperation of their situation, and God in his mercy covered their nakedness. Earlier, we observed that the fifth vial was expanded by the vial angel in chapter 17, in the same fashion the sixth vial is expanded by the vial angel (the sixth vial angel) in 21: 9-22: 7.

“And there came unto me one of the seven angels which had the seven vials full of the seven last plagues, and talked with me, saying, Come hither, I will shew thee the bride, the Lamb's wife.” (Rev. 21: 9)

This angel shews John the bride, and his section also closes with a similar blessing:

“Behold, I come quickly: blessed is he that keepeth the sayings of the prophecy of this book.” (Rev. 22: 7)

Destruction and salvation are two sides of the same coin. Whilst the saints are gathered to Har-Megiddon to be saved, the enemies of God are gathered to be destroyed. This is both the “great supper of God” and “the marriage supper of the Lamb”.

The observation was made that Har-Megiddon is the “mountain of precious fruits” (see chapter 14 page 19), but it is also a play on the Aramaic harma-geddon – “the destruction of their army”. Removing the letter h in accordance with the current Greek orthographic practice arrives at “Armageddon” without any vowel changes.

The author sees no need to choose between either meaning, for it is both the “mountain of precious things” and the place where “the destruction of the army” occurs.

It is significant that this destruction occurs by the word of God armed with a sharp sword (19: 11-15). The epistle to the Hebrews, written after Revelation, draws our attention to this in Heb.4: 10-13. The flaming sword of the cherubim and the nakedness of the transgressors is mentioned (v.13) [This has been expounded in chapter 1 page 21].

THE SEVENTH VIAL

“And the seventh angel poured out his vial into the air; and there came a great voice out of the temple of heaven, from the throne, saying, It is done. And there were voices, and thunders, and lightnings; and there was a great earthquake, such as was not since men were upon the earth, so mighty an earthquake, and so great. And the great city was divided into three parts, and the cities of the nations fell: and great Babylon came in remembrance before God, to give unto her the cup of the wine of the fierceness of his wrath. And every island fled away, and the mountains

were not found. And there fell upon men a great hail out of heaven, every stone about the weight of a talent: and men blasphemed God because of the plague of the hail; for the plague thereof was exceeding great." (Rev.16: 17-21)

THE PRINCE OF DARKNESS

The seventh angel poured out his vial into the air. This last angel is the angel of death. This is the same angel sent to Egypt to kill the firstborn in Exodus, referred to as the destroyer (Ex.12: 13). We encountered him earlier when the abyss was opened, there he is also called Abaddon (the destroyer) in the Hebrew (9: 11). On that occasion the air (and the sun) were also affected (9: 2).

Paul calls this angel: "the prince of the air, (of RV) the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience." (Eph.2: 2)

This angel works under the direct guidance of God, and, like the other angels, he is a 'ministering spirit.' His task is to test men, he is in charge of the dispensation of evil. The Jews called him KOSMOKRATOR (world ruler of darkness – Eph.6: 12).

Let us clearly state the difference between scriptural teaching about Satan and Church doctrine.

SCRIPTURE CHURCH

Sent to test men. (to accuse or prosecute Sent to tempt men.

them before God)1

Under God's control. Rebelled against God.

A ministering spirit. An evil being.

When the "destroyer" came to kill Jesus Christ (the firstborn), Jesus was able to say:

"The prince of this world (dispensation) cometh, and he hath nothing in me." (John 14: 30)

The destroyer's accusations against Jesus were proved unfounded – here (for once) was a man who did not capitulate to sin, no matter how hard the way. Here was a man who loved his Father more than he loved self, and his brethren like his own body. This was the first time the "prince of this world" had discovered a man not worthy of death. Because of this the accusation against man could no longer stand. Metaphorically Satan was "cast out" of heaven, there was however still work to do "on earth" before this dispensation could be ended and the full extent of God's mercy revealed. In this vial, however, there is no such discovery of worthiness, in fact there are no redeeming factors whatsoever, for they are all unrepentant. (Children of wrath. Eph.2: 3)

It is notable that the arena of operation for KOSMOKRATOR is the air. This is probably the same as mid-heaven (8: 13). A clear distinction is being drawn between the air and the heavens.1 The air is part of the earthly elements,2 which in turn is under the jurisdiction of KOSMOKRATOR, the effects of pouring the libation in the air are therefore felt on the earth.

IT IS DONE

We have observed that Jesus linked "the prince of this world" with his crucifixion, similarly the utterance, "it is done" (16: 17) is also a saying from the cross. This together with the darkness (16: 10), earthquake (16: 17) and the "blood of a dead man" (16: 3) [Jesus' blood was like water when his side was pierced] is meant to reflect the crucifixion experience – an eye for an eye.

“It is done” is a single thunder-like utterance in the Greek, gegonen, echoing the final saying of Christ on the cross, “It is finished” (John 19: 30), also just one word in the original. At that moment the temple veil was rent in two, to the accompaniment of an earthquake (Mtt.27: 51). Here in Revelation with the final vial the heavenly liturgy has now ceased and entrance into the holy of holies is now possible.3

This final earthquake is reminiscent of the earthquake in the sixth seal (6: 12-17), but unlike that earthquake it includes not only “great Babylon” but also, the “cities of the nations.” The whole world has become Babylon – this is the fruit of the current “globalisation”. The whole earth is “of one language and one speech” (Gen.11: 1) – God came down (theophany) and scattered them abroad on the face of all the earth (v.9). The tower of Babel was built in the days of Peleg; for in his days was the earth divided (Gen.10: 25). The great city is also divided into three parts. (16: 19)

The tower of Babel is destroyed by an earthquake (divided = the people were scattered) and the capital cities of the nations fall. (Genesis 10 enumerates 70 nations). The great city is divided into three parts, again alluding to the trumpets, confirming that we are dealing with Jerusalem.

We see yet another parallel drawn with the Egyptian plagues. The plague here (v.21) is that of hail (Ex.9: 22), accompanied by thunder and lightning (as in Exodus). In view of Joshua (= Jesus), this hail might well have a similar literal application. Each hailstone weighed a talent (25-35kg approx.) it is presented as the severest of the seven plagues. It may well be that these hailstones are caused by dust in the atmosphere.

Such a huge earthquake (movement of plates) would be accompanied by volcanic activity. Volcanoes spew tons of dirt and gases including water vapour into the atmosphere. The dirt causes a subsequent drop in temperature (nuclear winter) and acts as a seed- bed for ice formation.

However much we speculate, scripture is clear that this last earthquake at the return of the Lord, as described in Zechariah, is utterly devastating.

Even so, we read that men blasphemed God because of the plague. From this we can only conclude that those being judged are totally beyond redemption.

THE VIALS AND THE GOG INVASION

At this stage of the exposition it is important that we should examine the Gog invasion as encountered in the prophecy of Ezekiel. In order to do this we will place it in the historical context.

Magog is mentioned among the northern nations in the genealogy of Noah (Gen.10: 2), and Josephus identified them with the Scythians (Ant.1.6.1; cf. Jub.viii.25). The nation, designated as SAKI, i.e. Scythians, was occupying that belt of highland beyond the river ARAXES (now ARAS), which, watered by the river KYROS (now KOUR), stretches along the foot of the great Caucasian ridge between the Black Sea and the Caspian. It was an offshoot of the same branch of Eranian stock which pressed upon the Cimmerians from behind, in the roll of the great tidal migrations, and dislodging them from their wide lands in the south of Russia. Indeed, Herodotus, probably retelling a current tradition, asserts that this division of Scythians descended into Asia in pursuit of the Cimmerians, but missed the way and accidentally got into the highlands of the Southern Caucasus. The explanation is scarcely even plausible; but the fact is certain, and it may be supposed that they somehow stumbled on the defile or pass known in antiquity as the

“CAUCASIAN GATES”, as that is the only point where a descent would be possible through such a broad, rugged and altogether impracticable mountain barrier as the Caucasus. Their name remained to the region in which they settled; it is given on maps of the ancient world as SACASENE. To the Hebrews of that and later periods it was known as Mâ gô g, and it was not one of the least surprises we owe to Assyriology to find that the “Gô g, king of Mâ gô g”, of Ezekiel, was originally a real and historical person, no other in fact than the chief of the Scythians in Asshurbanipal’s time, probably a warrior sufficiently renowned to have survived as a by-word of terror in the memory of later generations.

This name of Gô g occurs on one of Asshurbanipal’s cylinders under the form of Gâ gi. In describing the campaign in the north-east, entirely successful and highly satisfactory in the way of tribute and booty- Asshurbanipal concludes by recording that he (or more probably his general), captured alive and brought to Nineveh two sons of “Gâ gi, a chief (or the chief) of the Saki” after taking seventy five of their strong cities, because they had “thrown of the yoke of his dominion”. This last expression, even if it implied more of a boast than a reality, would show that the Scythians of Mâ gô g had dwelt were history finds them for at least a couple of generations, and had become in part weaned from their nomadic habits, although later generations resumed them with the utmost readiness when tempted to do so by the prospect of unbounded plunder.

Ezekiel chapter 38 lists ten nations in the confederacy of Gô g.

1. Mâ gô g - Turkey (Asia Minor)

2. Meshech 1 Kazakhstan,

3. Tubal Azerbaijan, Georgia,

4. Persia – Iran

5. Ethiopia (Cush) – Ethiopia, Sudan, Eritrea

6. Libya (Put) – Egypt, Libya

7. Gomer – Turkey (Asia Minor)

8. Togarmah – Armenia

9. Sheba Saudi

10. Dedan rabia

11. MERCHANTS OF TARSHISH2

A prince called Gog leads the confederacy in Ezekiel 38. Sheba, Dedan and Tarshish are traditionally understood as challenging the confederacy (v.13) but this is by no means certain. Their challenge can also be interpreted as acquiescence or even as an offer of assistance. “Gog of the land of Magog” has in John become a pair of nations: the same transformation is found in the Sibylline Oracles (iii.512) and frequently in the Talmud, where Gog and Magog are said to be the rebellious nations of Psalm 2.1

It is of some incidental interest that in Sanhedrin 94a we are told that God decided that Sennacherib should enact the part of Gog, but was persuaded to change his mind by the arguments of the Attribute of Justice. Gog is here being treated as a true myth, applicable to

different historical applications. Anyone whom Gog's cap fits may wear it. It is in this sense that John uses the language of the Gog invasion in the seventh vial.

REVELATION EZEKIEL

Revelation 16:17-21 And the seventh angel poured out his vial into the air; and there came a great voice out of the temple of heaven, from the throne, saying, It is done. And there were voices, and thunders, and lightnings; and there was a great earthquake, such as was not since men were upon the earth, so mighty an earthquake, and so great. And the great city was divided into three parts, and the cities of the nations fell: and great Babylon came in remembrance before God, to give unto her the cup of the wine of the fierceness of his wrath. And every island fled away, and the mountains were not found. And there fell upon men a great hail out of heaven, every stone about the weight of a talent: and men blasphemed God because of the plague of the hail; for the plague thereof was exceeding great.

Ezekiel 38:18-23 And it shall come to pass at the same time when Gog shall come against the land of Israel, saith the Lord GOD, that my fury shall come up in my face. For in my jealousy and in the fire of my wrath have I spoken, Surely in that day there shall be a great shaking in the land of Israel; So that the fishes of the sea, and the fowls of the heaven, and the beasts of the field, and all creeping things that creep upon the earth, and all the men that are upon the face of the earth, shall shake at my presence, and the mountains shall be thrown down, and the steep places shall fall, and every wall shall fall to the ground. And I will call for a sword against him throughout all my mountains, saith the Lord GOD: every man's sword shall be against his brother. And I will plead against him with pestilence and with blood; and I will rain upon him, and upon his bands, and upon the many people that are with him, an overflowing rain, and great hailstones, fire, and brimstone. Thus will I magnify myself, and sanctify myself; and I will be known in the eyes of many nations, and they shall know that I am the LORD.

Revelation 19:17-18 And I saw an angel standing in the sun; and he cried with a loud voice, saying to all the fowls that fly in the midst of heaven, Come and gather yourselves together unto the supper of the great God; That ye may eat the flesh of kings, and the flesh of captains, and the flesh of mighty men, and the flesh of horses, and of them that sit on them, and the flesh of all men, both free and bond, both small and great.

Ezekiel 39:17-21 And, thou son of man, thus saith the Lord GOD; Speak unto every feathered fowl, and to every beast of the field, Assemble yourselves, and come; gather yourselves on every side to my sacrifice that I do sacrifice for you, even a great sacrifice upon the mountains of Israel, that ye may eat flesh, and drink blood. Ye shall eat the flesh of the mighty, and drink the blood of the princes of the earth, of rams, of lambs, and of goats, of bullocks, all of them fatlings of Bashan. And ye shall eat fat till ye be full, and drink blood till ye be drunken, of my sacrifice which I have sacrificed for you. Thus ye shall be filled at my table with horses and chariots, with mighty men, and with all men of war, saith the Lord GOD. And I will set my glory among the heathen, and all the heathen shall see my judgment that I have executed, and my hand that I have laid upon them.

In the vial section the protagonists are the "kings of the east" (v.13) and the "whole world" (v.14) no mention is made of Gog and Magog until 20: 8.

During the vial punishments it is palpably untrue that Israel is "dwelling safely." In chapter 20, however the opposite is true, for it is the millennial age. In that chapter Gog and Magog do not

come from the “uttermost parts of the north” (Ezek.39: 2RV) but from the “four quarters of the earth” (20: 8).

Gog and Magog represent an arch-typal enemy of whom all historic foes from the north were but a shadowy type. The rebellion in chapter 20 is not the subject of the complex events by which the nations were defeated at the Lord’s return to earth during the vial punishments.

In contrast judgment in chapter 20 is sudden and swift, and direct from above. As it was in the days of Nadab and Abihu (Lev.10: 2), or in the punishment of Dathan and Abiram (Num.16: 35). The invasion has nothing whatever to do with the punishment of Israel for her sins or with her subsequent redemption or with the retribution inflicted on her persecutors. It is only after this has happened, when peace and justice have been restored to earth, that Gog is to come, so to speak, out of a clear sky.

Three times it is said that he will come upon Israel only when she is living in security (Ezek.38: 8,11,14), and this gives us the necessary clue to the meaning of the symbolism. The myth of Gog enshrines a deep insight into the resilience of evil. The powers of evil have a defence in depth, which enables them constantly to summon reinforcement from beyond the frontiers of man’s knowledge and control.

The recrudescence of evil at the end of the millennium shows that Gog is used as an archetype – now he is no longer “Gog of the land of Magog”, but Gog and Magog – two separate nations, attacking from every point of the globe. The first rebellion (in the sixth vial) uses the language of the final rebellion because Gog represents organised insurrection against the Messiah.

We have already observed that Har-Megiddon has many parallels with the Gog invasion of Ezekiel. The prophecy of Ezekiel has many aspects in common with Zechariah 14 for they are all describing the same event.

1. A great earthquake occurs- Ezek.38: 19-20; Zech.14: 4-5.

2. The invader turns on itself- Ezek.38: 21; Zech.14: 13

3. A great plague occurs- Ezek.38: 22;Zech.14: 12,15

4. Great spoil is taken by Israel-Ezek.39:10; Zech.14: 14

The capture of Jerusalem in Zech.14 is obviously an event that happens some time earlier – scripture often compresses latter day events into an eschatological “day of the Lord.”

In his book, “Israel’s defeat by Gog or the Arabs”, Don Styles examines the evidence and presents the case against Arab invasion. The author feels however, that it may be an oversimplification. We have observed that the “kings of the east” (16: 12) are Semitic peoples, but the coalition also includes the “kings of the whole world” (16: 14). The margin gives the alternative “inhabited earth” – clearly using hyperbolic language and probably meant to denote a Gog-like coalition. Gog is a descendant of Japheth and therefore not Semitic, he would however “occupy the tents of Shem” (Gen.9: 27).

The Japhetic peoples would therefore eventually share the same region as the Semitic peoples. We have already noted that Japheth was the progenitor of the people who inhabited, or perhaps in some cases conquered and annexed Gomer, Magog, Madai, Javan, Tubal, Meshech and Tiras (Gen.10: 2). The booklet concedes that some Middle Eastern countries are included in the Gogian host (Ethiopia, Persia, Libya) but denies the importance of this. We have established

that the Gogian host is a mixture of Japhetic and Semitic people all inhabiting the same region. The unifying factor amongst these various nations is not race but religion. They are all Islamic countries. Russia has absolutely no motive for attacking Israel, it is time for some realpolitik in the debate – the tsar of Russia is long since dead.

John employs the language of Ezek.c.38, 39 to describe the battle of Har-Megiddon, but does not actually name the Gogian host – this is surely significant. He is using the Gog prophecy as a template, describing what he sees in the same terms as the decisive defeat prophesied by Ezekiel. Nevertheless, the full impact of the prophecy is reserved, in the realisation that the ultimate defeat of what Gog represents will only happen at the end of the millennium.

Another objection raised against the Arab view, is the observation that the Edomite people no longer exist as a nation. They have lost their identity and disappeared from the scene. To quote from pages 24, 25:

“When Judah was taken captive by Babylon, the Edomites seized the opportunity to move into formerly Jewish territory as far north as Hebron: “(Edom) hast shed the blood of the children of Israel by the force of the sword in the time of their calamity…I have heard all thy blasphemies which thou hast spoken against the mountains of Israel, saying, They are laid desolate, they are given us to consume” (Ezek.35: 5,12). Edom’s aggression spread their population too thinly to defend their former stronghold in mount Seir, which as a result was taken by the Nabataeans.

For over 200 years, the descendants of Esau occupied the area south of Hebron until events occurred which led to the ascendancy of the Jewish Maccabees. Then the judgment of God upon Edom was fulfilled. “Hyrcannus [a Maccabean general] took Dora and Marissa, cities of Idumea (Edom), and subdued all the Idumeans; and permitted them to stay in that country, if they would circumcise their genitals, and make use of the laws of the Jews; and they were so desirous of living in the country of their forefathers, that they submitted to the use of circumcision, and of the rest of the Jewish ways of living; at which time this befell them, that they were hereafter no other than Jews.” (Antiquities of the Jews, Josephus, XIII.9)

Thus scripture was fulfilled, “I will lay my hand on Edom by the hand of my people Israel.” The Edomites disappeared as an identifiable people.

The point is somewhat laboured, for Edom is a symbol as Don Styles himself recognises:

“Edom is taken to indicate mankind in general” (pg25).

“Edom represents the Gentiles” (pg35).

The frequent denunciations of Edom in the O.T. caused the name to be remembered only as an object of hatred, and hence the Jews came at an early date to employ it as a term indicating Rome, the most abhorred of all their enemies. The fact that Rome controlled and finally destroyed the “ancient high places” (Ezek.36: 2), no doubt contributed to this.

Although post–exilic Jews employed “Edom” in a generic sense, scripture itself never does, and it would be wrong to generalise. If Edom is to be employed as a symbol at all, then it is a symbol of hatred between brethren. The Edomite people were descendants of Esau the brother of Jacob.

EDOM AS A HISTORICAL PARABLE

EDOM

PARALLEL

And Esau said, Behold, I am at the point to die: and what profit shall this birthright do to me? And Jacob said, Swear to me this day; and he sware unto him: and he sold his birthright unto Jacob. Then Jacob gave Esau bread and pottage of lentils; and he did eat and drink, and rose up, and went his way: thus Esau despised his birthright. (Gen.25:32-34)

In the early days of colonisation, many Arabs sold their "barren land" to philanthropists such as the Rothschilds, who established the first agricultural settlements. They feel cheated by the Jews.

And by thy sword shalt thou live, and shalt serve thy brother; and it shall come to pass when thou shalt have the dominion, that thou shalt break his yoke from off thy neck. And Esau hated Jacob because of the blessing wherewith his father blessed him: and Esau said in his heart, The days of mourning for my father are at hand; then will I slay my brother Jacob. (Gen. 27:40,41)

The "perpetual hatred" of Ezek.35: 5 – the Jews obtain the Fathers blessing as a chosen nation. The Arabs and the Palestinians hate them for this: "Thus, the concept of a "chosen race" in Zionism differs from that in Nazism, only in the identity of that race being the Jewish rather than the Aryan race." Ismail (Ishmael) Zayid-Zionism the myth and the reality. They are envious (Ezek.35: 11) and want the "ancient high places."

Meddle not with them; for I will not give you of their land, no, not so much as a foot breadth; because I have given mount Seir unto Esau for a possession. (Deut.2:5)

Thou shalt not abhor an Edomite; for he is thy brother: thou shalt not abhor an Egyptian; because thou wast a stranger in his land. (Deut.23:7)

Many Jews see the Palestinians as an inferior people, with no right to a continued existence within the land. In ancient times they had Edom as a possession, while this is no longer true the sentiment of the prophecy still is – brethren should dwell together in unity.

And Esau ran to meet him, and embraced him, and fell on his neck, and kissed him: and they wept. (Gen.33:4)

The "time of Jacobs trouble" and final reconciliation. Historically the Edomites disappeared because they married Jews after their conversion. They were regarded as Jews by themselves and the outer world.

The prophetic and historical anomaly, is that while Edom did indeed become an example of the desolation awaiting Jew haters, and their national identity disappeared, individually they survived by becoming Jews.

When Abraham was promised the land from the river of Egypt to the Great River Euphrates it was populated by 10 nations. (Gen.15: 18-20) Where are these nations now? Some have disappeared or been absorbed by others, as with the Edomites. This does not, however, make the prophecy invalid, or the mention of 10 nations irrelevant.

Both in real and prophetic terms, the hatred between Jew and Arab is dramatically represented by Jacob and Esau (Israel and Edom). As a locality Edom is situated in Jordan, but as a people they are "typified" by the Arabs and specifically the Palestinians, who feel cheated of their birthright.

Let us examine the use of the "Edom prophecies" in Revelation:

EDOM PROPHECY

REVELATION

For it is the day of the LORD'S vengeance, and the year of recompenses for the controversy of Zion.

And the streams thereof shall be turned into pitch, and the dust thereof into brimstone, and the land thereof shall become burning pitch. It shall not be quenched night nor day; the smoke thereof shall go up for ever: from generation to generation it shall lie waste; none shall pass through it forever and ever. (Isa.34:8-10)

The same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation; and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb: And the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever: and they have no rest day nor night, who worship the beast and his image, and whosoever receiveth the mark of his name. (Rev. 14:10-11)

Who is this that cometh from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah? this that is glorious in his apparel, travelling in the greatness of his strength? I that speak in righteousness, mighty to save. Wherefore art thou red in thine apparel, and thy garments like him that treadeth in the wine vat? I have trodden the winepress alone; and of the people there was none with me: for I will tread them in mine anger, and trample them in my fury; and their blood shall be sprinkled upon my garments, and I will stain all my raiment. For the day of vengeance is in mine heart, and the year of my redeemed is come. And I looked, and there was none to help; and I wondered that there was none to uphold: therefore mine own arm brought salvation unto me; and my fury, it upheld me. And I will tread down the people in mine anger, and make them drunk in my fury, and I will bring down their strength to the earth. (Isa. 63:1-6)

And he was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood: and his name is called The Word of God. And the armies which were in heaven followed him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean. And out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron: and he treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. And he hath on his vesture and on his thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS. (Rev. 19:13-16)

Why does John employ prophecies concerning a nation that has long since disappeared? Many other prophecies could have been utilised. He uses the Edom prophecies because they are a metaphor for brotherly hatred and the controversy of Zion – this is the essence of the Arab question.

THE VIALS AND PSALM 2

We have already remarked that the Talmud associates the Gog, Magog rebellion with Psalm 2. This is essentially correct.

PSALM 2

PSALM 18

REV.20

I have set my king upon my holy hill of Zion (v.6).

Hast made me the head of the nations (v.43).

Shall reign with him a thousand years (v.6).

Let us break their bands asunder, and cast their cords from us (v.3).

Kiss the son, lest he be angry (v.12).

The strangers shall yield feigned obedience unto me (v.44 RVmg).

[see also Ps.81: 15 RVmg]

An angel with a great chain in his hand (v.1).

Satan "loosed" – Gog, Magog rebellion (v.8).

Psalm 2 is not limited to the Gog, Magog rebellion in chapter 20, for it was quoted in Acts 4 concerning the Messiah. Therefore it also had a first century application. Earlier in this exposition we saw how Psalm 2 was extensively alluded to in the last trumpet (chapter 11 page 32). As the last trumpet encompasses the seven vials, it also has an application to Har-Megiddon. This is confirmed by Revelation chapter 14 that commences with the Lamb on mount Zion. To sum up, Psalm 2 alludes to;

1. First century opposition to Christ. (Acts 4)

2. Har-Megiddon (seventh trumpet = seven vials. Rev.16)

3. The Gog rebellion at the end of the millennium. (Rev.20)

This demonstrates the beauty and complexity of scripture.

We can represent the sequence of events in the last seven vials as follows:

LAST SEVEN PLAGUES (SEVEN YEARS)

1st –3rd vial

Intensification of punishments

3rd , 4th & 5th vial

Destruction of Harlot city by ten kings. (Rev.chpt.16:4-8+ chpt.17)

6th vial-kings of the east (beyond Euphrates) and the "whole world".

Har-Megiddon –Christ returns (Rev.16: 12-15; 19:11-21; 14: 18-20) John employs the language of Ezek. c.38,39 but Gog not mentioned by name. The last Gog "archetypical" of the confederacy now facing Christ.

7th vial

GREAT EARTHQUAKE

Millennium

Age

Dwelling safely

Rev.20: 7-10 Ezek.c.38, 39

Gog invades and is destroyed

CHRONOLOGICAL PROBLEMS

We now have enough information to provide a chronological scheme that compliments the trumpet section. The scheme offered is tentative and the author admits that the usefulness of the exercise, is to highlight different possibilities rather than forcing a rigid timetable on events.

The first question we must address is that of the 3½ -year witnessing – beast period. Is it the same period? Do the witnesses achieve their mission during the time of the beast's supremacy? On the completion of their testimony, the monster from the abyss murders the prophet - witnesses (11: 7). This would seem to indicate that they are killed at the point of emergence from the abyss.

We have then, 3½ -year witnessing + 3½ -year beast = 7 years.

However, 13: 7 using similar language to 11: 7 seems to contradict this - "the beast will make war with the saints and overcome them." This suggests that the witnessing is concurrent with the 3½ - year "beast" period. If we adopt this view we encounter other difficulties. The vindication of the witnesses results in a repentant remnant (11: 13). God took a tithe from the city, because they had usurped his tithe (the 144,000 – firstfruits?). The community that results as a consequence of the witnessing is described in language applicable to the first century ecclesia, as a woman giving birth to a child (12: 5). The woman is protected for 3½ - years (12: 14) but her child (Jewish Christians) is persecuted (12: 17).

The language of 13: 7, although applicable to the witnesses, is also used of the saints, who now perform the same task as the prophet-witnesses. This was also the first century situation – the death of John the Baptist and Christ – who was vindicated by the resurrection, resulted in the birth of an ecclesia, who performed the same witnessing function and was persecuted in the same manner as the faithful witness (1: 5).

The saints are exhorted to be patient and faithful during this persecution (13: 10) as they are during the reign of the image of the beast (14: 12). Whether or not the witnessing is concurrent with the beast or pre-dates it, apparently it occurs during the downtreading of the "outer court" (11: 2). Once again, this downtreading does not necessarily indicate that the "beast" rules in the land. The temple mount is effectively "downtrodden" at the moment, for it houses a Gentile temple in the "outer court" – and the unrest that Israel is currently experiencing is in part a consequence of problems surrounding the status of Jerusalem. Historically, Judah was under Babylonian control several years before Zedekiah rebelled and Jerusalem was destroyed. Similarly, in the first century Israel was a Roman client- state for many years before the Jewish revolt resulted in the destruction of the nation.

Further chronological problems are encountered when the beast empire undergoes it's metamorphosis into the "image of the beast" and finally into the "man of sin". Does all this happen in the same 3½ - years? Or do we have 3½ - years of the "beast" followed by 3½ - years of the "image of the beast" (false prophet).

Finally we have the last seven plagues (vials), during which the harlot-city is destroyed by her "lovers". In turn this precipitates the invasion from beyond the Euphrates and the return of Christ.

If the last seven vials expand the seventh trump, this would represent the last seven years before the millennium. We have a possible reference to this in Daniel 4: 25;

"Seven times shall pass over thee; till thou know that the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will."

An alternative view is that the trumpets and the vials are parallel in that they treat the same subject matter – the trumpets from the perspective of Israel and the vials from the Gentile perspective (surrounding nations). In that case we would still be waiting for a particular Day of Atonement to trigger the subsequent events. The trumpets and the vials would then be fulfilled simultaneously over a seven- year period – this "seven" would be the seventh seal, which encompasses the trumpets (8:1) and had been delayed for two millennia because of the breach of promise (see scheme 2).

SCHEME 1. SCHEME 2.

Six seals see scheme 2

AD 30\31

Six seals

42

years

AD 73

Passover

Commences on

Day of Atonement

7th seal=

7trumpets

and 7vials

7 YEARS

If scheme 1 is correct the last three trumpets (woes) might look something like this:

FIFTH SEVEN (FIFTH TRUMPET)

Abyss opened -3½ - years intensification of troubles followed by 3½ - years witnessing at the end of this the witnesses are killed in the harlot-city, resulting in the birth of a Jewish ecclesia.

SIXTH SEVEN (SIXTH TRUMPET)

Middle East Empire emerges for 3½ - years (beast) harlot-city in control. Hostilities from the Euphrates region – out of their mouths fire, smoke and brimstone three plagues (9: 17)- This is

followed by 3½ - years of the “image of the beast” (false prophet and false religion) – Jewish Christians persecuted.

SEVENTH SEVEN (SEVENTH TRUMPET)

Last seven plagues intensify for 3½ - years (man of sin revealed) until the third and fourth vial - destruction of the Harlot city by ten kings – the Jews deported – out of their mouths three unclean spirits (16: 13) sent to gather the kings to challenge Christ.

CONCLUSION

Scheme 1 and scheme 2 both have possibilities. It is probable that many of these events overlap and compress into one seven year period. Any effort to work out a chronology of events will inevitably be flawed but this does not mean that we should not consider these matters. It is a useful exercise, even if the only outcome is to emphasise the complexity of the subject.

NOTES

1 This can be caused by either (a) flooding – red silt from Ethiopia contains the nutrients to feed the micro-organism. (b) drought – warm, shallow water allows anaerobic organisms to thrive.

NOTES

1 psyche zoes – living soul, is an illusion to the Genesis creation narrative (LXX Gen.1: 30) by way of contrast. This is the reversal of the creative act. Psalm 104:25-29 : So is this great and wide sea, wherein are things creeping innumerable, both small and great beasts. There go the ships: there is that leviathan, whom thou hast made to play therein. These wait all upon thee; that thou mayest give them their meat in due season. That thou givest them they gather: thou openest thine hand, they are filled with good. Thou hidest thy face, they are troubled: thou takest away their breath, they die, and return to their dust.

NOTES

1When ye pray use not vain repetitions (batt` logeo -only here) as the heathen (ethnikos – only here and Mtt.18: 16-20) do: for they think they shall be heard for their much speaking. (polulogia - only here).

---

2 Onomatopoeia: the formation of a word by using sounds that resemble or suggest the object named. (example - hiss, ping-pong.)

---

3 Israel had enjoyed three years of peaceful relations with Syria at this point.

NOTES

1It is instructive to examine the remainder of Paul’s argument in Romans chapter 9.

NOTES

1 Demon is often interchangeable with “unclean spirit” compare Mk.1: 23 (unclean spirit) with Lk.4: 33 (unclean demon). Demons are not supernatural beings – for a comprehensive exegesis on this subject the author directs the reader to “Demons Magic and Medicine” an excellent book by Andrew Perry. (ISBN 0952619296)

---

2 “And Jesus answered and spake unto them again by parables, and said, The kingdom of heaven is like unto a certain king, which made a marriage for his son, And sent forth his servants (FIRST ADVENT) to call them that were bidden to the wedding: and they would not come. Again, he sent forth other servants,(SECOND ADVENT – TWO WITNESSES) saying, Tell them which are bidden, Behold, I have prepared my dinner: my oxen and my fatlings are killed, and all things are ready: come unto the marriage. But they made light of it, and went their ways, one to his farm, another to his merchandise: And the remnant took his servants, and entreated them spitefully, and slew them. But when the king heard thereof, he was wroth: and he sent forth his armies, and destroyed those murderers, and burned up their city.(JERUSALEM) Then saith he to his servants,(JEWISH CONVERTS?) The wedding is ready, but they which were bidden were not worthy. Go ye therefore into the highways, and as many as ye shall find, bid to the marriage. So those servants went out into the highways, and gathered together all as many as they found, both bad and good: and the wedding was furnished with guests. And when the king came in to see the guests, he saw there a man which had not on a wedding garment: And he saith unto him, Friend, how camest thou in hither not having a wedding garment? And he was speechless. Then said the king to the servants, Bind him hand and foot, and take him away, and cast him into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.” (Matt.22: 1-13)

NOTES

1 Jesus was tempted of the devil (Satan). [Mtt.4: 1] The Greek word peirazo also means proved or examined. Temptation is always an internal experience, usually triggered by external stimulus. God proves men he does not tempt them.

NOTES

1 Heavenlies is the place where the saints reside. See page 19,20 of chapter 12.

---

2 In Greek philosophy the four elements were fire, water, air and earth these combined to make all known substances. All four earthly elements are involved in the punishments in this chapter. The retribution is therefore comprehensive and final.

---

3 Compare 15: 8; “No man was able to enter into the temple, till the seven plagues of the angels should be finished.”

NOTES

1 Rosh is Hebrew for head or chief and is not a proper name. Therefore “prince of Rosh Meshech” should read “chief prince of Meschech” as the RV margin indicates. Rosh is not a separate nation.

---

2 Much ink has been spilled on the identity of Tarshish. It has been identified with Phoenicia, Spain and subsequently with Britain and America. The Biblical evidence for this is very sparse (non- existent even), and the author feels that the point has been altogether missed. The term “ships of Tarshish” is often used in a generic sense – Jehosophat built such vessels to go to Ophir (1 Kgs 22: 48). These ships were probably originally refining ships, so called after similar ships which plied the Mediterranean, connecting the mines and refineries of Sardinia and later those of s. Spain with Phoenicia. The modern equivalent would probably be “supertankers”, carrying oil to refineries. Ships of Tarshish are mentioned by Ezekiel (chapter27) and Isaiah (chapter 23) in their prophetic condemnation of Tyre. Tyre traded with all the countries of the known world. According to ancient testimony, Tyre originally stood on the mainland; but in course of time, for safety against besiegers, it was transferred to the neighbouring rocky island that gave name to the locality. Ezekiel's dirge over Tyre was indeed somewhat “previous”, for Tyre was a flourishing city for centuries after the prophet predicted its doom. But the form that the prediction takes is splendidly imaginative. The mercantile island is depicted as though it was a ship at sea! Ezekiel’s poem depicts Tyre sinking in the midst of the sea with all her men and merchandise on board. There is appreciation of the beauty of ships and the pathos of a wreck; there is the sense of romance of names; and behind the song lies a longing for the downfall of an implacable enemy. These prophecies form the basis for the lament at the fall of Babylon, when all the merchants weep for her. (Rev.18: 8) The ships of Tarshish, which are associated with Tyre, represent a system or principle not a location. The predominant idea in all these passages is merchandise and trade. This system is represented in the modern world by capitalism and free trade on a global scale. Institutions such as the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund and the World Trade Organisation help underpin market liberalism which puts the mechanisms of the market before the environment and before the well being of communities. The current system is unstable and unfair, structured to benefit powerful vested interests and widens the gap between rich developed countries and poor underdeveloped countries. In the face of this, even people in rich countries feel increasingly disenfranchised, for their own governments are powerless to act against global corporate forces. The city of Tyre prospered and profiteered in times of war and peace, until she was destroyed. In Revelation the merchants weep because the Babylon-system (globalisation) is destroyed and they have no one to trade with. (not only Babylon falls, but also the cities of the nations)

The confederacy of Gog consists of predominantly oil producing, Muslim nations. If they are destroyed where does this leave the world economy? “In that day there will be no more the merchant in the house of the Lord of hosts” (Zech.14: 21) Further reading: Capitalism and progress – Bob Goudzwaard.

NOTES

1 Ber.7b, 10a, 13a ; Shab.118a ; Pes.118a ; Meg.11a ; San.17a, 94a, 97b ; Abodah Z.3b ; Ed.1110

Chapter 17

THE HARLOT

“How the faithful city has become a harlot! It was full of judgment! Righteousness lodged in her, but now murderers.” (Isa.1: 21)

“You trusted in your beauty and played the harlot.” (Ezek.16: 15)

ONE MOTHER MANY DAUGHTERS

The prime candidate for the harlot woman in most expositions (even the progressive ones) is the city of Rome and Roman Catholicism.

“It would be illogical to suppose that if the Old Testament employed the figures of bride and harlot to express two different aspects of Israel’s relationship with God, that the same figures in the New Testament could possibly indicate the faithful church on one hand, and yet still unfaithful Israel on the other.” 1

“If the Old Testament were to be our guide, Jewry would be the only candidate, since the harlot figure is constantly applied to its declension from its covenant with God. But since the New Testament describes the bringing into being of a new people of God (1 Pet.2: 9-10), whose apostasy is plainly prophesied, this new pervert could equally reasonably qualify for the title (1 Cor.6: 15; Acts 20: 29; 2 Thess.2: 3-11).” 2

The traditional orthodoxy also holds that the harlot woman is apostate Christianity, specifically the Roman Church:

“The Tridentine Council described the papacy in such terms, stating: ‘The Roman church is the mother and mistress of all churches.’ Her harlot daughters have been brought to the birth by her adulterous union with the ‘kings of the earth’. The establishing of the Church of England is a case in point. Originally, it was Roman Catholic, but because Rome refused the request of king Henry VIII for a divorce, he set up the Church of England as distinct from that of Rome and refused to acknowledge the authority of the Pope.” 3

It is indeed tempting to see the Roman Catholic Church as the “mother of harlots”, especially as she defines herself as the “mother church”. Further contemplation shows that this is an oversimplification. The “mother of the living” was Eve, because she had faith in the promised Messiah. The messianic promise passed through Abraham to his descendants the Jews, who as a nation were taken into covenant relationship with God at Sinai. The Jewish nation became the “mother of the living” or the “mother church”.

The apostasy of the Jewish nation caused the promise of salvation to be extended to the Gentiles who under the “new covenant” were grafted into the same hope (Rom.11: 23-24). The “new covenant” is therefore the fulfilment of the “old covenant” and the contrast between the “Jewish Church” and the “Christian Church” is artificial, for it is essence the same “mother church.” All those under the old covenant died in the same hope as we now possess (Heb. Chapter 11) because they belong to the same church:

“To the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are enrolled in heaven.”(Heb.12: 23)

There is only one mother church.

All who commit apostasy fall away from this church, whether they are Jews in the wilderness, Christians in the first century or Christians in the 20th century. Modern Jews are still in a state of apostasy even if they are not Christians for they have fallen away from a faith that should have brought them naturally to their Messiah. They have replaced the "old covenant", under which many of their brethren and our brethren died, with Judaism.

However, in the harlot-woman we look for something specific – a city. This city, in order to commit apostasy must in the first instance have been chosen by God. The only city chosen by God is Jerusalem.

"Son of man, cause Jerusalem to know her abominations…Now when I passed by thee, and looked upon thee, behold, thy time was the time of love; and I spread my skirt over thee, and covered thy nakedness: yea, I sware unto thee, and entered into a covenant with thee, saith the Lord GOD, and thou becamest mine. And I will judge thee, as women that break wedlock and shed blood are judged; and I will give thee blood in fury and jealousy." (Ezek.16: 1,8,38)

We have then the unique historical and spiritual fact that God selected a nation and took them to the place where he chose to put his name and his habitation (Deut.12: 5). That place was Jerusalem and the habitation was the Temple. The "earthly Jerusalem" became therefore symbolic of a higher institution:

"The holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down from heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband." (Rev.21: 2)

The "New Jerusalem" is perfect and incorruptible; the "earthly Jerusalem" has twice before been destroyed for her apostasy. The author believes that there will be a faithful Jewish Christian remnant before the Lord's return, and that there will also be apostasy in this new- born ecclesia, as there was in the first century.

God chose to associate a people and a city with his holy name. We will examine how this people and city apostatised and influenced all her daughters.

(1) JUDAISM AND THE OLD COVENANT

The author hardly needs to remind the reader of the apostasy of the Jewish people, which began shortly after the Exodus and culminated centuries later with the deportation to Babylon. While it is true that the Jews had been cured of their idolatry by the Babylonian captivity, a more subtle form of apostasy had arisen by the time of Christ. We need to go back to the 4th century BC in order to understand this phenomenon. The Jewish community at that time was in a state of flux and was thus prey to the waves of non-Jewish culture that was engulfing the Mediterranean world and beyond. The waters emanated from Greece, and Judaism emerged with a Hellenistic garment. In 332 BC the Greek general Alexander the Great took the Middle East in lightning – quick conquest and was welcomed by the Jews when he came to Jerusalem. Alexander's successors continued his plan of Hellenization, imbuing all parts of the empire with Greek language, culture, and philosophy. As a result, the Greek and Jewish cultures went through a blending process that was to have surprising results.

Diaspora Jews began to speak Greek instead of Hebrew. So toward the beginning of the third century BC, the first translation of the Hebrew Scriptures, called the Septuagint, was made into Greek, and through it, many Gentiles came to have respect for and familiarity with the Jews' religion, some even converting. Jews, on the other hand, were becoming conversant with Greek thought and some even became philosophers, something entirely new to the Jews. One

example is Philo of Alexandria of the first century BC, who endeavoured to explain Judaism in terms of Greek philosophy, as if the two expressed the same truth. Summing up this period of give-and-take between Greek and Jewish cultures, Jewish author Max Dimont says: “Enriched with Platonic thought, Aristotelian logic, and Euclidean science, Jewish scholars approached the Torah with new tools…they proceeded to add Greek reason to Jewish revelation.” The events that would take place under Roman rule, which absorbed the Greek Empire and then Jerusalem in 63 BC, were to pave the way for even more significant changes.

The Judaism of the first century BC was at a unique stage. Max Dimont states that it was poised between “the mind of Greece and the sword of Rome.” Jewish expectations were high because of political oppression and interpretations of Messianic prophesies, especially those of Daniel. The Jews were divided into four factions. The Pharisees emphasised the oral law rather than temple sacrifice. The Sadducees stressed the importance of the temple and the priesthood. Then there were the Essenes, the Zealots, and the Herodians. All were at odds religiously and philosophically. Christ quoted the prophet Isaiah at this juncture:

“In vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.” (Mtt.15: 9)

The law had been changed into a means for legalistic self-righteous justification. Jewish leaders were called rabbis (masters, teachers) who, because of their knowledge of the law, grew in prestige and became a new type of spiritual leader. Internal and external divisions, however, continued in Judaism, especially in the land of Israel. Finally, outright rebellion broke out against Rome, and in 70 AD Roman troops besieged Jerusalem, laid waste the city, burned its temple to the ground, and scattered its inhabitants. Eventually Jerusalem was decreed totally off-limits to Jews. Without a temple, without a land, with its people dispersed throughout the Roman Empire, Judaism was in need of a new religious expression if it was to survive.

With the destruction of the temple, the Sadducees disappeared, and the oral law that the Pharisees had championed became the centrepiece of a new, Rabbinical Judaism. More intense study, prayer, and works of piety replaced temple sacrifices and pilgrimages. Thus, Judaism could be practised anywhere, at any time, in any cultural surroundings. The rabbis put this oral law into writing, in addition to composing commentaries on it, and then commentaries on the commentaries, all of which together became known as the Talmud. What was the result of these varied influences? Max Dimont says in his book Jews, God and History that though the Pharisees carried on the torch of Jewish ideology and religion, “the torch itself had been ignited by the Greek philosophers.” While much of the Talmud was highly legalistic, its illustrations and explanations reflected the clear influence of Greek philosophy. For example, Greek religious concepts, such as the immortal soul were expressed in Jewish terms. Later Jewish mystical literature, the Kabbala, even goes so far as to teach reincarnation (transmigration of souls), which is basically an ancient Hindu teaching. According to the Encyclopaedia Judaica, “In the rabbinical period the doctrine of the resurrection of the dead is considered one of the central doctrines of Judaism” and “is to be distinguished from the belief in the immortality of the soul.” In addition to Biblical authority it was taught as an article of faith in the Mishna (San.10: 1) and was included as the last of Maimonides’ 13 principles of faith. Until the 20th century, denial of the resurrection was viewed as heresy. Today, however, while all factions of Judaism accept the immortality of the soul, the resurrection of the dead is not. Truly, in that new rabbinical era, veneration of the Talmud – by then a blend of legalistic and Greek philosophy – grew among Jews until, by the middle ages, the Talmud came to be revered by the Jews more than the Bible itself.

During the middle ages (from 500-1500 AD), two distinct Jewish communities emerged – the Sephardic Jews, who flourished under Muslim rule in Spain, and the Ashkenazi Jews in Central and Eastern Europe. Both communities produced rabbinical scholars whose writings and thoughts form the basis for Jewish religious interpretation until this day. Interestingly, many of the customs and religious practices current today in Judaism really got their start during the middle ages. In the 12th century, there began a wave of expulsions of Jews from various countries. By the end of the 15th century, Jews had been expelled from nearly all Western Europe, fleeing to Eastern Europe and countries around the Mediterranean. Through the centuries of oppression and persecution, many self-proclaimed Messiahs rose up among the Jews in different parts of the world, all receiving acceptance to one degree or another, but ending in disillusionment. By the 17th century, new initiatives were needed to reinvigorate the Jews and pull them out of this dark period. In the mid-18th century, there appeared an answer to the despair the Jewish people felt. It was Hasidism, a mixture of mysticism and religious ecstasy expressed in daily devotion and activity. In contrast, about the same time, philosopher Moses Mendelssohn, a German Jew, offered another solution, the way of Haskala, or enlightenment, which was to lead into what is historically considered to be "Modern Judaism."

According to Moses Mendelssohn (1729-86), Jews would be accepted if they would come out from under the restraints of the Talmud and conform to Western culture. In his day, he became one of the Jews most respected by the Gentile world. However, renewed outbursts of violent anti-Semitism in the 19th century, especially in "Christian" Russia, disillusioned the movement's followers, and many then focused on finding a political refuge for the Jews. They rejected the idea of a personal Messiah who would lead the Jews back to Israel and began to work on establishing a Jewish State by other means. This then became the concept of Zionism: "the secularisation of Jewish messianism", as one authority puts it. The murder of some six million European Jews in the Nazi-inspired Holocaust (1935-45) gave Zionism its final impetus and gained much sympathy for it worldwide. The Zionist dream came true in 1948 with the establishment of the state of Israel, but this has still not solved their problems.

(2) JUDAISM AND CHRISTIANITY

The corrupting influence of Judaism on Christianity, especially in the early years is undeniable. A deliberate attempt was made by the Jews to wreck the Christian movement from within. False brethren were deliberately planted in order to create dissension (Gal.2: 4,5). The apostle Paul suffered personal attacks (2 Cor.10: 9,10; 11: 6), forged letters in his name (2 Thess.2: 2) and the deliberate twisting of his gospel of grace (2 Pet.3: 15,16; Rom.3: 8). He was forced to go to Jerusalem to counter these accusations and clarify matters (Acts 15: 1-29). Finally he was manipulated into a situation were he was arrested (Acts 21: 21-33).1

We have already observed that the Nero persecution was probably influenced by the Jewish hatred of Christians. Nero's mistress Poppea was a Jewish proselyte, who spent a lot of her time in the company of Ismael, the Jewish high priest and Helcias, the temple treasurer, who were retained in Rome as hostages.2

There is also evidence that one of the most fundamental doctrinal errors of Christendom – belief in the Trinity, was a deliberate Jewish ploy to make Christianity unpalatable to the Jews. The belief in a triune God is abhorrent to the Jewish faith that bases one of its most important prayers – the shema on Deut.6: 4 ;

"Hear (shema), O Israel: The Lord thy God is one Lord."

The council of Nicaea accepted the Nicene creed with its heavy trinitarian bias in 325 AD, but debate continued until the doctrine was adopted at Chalcedon by the Western churches in 451 AD. Despite the fact that the debate raged for many centuries, it was already a problem in the first century.

“Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world. Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God: And every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God: and this is that spirit of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world.” (1 John 4:1-3)

“For many deceivers are entered into the world, who confess not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh. This is a deceiver and an antichrist.” (2 John 7)

Trinitarians suggest that these passages do not refer to the Trinity (no surprise there), but rather to gnostic influences or certain mystery religions. This has in fact been rejected by scholars in the field of biblical studies. The reason for such rejection are mainly due to the historical character of Christianity and the early date of the New Testament documents that would not have allowed enough time for the development of “mythological” (pagan) ideas on the one hand, and on the other hand, the complete lack of any historical evidence in support of the mystery religions or gnosticism.

How (or more pertinently-why?) did trinitarian ideas originate so early in the first century? The suggestion is that this was a deliberate Jewish spoiling tactic, in order to make Christianity unpalatable to their fellow countrymen. The Jews believed that there was only one God – by over-emphasising the divine origin of Jesus it would be possible to persuade orthodox Jewry that Christians actually believed that Jesus was God. This explains John’s emphasis on Jesus Christ came in the flesh (human nature). The apostle Paul also warns against those who preach “another Jesus” and a “different gospel” (2 Cor.11: 4). He calls these brethren “false apostles” and their leader “Satan.”

“For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ. And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light.” (2 Cor. 11:13-14)

The Apocalypse also warns against the “blasphemy of them that say they are Jews, and are not, but are the synagogue of Satan.” (Rev.2: 9) The author admits that the evidence is circumstantial, but in the light of first century history it is very likely that the Jews deliberately introduced this false doctrine into the early ecclesias.

(3) JUDAISM AND ISLAM

A.D. Norris has the following to say:

“It hardly seems that Islam can qualify for the Harlot’s office in view of the fact that as a religious faith it has apostatised neither from Judaism nor from Christianity.” 1

While it is certainly true that the harlot is not Islamic – it is incorrect to say that she is not an apostate religion. Islam is an of-shoot from Judaism which itself has apostatised from the “old covenant.”

The influence of Judaism on Islam has been admirably proven in Rabbi Abraham Geiger’s book Judaism and Islam written in 1824. W.St. Clair-Tisdall, in his classic The Sources of Islam, also demonstrates the direct dependence of certain Qur’anic stories of the Old Testament on the

Jewish Talmud. The influence of the Jewish apocrypha can be seen on the Qur'anic stories of Cain and Abel, Abraham and the idols, and the Queen of Sheba. The author refers the reader to both books, that make the case for a Jewish origin of the Islamic religion.2 Most recently a work by two young scholars who might be described as post-Christian has presented the historical relationship between Judaism and Islam in an entirely new light, in which the share of Judaism in Islam is depicted as something vastly greater than a "contribution" or an "influence." This work, which depicts Islam as a kind of offshoot or aberration from Judaism, has aroused violent controversy.3

ONE MOTHER MANY DAUGHTERS

CORRUPTION OF OLD COVENANT

MOTHER OF HARLOTS

AD 30 Bride –CHRISTIANITY

new covenant

C

A

T

H

O

L

I

C

C

H

U

RCH

BRIDE

ISRAEL AT

SINAI

BC 586 Fall of Jerusalem

Babylonian captivity

JEWISH

INFLUENCE

AD 70 Fall of Jerusalem

START OF CHRISTIAN APOSTASY

COPTIC JACOBITE

4 th century Constantine

5 th century

610

AD

6 th century

EASTERN

ORTHODOX

J

U

D

A

I

M

Russian

1054 AD Greek

Romanian

and others

I

L

A

M

16 th century reformation

18thCent.

HASIDIM

ANGLICAN

EPISCOPAL

LUTHERAN

German Swedish American and others Methodist

CALVINISM

Salvation army

19 th cent. Reform and Conservative Judaism

Baptist

Pentecostal Congregational

Presbyterian Reformed churches

2000 AD

CONCLUSION

The apostasy of the Jewish nation had consequences for the whole world. One of the positive consequences was the inclusion of the Gentiles into covenant relationship. On the negative side it resulted directly or contributed indirectly to three apostate religions:

1. Judaism.

2. False Christianity.

3. Islam.

JERUSALEM THE HARLOT CITY

1. The woman of Rev.chapter 17 is first encountered in the wilderness in Rev.chapter 12 (see page 25 of chpt.12) this is the same woman of Zech.chpt.5. Even though God had prepared a place for her (Jerusalem – Deut.12: 5 ; Rev.12: 14) she preferred to build her own place in Babylon. (Zech.5: 11) the place where she originated.

2. After the fall of Jerusalem in AD 70 Babylon became the place were a renaissance of Jewish religion occurred. See Digression 12.4.

3. The witnesses are killed in Jerusalem. (see chapter 11 page 21,22)

4. The reference to the seven mountains and seven kings in 17: 9,10 is a reference to Rome and to the first seven Emperors. 1. Julius Caesar 2. Augustus 3. Tiberius 4. Gaius 5. Claudius (five fallen) 6. Nero (one is –placing the writing of Revelation firmly in his reign) and one future protagonist – 7. The man of sin (not yet come). These verses are interpolated and clearly belong in chapter 12. (see digression 12.1) Chapter 17 only has reference to ten kings these have no crowns (17: 3) until after they destroy the Harlot and receive authority with the beast for one hour (17: 3). The beast power is then seen to have ten crowns upon his ten horns (13: 1). When the seven heads wore seven crowns the beast represented imperial Rome under it's first seven Emperors during the time of Christ and his apostles. When the ten horns wear crowns, the beast represents ten rulers at the time of Christ's return.

5. The term harlot and related expressions such as "play the harlot", harlotry etc. occur approximately 70 times with reference to Israel. Of the remaining five occurrences one refers to Tyre (Isa.23: 15) and one to Nineveh (Nah.3: 4) both condemned for their violence and materialism and political aggrandisement. It is used 16 times in Ezekiel chapter 16 – a chapter that likens the nation and specifically Jerusalem to a harlot.

6. The fate of the harlot-city is to be burnt. (Rev.17: 16; 18: 8); "If thou shalt hear say in one of thy cities, which the LORD thy God hath given thee to dwell there, saying, Certain men, the children

of Belial, are gone out from among you, and have withdrawn the inhabitants of their city, saying, Let us go and serve other gods, which ye have not known; Then shalt thou enquire, and make search, and ask diligently; and, behold, if it be truth, and the thing certain, that such abomination is wrought among you; Thou shalt surely smite the inhabitants of that city with the edge of the sword, destroying it utterly, and all that is therein, and the cattle thereof, with the edge of the sword. And thou shalt gather all the spoil of it into the midst of the street thereof, and shalt burn with fire the city, and all the spoil thereof every whit, for the LORD thy God: and it shall be an heap forever; it shall not be built again. And there shall cleave nought of the cursed thing to thine hand: that the LORD may turn from the fierceness of his anger, and shew thee mercy, and have compassion upon thee, and multiply thee, as he hath sworn unto thy fathers; When thou shalt hearken to the voice of the LORD thy God, to keep all his commandments which I command thee this day, to do that which is right in the eyes of the LORD thy God." (Deut.13: 12-18)

7. The term abomination (mother…of abominations of the earth) is only used of the city of Jerusalem in scripture (not for Tyre or Babylon).

CONCLUSION

Jerusalem is the mother of Harlots the "great city" - where men from "all tribes tongues and nations" look at the dead bodies of the witnesses. All who commit apostasy belong to her – the faithful belong to the "New Jerusalem." Any city that treats the witnesses of Jesus as he himself was treated models herself on Jerusalem, who killed the prophets and stoned them that were sent to her (Mtt.22: 37). The great city is first of all Jerusalem, then any city that identifies with her deeds, such as Rome. That is why the cities of the nations will fall alongside the "great city" (16: 19).

THE HARLOT ENTHRONED ON THE BEAST

"And there came one of the seven angels which had the seven vials, and talked with me, saying unto me, Come hither; I will shew unto thee the judgment of the great whore that sitteth upon many waters: With whom the kings of the earth have committed fornication, and the inhabitants of the earth have been made drunk with the wine of her fornication. So he carried me away in the spirit into the wilderness: and I saw a woman sit upon a scarlet coloured beast, full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns. And the woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet colour, and decked with gold and precious stones and pearls, having a golden cup in her hand full of abominations and filthiness of her fornication: And upon her forehead was a name written, MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH." (Rev.17: 1-5)

We have already observed that the vision of the harlot in chapter 17 is an expansion of the vials (see chapter 16). The harlot represents a city (18: 18) the O.T. prototype is the city of Babylon.

The river Euphrates flowed through the midst1 (17: 1– sitteth on many waters) of Babylon, and the city was dissected by many irrigation channels. It was the first of the city-states built by Nimrod (Gen.10: 10) 2 and the site of mans first organised rebellion against God (Gen.11: 3). It was a city of vast material wealth and political control. Perhaps more importantly, it was the place where God's people were held captive for 70 years before they returned to Jerusalem. It was therefore the place where the "faithful" (like Daniel) and the "wicked" (like Zedekiah –Jer.52: 11) dwelt temporarily before becoming citizens of the "New Jerusalem" (or dying in Babylon).

The city of Babylon fell the same night1 (Dan.5: 30) that it committed the sacrilege of drinking from the temple vessels and praising false gods (v. 23). 2 In a Similar fashion the harlot drinks from a cup (temple vessel?) filled with filthy fornication and worships the “image of the beast.”

Babylon was the archetype for all her daughters. In the first century the cities of Jerusalem and Rome conspired to crucify Christ and persecute the saints. It is however, not Rome but Jerusalem that is censured by Christ. In order for it to apostatise, the harlot-city required in the first instance to be chosen by God.

The only city chosen by God is Jerusalem, this is made abundantly clear in Ezekiel chapter 16 which forms the template of the harlot vision in Revelation chapter 17.

EZEKIEL 16

REVELATION 17

Again the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, Son of man, cause Jerusalem to know her abominations, (16:1,2)

And upon her forehead was a name written, MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH. (17:5)

I clothed thee also with embroidered work, and shod thee with badgers' skin, and I girded thee about with fine linen, and I covered thee with silk. I decked thee also with ornaments, and I put bracelets upon thy hands, and a chain on thy neck. And I put a jewel on thy forehead, and earrings in thine ears, and a beautiful crown upon thine head. Thus wast thou decked with gold and silver; and thy raiment was of fine linen, and silk, and embroidered work; thou didst eat fine flour, and honey, and oil: and thou wast exceeding beautiful, and thou didst prosper into a kingdom. And thy renown went forth among the heathen for thy beauty: for it was perfect through my comeliness, which I had put upon thee, saith the Lord GOD. (16:10-14)

And the woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet colour, and decked with gold and precious stones and pearls, having a golden cup in her hand full of abominations and filthiness of her fornication: And upon her forehead was a name written, MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH. (17:4-5)

And I saw the woman drunken with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus: and when I saw her, I wondered with great admiration. (17:6)

And saying, Alas, alas, that great city, that was clothed in fine linen, and purple, and scarlet, and decked with gold, and precious stones, and pearls! (18:16)

EZEKIEL 16

REVELATION 17

But thou didst trust in thine own beauty, and playest the harlot because of thy renown, and pourest out thy fornications on every one that passed by; his it was. (16:15)

How weak is thine heart, saith the Lord GOD, seeing thou doest all these things, the work of an imperious whorish woman; (16:30)

Wherefore, O harlot, hear the word of the LORD: (16:35)

MOTHER OF HARLOTS

And I will judge thee, as women that break wedlock and shed blood are judged; and I will give thee blood in fury and jealousy. And I will also give thee into their hand, and they shall throw down thine eminent place, and shall break down thy high places: they shall strip thee also of thy clothes, and shall take thy fair jewels, and leave thee naked and bare. They shall also bring up a company against thee, and they shall stone thee with stones, and thrust thee through with their swords. And they shall burn thine houses with fire, and execute judgments upon thee in the sight of many women: and I will cause thee to cease from playing the harlot, and thou also shalt give no hire any more. (16:38-41)

And the ten horns which thou sawest upon the beast, these shall hate the whore, and shall make her desolate and naked, and shall eat her flesh, and burn her with fire. (17:16)

The description of the woman in Ezekiel 16 is based on the tabernacle in the wilderness. God clothed the nation with badger skins (Ezek.16: 10; Ex.25: 5) a beautiful crown was put upon the forehead (Ezek.28: 36-38; Ezek.16: 12). 1 The linen curtains of the tabernacle were embroidered with blue, purple and scarlet (Ex.26: 1), the linen priestly garments, "for glory and beauty" were also embroidered with gold, blue, purple and scarlet (Ex.28: 2-5; Ezek.16: 13). The priests were "decked with ornaments" (the breastplate Ex.28: 15-29; Ezek.16: 11). In turn the tabernacle formed the template for the sanctuary built by Solomon at Jerusalem.

Jerusalem became therefore a priestly city, the dwelling place of God.

"And saying, Alas, alas, that great city, that was clothed in fine linen, and purple, and scarlet, and decked with gold, and precious stones, and pearls!" (Rev.18: 16)

The temple treasury was renowned for its riches – the Jews regularly "tithed" even amongst the Diaspora. But now the "holy city" has become a parody of itself, the holy garments are used for the purpose of prostitution. Just as Aaron "bore the iniquity of the holy things" on his forehead (Ex.28: 38), so the whore now bears her iniquity on the forehead (17: 5). In the past the ancient city of Jerusalem slew God's children and passed them through the fire (Ezek.16: 21) – here she is depicted as intoxicated with the blood of the saints (17: 6). In the past she was burnt with fire (Ezek.16: 41) in the future she will again be burnt by her lovers (17: 16). This is appropriate, for burning (not the common punishment of stoning) was the fate of a priest's daughter who committed harlotry (Lev.21: 9).

Ezekiel chapter 16, the basis of John's vision has the greatest concentration of the word "harlot" than any other chapter in the Old Testament. In the same chapter the word "covenant" occurs 6 times, appropriate to the marriage metaphor here being employed by Ezekiel, and the literal event at Sinai. In other passages besides, the concept of harlotry is associated with the transgressing of the covenant (Jud.2: 17-20, Hos.6: 7-10 cp. Prov.2: 17). Thus when applied to God's covenant people "harlotry" denotes apostasy.

In very few places in the OT, however, there are instances in which the commercial trade of a city is described with the metaphor of prostitution, doubtless because economic relationships frequently led to the exchange of religious practices. Of the 75 times that the term is used, it is applied only twice to cities other than Jerusalem. Tyre (Isa.23: 15) and Nineveh (Nah.3: 4) – and this no doubt because these two prostitutes encouraged their sister city to prostitute herself. Tyre deserves the title "harlot" on account of its materialistic outlook and accumulation of wealth, 1 Tyre being one of the most successful trading centres of its day. Nineveh, the capital of the Assyrian Empire, warrants this description – seemingly through its unabated desire for territorial gain and particularly for its oppresiveness and violence. 2

Three senses exist, therefore, in which the designation “harlot” may be understood – religious infidelity, accumulation of material wealth and political aggrandisement, but its background clearly places the stress on the first of these.

In what sense did Jerusalem commit fornication with the kings of the earth? Ezekiel makes it apparent that in his time Egypt (16: 26) and Assyria (16: 28) were the main candidates. The kings of Jerusalem exchanged treaties and made political alliances with them, even adopting their religious practices (Ezek.20: 7-8; 23: 19-21; 2Kgs.16: 7-8).

In the first century Jerusalem was a city with special authority over the various tetrachies adjoining Judea, but also the temple had an amazing degree of authority over Jewish communities in all parts of the Roman Empire.

After some controversies, the principle was adopted in the Islamic world that Jerusalem was indeed a holy city of Islam. The loss and recapture of the city during the Crusades and the obvious enormous importance attached to it by Christians no doubt had some impact, too, as did the great controversies among the European powers over the holy places in Jerusalem during the late Ottoman period. By now the Islamic sanctity of Jerusalem, whatever its origin, is firmly established. The city of Jerusalem is therefore a “holy city” for three monotheistic religions. She has indeed become a prostitute over the centuries, lending legitimacy to false religions and offering her cup of filth to all nations.

“Behold I will make Jerusalem a cup of trembling unto all peoples round about.” (Zech.12: 2)

Like its predecessor Babylon, Jerusalem controls nations, but it does so in a different way. It is famous, or rather infamous, for its compromising relationship with political powers. It both depends upon them, and directs them as a rider depends upon and directs the movements of his beast. Yet the scene in Revelation is not the dignified relationship of a wise and intelligent rider and his strong obedient horse. The scene here is bizarre and offensive. Babylon (Jerusalem) is depicted as a wicked, gaudily attired woman, enthroned on a vicious, hideous monster. Supported, elevated and borne along by this hybrid creature, she manages in a precarious way, to direct its movements. She plays a dubious, dishonourable role that involves selling herself for political advantage.

In her hand she holds a golden cup, filled with abominations and the impurities of her fornication. This is in part an illusion to LXX Jer.28: 7 (MT 51: 7), though there the golden cup is a metaphor for Babylon itself: “Babylon was a golden cup in the Lord’s hand, making all the nations drunken; the nations drank of her wine; therefore the nations went mad.” In the Targum of Jer.51: 7, however, the cup is turned into a metaphor for the sin of Babylon, which is precisely the symbolism of the cup in 17: 4, “Behold the cup of gold which was precious amongst all the vessels, so is the sin of Babylon exalted !!” The golden cup held by the woman is described as filled with two ingredients: “what is detestable (abomination)” and “the impurities of her fornication.” This is a reference to idolatry (image of the beast) and the associated pagan sexual rites (the “sons of God” joining themselves to “the daughters of men” see Num.25: 1-3). In the context of Revelation this is symbolic for political alliances and the (import?) setting up of false religion. She is the mother of whores, the term “mother,” is a figurative extension that means something like “archetype,” i.e., “anticipating a later reality and suggesting a derivative relationship,” or that indicates the source or origin of some activity or quality. In Hos.2: 2-5 (cp. Isa.50: 1), Israel is personified as a “mother” who has played the whore and has bastard children. The word “abomination” again is a detail which, when researched, is found to relate

solely to Jerusalem of the three cities mentioned. Surprisingly, in spite of the length of the oracles uttered by Isaiah, Jeremiah and Ezekiel against Babylon and Tyre, not once is the word used. In sharp contrast to this there exists some 60 occurrences of “abomination” with reference to the deeds of the Israelites, with Ezekiel 16 once more having more than any other chapter. It is true to say, therefore, that, when speaking of cities, Jerusalem is the only one to which “abomination” may be scripturally applied.1

It appears mainly with reference to idolatry and false sacrifice (Deut.7: 25, Isa.1: 13, Jer.44: 22, Ezek.7: 20). In Ezek.20: 30 the ideas of idolatry and harlotry are found side by side.

The “mother of harlots” is obviously a contrast with the “New Jerusalem.”

REV. 17

REV.21

And there came one of the seven angels who had the vials, and talked with me (v.1)

And there came one of the seven angels who had the vials full of the seven last plagues, and talked with me. (v. 9)

Come, I will show you the judgment of

Come, I will show you the bride, the

The great harlot (v. 1)

wife of the Lamb (v. 9)

He carried me away in the Spirit into the wilderness (v. 3)

he carried me away in the Spirit to a great, high mountain (v. 10)

the great city (v. 18)

the holy city (v. 10)

I WONDERED WITH GREAT ADMIRATION

“And I saw the woman drunken with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus: and when I saw her, I wondered with great admiration.” (Rev. 17:6)

Why did John wonder with great wonder (RV – same word thaumazo)? The language is reflective of the reaction of the people at the appearance of the beast in 13: 3, “all the world wondered (thaumazo) after the beast.” The same formula is applied in verse 8 of chapter 17:

“They that dwell on the earth shall wonder (thaumazo) whose names were not written in the book of life.” (17: 8)

It is implied therefore that wonder or amazement is tantamount to worship. Christ warned that if it were possible the very elect would be deceived (Mtt.24: 24), John however, was not deceived but perplexed (cp. Dan.8: 15). How was it possible that the harlot could once again exercise power over the saints and even murder them?

THE INTERPRETATION

7 And the angel said unto me, 'Wherefore didst thou marvel? I will tell thee the mystery of the woman, and of the beast that carrieth her, which hath the seven heads and ten horns.'

8 The beast that thou sawest was, and is not; and shall ascend out of the bottomless pit, and go into perdition: and they that dwell on the earth shall wonder, whose names were not written in the book of life from the foundation of the world, when they behold the beast that was, and is not, and yet is.

11 And the beast that was, and is not, even he is the eighth, and is of the seven, and goeth into perdition.

(Rev.17: 7-8, 11)

We have already proposed that verses 9 and 10 are an interpolation from chapter 12, and that they refer to first century Rome. Once this is realised, and verses 9 and 10 are inserted in their proper place, the remaining text (verses 7,8 and 11) flows without encountering any problems.

In chapter 13 John has represented the monster as a travesty of Christ: like the Lamb "bearing marks of slaughter", the beast bore on one of its heads "the deadly marks of slaughter" (v.6 ; 13: 3). Like him who "was dead" and is "alive for ever" (1: 18), the monster "had received the sword-wound and had come to life"(13: 4).

The explanation of the symbolism of the woman and the monster begins with more in the same vein. The monster bears a title which is a parody of the divine title: God "is and was and is coming" (1: 4); the monster was and is not and is yet to be. The last of these three verbs (parestai) is the one from which is derived the noun parousia, commonly used throughout the New Testament to denote the future advent of Christ. The monster is to have its sinister Parousia, when it is to rise from the abyss. In an earlier reference to the monster the angel used this same phrase in the present tense –"the monster that rises from the abyss" (11: 7). This gives the impression that rising from the abyss was a permanent attribute of the monster's character rather than a single episode in it's career. The angel confirms this impression by immediately reverting to the present tense: and it goes into perdition. It is a second permanent attribute of the monster that it is constantly heading for perdition Whenever in human history the monster has appeared, it has come trailing clouds of smoke from the abyss which is its home and labelled with its destination. If the angel here speaks of it's rising from the abyss as future, it is because he is indicating that Parousia which will coincide with the outbreak of persecution. The fact that he can say is not is a clear indication that the monster – empire did not exist at the time of writing (approx. AD 65). This means that it could not be the Roman Empire. The angel clearly intends John to understand that although the first century incarnation of the monster was the seven headed Roman beast of 12: 3 this did not represent its last manifestation, indeed it could not, for it had transferred its authority and power to the last monster (13: 2).

We have already considered the seven-headed monster in chapter 13. It is the composite of all Daniel's beasts1 – they all possessed the "harlot-city" amongst their dominions and both Babylon and Rome "burned her utterly with fire" (17: 16).

The attention is however focused on the "wounded head," the first head (13: 3) [see chapter 13]. The first of the seven heads is Babylon. In the past Babylon was, at the time of writing is not, and in the future will rise from the abyss.

The eighth (head), is therefore the reincarnated Babylon, it belongs to the seven other empires (heads) that possessed Jerusalem and will suffer the same fate as them. The city of Jerusalem

identifies itself completely with this Middle Eastern phenomenon and appropriates its characteristics which is why she also becomes “Babylon the Great.”

The eighth head which is closely related to the other seven, goes into perdition (or destruction). This refers specifically to the casting of the beast into the lake of fire (19: 20). The term “destruction” appears to be a word play, since in 9: 11 the angel of the abyss is called apollyon or abaddon (destroyer) in the Hebrew.

THE BEAST’S BIOGRAPHY

The figure of the beast is mentioned in four narrative passages in Revelation (longest to shortest: 13: 1-18; 17: 3-17; 20: 7-10; 19: 17-21; 11:7). Elsewhere, the monster is mentioned in discrete sayings on the mark of the beast and the worship of his image (14: 9; 15: 2; 16: 2), and two more times in a variety of brief miscellaneous notices (16: 10,13). On the following page there follows a synoptic comparison of the main narratives about the beast.

REV 11:7

REV 13:1-18

REV 16:10-16

REV 17:3-17

REV 19:17-21

REV 20:7-10

Beast was (8a)

Beast was

(8c)

Beast was

(11a)

Beast is not(8a)

Beast is not (8c)

Beast is not (11a)

Ascends from the abyss (7a)

Beast ascends from sea (1a)

Beast ascends from abyss (8a)

Beast is to come (8c)

Beast is the eighth (11b)

Color

Scarlet(3b)

Has 10 horns

(1b)

Has 10 horns (3d,7c,12,16)

Has 10 horns

(7c)

10 horns=

10 kings (12a)

Has 7 heads

(1c)

Has 7 heads

(3c)

Has 7 heads (7c)

7 heads =7hills

(9c)

7 heads=7kings

(9d)

Has blasphemous name on its heads (1b)

Beast full of blasphemous names (3b)

Looks like leopard,feet like bear, mouth like lion (2a)

Dragon gives beast his power, his throne, great authority (2b)

[Fifth vial poured on beast's throne (10a)]

One of his heads appeared fatally wounded (3a)

The first beast, whose mortal wound (12b)

The beast who was wounded by the sword

(14b)

Fatal wound healed (3b)

Was healed (12b)

But lived

(14b)

Whole earth amazed and followed beast (3c)

Inhabitants of the earth amazed

(8b)

People worshipped dragon (4a)

People also worshipped beast (4b)

Beast permitted to say proud and blasphemous things (5a)

Blasphemed

God and those who dwell in heaven (6a)

Given power to be active 42 months (5b)

Beast in power one day, with 10 kings (12b)

The beast will fight, conquer and kill 2 witnesses (7b)

Fights against saints conquers them (7a)

Given authority over every tribe, people, language, and nation (7b)

Waters were whore seated are peoples, crowds, nations and languages (15)

All inhabitants of the earth will worship him (8a)

Second beast makes people worship first beast (12b)

All inhabitants of the earth will be amazed at beast (8b)

Those whose names not written in book of life (8b)

Those whose names not written in book of life (8b)

Kings of world assembled for battle (14), at Armageddon (16)

10 kings give their power and authority to the beast (13)

10 kings give royal power to the beast (17a)

Beast and kings of earth gather to fight the rider and his army (19)

[Satan deceives nations and gathers them to battle (8)]

10 kings and beast fight against the Lamb (14a)

Army surrounds the camp of the saints and the beloved city (9b)

Lamb will conquer them

(14b)

Beast and false prophet captured (20)

Fire from heaven consumes them (9b)

10 horns will hate and destroy the whore (16)

Beast headed for destruction (8a)

Beast headed for destruction (11b)

Beast thrown into lake of fire (20b)

[Devil thrown into lake of fire with beast and false prophet (10)]

THE TEN KINGS

“And the ten horns which thou sawest are ten kings, which have received no kingdom as yet; but receive power as kings one hour with the beast. These have one mind, and shall give their power and strength unto the beast. ” (Rev.17: 12-13)

The eighth head supports the ten horns, for the eighth head is the latter day incarnation of the seven-headed monster. The harlot-cities relationship with the kings of the earth is interesting. She rules over kings (17: 18); her relationship with kings is one of wanton wickedness (18: 3); she is destroyed by kings (17: 16); and other kings lament her destruction (18: 9).

These ten kings cede power to the monster – they do not act individually but are united in purpose. These have one mind, this is a reflection of Gen.11:1: “the whole earth was of one language and one speech”, when mankind united to build the tower of Babel. This is a parody of the attitude of the saints who are encouraged to be of [1] the same mind (1 Cor.1: 10) [2] the same judgment (1 Cor.1: 10) [3] one heart (Acts 4: 23) [4] one mind (Acts 4:23; Phil 1:27) [5] one spirit (2 Cor.12: 18) [6] having the same attitude (Phil.2: 20) [7] harmonious, one mind (Phil.2: 2)

When the heads wore seven crowns, the beast represented imperial Rome under its first seven emperors during the time of Christ and his apostles (12: 3). When the ten horns wore crowns, the beast represented ten individual rulers shortly before the return of Christ (13: 1). Now, when it is shown without any crowns, it is because the ten kings have destroyed the harlot-city that exercised control over them and pooled their sovereignty. The sum of the parts has become larger than the individual rulers – it is the beast-empire.

These ten kings “have received no kingdom as yet.” In other words, in John’s day they were not identifiable. Nor are they identifiable, so the prophecy implies, until the exciting events of the Last Days are already in train, for “they receive power as kings one hour with the beast.” To attempt to turn this “one hour” into a significant time period is to manufacture difficulties.1 The fairly obvious intention behind the expression is to emphasise that this build up of hostility to “Babylon” is the divinely decreed counterpart to the hour of shame and suffering which Jesus suffered there. John’s gospel uses the term frequently in order to express the shame and tribulation of Christ. Its fourfold use about the downfall of Babylon adds one more to the long list of correspondences between Christ and anti-Christ.

Although not identifiable the “ten kings” reflect the extent of the land promised to Abraham, from the river Nile to the Euphrates and possessed by ten nations (Gen.15: 18-21).

WAR WITH THE LAMB

“These shall make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb shall overcome them: for he is Lord of lords, and King of kings: and they that are with him are called, and chosen, and faithful.” (Rev.17: 14)

One way in which earthly kings can wage war on the Lamb is through his followers. The war is therefore yet another reference to the great persecution. Earlier John has described the victory of the Lamb from the point of view of the martyrs, whose conquest is already implicit in his representative triumph: “they have conquered him (Satan) by the life-blood of the Lamb and by the testimony they bore; no love of life caused them to shrink from death” (12: 11). Here he describes the victory of the conquerors from the point of view of the Lamb, who is still the agent

of victory: he will conquer them, not only because he is Lord of lords and King of kings, but also because his companions are called and chosen and faithful. He is Lord of lords and King of kings in virtue of the victory secured once for all on Calvary. But that is not enough to make the final victory complete. It must be re-enacted again and again in his companions, the picked and faithful soldiers of the cross. Whichever way we look at it, final victory depends on the inaugural victory of the Lamb together with the victory that he makes possible for the whole vast throng of martyrs.

The initial victory achieved by martyrdom (the 144,000 who followed him withersoever he goeth) is reinforced by a military victory. The vision is expanded in 19: 14-16 where the martyrs are represented by armies mounted on white horses who follow the King of kings and Lord of lords into battle.

THE HARLOT DESTROYED

“And he saith unto me, The waters which thou sawest, where the whore sitteth, are peoples, and multitudes, and nations, and tongues. And the ten horns which thou sawest upon the beast, these shall hate the whore, and shall make her desolate and naked, and shall eat her flesh, and burn her with fire. For God hath put in their hearts to fulfil his will, and to agree, and give their kingdom unto the beast, until the words of God shall be fulfilled. And the woman which thou sawest is that great city, which reigneth over the kings of the earth.” (Rev.17: 15-18)

The “ten kings” have “one mind” but despite their free choice they are actually fulfilling the purpose of God, who has put it in their hearts to do his mind (RV). God’s purpose is the destruction of the harlot, no doubt retributive justice for the mal- treatment of his martyr-witnesses. Every power that sets itself up against God shall in the end break itself on the cross of his Son and the martyr-witness of his saints.

Jerusalem will be made naked and desolate they will eat her flesh and burn her with fire. This is an allusion to Ezek.23: 26-29, where Jerusalem is compared to a woman

stripped naked, and to Ezek.23: 25, where survivors of Jerusalem will be burned with fire. Several OT prophets also threaten the harlot Judah with being stripped naked (Jer.13: 26-27; Ezek.16: 37-38; 23: 10, 29; Hos.2: 5,12).

The phrase “they shall devour her flesh” is clearly a metaphor. In the ancient world one would expect dogs to devour unburied corpses in cities and birds in the country (1 Kgs.14: 11; 16: 4). This phrase is probably an allusion to the fate of Jezebel, who was reportedly thrown from a window and eaten by wild dogs in the street (1 Kgs.21: 23-24; 2Kgs.9: 10,36-37). One might expect “dogs” to be the subject of “devour”, implying the figurative use of dog, in a manner similar to 22: 15 compare the figurative use of “dog” to describe people opposed to the gospel (Mtt.7: 6), Paul’s Judaizing opponents (Phil.3: 2), and heretics (2 Pet.2: 22).

THE HARLOT AND JEZEBEL

(1) Jezebel was accused of “harlotry” (2 Kgs.9: 22) she was the “mother of harlots” for her daughter Athaliah was of a similar character.

(2) She incited the king and all Israel to act “abominably” in worshipping idols (1 Kgs.21: 25)

(3) Jezebel (1 Kgs.18: 4), Athaliah (2 Kgs.11: 1) and the harlot of Revelation (17: 6, 18: 20, 19: 2) all attempted to destroy the godly seed.

(4) Athaliah reigned for “six years” (2 Kgs.11: 3), then was slain, and the righteous king Jehoash took the throne in the “seventh year” (11: 4) being seven years old.

(5) Following the death of Athaliah, the new king was able to restore the temple in Jerusalem for pure worship (2 Kgs.12: 4). Similarly, in the Apocalypse, once the harlot is destroyed, the New Jerusalem is established.

It is perhaps due to such correspondences that the perverse individual at Thyatira could be dubbed “Jezebel” (Rev.2: 20), which can hardly have been her true name.

CONCLUSION

While Babylon and subsequently Rome are types of the “harlot” we have encountered sound scriptural and historical evidence that demonstrate that only Jerusalem fulfils all the qualifications. Any extrapolation of these prophecies to the EEC and the Catholic Church goes against the grain of history and sound exegesis.

To quote H. Whittaker:

“One is left guessing as to how the Babylonian harlot riding the Beast and then ravaged by the ten kings can represent the Papacy controlling the Roman church and then destroyed by those who are themselves subject to it. Indeed, how harlot and beast can both be identified with the apostasy of Rome deserves the name Mystery nearly as much as the woman in the vision.”1

These words were written in 1973 and Christadelphians still confuse the identity of the harlot!!

NOTES

1 Alpha and Omega – Nick Lunn page 195.

---

2 Apocalypse for Everyman- A.D. Norris page 285.

---

3 The Apocalypse epitomised- H.P. Mansfield page 210.

NOTES

1 The author believes that James was unwittingly used by “false brethren” to manipulate Paul into a situation where he could be arrested.

---

2 Josephus Antiq. book 20.9.11

NOTES

1 Apocalypse for Everyman – A.D. Norris page 286.

---

2 Both books are available on the internet and the author urges the reader to conduct further research. http://answering-islam.org/Books/Geiger/Judaism/intro.htm and for W.St. Clair-Tisdall see http://www.muhammadanism.com/Books/default.htm

---

3 Patricia Crone and Michael Cook, Hagarism: The Making of the Islamic World (Cambridge,Eng.,1977) see also – The Jews of Islam by Bernard Lewis.

NOTES

1 Contrast the "New Jerusalem" (22: 1-2)

---

2 The mighty hunter before (against) the Lord.

NOTES

1 "In one hour is thy judgment come." (18: 10)

---

2 Daniel 5:23 But hast lifted up thyself against the Lord of heaven; and they have brought the vessels of his house before thee, and thou, and thy lords, thy wives, and thy concubines, have drunk wine in them; and thou hast praised the gods of silver, and gold, of brass, iron, wood, and stone, which see not, nor hear, nor know: and the God in whose hand thy breath is, and whose are all thy ways, hast thou not glorified:

Revelation 9:20 And the rest of the men which were not killed by these plagues yet repented not of the works of their hands, that they should not worship devils, and idols of gold, and silver, and brass, and stone, and of wood: which neither can see, nor hear, nor walk:

NOTES

1 This "beautiful crown" bore the words HOLINESS TO THE LORD, and "it shall be always upon his (Aaron's) forehead."

NOTES

1 The city of Jerusalem was condemned for the same sin by Christ – even religious observance was seen as a money making opportunity, for they had turned the sanctuary (at Jerusalem) into a "den of thieves" (Mtt.21: 13). In the eschaton "there will no more be the merchant (RV) in the house of the Lord of hosts."

---

2 Nineveh is depicted as “the bloody city! It is full of lies and robbery” (Nah.3: 1). This is also the sin of Jerusalem, not against other nations but for the violence towards the prophets and the Son of God. It is depicted as the “bloody city” by the prophet Ezekiel (24: 6, 9). Nineveh gave rise to the ‘man of sin’ (Nah.1: 11) so will Jerusalem. Nineveh repented at the preaching of Jonah, Jerusalem did not repent even though she was also shown the sign of the prophet Jonah.

NOTES

1 The expression “abominations of the heathen” occurs a number of times (eg, 2Kgs.21: 2), but only in the context of Israelites practising these things. That is to say it is declared to be an abomination for God’s chosen people to act this way not for the ignorant heathen. While the latter must still be offensive to God, it is not this that constitutes an “abomination” before God, but the fact that his people, called out idolatry to pure worship, have been specifically commanded not to do such things.

NOTES

1 The seven heads do not exist at the same time, nor do the seven kings of 17:9,10 – they are successive. The seven heads are of course 1.Babylon –lion head 2. Medo-Persia –bear head 3. Greece- four headed leopard 5. Rome – one head. TOTAL SEVEN HEADS.

NOTES

1 The equivalent in Rev.18: 18 is: “In one day” it is likely that these phrases denote the three and a half years but by no means certain.

NOTES

1 Revelation : A Biblical Approach – page 206

Chapter 18

THE LAMENT FOR BABYLON

“What city is like unto this great city?” (Rev.18: 17)

THE GREAT CITY

Before we commence a detailed exegesis of this chapter it is important to consider what is meant by the great city. We have identified the great city as Jerusalem, and this is essentially correct, but she is also more than a singular city. The fact that this chapter is based on prophetic dirges over the fall of Babylon and Tyre already indicates that we are dealing with a metaphor.

The great city encapsulates all the cities of the earth, for the fall of Babylon precipitates the fall of the cities of the nations (16: 19).

In order to understand the implications of this chapter it is important to establish how cities are viewed in scripture. The author strongly recommends The Meaning of the City by Jacques Ellul and the following transcript is a compilation of some of the most important passages in his book.1

The city represents man’s ultimate rejection of God. It demonstrates man’s creativity and independence. Rather than rely on God, Cain built a city in order to provide protection and security for himself (Gen.4: 17) and cities quickly became the focus of primitive industrialisation (Gen.4: 22).

Gods dwelling place was never in the city, for it was David who wished to build God a house in the city.

“Whereas I have not dwelt in any house since the time that I brought up the children of Israel out of Egypt, even to this day, but have walked in a tent and in a tabernacle. In all the places wherein I have walked with all the children of Israel spake I a word with any of the tribes of Israel, whom I commanded to feed my people Israel, saying, Why build ye not me an house of cedar?” (2 Samuel 7:6-7)

This is a kind of refusal to enter the city, to make a home there. And all of Jerusalem’s destiny is included, then, in this opposition emphasised by God:

“You David, want to build me a house, and put me in a city. But in fact, it is I, the Lord, who will build you up a house.”

And the Lord then grants David’s immediate posterity the permission to build the Temple, but it is nothing more than accepting David’s wish. Jerusalem’s destiny is henceforth unique and ambiguous, that of being one of man’s cities chosen by God. Jerusalem is a holy city. But she is still a city. She carries man’s mark, even in her election, even in her adoption by God. She never escapes from all the characteristics of the city, as is indicated by the accusations constantly aimed at her, aimed at the sins she never ceases falling into anew. Her sins are those of other cities: she acts like them and is condemned like them.

Moreover, Jerusalem fulfilled by Christ’s death what had ever been announced; namely that she would play a unique role in the history of salvation. And how earnestly did she seek out that role. This obviously emphasises Jerusalem’s ambiguity. She is, in spite of her sanctification and

adoption, the city seeking to combat God, to destroy his action. But all she does by this is to continue accomplishing God's will, and not only his general will, but his particular will for her.

God's revelations instruct us of the unparalleled truth that by Jesus Christ's death, Jerusalem literally becomes Babylon. During the period of time between Christ's ascension and his return there is a confusion of the formerly holy city and the city of demons, Babylon.

Jerusalem here is called the great city and this term is, as we know, characteristic of Babylon. Moreover, the text as a whole confirms our identification. Jerusalem here plays a part which should be that only of Babylon. She is the defiled place where all nations of the earth gather to revel drunkenly and make merry over the death of God's prophets. She is celebrating therefore, the victory of the Beast, and becomes the city of the nations.

Moreover in John's portrayal there is much food for reflection, if only from the historical standpoint, for those who consider Revelation only as a political writing turned against Rome. (Ellul was a reformed sociologist, historian and lawyer and had every reason to be critical of Rome, yet did not fall into the trap of so many of his contemporaries)

Jerusalem – ever controlled by the Goyim and unable to attain spiritual liberation in the Christian faith. Neither Jewish nor Christian, but always torn apart, going from one persecution to another, from siege to destruction, with no durable period of domination, no settled condition, no possible restoration under Arab domination. Even today's Jewish domination is but one more sign of the underlying contradiction. A wandering city, defiled, condemned. A deserted city in the midst of it's swarming peoples and confused races. A deserted city because she did not recognise her Lord: "Your house is desolate, for you will not see me again." He alone could have populated her; he alone could adequately take the place of the Temple and was waiting to do so. A city of which not one spiritual stone was left upon another, full of horrible tourist churches and monuments raised by every sect and every religion, the symbol of division and spiritual falsehood, the symbol of satanic spirituality, a subject of mocking for the Holy Spirit.

Jacques Ellul concludes that the city is essentially a metaphor for mans work, it is God's pardon that will transform it. This pardon teaches us, much better than any historical considerations, the vanity and relativity of man's work, since everything depends on forgiveness. God's pardon will make the city of man into a New Jerusalem; that is, its precise goal is to keep her disappearing into nothingness. So not only man's spiritual destiny is connected with God's forgiveness, but also the destiny of his work and the very materiality of history, which rests exclusively on this act of God – rests on the infinitely thin line, that razor blade which separates decisively between the work destined to vanish and the work that will be transformed into a creation of God for all eternity.

To this the present author would add that although Abraham was promised a country, in Hebrews this becomes a city; "for he looked for the city which hath the foundations, whose builder and maker is God." (Heb.11: 10) This city is the New Jerusalem, whose dimensions will eventually encompass the whole world.

In conclusion the great city carries a specific and a generic meaning.

Generically she represents the work of man – the whole world becomes the great city. The city is a place of ambiguity. Whilst demonstrating the independence and creativity of man, it

represents man's ultimate rejection of God. Therefore it is the city, home of man's rebellious heart, that must be reformed.

Specifically the great city is represented by Jerusalem – a city with a unique heritage, adopted by God and destined for transformation along with the rest of the earth.

THE GREAT CITY AND THE MERCHANTS

We have already considered the city as man's edifice against God. She is not only the place of false religion but also of unbridled materialism as Revelation chapter 18 makes apparent.

Once again we have a truth that transcends the meaning of a singular city. At this stage the author refers to another Christian classic – Capitalism and Progress (a diagnosis of western society) by Bob Goudzwaard.

In this book the history of modern capitalism is analysed. Until the middle ages man laboured under the hierarchical structure of the church (however corrupt that church had become) in the belief that man was a sinful creature and paradise could only be achieved in the "next life." The church was the arbiter of God's will on earth and man's destiny was essentially outside of his own control. The Renaissance liberated man from the burden of the church and prepared the way for industrialisation.

"Man is free, the master of his fortune, not chained to his place in a universal hierarchy but capable of all things."1

The next few centuries saw the development of such ideas as rationalism, humanism, utilitarianism and evolution, leading to a general belief in human progress. This belief has become the faith of the city. By rejecting God as the only means of salvation, and replacing this with faith in progress, mankind could realise his own happiness – paradise on earth.

The outcome of these ideas was the industrial revolution and modern capitalism. The "god of this age" is technology and the elevation of man's wisdom. Capitalism has emerged as the triumphant ideology of the 20th century, even adopted by communist countries like Russia and China. Whilst, undoubtedly the populations of the western world have benefited from capitalism (i.e., higher living standards – better medicines etc.) the premise testifies to spiritual bankruptcy. Man is a sinful creature and paradise cannot be achieved through human progress.

This does not deter man from his headlong rush to utopia, for the industrial revolution has now become the "technological revolution." The very stuff of life can now be genetically manipulated promising the holy- grail of ever longer, healthier lives. Man can now create and adopt new life forms- he has become a god in his own universe. Capitalism has now entered a new phase, for it is now truly global.

"Thus were the visions of mine head in my bed; I saw, and behold a tree in the midst of the earth, and the height thereof was great. The tree grew, and was strong, and the height thereof reached unto heaven, and the sight thereof to the end of all the earth: The leaves thereof were fair, and the fruit thereof much, and in it was meat for all: the beasts of the field had shadow under it, and the fowls of the heaven dwelt in the boughs thereof, and all flesh was fed of it." (Dan.4: 10-12)

The faith of the "global village" can therefore also be designated as faith in "mammon." Again we are faced with a specific and a generic meaning.

Specifically, the city of Jerusalem will again become a “den of thieves”, a holy city immersed in trade and merchandising. She therefore typifies the religion of mammon. She will become the “throne of the beast” ultimately rejecting all religion for the worship of man himself – “that no man might buy or sell, save that he had the mark” (13: 7). Economic activity finally used as a tool of subjection.

Generically, the whole world is condemned for this philosophy – a religion of materialism and consumerism on a global scale (Babel). The influence of the Jews in the world of commerce, especially in America, should not be underestimated (ironically the dollar bill contains the words, “In God we trust”). However, the religion of capitalism will not lead to paradise, on the contrary it contains the seeds of its own destruction for the very environment that is so rapaciously plundered is about to collapse. Economically it also fails to deliver paradise, for the divide between rich and poor countries is accelerating.

She is therefore condemned for her trade in luxury goods and her enslavement of men (18: 13). That slavery should be a problem in the 20th century may seem surprising to some. This is true in a literal and metaphorical sense. Slavery still exists in some parts of Africa. More pertinently, economic slavery exists, whether it is the exploitation of child labour or the even more distasteful sexual tourism – rich countries still oppress the poor.

In a sense we have all become slaves to consumerism and have all contributed to the building of the great city – whether we like it or not, we are part of the world we live in.

“No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon.” (Matt.6: 24)

REVELATION CHAPTER 18

Rev.18 continues the same subject matter as the previous chapter – the fall of Babylon. The reason for placing the chapter division between the two is doubtless the completely different approach that each has to the same event. While Rev.17 is a purely narrative account, 18 waxes eloquent in offering us an almost poetic appraisal, from both a divine and worldly perspective, of the loss of this great city. The description is much more vivid, image after image is knit together to form the most brilliant patchwork of Old Testament texts. The text has a definite inverted structure, marked by the change in speaker:

A. Mighty angel (v.2f)

B. Heavenly voice (vv.4-8)

C. Kings (v.9f)

D. Merchants (vv.11-17)

C. Mariners (vv.17-19)

B. Heavenly voice (v.20)

A. Mighty angel (vv.21-24)

Closer examination reveals that each parallel element has certain features in common. Thus the first and second A’s possess a threefold structure consisting of the following:

(a) A declaration of the destruction of Babylon (v.2, 21)

(b) A description concerning its future state (v.2,22f)

(c) Three reasons for its fall – "for…and…and…" (v.9, 23f)

The B elements, uttered by some unidentified voice from heaven, both address the saints as "you" (v.4, 20). The middle CDC section, containing mourning for Babylon by three different categories of people, each begins the lament with the words, "Alas, alas, that great city!" (v.10,16,19). Between these first and last lines, words are found which relate to the category of people speaking. Thus the kings focus upon the might of the city (v. 10), the merchants upon its fine garments and jewels (v. 16), and the mariners upon those "who had ships at sea" (v. 19). Such parallels and refrains are typical of Hebrew poetic style.

Some commentators are of the opinion that the theme of Rev.18 spills over into the following chapter, for the judgment of the harlot is again mentioned in 19: 2f. Yet at the beginning of Rev.19 we notice the start of a new structure based upon the repetition of the word "Hallelujah" (19: 1, 3, 4, 6). This and the perfect balance of the content of Rev.18 suggest that the chapter division has, in fact, been appropriately located.

The picture of the harlot has been drawn from three distinct sources, ie, those prophetic texts relating to Jerusalem, Tyre and, instead of Nineveh, yet hardly different in it's significance, Babylon. In some cases the quotation is almost verbatim.

References to ancient Babylon

Babylon is fallen, is fallen Isa.21: 9

Is become the habitation of devils and

the hold of every foul spirit. Jer.50: 39; Isa.13: 21

All nations drunk of the wine of the

wrath of her fornication. Jer.51: 57

Come out of her my people… Jer.51: 6, 45; 50: 8

Her sins have reached unto heaven. Jer.51: 9

Reward her even as she rewarded you. Jer.50: 29; Ps.137: 8

I sit a queen and am no widow… Isa.47: 8

Therefore shall her plagues come in one day. Isa.47: 9

Rejoice over her, thou heaven. Jer.51: 48

A stone….cast into the sea. Jer.51: 63

Thus shall that great city, Babylon, be thrown down. Jer.51: 64

All that were slain upon the earth. Jer.51: 49

References to Tyre

Kings of the earth committed fornication

with her. Isa.23: 17

The kings of the earth shall wail and lament her. Ezk.26: 16, 17

Gold, precious stones, spices... Ezk.27: 22, 24 etc

Bodies and souls of men. Ezk.27: 13

Merchants weeping and lamenting. Ezk.27: 31

Every shipmaster and all company of ships.. Ezk.27: 29, 30

And they cried out, What city is like unto

this great city. Ezk.27: 32

They cast dust on their heads, weeping and wailing. Ezk.27: 30

The voice of harpers heard no more at all in thee. Ezk.26: 13

Thy merchants were the great men of the earth. Isa.23: 8

References to Jerusalem

Double unto her double. Jer.16: 18; Isa.40: 2

The sound of the millstone no more heard

...and the light of a candle shall shine no more in thee. Jer.25: 10

The voice of the bridegroom... Jer.25: 10

In her was found the blood of prophets and of saints... Jer.2: 34

THE GLORY RETURNS

“And after these things I saw another angel come down from heaven, having great power; and the earth was lightened with his glory. And he cried mightily with a strong voice, saying, Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, and is become the habitation of devils, and the hold of every foul spirit, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird.” (Rev.18: 1-2)

When it says of the angel that the earth was lighted with his glory it is referring back to Ezekiel 43.

“Afterward he brought me to the gate, even the gate that looketh toward the east: And, behold, the glory of the God of Israel came from the way of the east: and his voice was like a noise of many waters: and the earth shined with his glory. And it was according to the appearance of the vision which I saw, even according to the vision that I saw when I came to destroy the city: and the visions were like the vision that I saw by the river Chebar; and I fell upon my face. And the glory of the LORD came into the house by the way of the gate whose prospect is toward the east. So the spirit took me up, and brought me into the inner court; and, behold, the glory of the LORD filled the house. And I heard him speaking unto me out of the house; and the man stood by me. And he said unto me, Son of man, the place of my throne, and the place of the soles of my feet, where I will dwell in the midst of the children of Israel for ever, and my holy name, shall the house of Israel no more defile, neither they, nor their kings, by their whoredom, nor by the carcasses of their kings in their high places.” (Ezek.43: 1-7)

Before the destruction of the nation and the temple, because of the whoredoms committed there, Ezekiel saw the glory departing in stages, withdrawing via the threshold (10: 4,18) to the

mountain on the east (11: 23) and finally back to heaven. God had abandoned the nation to its fate, destruction by Nebuchadnezzar. In a similar fashion, Jesus Christ (the glory of God) withdrew from the temple precinct and ascended to heaven from the Mt., of Olives on the east, leaving the temple ready for desolation by the Romans. One presumes that a parallel can be drawn with the martyr-witnesses; with their death the glory also departed (11: 12) and the city was left ripe for destruction and subsequent cleansing. Now however, the reverse is about to occur. Israel, purged of her sins has the glory restored – John is carried away in the spirit to a great high mountain and sees the New Jerusalem, descending out of heaven, having the glory of God. (21: 10,11) This is the essence of the angelic message, he comes not to gloat over the fallen, but to announce the triumph of God's purposes and the final liberation of God's people from all oppression. This angel, notwithstanding the gloom of his proclamation, is an angel of the gospel.

The angel's opening words, Fallen, fallen is Babylon, are the words with which the prophet on his watchtower announced to Jerusalem the news of the capture of Babylon by Cyrus (Isa.21: 9). The picture of a city reduced to utter desolation, the home of unclean spirits and unclean birds and beasts, is found in doom oracles of about the same period, one directed against Babylon, the other against Edom (Isa.13: 21; 34: 11-15).

Babylon is no longer a great tree, offering protection to the birds of heaven and the beasts of the field (Dan.4: 10-12), but rather she has become a cage (RV prison) for every unclean and hateful bird. The hateful birds are no doubt a reference to carrion eaters such as vultures, for the inhabitants have defiled their city, not with the carcasses of their kings, but with the bodies of the witnesses. She has become a place of demons. Demons are always associated with idol worship (image of the beast) and unclean spirits.1

When Jesus Christ came to exorcise the unclean spirit from the nation (cp.legion), he prophesied that the condition of the patient would deteriorate because of an obstinate refusal to replace the uncleanness with something wholesome. After wandering in the wilderness, the unclean spirit returned to his house making the final condition worse than it previously was (Mtt.12: 43-45). In fact it was seven times worse – complete madness! Jesus had declared their house unclean and prophesied that it would be desolated. Now, the woman after her initial wilderness wandering is encountered still in the wilderness, and with seven worse spirits in her bosom she has truly become an unclean harlot-city. In the repetition of the word unclean there is no doubt a contrast intended with the holy city, into which nothing unclean may enter (21: 27).

DRUNK WITH FORNICATION

"For all nations have drunk of the wine of the wrath of her fornication, and the kings of the earth have committed fornication with her, and the merchants of the earth are waxed rich through the abundance of her delicacies." (Rev.18: 3)

The reason given for the total obliteration of Babylon is the now familiar one: all nations have drunk the wine of the wrath of her fornication. But now John has a new disclosure in store for us. He has repeatedly warned his readers against the dangers of idolatry, particularly by use of the offensive word fornication. He has seen men freely choosing to worship the monster. But he has so far given barely a hint why men should have considered it reasonable to do so or what the precise nature of their fornication was. Now we are given the first hint, which will be enlarged on in the next paragraph: the merchants of the earth have made their fortunes on her lavish wealth. For a time the great city was allowed to control the beast, giving peace and security to this

region of the world, thus making possible a vast luxury trade and bringing widespread prosperity. This, we are to understand, is the true nature of the seduction exercised by the great whore. The kings of the earth were guilty of an economic dalliance, which involved the idolatrous worship of Mammon. When the archetypal Babylon, like the ancient one, boasts, "I am a queen on my throne", her fault is not mere arrogance, but an unquestioning faith in her own inexhaustible resources, unaccompanied by any sense of deeper lack (cp.3: 17). Such was the oracle directed against Ephraim:

"He is a merchant, the balances of deceit are in his hand: he loveth to oppress. And Ephraim said, Yet I am become rich, I have found me out substance: in all my labours they shall find none iniquity in me that were sin." (Hosea 12:7-8)

The Hebrew for merchant is Canaanite (RVmg). In the eschaton there will no longer be the Canaanite (merchant) in the house of the Lord. Ephraim's riches are not the result of oppression but deceit (RVmg) a clear play on the name of Jacob (the deceiver) – the previous verses relate the wrestling of Jacob, who although successful in his dealings with men, was utterly defeated when confronted by God. He overcame his old nature and was renamed Israel, in acknowledgement of the fact that God was prince (ruler) in his life. The prophecy of Hosea has many other connections with Revelation chapter 18, tabulated below.

REVELATION 18 HOSEA

For all nations have drunk of the wine of the wrath of her fornication, and the kings of the earth have committed fornication with her, and the merchants of the earth are waxed rich through the abundance of her delicacies. (v.3)

Whoredom and wine and new wine take away the heart. (4:11)

I have seen an horrible thing in the house of Israel: there is the whoredom of Ephraim, Israel is defiled. (6:10)

He is a merchant, the balances of deceit are in his hand: he loveth to oppress.

(12:7)

And I heard another voice from heaven, saying, Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues. (v.4)

Say ye unto your brethren,

Ammi [my people]; and to your sisters, Ruhamah. [that hath obtained mercy] (2:1)

For her sins have reached unto heaven, and God hath remembered her iniquities. (v.5)

And they consider not in their hearts that I remember all their wickedness: now their own doings have beset them about; they are before my face. (7:2)

According to their pasture, so were they filled; they were filled, and their heart was exalted; therefore have they forgotten me. (13:6)

Reward her even as she rewarded you, and double unto her double according to her works: in the cup which she hath filled, fill to her double. (v.6)

When Israel was a child, then I loved him, and called my son out of Egypt. (11:1)

The firstborn given a double portion

And the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever: and they have no rest day nor night, who worship the beast and his image, and whosoever receiveth the mark of his name. (Rev.14:11)

When Ephraim spake trembling, he exalted himself in Israel; but when he offended in Baal, he died. (13: 1)

The prophecy of Hosea forms the basis of the parable of the prodigal son in Lk.15: 11-32.1 There is always hope for those who, even at this late stage, return to the Father.

COME OUT OF HER MY PEOPLE

“And I heard another voice from heaven, saying, Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues.” (Rev.18: 4)

The words are again drawn from the old Testament, when natural Israel is called on to forsake the doomed city of Babylon in Isa.48: 20; and there are parallels also with 52: 11, Jeremiah 50: 8 and 51: 6, 45 and Zechariah 2: 6-7. In the New Testament the words are no doubt intended to remind us of Paul’s call to the saints of all ages, “Come out from among them and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing.” (2 Cor.6: 17, itself quoted from Isaiah 52: 11) This was not a summons to flight, but to abstain from the idolatrous practices of pagan society. Similarly, the crime in Revelation is the worship of the image of the beast, for it is the ultimate rebellion against God. These are the words of Moses at the Korah rebellion: “And he spake unto the congregation, saying, Depart, I pray you, from the tents of these wicked men, and touch nothing of theirs, lest ye be consumed in all their sins.” (Num.16: 26) Again this is the ultimate rebellion, for man himself presumes to be equal to God (his representative Moses). The image of the beast, after all, bears the number of man (a man)- it becomes the worship of man himself. The call is obviously to be heard before the destruction of “Babylon” takes effect, just as the call of the Lord Jesus to his disciples to forsake the doomed Jerusalem (Lk.21: 21) had to be heeded before the city was broken up. Like Sodom, the city cannot be spared for the multitude of its iniquities but, like Lot (Gen.19: 16), the faithful have the opportunity to escape. These words cannot be addressed to the martyrs, for the great ordeal has already sent them to their death. Who are they who are to come out and when? Apart from the timeless call to those called on to join their Lord without the camp (Heb.13: 13-14), having here no continuing city, the urgency grows as the day approaches in which “yet once more” the Lord will shake the (Jewish) world. (Hag.2: 6 ; Heb.12: 26-28). The Jewish believers needed to disentangle themselves from reliance on a doomed temple as the destruction of Jerusalem approached. But the only inhabitants now left in the great city are those who, through all the premonitory plagues, have obdurately refused to repent. Yet even at this late hour it is still possible for men to prove themselves God’s people and to escape their share in Babylon’s plagues by dissociating themselves from her sins. To the bitter end the miracle of grace remains open, and God never ceases to say, “My people”, to those who before were not his people. (Hos.2: 23; Rom.9: 25; 1 Pet.2: 10)

THE TOWER OF BABEL

“For her sins have reached unto heaven, and God hath remembered her iniquities.” (Rev.18: 5)

Like the tower of Babel the sin of the great city is so blatant that it reaches to heaven. It threatens the sovereignty of God himself, and is of such a magnitude that it can no longer be

ignored. The longsuffering of God has been stretched beyond the limit and has finally expired, he will not be mocked. The man of sin has been revealed in all his glory, but though he exalt himself to heaven, he will be cast into the lowest part of hell. The time has arrived for just retribution.

DOUBLE DESTRUCTION

“Reward her even as she rewarded you, and double unto her double according to her works: in the cup which she hath filled fill to her double.” (Rev.18: 6)

The cup from which Babylon must drink a double draught is the cup she mixed for others, to which God has had to add no other ingredient but his ratifying wrath. Vengeance is the prerogative of God alone and the principle of lex talonis is applied, the law that demands that the punishment shall match the crime. Exact retribution there may be, but only for those who insist to the last on being given their deserts and on refusing the offer of divine mercy. God has a record of (lit. has remembered) her crimes. When God forgives, he also forgets; and when he forgets it is blotted out from the record (Jer.31: 34).

The expression double unto her can only be understood with respect to the Jerusalem background, since the expression has its origins within the law and covenant. In Deut.21: 17 it states that the firstborn son should inherit a double portion from the father. Israel was God’s firstborn (Ex.4: 22), and therefore if found wanting would receive a double punishment for his sins (as Isa.40: 2). At this particular point, since Tyre and Babylon are in no sense firstborn, any application to these (or to Rome) is wholly excluded.

I SIT A QUEEN AND AM NO WIDOW

“How much she hath glorified herself, and lived deliciously, so much torment and sorrow give her: for she saith in her heart, I sit a queen, and am no widow, and shall see no sorrow.” (Rev.18: 7)

This soliloquy is based on Isa.47: 8, 9:

“Therefore hear now this, thou that art given to pleasures, that dwellest carelessly, that sayest in thine heart, I am, and none else beside me; I shall not sit as a widow, neither shall I know the loss of children: But these two things shall come to thee in a moment in one day, the loss of children, and widowhood: they shall come upon thee in their perfection for the multitude of thy sorceries, and for the great abundance of thine enchantments.”

The emphasis on widowhood is appropriate since one of the results of war in ancient times (and all times) was the slaughter of adult males, many of whom were husbands and fathers. Widows and orphans were extremely disadvantaged in ancient Israel because they were deprived of the protection and financial support afforded them by their husbands and their families and consequently often experienced extreme hardship and oppression.

UTTERLY BURNED WITH FIRE

“Therefore shall her plagues come in one day, death, and mourning, and famine; and she shall be utterly burned with fire: for strong is the Lord God who judgeth her.” (Rev.18: 8)

This verse describes the effects of the outpouring of the vial plagues (see Jer.18: 21) and the burning of the city (Rev.17: 16), a punishment solely reserved for a priests daughter who committed harlotry. Pestilence and famine were the common results of a prolonged siege,

mourning is linked with the death of the inhabitants, and burning with fire is the final act of destruction by the conquerors. A fate Jerusalem has suffered twice before.

THE LAMENT OF THE KINGS

“And the kings of the earth, who have committed fornication and lived deliciously with her, shall bewail her, and lament for her, when they shall see the smoke of her burning, Standing afar off for the fear of her torment, saying, Alas, alas, that great city Babylon, that mighty city! for in one hour is thy judgment come.” (Rev.18: 9-10)

Heaven has lamented the idolatrous materialism that has led to Babylon’s fall. Now the voice from heaven goes on to tell how earth will join the lament, because the bottom has dropped out of the world market. The kings of the earth are said to mourn the mighty city, the merchants the wealthy city; but this is a distinction without a difference, for the kings have shared her fornication and luxury, i.e. their sovereignty has been based on the mercantile prosperity she provided. Three times we are told that the desolation is to be accomplished in one hour, and we are reminded of the one hour of the ten kings reign with the monster, during which they will wage war on the Lamb (17: 12-14). The one hour of persecution is balanced by the one hour of retribution, because the blood of the martyrs is not only the seed of the New Jerusalem but the ruin of the great whore. The phrase standing afar off, is also repeated three times in this text unit (v.10, 15, 17) and characterises the stance of each of the three groups who witness the destruction of the archetypal Babylon; kings, merchants and the maritime professionals. This spatial separation not only expresses the horror they feel at its sudden and unexpected destruction; it also refers to their attempt to distance themselves from a judgment they deserve to share. We note how no one comes to her rescue – where are the merchant ships of Tarshish?

“Awake, awake, stand up, O Jerusalem, which hast drunk at the hand of the LORD the cup of his fury; thou hast drunken the dregs of the cup of trembling, and wrung them out. There is none to guide her among all the sons whom she hath brought forth; neither is there any that taketh her by the hand of all the sons that she hath brought up.” (Isa.51: 17-18)

PRECIOUS MERCHANDISE

“And the merchants of the earth shall weep and mourn over her; for no man buyeth their merchandise any more: The merchandise of gold, and silver, and precious stones, and of pearls, and fine linen, and purple, and silk, and scarlet, and all thine wood, and all manner vessels of ivory, and all manner vessels of most precious wood, and of brass, and iron, and marble, And cinnamon, and odours, and ointments, and frankincense, and wine, and oil, and fine flour, and wheat, and beasts, and sheep, and horses, and chariots, and slaves, and souls of men.” (Rev.18: 11-13)

Most commentators understand the list of merchandise, particularly the mention of slavery (v.13) as indicative of the Roman markets with their unparalleled access to world trade. Later, this vast accumulation of worldly wealth and temporal power became a characteristic of the Roman Catholic Church. The author would not dispute that there is a universal element of truth in this perception, the Romish Church is a false religion and has done what false religions always do, self- aggrandisement.

This assessment is however, an oversimplification and ignores important scriptural considerations:

1. The revelation of the man of sin is only fully manifested right at the end.

2. It only exists a short while.

3. It has Middle Eastern origins.

4. It is typified by Solomon's kingdom.

Solomon was specifically condemned for three sins:

(a) Idolatry – image of the beast.

(b) Foreign marriages- fornication with the kings of the earth.

(c) Commerce- 666 talents of gold income per annum.

Commerce flourished in his kingdom and brought wealth; and voyages were successfully made to Ophir and traffic was conducted with India. For the protection and fostering of trade, he built store cities, among others Palmyra, in the desert midway between Damascus and the Euphrates. Many of the goods listed in Revelation bear correspondence with the materials stockpiled by David, for the building and ritual of the temple (2 Chron.2: 4, 7,8).

This was innocent enough, and Solomon spent 7 years building the temple, after which he devoted 13 years 1 to the building of his own palace (1 Kgs.7: 1-12). This was completed with a magnificent throne approached by six steps and flanked by two gold lions (cp, the lion mouth 13: 2, 5).

The splendour of his court, the magnificence of his table, and his pomp when on excursions corresponds to his wealth and political power (1 Kgs. 10: 4, 5, 21).

"And he reigned over all the kings from the river even unto the land of the Philistines, and to the border of Egypt. And the king made silver in Jerusalem as stones, and cedar trees made he as the sycamore trees that are in the low plains in abundance."

(2 Chron.9: 26-27)

Although Solomon's reign commenced with the best of motives, absolute power corrupts absolutely. His reign became a parody of the kingdom, and the gift of divine wisdom was transformed into man's wisdom.

Without a doubt, the picture in Revelation is based on Solomon's corrupt kingdom. It serves as a salutary lesson in how easily divine principles can be corrupted. This is not, therefore a picture of the Roman Church, although she too will undoubtedly play her part, for all false religion will be flushed out by this phenomenon.

How do we understand the slaves (bodies) and souls of men in this light? Solomon raised a levy (tribute) of bondservants on the nations he conquered (1 Kgs.9: 21). No doubt their labour contributed towards the building of his palace (and the temple?) and was also used for domestic service. We are told that he did not raise a levy (tribute) from among the children of Israel.

Presumably, the 30,000 men required for cutting timber and mining stone in Lebanon were Gentile captives (1 Kgs.5: 13-18). This is not completely clear, but we know that the common people resented Solomon's harshness.

"Thy father made our yoke grievous: now therefore make thou the grievous service of thy father, and his heavy yoke which he put upon us, lighter, and we will serve thee." (1 Kgs.12: 4)

The prophet Samuel had given them advance warning of this:

“And he will take your daughters to be confectioneries, and to be cooks, and to be bakers. And he will take your fields, and your vineyards, and your oliveyards, even the best of them, and give them to his servants. And he will take the tenth of your seed, and of your vineyards, and give to his officers, and to his servants. And he will take your menservants, and your maidservants, and your goodliest young men, and your asses, and put them to his work. He will take the tenth of your sheep: and ye shall be his servants. And ye shall cry out in that day because of your king which ye shall have chosen you; and the LORD will not hear you in that day. Nevertheless the people refused to obey the voice of Samuel; and they said, Nay; but we will have a king over us.” (1 Sam.8: 13-19)

The outcome of the matter was the rebellion of Jereboam the son of Nebat, and the disintegration of Solomon’s Empire. The significance of this slavery to our time period is to be found in (Rev.13: 16, 17), where men are branded with the mark of ownership. They have a choice, either serve the beast and his image or die (starve?) for the consequences of refusal are economic ruin. Presumably at this stage the harlot-city is “the throne of the beast” and controls the levers of political power. It is not difficult to imagine how ten Arab nations with the city of Jerusalem playing a prominent role could impose economic hardship on the whole world through the only currency it truly values – oil.

THE DESIRE OF THE SOUL

“And the fruits that thy soul lusted after are departed from thee, and all things which were dainty and goodly are departed from thee, and thou shalt find them no more at all.” (Rev.18: 14)

Here the phrase translated the ripe fruit you desired can be rendered more literally the ripe fruit of the desire of your soul. The children of Israel were commanded the following:

“When the LORD thy God shall enlarge thy border, as he hath promised thee, and thou shalt say, I will eat flesh, because thy soul longeth to eat flesh; thou mayest eat flesh, whatsoever thy soul lusteth after.” (Deut.12: 20)

It was not sinful for them to eat (clean) flesh “only, be sure thou eat not the blood: for the blood is the life; and thou mayest not eat the life with the flesh.” (v. 23) The harlot has, however, developed an appetite for blood, for she has no qualms in drinking the blood of the saints and the prophets. She also exercises her other lust, materialism: “For the wicked boasteth of his heart's desire, and blesseth the covetous, whom the LORD abhorreth.” (Ps.10: 3) But even more than the desire for temporal power is the desire to be like God: “And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat.” (Gen.3: 6)

WOE, WOE, THE GREAT CITY

“The merchants of these things, which were made rich by her, shall stand afar off for the fear of her torment, weeping and wailing, And saying, Alas, alas, that great city, that was clothed in fine linen, and purple, and scarlet, and decked with gold, and precious stones, and pearls!” (Rev.18: 15-16)

The RV has the rendering woe instead of alas. This is repeated in v.10, 16 and 19. These three woes have already been encountered in the last three trumpets (8: 13) also a judgment against

Israel, and are now intensified in the judgment of the great city which happens in the vial section. We now have 2 x 3 Woes – render double unto her (v.6).

At this point the words of the merchants echo the description given by the angel in 17: 4 – except for this one particular detail:

Rev.17: 4 Rev.18: 16

“clothed in purple and scarlet, “clothed in fine linen and

and decked with gold and scarlet and decked with

precious stones and pearls.” precious stones and pearls.”

While in the minds of the merchant associates of the harlot she was worthy to be clothed in fine linen, not so with the angel, who omits these words. The reason for this can be readily explained by reference to 19: 8 where it states that the bride was attired in fine linen – for the fine linen is the righteousness of the saints. How unfitting it would have been to include this in 17: 4. And how remarkably consistent is the scriptural use of imagery!

THE LAMENT OF THE SHIPMASTERS

“For in one hour so great riches is come to nought. And every shipmaster, and all the company in ships, and sailors, and as many as trade by sea, stood afar off, And cried when they saw the smoke of her burning, saying, What city is like unto this great city! And they cast dust on their heads, and cried, weeping and wailing, saying, Alas, alas, that great city, wherein were made rich all that had ships in the sea by reason of her costliness! for in one hour is she made desolate.” (Rev.18: 17-19)

The shipmasters had every reason to lament for they were out of business. Consider the following:

2 Chronicles 9:20-22 And all the drinking vessels of king Solomon were of gold, and all the vessels of the house of the forest of Lebanon were of pure gold: none were of silver; it was not any thing accounted of in the days of Solomon. For the king's ships went to Tarshish with the servants of Huram: every three years once came the ships of Tarshish bringing gold, and silver, ivory, and apes, and peacocks. And king Solomon passed all the kings of the earth in riches and wisdom.

1 Kings 9:26-28 And king Solomon made a navy of ships in Eziongeber, which is beside Eloth, on the shore of the Red sea, in the land of Edom. And Hiram sent in the navy his servants, shipmen that had knowledge of the sea, with the servants of Solomon. And they came to Ophir, and fetched from thence gold, four hundred and twenty talents, and brought it to king Solomon.

1 Kings 10:22-23 For the king had at sea a navy of Tharshish with the navy of Hiram: once in three years came the navy of Tharshish, bringing gold, and silver, ivory, and apes, and peacocks. So king Solomon exceeded all the kings of the earth for riches and for wisdom.

With exemplary restraint John never shows us the fall of Babylon. Just as earlier he declined to describe God and allowed us to see him through the hymns of the worshipping host of heaven, so now he allows us to see the fall of Babylon only through the laments of the heavenly and earthly spectators. But this is no mere literary or dramatic device. There is a sense in which the spectators speak for the author as well for themselves. He has had to be told not to stare in wonder at the great whore (17: 6-7), for he too was able to appreciate the glamour and

brilliance, however deeply aware he might be of their dangers. He was no ascetic, contemptuous of the beauties and amenities of the civilised world. The cry, “Was there ever a city like the great city?” is wrung from his own heart as he contemplates the obliteration of the grandeur of the city of Jerusalem. The proof of this is to be seen in the thoroughly material splendours of the holy city, into which “ the treasures and wealth of the nations” are to be brought (21: 6). There was nothing sinful about the commodities that made up the luxury trade, until the great whore used them to seduce mankind into utter materialism. Every object of worth that seafaring man had ever carried to grace the life of the city, whether in its natural state or enhanced by the craftsmanship of man, belonged to the order of God’s creation which must be redeemed by the overthrow of Babylon, and would find its proper place in the New Jerusalem. In the meantime it is with infinite pathos that John surveys the loss of so much wealth.

THE SONG OF WITNESS

“Rejoice over her, thou heaven, and ye holy apostles and prophets; for God hath avenged you on her.” (Rev.18: 20)

This is very close to the LXX version of Deuteronomy 32: 43 – the song of witness against the nation of Israel, a prophetic song, as the previous chapter (Deut.31) makes clear:

“For when I shall have brought them into the land which I sware unto their fathers, that floweth with milk and honey; and they shall have eaten and filled themselves, and waxen fat; then will they turn unto other gods, and serve them, and provoke me, and break my covenant And it shall come to pass, when many evils and troubles are befallen them, that this song shall testify against them as a witness; for it shall not be forgotten out of the mouths of their seed: for I know their imagination which they go about, even now, before I have brought them into the land which I sware.”

(Deut.31: 20,21)

The rejoicing of the saints stands in sharp contrast to the mourning of the kings, merchants and seafarers. It is the heavenly voice that summons the saints to rejoice because God has avenged you on her. This verse is not easy to translate. Literally it reads: “God has judged your judgment from her.” This very difficult expression has given rise to many different interpretations. Some consider that it means, “God has judged her and vindicated you”; but it is not obvious how this can be gotten from the Greek. The RSV appears to take krima (judgment) as a cognate accusative and “your judgment” as the equivalent of “judgment in favour of you”: “God has given judgment for you against her.” The NEB takes krima as the equivalent of the Hebrew rib, which can either mean a lawsuit or the cause which a man submits to the arbitration of a judge: “in the judgment against her he has vindicated your cause.”

These renderings suffer the same two disabilities; they overload the final phrase, ex autes (from her), and they give to krima a meaning that it does not have anywhere else in Revelation, in the New Testament, or indeed even in the Septuagint. In the New Testament krima means one of three things (a) the right to act as a judge (Rev.20: 4); (b) the judicial act of passing sentence (John 9: 39; Rom. 20: 4; Acts 24: 25; 1 Pet.4: 17); and most frequently (c) the sentence passed by a judge. It is not hard to see that only the third sense will fit the present context. “Your judgment”, then, must mean either “the sentence passed by you” or “the sentence passed on you”; and the first of them is inappropriate here because God is the judge. The verse would then literally read; Rejoice over her, thou heaven, and ye holy apostles and prophets; for God hath sentenced or judged (instead of avenged) you on her.

Thus your judgment must be the sentence passed on the martyrs in law court of "Babylon." John has previously been invited to watch the passing of sentence on the great whore (17: 1); now he hears that this consists in the reversal of the sentence she passed on you. The phrase ex autes is best explained by two Old Testament laws – the law of bloodshed and the law of malicious witness. The law of bloodshed declares: "I will require from a man the life of his fellow man. Whoever sheds a man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed" (Gen. 9: 5-6). The law of malicious witness adds: "If a malicious witness comes forward to accuse a man of crime, then both parties to dispute shall appear before the Lord…and if the witness is found guilty of perjury and has accused his fellow falsely, you shall do to him as he meant to do to his fellow" (Deut.19: 16-19; cp.Rev.11: 13). John has produced a portmanteau version of these two laws. God has imposed on her the sentence she passed on you. Babylon has brought a malicious accusation against the martyrs, which has resulted in their death. But the case has been carried "before the Lord", to the court of final appeal, where judgments are true and just. There Babylon has been found guilty of perjury, and God has therefore required from her the life of her victims, exacting from her the penalty she extracted from them.

With this forensic setting so clearly before us, we can now the better appreciate why John has throughout called the victims of persecution witnesses (martyrs). The Greek word martyrs had not yet come to be a technical term, meaning a martyr. It still meant "one who gives evidence in a court of law." It had, of course, been used metaphorically of the missionaries of the ecclesia, who were witnesses to the truth and power of the gospel (Acts 1: 8). But John uses it more literally than this, with an eye to its legal origins. He knew from his own experiences that no Christian could be put to death for his faith without first being given the opportunity of testifying at his own trial before a Roman judge (cp. Lk.21: 13). But he wishes to assure prospective martyrs that the evidence given in earthly law courts leading to a death sentence, is also evidence given in the heavenly court, leading to the condemnation of Babylon. This explains the lack of gloating in the song of triumph, since the martyrs can be vindicated only by the reversal of Babylon's sentence, so that Babylon's malicious witness recoils on her own head.

BABYLON TO SINK LIKE A MILLSTONE

"And a mighty angel took up a stone like a great millstone, and cast it into the sea, saying, Thus with violence shall that great city Babylon be thrown down, and shall be found no more at all." (Rev.18: 21)

The mighty angel is the third to be given this appellation (5: 2 ; 10: 1). Since the first was the angel of the great scroll, in which was written the redemptive purpose of God, and the second was the angel of the little scroll, which contained the witnesses part in that purpose, the third appearance of the mighty angel (Gabriel?) must mark the consummation of the contents of both scrolls. His symbolic act with the millstone and the words he speaks are reminiscent of both Jeremiah and Jesus. Jeremiah wrote his prophecies against Babylon in a scroll and was told to tie a stone to it and throw it into the Euphrates, saying, "So shall Babylon sink, never to rise again" (Jer.51: 60-64). Jesus declared that the faithful man could have this mountain (Mt. Zion, with its temple and Judaism) removed and cast into the sea. Jesus also warned that it would be better for a man to be thrown into the sea with a millstone round his neck than to cause one of his disciples to stumble (Mtt.18: 6).

With the hurling of the millstone it is as though a voice called, "Stop!" over all the activities of the great city.

NO MORE AT ALL

“And the voice of harpers, and musicians, and of pipers, and trumpeters, shall be heard no more at all in thee; and no craftsman, of whatsoever craft he be, shall be found any more in thee; and the sound of a millstone shall be heard no more at all in thee; And the light of a candle shall shine no more at all in thee; and the voice of the bridegroom and of the bride shall be heard no more at all in thee: for thy merchants were the great men of the earth; for by thy sorceries were all nations deceived.” (Rev.18: 22-23)

This whole section is a paraphrase of Jer.25: 10 and refers to the ancient city of Jerusalem:

“Moreover I will take from them the voice of mirth, and the voice of gladness, the voice of the bridegroom, and the voice of the bride, the sound of the millstones, and the light of the candle.” (Jer.25: 10)

The prophecy of Joshua ben Ananias (AD 62), which anticipated the destruction of Jerusalem, contains one line that reads “A voice against the bridegroom and the bride.” (Jos.J.W.6.301)

Jeremiah had warned his contemporaries that the normal activities of the city of Jerusalem would cease. Jesus had also warned their descendants that the day of the Son of man would overtake them, like lightening out of a clear sky, amid all the pursuits of the city – trade, building and marriage (Lk.17: 24-30). The old Jerusalem will pass away as though she had never existed, she will be replaced with, and transformed into the New Jerusalem.

“Thus saith the LORD; Again there shall be heard in this place, which ye say shall be desolate without man and without beast, even in the cities of Judah, and in the streets of Jerusalem, that are desolate, without man, and without inhabitant, and without beast, The voice of joy, and the voice of gladness, the voice of the bridegroom, and the voice of the bride, the voice of them that shall say, Praise the LORD of hosts: for the LORD is good; for his mercy endureth for ever: and of them that shall bring the sacrifice of praise into the house of the LORD. For I will cause to return the captivity of the land, as at the first, saith the LORD.” (Jer.33: 10-11)

The voice of gladness will be heard again, the voice of bride, the Lamb’s wife and voice of the bridegroom himself (21: 9).

“Thus saith the LORD; I am returned unto Zion, and will dwell in the midst of Jerusalem: and Jerusalem shall be called a city of truth; and the mountain of the LORD of hosts the holy mountain. Thus saith the LORD of hosts; There shall yet old men and old women dwell in the streets of Jerusalem, and every man with his staff in his hand for very age. And the streets of the city shall be full of boys and girls playing in the streets thereof. Thus saith the LORD of hosts; If it be marvellous in the eyes of the remnant of this people in these days, should it also be marvellous in mine eyes? saith the LORD of hosts. Thus saith the LORD of hosts; Behold, I will save my people from the east country, and from the west country; And I will bring them, and they shall dwell in the midst of Jerusalem: and they shall be my people, and I will be their God, in truth and in righteousness.” (Zech.8: 3-8)

BLOODGUILT

“And in her was found the blood of prophets, and of saints, and of all that were slain upon the earth.” (Rev.18: 24)

There is yet another echo of the teaching of Jesus in the last words of the angel. Jesus had warned his contemporaries that, unless they disassociated themselves from the past by an act

of national repentance, their generation would “be held accountable for the blood of all the prophets shed since the foundation of the world.” (Lk.11: 50). The national history was a record of cumulative guilt. They were instructed to, “fill up the measure of their fathers”, and they did – by murdering the witnesses in Jerusalem (11: 8). In fact this last verse is almost the exact equivalent of Lk.13: 33, “It cannot be that a prophet shall perish out of Jerusalem.”

NOTES

1 Summation from pages 94-97, 137, 140-144, 180.

NOTES

1 Peter Gay, The Enlightenment: An interpretation. Vol., 1 pg.226.

NOTES

1 See, Demons, Magic and Medicine by A. Perry.

NOTES

1 Compare the following: Hos.2: 7; 14: 2 – Lk.15: 18, Hos.13: 1, 13, 14 – Lk.15: 24, 32, Hos.9: 1-3 – Lk.15: 13-16

NOTES

1 The number 13 in scripture signifies rebellion.

Chapter 19

THE WEDDING

“And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse… and on his thigh a name written KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS.” (Rev.19: 11-16)

“Gird thy sword upon thy thigh, O most mighty, with thy glory and thy majesty. And in thy majesty ride prosperously.” (Ps.45: 3,4)

INTRODUCTION TO CHAPTER 19

We have already observed that the vision of the redeemed in chapter 15: 3-4 was proleptic of what is actually described in this chapter. It is based on the Passover Hallel and is an expansion of the events that happen during the sixth and seventh vial at the return of Christ (see chapter 15 page 5).

THE WEDDING IN CANA

Although none of the others recount the event, the Johannine gospel places the wedding at Cana at the commencement of Jesus’ ministry. It is significant that a wedding feast marked the start of his public ministry, as it was symbolic of his work, namely the calling out a bride community. In order to do so he had to transform the old covenant (water for purifying the Jews- John 2: 6) into the wine of the new covenant.

The “seed” of this new community were the “six waterpots” – John, James, Peter, Andrew, Phillip and Nathaniel (all mentioned in John chpt.1). They were the only ones aware of the miracle, as they were serving at the wedding (2: 5; 2: 9).

The origin of the new wine was a mystery to the other guests for, “they knew not whence it was” (v.9). This is a theme that reoccurs constantly in John’s gospel – they did not know the origins of Christ (they presumed they knew) 1 nor did they know where he was going.2

“The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit.” (John 3:8)

“Jesus answered and said unto them, Though I bear record of myself, yet my record is true: for I know whence I came, and whither I go; but ye cannot tell whence I come, and whither I go.” (John 8:14)

As with the master, so also with the servants, the world is oblivious to their origins and to their future destiny. It is fitting therefore, that the book of Revelation concludes with a “wedding feast.” This is the culmination of all the work and suffering done by Christ thousands of years before.

“He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied: by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities.” (Isa.53: 11)

It is also the culmination of all the faithful suffering of his fellow servants, some of whom have offered their very lives in the course of their witnessing.

“And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away.” (Rev.21: 4)

No more will the last supper (marriage feast) be remembered as a time of sorrow, heartbreak and betrayal. But, the very disciples who sat at his table (including you and me) will drink new wine, “new with him in his kingdom.” This will be an occasion of ecstatic joy and sublime insight into the wondrous love of God. For God keeps the good wine for serving last. (2: 10)

It is the power of God that takes the ignominy and shame of the cross and turns it into the victory of love.

REVELATION 19 PSALM 22

4. The four and twenty elders.

And four living creatures.

22: In the midst of the congregation will I praise thee.

21. Thou hast heard me from the horns of the unicorns (the cherubim in the sanctuary).

5. Praise our God, all ye his servants, and ye that fear him, both small and great.

23. Ye that fear the Lord, praise him; all ye the seed of Jacob, glorify him; and fear him, all ye the seed of Israel.

6. The voice of a great multitude.

25. My praise shall be of thee in the great congregation: I will pay my vows (marriage vows?) before them that fear him.

6. Hallelujah, for the Lord God Almighty reigneth.

I will declare thy name unto my brethren.

7,9. The marriage supper of the Lamb.

26. The meek shall eat and be satisfied…your heart shall live forever.

The Lord recited Psalm 22 as he hung on the cross, it is fitting therefore that it forms the basis of the eulogy encountered in Revelation 19. Crucified as KING OF THE JEWS he returns as KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS, for his followers are now themselves elevated to the status of king-priests.

The marriage of the Lamb is based on the song of loves (Psalm 45), a Korah Psalm, which is itself drawn from the Song of Songs. The Korah Psalms are contemporary with Hezekiah. The author believes that this Psalm celebrates his marriage after his

miraculous recovery from death (and Judah’s deliverance from Assyria). Hezekiah would otherwise have died childless, but now he would, “see the travail of his soul.”

Despite the references to Solomon, it is also the author’s belief that the Song of Songs was written by Hezekiah. The bride of Hezekiah, Hephzi-bah, was probably a Tyrian princess (Ps.45: 12), just as Solomon’s wife was an Egyptian princess (2 Kgs.3: 1). Hezekiah named his son Manasseh (2 Kgs.21: 1), which means forget your fathers house:

“Hearken, O daughter, and consider, and incline thine ear; forget also thine own people, and thy father's house.” (Ps.45: 10)

Hezekiah (strengthened of Yah) represents Christ, Hephzi-bah (my delight is in her) his Gentile bride, and Manasseh (forget your fathers house) the Jews. Consider the following:

“Because Manasseh king of Judah hath done these abominations, and hath done wickedly above all that the Ammorites did, which were before him, and hath made Judah also to sin with his idols.” (2 Kgs.21: 11)

“Moreover Manasseh shed innocent blood very much, till he had filled Jerusalem from one end to another; beside his sin wherewith he made Judah to sin, in doing that which was evil in the sight of the LORD.” (2 Kgs.21: 16)

Jewish legend tells us that the prophet Isaiah was sawn in half at Manasseh’s behest and this is confirmed by Hebrews 11: 37. Manasseh represents the harlot-city for it was also full of abominations and the blood of the martyrs of Jesus (17: 5, 6). It is the place where the “image of the beast” will be worshipped.

The story of Manasseh has a wonderful outcome, for in the end he was repentant:

“And when he was in affliction, he besought the LORD his God, and humbled himself greatly before the God of his fathers, And prayed unto him: and he was intreated of him, and heard his supplication, and brought him again to Jerusalem into his kingdom. Then Manasseh knew that the LORD he was God.” (2 Chron.33: 12-13)

The origin of the tribe of Manasseh was Egypt, and it is only through the chastisement of the Lord that the nation of Israel will stop hankering back to Egypt – they will forget their father’s house and remember the mercy of their God.

The background of the Hezekiah (Korah) Psalm, the song of loves is therefore very appropriate to Revelation chapter 19.

“Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready.” (Rev.19: 7)

REVELATION 19

4. Ride prosperously.

7.Thou lovest righteousness, and hatest wickedness: therefore God, thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows.

11. And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and he that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he doth judge and make war.

3.Gird thy sword on thy thigh, O mighty one.

16. The name on his thigh, LORD OF LORDS AND KING OF KINGS.

5.Thine arrows are sharp in the heart of the king's enemies; whereby the people fall under thee.

15,21. Sword and rod of iron… which sword proceeded out of his mouth: and all the fowls were filled with their flesh.

Song of Solomon 3:8; They all hold swords, being expert in war: every man hath his sword upon his thigh because of fear in the night.

14. And the armies which were in heaven followed him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean.

8.All thy garments smell of myrrh, and aloes, and cassia, out of the ivory palaces, whereby they have made thee glad.

13. And he was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood: and his name is called The Word of God.

6.Thy throne, is the throne of God, is forever and ever: the sceptre of thy kingdom is a right sceptre. (RV)

17.I will make thy name to be remembered in all generations: therefore shall the people praise thee for ever and ever.

5.And a voice came out of the throne, saying, Praise our God, all ye his servants, and ye that fear him, both small and great.

13-14: The king's daughter is all glorious within: her clothing is of wrought gold. She shall be brought unto the king in raiment of needlework: the virgins her companions that follow her shall be brought unto thee.

8. And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints.

14-15: She shall be brought unto the king in raiment of needlework: the virgins her companions that follow her shall be brought unto thee. With gladness and rejoicing shall they be brought: they shall enter into the king's palace.

Rev.21: 2; And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.

10. Hearken, O daughter, and consider, and incline thine ear; forget also thine own people, and thy father's house.

Rev.21: 4; And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away.

11. So shall the king greatly desire thy beauty: for he is thy Lord; and worship thou him.

10. And I fell at his feet to worship him. And he said unto me, See thou do it not: I am thy fellowservant, and of thy brethren that have the testimony of Jesus: worship God: for the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.

(Rev.22: 9; Then saith he unto me, See thou do it not... worship God)

Song of Solomon 7: 10; I am my beloved's, and his desire is toward me.

9. And he saith unto me, Write, Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb.

Song of Solomon 3:11; Go forth, O ye daughters of Zion, and behold king Solomon with the crown wherewith his mother crowned him in the day of his espousals, and in the day of the gladness of his heart.

12. His eyes were as a flame of fire, and on his head were many crowns; and he had a name written, that no man knew, but he himself.

HALLELUYAH

“And after these things I heard a great voice of much people in heaven, saying, Alleluia; Salvation, and glory, and honour, and power, unto the Lord our God: For true and righteous are his judgments: for he hath judged the great whore, which did corrupt the earth with her fornication, and hath avenged the blood of his servants at her hand.” (Rev.19: 1-2)

God has now passed sentence on the great whore, the martyrs have given in their sacrificed lives the evidence that secured her conviction. In the description of the total destruction of Babylon, come the words; “Rejoice over her, O heaven, O saints and apostles and prophets, for God has passed your sentence (the sentence she passed on you) on her” (18: 20 see previous chapter). Here now is the rejoicing that was called for.

The ten kings destroyed the harlot-city, but it is God’s judgment nonetheless. That was the way God dealt with harlot Israel in the past, through the Assyrians, Babylonians and Romans.

He hath avenged the blood of his servants at her hand. (v. 2) It is a dog’s death that the harlot died, like the death of Jezebel her prototype, “And I will avenge the blood of my servants the prophets…shed by Jezebel.” (2 Kgs.9: 7 NIV) The other enemies of God yet to be dealt with, the beast, the false prophet, and the dragon itself, will all in due course come under direct judgment of the quick and the dead, and end their activities in the “lake of fire” (19: 20; 20: 10; 14-15).

The author has already indicated that this celebration is based on the feast of Passover (see the introduction to Revelation). The series of Psalms from 113-118 were called the Hallel, the Praise God, and were part of the essential education of every Jewish lad.

Hallelujah literally means Praise God, it is derived from halal, which means to praise, and Yah, which is the covenant name of God. Outside the Hallel the term is also found in other groups of Psalms.

(a) Psalm 105 and 1061

(b) Psalm 111-118 (includes the Hallel)

(c) Psalm 135

(d) Psalm 146-150

These Psalms have the following themes; (1) Praising God for his deliverance. (2) Praising God for justifying them and upholding his cause. (3) Praising God for his creation, which in the poetic idiom is often expressed as praise of God by the creation (Ps.147: 8; 148: 3-10) in this context it is the new creation that praises God.

The following verses from these Psalms of praise are particularly appropriate to the scene in chapter 19.

Psalm 105:14-15 He suffered no man to do them wrong: yea, he reproved kings for their sakes; Saying, Touch not mine anointed, and do my prophets no harm.

Psalm 105:19 Until the time that his word came: the word of the LORD tried him.

Psalm 106:4-5 Remember me, O LORD, with the favour that thou bearest unto thy people: O visit me with thy salvation; That I may see the good of thy chosen, that I may rejoice in the gladness of thy nation, that I may glory with thine inheritance. Psalm 111:7-8 The works of his hands are verity and judgment; all his commandments are sure. They stand fast for ever and ever, and are done in truth and uprightness.

Psalm 112:8 His heart is established, he shall not be afraid, until he see his desire upon his enemies.

Psalm 113:9 He maketh the barren woman (Rachel) to keep house, and to be a joyful mother of children. Praise ye the LORD.

Psalm 114:1-2 When Israel went out of Egypt, the house of Jacob from a people of strange language; Judah was his sanctuary, and Israel his dominion.

Psalm 115:3 But our God is in the heavens: he hath done whatsoever he hath pleased.

Psalm 116:14-18 I will pay my vows unto the LORD now in the presence of all his people. Precious in the sight of the LORD is the death of his saints. O LORD, truly I am thy servant; I am thy servant, and the son of thine handmaid: thou hast loosed my bonds. I will offer to thee the sacrifice of thanksgiving, and will call upon the name of the LORD. I will pay my vows unto the LORD now in the presence of all his people,

Psalm 117:1-2 O praise the LORD, all ye nations: praise him, all ye people. For his merciful kindness is great toward us: and the truth of the LORD endureth for ever. Praise ye the LORD.

Psalm 118:7 The LORD taketh my part with them that help me: therefore shall I see my desire upon them that hate me.

Psalm 118:17 I shall not die, but live, and declare the works of the LORD.

Psalm 118:26 Blessed be he that cometh in the name of the LORD: we have blessed you out of the house of the LORD.

Psalm 135:14 For the LORD will judge his people, and he will repent himself concerning his servants.

Psalm 147:2-3 The LORD doth build up Jerusalem: he gathereth together the outcasts of Israel. He healeth the broken in heart, and bindeth up their wounds.

Psalm 148:5 Let them praise the name of the LORD: for he commanded, and they were created.

Psalm 149:6-9 Let the high praises of God be in their mouth, and a two-edged sword in their hand; To execute vengeance upon the heathen, and punishments upon the people; To bind their kings with chains, and their nobles with fetters of iron; To execute upon them the judgment written: this honour have all his saints. Praise ye the LORD.

Psalm 150:1-2 Praise ye the LORD. Praise God in his sanctuary: praise him in the firmament of his power. Praise him for his mighty acts: praise him according to his excellent greatness.

God is praised because salvation, glory and power belong to him. Each of these three attributes of God should awaken its own response in the heart of man. The salvation of God should awaken the gratitude of man; the glory of God should awaken the reverence of man; the power

of God is always exercised in the love of God and should, therefore, awaken the trust of man. Gratitude, reverence, trust- these are the constituent elements of real praise.

God is praised because he has exercised his just and true judgment on the great harlot. Judgment is the inescapable consequence of sin. The moral law can no more be broken than the law of gravity; it can only be illustrated. It is said that the judgments of God are true and just. God alone is perfect in judgment for three reasons. First, he alone can see the inmost thoughts and desires of any man. Second, he alone has that purity which can judge without prejudice. Third, he alone has the wisdom to find the right judgment and the power to apply it. The great harlot is judged because she corrupted the world. The worst of all sins is to teach others to sin. There is one other reason for the rejoicing. The judgment on the whore is the guarantee that God never in the end abandons his own.

HER SMOKE ROSE UP FOREVER

“And again they said, Alleluia. And her smoke rose up for ever and ever. And the four and twenty elders and the four beasts fell down and worshipped God that sat on the throne, saying, Amen; Alleluia. And a voice came out of the throne, saying, Praise our God, all ye his servants, and ye that fear him, both small and great.” (Rev.19: 3-5)

The many verbal similarities between this passage and the seventh trump (11: 15) make it clear that this is a detailed exposition of the same theme. The servants….who fear him, both great and small (11: 18), the peals of thunder (11: 19), and above all the declaration of divine sovereignty (11: 15,16). Then it was the choir of heaven that sang: “the sovereignty of the world has passed to our Lord and to his Christ” ; now the vast throng of martyrs joins the Hallelujah chorus, because it is through them that God has broken down the last resistance to his universal and eternal reign. Then the elders declared; “Now is the time… for rewarding your servants the prophets…for destroying the destroyer of the earth,” and these are the two themes that the chapter proceeds to develop.

The host sings a second Hallelujah. Their praise is that the smoke of Babylon rises forever and ever. This verse is an allusion to Isaiah 34: 10;

“It shall not be quenched night nor day; the smoke thereof shall go up for ever: from generation to generation it shall lie waste; none shall pass through it for ever and ever.”

Isaiah 34: 10 and Rev.19: 3 share the same hyperbole, which portrays the destruction as lasting forever i.e. emphasising the finality and totality of the destruction. It also draws on the destruction of Sodom (Gen.19: 28), which is fitting, for this city is spiritually Sodom (11: 8). As the hymn of triumph rises up, so also does “the smoke of her burning.” In contrast New Jerusalem will be shrouded in the shekinah glory; the pillar of cloud and fire (Ex.14: 20,24);

“And the LORD will create upon every dwelling place of mount Zion, and upon her assemblies, a cloud and smoke by day, and the shining of a flaming fire by night: for upon all the glory shall be a defence. And there shall be a tabernacle for a shadow in the daytime from the heat, and for a place of refuge, and for a covert from storm and from rain.” (Isa.4: 5-6)

The whole of creation prostrates itself before God, in praise to him. The twenty four elders (see chapter 4 page 12) represent the “heavenly priesthood” they are symbolic of the old and new covenant – they are the twelve patriarchs (21: 12) and the twelve apostles (21: 14). They are joined in their adoration by the four living creatures, respectively lion, ox, man and eagle. We have already observed in chapter 4 that they represent God’s glory in the natural and spiritual

creation. He is the "living God" because his throne is in the midst of the "living creatures", for in him everything lives moves and has it's being. He is a God of the living not of the dead – and all his creation, both old and new, natural and spiritual will join in their praise of him – Hallelujah!!!

The voice that comes from the midst of the throne is that of Jesus Christ, for "thy throne is the throne of God for ever and ever." (Ps.45: 6) and also Psalm 22:22-23;

"I will declare thy name unto my brethren: in the midst of the congregation will I praise thee. Ye that fear the LORD, praise him; all ye the seed of Jacob, glorify him; and fear him, all ye the seed of Israel."

The voice instructs the congregation to praise our God. Some commentators consider this inappropriate, and suggest that the voice could not be that of Christ otherwise the phrase "my God" would have been used. The sonship of Jesus is, after all, distinct from that of his disciples:

"Jesus saith unto her, Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father: but go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God." (John 20:17)

While it is true that the sonship of Jesus is unique, in the kingdom age the saints will be "like him" - immortal beings, they are joint-heirs with Christ, they suffered with him and they are glorified with him (Rom.8: 17). It is therefore an honour for them to be addressed by their Lord in this manner, and it emphasises a great truth – "they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God." (21: 3)

Two sets of people are called on to praise God. First, there are his servants. In Revelation two kinds of people are specially called the servants of God; the prophets (10: 7; 11: 18; 22: 6), and the martyrs (7: 3; 19: 2). First, then, this is the praise of the prophets and the martyrs who have witnessed for God with their voices and their lives. Second, there are the small and great. The praising of God involves all his servants, those of low and high status. God is no respecter of persons, so what does this mean? The gospel teaches that "he that is least among you all, the same shall be great" (Lk.9: 48) and "he that is greatest among you, let him be as the younger; and he that is chief, as he that doth serve" (Lk.22: 26). This reverses human notions of "greatness." The apostle Paul, whose name means little or small, saw himself as the "least of all saints" (Eph.3: 8), and the "least of the apostles"(1 Cor.15: 19). If Paul considered himself the least, then who is the greatest? His zeal for God was unmatched, and his ministry unsurpassed. Paul himself reminds the Corinthians that the least honourable members of the body often perform some of the most important functions, and therefore require our lavish attention and protection. God, "gives more abundant honour to that part which lacked." (1 Cor.12: 24) Who then is small and who is great in the kingdom of God? It was a question that exercised the mind of John the recipient of the apocalypse, and his brother James. Their mother requested (no doubt on their behalf) the honour of sitting on his right and left hand. Jesus asked them if they could drink from his cup and be baptised with his baptism (suffer martyrdom like him). When they answered positively, Jesus acknowledged that they would indeed suffer martyrdom. But even this could not guarantee high status in the kingdom, for, "It is not mine to give, but it shall be given them for whom it is prepared of my Father."

God is not "beholden" to any man and it is his gift to grant high status in the eschaton. We should be content to take the lowest seat at the wedding feast.

“When thou art bidden of any man to a wedding, sit not down in the highest room; lest a more honourable man than thou be bidden of him; And he that bade thee and him come and say to thee, Give this man place; and thou begin with shame to take the lowest room. But when thou art bidden, go and sit down in the lowest room; that when he that bade thee cometh, he may say unto thee, Friend, go up higher: then shalt thou have worship in the presence of them that sit at meat with thee. For whosoever exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.” (Lk.14: 8-11)

There are those, who now in the present have already exalted themselves in the household of God, they will find out their true worth when Jesus returns. Being a doorkeeper in the house of the Lord is better than dwelling in the tents of the wicked (Ps.84: 10).

ALLELUIA: FOR THE LORD GOD OMNIPOTENT REIGNETH..

“And I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunderings, saying, Alleluia: for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth. Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready. And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints.” (Rev.19: 6-8)

Psalm 22 made the prophetic pronouncement that Christ would declare God’s name to his brethren, and that they in turn would also praise God. All the significant names of God are mentioned in this Te Deum of the redeemed. Hallelujah (the covenant name) Lord (Hebrew Adonai) God (Hebrew Elohim) Omnipotent (Hebrew Ts’baoth). The RV renders Omnipotent as Almighty. The Greek word is pantokrator, literally the one who controls all things. The significant thing about this great word is that it occurs ten times in the New Testament. Once it is in an Old Testament quotation in 2 Cor.6: 18; the other nine times are all in Revelation. The word pantokrator was introduced as a translation of, “Lord (or God) of hosts,” in the Septuagint (Hebrew Yahweh Ts’baoth) i.e., Jer.5: 14 and Amos 4: 13. There was never a time in history in which such forces were drawn up against the ecclesia as when the Christian was called upon to undergo such suffering and to accept so continually the prospect of a cruel death. Such was the Nero persecution. And such is also the future ordeal of the saints. And throughout all this time John sees God called the pantokrator. Here is faith and confidence; and the whole point of this passage is that faith and confidence are vindicated.

REJOICE

The final shout is the praise of the host of the redeemed. John goes out of his way to heap up similes to describe its sound. It was, like the din of a vast concourse, the roar of a cataract, the roll of thunder. Once again John finds inspiration in the words of scripture. In his mind are two things. First, he is remembering Psalm 97: 1; “The Lord reigns; let the earth rejoice.” Second, he says: “Let us rejoice and exult.” There is only one other place in the New Testament where these two verbs (chairein and agallian) come together – in Jesus Christ’s promise to the persecuted: “Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven” (Mtt.5: 12). It is as if the multitude of the redeemed sent up their shout of praise because the promise of Christ to his persecuted ones had come abundantly true.

“I will greatly rejoice in the LORD, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decketh himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorneth herself with her jewels. For as the earth bringeth forth her bud, and as the garden causeth the things that are sown in it to spring

forth; so the Lord GOD will cause righteousness and praise to spring forth before all the nations." (Isa.61: 10-11)

THE MARRIAGE OF THE LAMB

The servants of God are rewarded by an invitation to the wedding of the Lamb. At this point John weaves together no less than three strands of Old Testament thought, all of which have been used before in Christian literature, but not in a single context. The first is the picture of the reign of God as a great feast, which is first found in the Old Testament in the book of Isaiah (Isa.25: 6; Mark 2: 19; Mtt.22: 1; 25: 1; Lk.14: 15). The second is the idea of Israel as the bride of Yahweh (Hos.2: 5; Isa.1: 21; Jer.2: 2; cp.Eph.5: 32). The third is the use of clean garments as the symbol of sanctity (Gen35: 2; Isa.52: 1; 61: 10; Zech. 3: 4; Rev.3: 4; 6: 11; 7: 14). Jesus had turned the messianic banquet into a wedding feast, but in his wedding parables the central figure was the bridegroom. Here attention is focused on the bride. The wedding day has come because the bride has made herself ready, and her readiness is symbolised by her wedding-dress.

This dress is not of her own making; like the white robes of the martyrs to which it is closely related, it is given to her (cp.6: 11). It is made of linen which signifies the sanctity of God's people, a sanctity achieved in the great ordeal by those who "washed their robes and made them white in the life-blood of the Lamb" (7: 14). It is martyrdom that has provided the prothalamium to the wedding of the Lamb.

The metaphor of Christ as the bridegroom and the people of God as the bride was quite widespread in early Christianity. The ecclesia is a chaste virgin betrothed to Christ – Paul says of the Corinthians; "I betrothed you to one husband, to present you as a chaste virgin [virgio intacta] to Christ." (2 Cor.11: 2) The betrothal presumably occurred with the conversion and baptism of the Corinthians, while the presentation to Christ will presumably occur at his coming; during the interim the ecclesia, like a betrothed virgin, must maintain her purity and faithfulness to her one husband. The use of wife at this point fits Jewish marriage customs in which engagement was a legally binding initiation of marriage consummated by the wedding (see Deut.22: 23-24; Mtt.1: 18-25). This metaphor is developed further in Eph.5: 25-32, where the archetype for the appropriate relationship between husband and wife is the self-sacrificing love Christ had for his own. This may seem to us a strange metaphor. But it conserves certain great truths. In any real marriage there must be four things which must also be the relationship of the Christian and Christ.

1. There is love. A loveless marriage is a contradiction in terms.

2. There is intimate communion, so intimate that a man and his wife become one flesh. The relationship of the Christian and Christ must be the closest in all life.

3. There is joy. There is nothing like the joy of loving and of being loved. If Christianity does not bring joy, it does not bring anything.

4. There is fidelity. No marriage can last without fidelity, and the Christian must be as faithful to Jesus Christ as Jesus Christ is to him.

THE ONLY WORSHIP

"And he saith unto me, Write, Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb. And he saith unto me, These are the true sayings of God. And I fell at his feet to worship him. And he said unto me, See thou do it not: I am thy fellowservant, and of thy brethren that

have the testimony of Jesus: worship God: for the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy." (Rev.19: 9-10)

The Jews had the idea that, when the Messiah came, God's people would, as it were, be entertained by God to a great Messianic Banquet. Isaiah speaks of God preparing for his people "a feast of fat things, a feast of wine on the lees, of fat things full of marrow, of wine on the lees well refined" (Isa.25: 6). Jesus speaks of many coming from the east and the west and sitting down with the patriarchs in the kingdom of heaven (Mtt.8: 11). The word used for sitting down is the word for reclining at a meal. The picture is of all men sitting down at the Messianic Banquet of God. Jesus at the Last Supper said that he would not drink of the cup until he drank it new in his Father's kingdom (Mtt.26: 29). That was Jesus looking forward to the great Messianic Banquet. It may well be from that old Jewish idea there came the idea of the marriage feast of the Lamb, for that indeed would be the true Messianic Banquet. It is a simple picture, not to be taken with crude literalness, but simply saying very beautifully that in his kingdom all men will enjoy the bounty of God.

"As the apple tree among the trees of the wood, so is my beloved among the sons. I sat down under his shadow with great delight, and his fruit was sweet to my taste. He brought me to the banqueting house, and his banner over me was love." (Song of Songs 2:3-4)

Jesus enacted the Messianic Banquet during his ministry, eating and drinking with those who were social outcasts, the despised publicans and the unclean whores – they were willing to listen and repent. At one such meal one of the guests uttered the following beatitude: "Blessed is he that shall eat bread in the kingdom of God." (Lk.14: 15) The phraseology of this beatitude has close parallels in the verse we are now considering- Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb. Jesus responded with a parable about a man that made a great supper and issued invitations. All the invitations were rejected with excuses. One man needed to break in his new ploughing team, another had just married (they planted…and married…Lk.17: 27,28). The master of the house responded by dragging in the despised elements of society, and adamantly refusing to ask (again) those who had rejected the invitation. Jesus concludes the parable with some very significant remarks directed to his prospective disciples.

1. They must hate their close relatives and even their lives for his sake.

2. They must bear their own cross.

3. They must be aware of the cost before they start – forsaking everything.

4. A disciple that cannot do this is like salt that has lost its taste. Good for nothing (especially not for seasoning the sacrifice).

These are very "hard sayings", what does Christ mean, when he instructs his disciples to hate father and mother etc? Jesus had previously said, "that he had not come to send peace but a sword" (Mtt.10: 34). Allegiance to Christ would cause division, even within families. These sayings are based on the golden calf incident in Exodus 32, where Moses issued the rallying call; "Who is on the Lord's side? Let him come to me? Put ye every man his sword by his side, and go in and out from gate to gate throughout the camp, and slay every man his brother, and every man his companion, and every man his neighbour." (v. 26,27)

This incident finds its parallel in verses 11-21 of chapter 19 where Christ, "doth judge and make war."

EXODUS 32 REVELATION 19

v.15. Moses descends the mount.

v.11. I saw heaven opened…a white horse.

v.19. The people worship the golden calf.

v.20. Worshippers of the image of the beast.

v.10. Worship God.

v.26. Who is on the Lord's side?

v.14. The armies in heaven followed him.

v.27. The Levites strap every man his sword on his thigh (RV).

v.15. Out of his mouth a sharp sword.

v.16. On his thigh a name written.

v.29. The Levites blessed for their action.

v.9. Blessed are those called to the marriage.

v.33. Sinners blotted out the book of life.

20: 14. Those not in the book of life thrown into the lake of fire.

The children of Israel did not believe that Moses would return, and soon fell into apostasy. The worship of God was substituted with the ox-cherubim (golden calf).

Similarly, we find John prostrating himself before the angel (19: 10) he is told not to do so, but does it again in 22: 9. This was to serve as a warning to the early ecclesia not to indulge in angel worship, a legacy of Judaism. Idolatry is more than burning incense before a man made image. It is to accord anyone or anything other than God an absolute worth and a controlling significance in the life of man. The angel's protests to John is a salutary warning to all crusaders not to mistake the cause they champion for God.

When Christ and his saints "make war", it is not just in a military sense. Christ is a warrior priest in the same sense as the Levites of Exodus 32. After this incident service in the Tabernacle was idiomatically referred to under the phrase- "to war the warfare in the work" 1

In conclusion, the parable told at the meal table – about the invitation to the Messianic Banquet (wedding feast), involves hard choices. It can mean forsaking everything near and dear, it must mean self-denial; for some it will mean martyrdom. The greatest warfare to be fought is with our own flesh.

"Ye are they which have continued with me in my temptations. And I appoint unto you a kingdom, as my Father hath appointed unto me; That ye may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom, and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel." (Lk. 22: 28-30)

THE TRUE SAYINGS OF GOD

The word true does not mean veracious in contrast to that which is false, but instead means reality in contrast to that which is type or prophecy. (i.e. John 6: 32; 15: 1; Heb.9: 24; 1 John 2: 8).

Thus the angel signified that even though the figure of marriage was being employed and the words of Psalms and prophecies were being woven together in the vision presented to John, it was imagery behind which a sublime reality was to be discerned.

THE SPIRIT OF PROPHECY

The testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy – We take this phrase by itself, because it is both ambiguous and important. The ambiguity springs from the fact that the testimony of Jesus can bear either of two meanings.

(1) It can mean the witness that the Christian bears to Jesus.

(2) It can equally mean the witness that Jesus Christ bears to men.

This is the kind of double meaning of which the Greek language is capable. It may well be that John intended a double meaning; and that we are not meant to choose between the meanings, but accept both of them. If so, since true prophecy is the witness to Jesus, any witness to Jesus can be identified as prophecy, and thus prophecy is not limited to those who are designated "prophets" in a special sense. It is therefore the word spoken by God and attested by Jesus that the spirit takes and puts in the mouth of the Christian prophet. At the end of the first century there were many charlatans about, like the Jezebel of Thyatira, who claimed to speak with authority in virtue of their prophetic gift, and the ecclesia was under the necessity of devising tests to distinguish the true from the false. John insists that his friends shall "test the spirits (those who claim the spirit of prophecy) to distinguish the true from the false" (1John 4: 1). The test he proposes is a double one: a belief that Jesus Christ bore human nature, and conduct conforming with that belief. As we have seen in each of the letters to the ecclesias, the spirit speaks to the ecclesias in the accents of the crucified and risen Lord, summoning them to become conquerors in the name of him who has conquered. It is the gospel of the cross that gives to the prophets the assurance of their mission and its ultimate success (cp.10: 7). To be a prophet in the streets of the great city is to follow in the steps of the master (11: 3, 10). And it is the spirit who introduces the harvest and vintage with the benediction on those who "die in the Lord" (14: 13).

THE LORD IS A MAN OF WAR, THE LORD IS HIS NAME (Ex.15: 3)

"And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and he that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he doth judge and make war. His eyes were as a flame of fire, and on his head were many crowns; and he had a name written, that no man knew, but he himself. And he was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood: and his name is called The Word of God. And the armies which were in heaven followed him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean. And out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron: and he treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. And he hath on his vesture and on his thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS." (Rev.19: 11-16)

The picture of the warrior-priest, warrior-king is drawn from the Psalms and also from the prophetic books of the Old Testament. Psalm 18, which had a messianic application1 to the crucifixion is also appropriate to the eschatological "day of the Lord." Without the victory of the cross the martyrdom would have been meaningless and the final battle of Har- Megiddon unachievable. The crucifixion Psalms (18, 22) feature largely in Revelation 19 because all subsequent victories depend on, and flow from the "war" fought on the cross.

PSALM 18 REVELATION 19

And he rode on the cherub and did fly (v.10).

Rider on a white horse (v.11).

The word of the Lord is tried, he is a buckler to all those that trust in him (v.30).

The WORD of God (v13).

He teacheth my hands to make war (v.34).

Thou hast girded me with strength unto the battle (v.39).

In righteousness he doth judge and make war (v.11).

Thou hast made me the head of the nations (v.34).

He shall rule them with a rod of iron (v15).

Thou hast subdued under me those that rose up against me (v.35).

All the birds were filled with their flesh (v.21).

The one who "rules with a rod of iron" is the Melchizedek figure of Psalm 110, it is said that, "His people are freewill offerings in the day of thy power" (v. 3 RVmg). This is another indication that martyrdom is inextricably linked with the return of Christ. Making war with the enemy entails more than a military rout, as the lesson of the cross teaches so poignantly. The deliverer will come, and the people that dwell (Zebulun) in the land of wrestling (Naphtali) will see a great light (Isa.9: 1-2).

ISAIAH 9 REVELATION 19

Thou hast multiplied the nation, and not increased the joy: they joy before thee according to the joy in harvest, and as men rejoice when they divide the spoil. (v.9)

Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come..(v.7)

For every battle of the warrior is with confused noise, and garments rolled in blood; but this shall be with burning and fuel of fire. (v.5)

VESTURE DIPPED IN BLOOD (v.13)

The Lord sent a word into Jacob, and it hath lighted upon Israel. (v.8)

THE WORD OF GOD (v.13)

The government upon his shoulder (v.6)

He shall rule the nations with a rod of iron (v.15).

His name shall be called…(v.6)

His name is called..(v.13)

Mighty God (El Gibbô r) –mighty warrior (v.6).

He doth judge and make war (v.11).

Therefore the LORD will cut off from Israel head and tail, branch and rush, in one day. The ancient and honourable, he is the head; and the prophet that teacheth lies, he is the tail. (v.14,15)

The false prophet that wrought miracles before him (v.20).

For wickedness burneth as the fire: it shall devour the briers and thorns, and shall kindle in the thickets of the forest, and they shall mount up like the lifting up of smoke. Through the wrath of the LORD of hosts is the land darkened, and the people shall be as the fuel of the fire: no man shall spare his brother. (v.18,19)

And the beast was taken, and with him the false prophet that wrought miracles before him, with which he deceived them that had received the mark of the beast, and them that worshipped his image. These both were cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone. (v.20)

These verses (19: 11-16) are interwoven with Old Testament imagery and even draw inspiration from the apocryphal book of Wisdom (18: 15). This should not surprise us, for the verse under consideration is part of a poetic description of the destruction of the firstborn in Egypt, and is itself an illusion to Old Testament texts including Exodus 15: 3-4.

“Thy all powerful word leaped from heaven, from the royal throne into the midst of the land that was doomed, a stern warrior carrying the sharp sword of thy authentic command, and stood and filled all things with death, and touched heaven while standing on earth.” (Wis.18: 15 RSV)

Since the context of Wisdom 18:15-16 is a poetic description of God’s slaying of the firstborn in Egypt during the tenth and final plague, it is of some interest that the Hebrew term dbr can mean both “word” and “pestilence.” This personification of plague as a messenger of God has a canonical parallel in 1 Chr.21: 16;

“David looked up and saw the angel of the Lord standing between earth and heaven, and in his hand a drawn sword stretched out over Jerusalem.” (NSRV)

The double meaning of dbr is also reflected in a striking error in translation in the LXX version of Hab.3: 5. The Hebrew text reads ; “Before him (the Lord) went pestilence (dAber) and plague followed closely behind,” LXX Hab.3: 5 mistakenly has, “Before his presence goes the word, and his feet will follow with plagues.” A passage emphasising divine judgment has been changed into one in which the word arrives in advance of God’s punishment. The Exodus motif runs through the book of Revelation. The Lord is indeed, the “Prince of Peace” (Isa.9: 6), but he is also a “man of war” (Ex15: 3).

The other motif we encounter is that of the cherubim we have already commented on this in ch.16pg.15. His eyes were a flame of fire (v.12) and his tongue a sharp sword (v.15) – this is because he discerns the intents of the heart (Heb.4: 12). Like the cherubim he divides the joints and marrow (of the sacrifice). This is appropriate for two reasons.

(1). The cherubim “keep the way of the tree of life” (Gen.3: 24) and the next few chapters elaborate on the restoration of paradise (22: 2).

(2). The sacrifices provided by Adam and Eve were obviously consumed by the flaming sword at the entrance to Eden – which was a type of the sanctuary. In Revelation chapter 19 we also read about a great sacrifice – the great supper of God (19: 17), this is the counterpart of the martyrdom, a different kind of sacrifice.

The first thing we are told about the Rider is that his name was Faithful and True. He is thus identified with the heavenly Son of Man in his address to the Laodicean ecclesia, "the Amen, the faithful and true witness" (3: 14), and consequently also with the faithful witness of the opening salutation (1: 5). In turning warrior he has not deserted his original function of witness-bearing, on which all his other achievements are founded. He is armed, with no other weapon than the good confession (the word v.15) that he witnessed before Pontius Pilate (1 Tim.6: 13). This was not some supernatural figure from the fantasies of Jewish apocalyptic, but the Jesus of history, whose final victory in the battle to come serves only to make plain to the world the victory seen by faith from the beginning in the cross. Although the battle he fights is described for the most part in military imagery, it is also, as befits the faithful witness, the wordy battle of the law court: with justice he judges and makes war. In the Old Testament the locus classicus for this mixture of legal and military metaphor is Joel 3: 1-16, where all nations are summoned to battle in the Valley of Verdict; and this is a passage to which John has alluded more than once. But a closer parallel is the war in heaven between Michael and Satan, which turned out to be a legal battle between defending and accusing counsel (12: 7-12). It may seem illogical to us that the witness should be said to judge, but there are two reasons for this. One is that John is preparing the way for a reinterpretation of Isaiah 11: 1-5, where it is said of the Messiah that "he shall judge the poor with righteousness and give a verdict that is fair to the humble folk." The second reason is that the verb krinein (judge) and even katakrinein (condemn) are used elsewhere in the New Testament to denote the part played in the lawcourt by the witness. When Jesus says that at the last judgment the Queen of Sheba and the population of Nineveh will condemn "this generation", he does not mean that they will have a place on the bench, but that their evidence will secure a conviction (Mtt.12: 41-42; Lk.11: 31-32 cp. also Lk.11: 19 – "therefore they shall be your judges"). Similarly, when Paul says that Gentiles who keep the law will judge Jews who possess the law of Moses but break it, he means that they will provide the necessary evidence to refute Jewish claims of superiority (Rom.2: 27). This usage probably goes back to the legal practice of the small town in ancient Israel, where disputes were settled before an assembly of townsfolk in the gate and every speaker was entitled to give his verdict. So here the witness judges because it is on his evidence that the legal victory turns.

Every phrase in the description of the Rider adds something important to our understanding of his character and function. If we have any doubts that the name Faithful and True was a deliberate cross-reference to the letters, they are removed when we are told that his eyes flamed like fire (cp.1: 14; 2: 18). This is the Son of Man who was first seen walking among the seven lamps, with a vigilant care for his people and an omniscient knowledge of what they were doing. To this extent he is the same, but in the meantime something has been added to his dignity, for on his head were many diadems.

There is a contrast intended between the seven diadems of the dragon and the ten diadems of the monster on the one hand and the many diadems of the Rider on the other (12: 3; 13: 1). Here is royalty far surpassing any earthly sovereignty. In the last vision of the Rider on the white horse he had only one diadem (6: 2), the vital fact is that he has acquired the many diadems in the meantime. When he ascended to heaven he was already king, he had conquered and sat down beside his Father on his throne, and was ruler of earthly kings (3: 21; 1: 5). Whence then come the diadems? They signify, no doubt, that "the sovereignty of the world has passed to our Lord and to his Christ" (11: 15), but this does not tell us how he came by them. They are his neither by virtue of the initial victory on the cross nor of the final victory over the monster which is still to be recounted. They must therefore be the token of the victory he has won through the conquerors.

“To the conqueror I will grant a seat beside me on my throne, as I myself conquered and sat down beside my Father on his throne” (3: 21).

They have conquered the dragon by the life-blood of the Lamb (12: 11), have been made “a royal house of priests to his God and Father” (1:6; 5: 10), have won the freedom from the monster and his image (15: 2); and now all the diadems of their newly won empire meet upon his brow. He is in fact a representative figure, incorporating his faithful followers in his own inclusive person; for they have died “in the Lord” (14: 13). They have come to know him more intimately than others, for they have been entrusted with his new name (3: 12), a name which no one can learn except the conquerors who receive it, because it embodies the secret of his suffering (2: 7). They have learnt the victory song of heaven, which none can learn except those who die for their faith (14: 3). Yet there are depths of his being which pass even their comprehension, for he has a name written on him known to none but himself. When they have joined all the glorious names that adoring wonder can ascribe to him, he still confronts them with an ultimate mystery.

The heart of the mystery is that he wore a garment sprinkled with blood (RV). This is the second time that John has drawn his imagery from the gruesome vintage scene of Isaiah 63. There the vintager is God himself, who comes from treading the winepress with his garments stained with the blood of his enemies. It has commonly been assumed that John must have kept close to his model, and that the blood here is the blood of the Rider’s enemies also. In that case the winepress in verse 15 is a symbol for divine retribution synonymous with the symbol of annihilation in battle; and this interpretation must be adopted also in the parallel passage (14: 18-20). The obvious and insuperable objection is that the Riders garment is already sprinkled with blood before the battle begins. Some commentators have seen this difficulty and have unsuccessfully tried to find a way around it. The present author believes that the blood sprinkled garment draws us to the dedication of the Mosaic priesthood in Lev 8: 30, where the garments of Aaron were sprinkled with the blood of animal sacrifices. Now, however, the garments of the Melchizedek High Priest are sprinkled with the blood of the martyrs. John has used the garment to make a profound disclosure about the great martyrdom, to show that the persecution, which might appear to be the total defeat of the ecclesia, was to the eyes of faith the ingathering and dedication of the king-priests, and the means whereby the Son of Man would turn the slaughter of his saints into the downfall of his enemies. The Rider bears on his garment the indelible traces of the death of his followers, just as he bears on his body the indelible marks of his own passion (1: 7; cp. John 20: 20-27).

The title given to him was the word of God. This title appears at first sight to have only a superficial likeness to the Logos of John’s gospel. The Rider more closely resembles the personified Word of the Wisdom of Solomon, leaping from the royal throne like a relentless warrior into the doomed land of Egypt, bearing the sharp sword of God’s inflexible commandment (Wis.18: 15-16), or that living, active word of God which cuts more keenly than any two-edged sword (Heb.4: 12). But we must recall the charge laid upon John according to the title of his book – to bear witness to all that he saw, the purpose (or word) declared by God and attested by Jesus Christ (1: 2). Because Jesus in his earthly existence had been the faithful witness to the divine purpose, he had won the right to open the scroll of destiny, and so both to disclose and to achieve the purpose written in it. But the final disclosure and achievement are no different in character from the earthly life in which they were already anticipated. The word to which Jesus bore testimony in his life and death is now recognised to be indistinguishable from the person of the witness: he is the Word of God. The difference between the gospel and the

Apocalypse, is that one looks back at the origins of the word, and the other looks forward to the end manifestation of the word.

We normally think of the armies of heaven as consisting of legions of angels (cp.Mtt.26: 53), but here they are the conquerors. They follow the Rider now, just as on an earlier occasion they followed the Lamb wherever he went (14: 4). Like his horse, their white horses are the token of victory. They have "washed their robes and made them white in the life-blood of the Lamb" (7:14; cp.6: 2; 19: 8). Their pure white linen is in striking contrast to his blood sprinkled garment. His blood has made their robes white, and theirs has made his red. In this respect, as in the secret name he bears, he remains unique, even when surrounded by those who have also undergone martyrdom.

The description of the Rider continues with a catena of Old Testament references: to the Davidic king who is to judge the poor with justice and smite the earth with the rod of his mouth (Isa.11: 4); to his anointed king who is to smash the nations with an iron bar (Ps.2: 9); and once again to the vintager (Isa.63: 1). But none of these references can be taken quite at its face value. The Davidic king was expected by the prophet to be a person of such authority that he could redress the grievances of the poor and break the power of the unscrupulous "by the rod of his mouth", i.e. by the mere pronouncement of a judicial verdict; but here the rod has given place to a sharp sword.

Now the sword as a symbol of judicial authority is a Roman metaphor, not a Jewish one. It is possible that the vision has done nothing more than substitute the Roman symbol of autjority for the Old Testament one, in order to assert, as the letter to Pergamum does, that Christ, not the Roman proconsul, held the ius gladii, the ultimate jurisdiction over life and death. But it is more likely that the full significance of the sword is to be found in the Old Testament, the source of most of the apocalypse's figurative language. There the tongue, because of it's shape is a metaphor for a two-edged sword, and the "mouth like a sharp sword" is the symbol of a prophet, whose utterance has a cutting edge to it, because he speaks the word of God (Isa.49: 2; Heb.4: 12; Eph.6: 17). Thus the only weapon the rider needs, if he is to break the opposition of his enemies, and establish God's reign of peace, is the proclamation of the gospel. The quotation from Psalm 2 does not need any further reinterpretation here, for the reader is expected to remember that John has already done this on two previous occasions. In the promise to the conqueror at Thyatira (2: 27) and in his extended comment on the psalm in chapters 11-14. The only iron bar God needs to reduce the rebellious nations to submission is the cross of his Son and the martyrdom of his saints.

The winepress of the wine, i.e., the place in which the wine of the fury of the wrath of God Omnipotent is prepared. "The two ideas of the winepress and the cup of wrath," writes one commentator, "are here combined, and mean that from the winepress trodden by Christ flows the wine of the wrath of God, of which his enemies are to be made to drink. It is a case of mixed metaphors." But it is a case of mixed metaphors only if we jump to the conclusion that winepress and cup both denote divine judgment. If we study the present passage without prejudice, we shall certainly conclude that the wine of the fury of the wrath of God is a symbol for judgment, and that the winepress represents something quite different, namely the means by which the wine of judgment is prepared. When we remember that the cup of wrath is the cup which Babylon herself mixed (18: 6), and that she was seen drunk with the blood of the martyrs (17: 6), it becomes reasonable to suppose that the winepress, like the cross, is a place where God has turned the murderous acts of men into the means of their own judgment. This is

confirmed by the fact that the garment is already sprinkled with blood before ever the judgment of God's enemies has begun.

The Rider has a second title, King of kings and Lord of lords, and this one is written on his garment and on his thigh. The title is ambiguous, perhaps deliberately so; for it may refer to his sovereignty either over the rulers of the earth (1: 5) or over those whom he has made a royal house of priests to his God and Father. For a reason which will appear shortly it is likely that it was the second of these ideas that is expressed. But whichever explanation we adopt, the title is the ground, not the result, of the coming victory; he will conquer the monster and the kings because he is already King of kings and Lord of lords (cp.17: 14). The warrant for the title is the initial victory of the cross. It is natural therefore that the title should be written on his thigh. All the readers of the Apocalypse, Jewish, Greek or Roman, would readily understand that the thigh was the place where the sword hung. It is also an allusion to Exodus 32: 27 a chapter we have already discussed. Since in this picture there were reasons why the sword should not be in its usual position, the thigh must do service for the sword, the weapon with which the victory and the title had been won. But why was the title written also on his garment? Surely for exactly the same reason: the garment, sprinkled as it was with blood, was the symbol of that other victory by which the conquerors had taken their seat beside Christ upon his throne, yielding up to him their many diadems and so constituting him King of kings.

We have already associated the sprinkling of garments with the inauguration of a new priesthood, the title on the garment is also the symbol of brethren dwelling together in unity, for it is like the precious anointing oil at that dedication of Aaron, running down his beard onto his garments. (Ps.133: 1-30) The newly dedicated King-Priest is therefore crowned with the diadems of their victory, sprinkled with the blood of their martyrdom and anointed by the unity of their witness to him (the word). This is truly the manifestation of the body of Christ, he is one in them and they in him. None of this would have been possible without his initial conquest of sin.

THE GREAT SUPPER OF ALMIGHTY GOD

"And I saw an angel standing in the sun; and he cried with a loud voice, saying to all the fowls that fly in the midst of heaven, Come and gather yourselves together unto the supper of the great God; That ye may eat the flesh of kings, and the flesh of captains, and the flesh of mighty men, and the flesh of horses, and of them that sit on them, and the flesh of all men, both free and bond, both small and great. And I saw the beast, and the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against him that sat on the horse, and against his army. And the beast was taken, and with him the false prophet that wrought miracles before him, with which he deceived them that had received the mark of the beast, and them that worshipped his image. These both were cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone. And the remnant were slain with the sword of him that sat upon the horse, which sword proceeded out of his mouth: and all the fowls were filled with their flesh." (Rev.19: 17-21)

The summons to the birds has a fourfold significance. God's great feast, to which they are invited as guests, forms a grim contrast to the wedding feast of the Lamb. It is the first part of the double fulfilment of Ezekiel's prophecy about the defeat of Gog and his armies (the other is in 20:7-11). It is also reminiscence of the saying of Jesus which concluded his discourse on the day of the Son of Man: "where the carcass is there will the vultures be gathered together" (Mtt.24: 28; Lk.17: 37). This event will be unmistakable and distinctive, even from a distance one can see the vultures circling the dead carcass even if the prey itself is out of view. But more important is the cross-reference, which picks up a vital thread in Revelation – the invitation is to the birds

that fly in mid heaven. This curious phrase has been used before to characterise the eagle or vulture whose screech gave warning of the three woes (8: 13), and although the woes steadily intensified, the third woe was never actually depicted (11: 18). Instead the seventh trumpet called forth a jubilant paean on the establishment of God's sovereignty and a promise that the time had come to reward God's servants and to destroy the destroyers of the earth. It appears, then, that now at last we have reached the third woe. The birds that fly in mid-heaven, come to make good the threat of the eagle that flew in mid heaven. This reminder of the eagle and its three woes helps us to answer the next question as well. Who are these armies marshalled to do battle with the Rider? They are those who would "destroy the earth" a metaphor for the land of Israel (11:18). The kings of the earth are the ten kings that we encountered earlier, who destroyed the harlot. All classes of men are punished for they were all involved with the worship of the beast and his image (cp.v.18 with 13:16).

THE FATE OF THE BEAST AND HIS FOLLOWERS

The protagonists suffer a similar fate to Korah, Dathan and Abiram, who were swallowed by the earth and descended alive into Sheol. The phrase "the lake of fire burning with sulphur" occurs with variations six times in Revelation. (here; 20:10,14-15 [3x]; 21: 8) In chapter 20: 14 the second death is associated with the lake of fire. It is instructive to note that the lake of fire occurs in ancient Egyptian texts, it is instructive to note that another Egyptian underworld myth, "the second death" is also closely connected with the lake of fire in the book of the dead. (cp.20:12) It is appropriate to the Exodus motif that those who refuse to leave Egypt suffer the fate proscribed by Egyptian mythology. Jesus himself used a current underworld myth to illustrate a hyperbolic point, in his parable about Lazarus and the rich man (Lk.16: 19-31). In Greek mythology as many as four rivers were connected with Hades (1) Styx or Acheron (which separates the realm of the dead from the world of the living) (2) Phlegethon or Pyriphlegethon [meaning blazing] (3) Cocytus (in Latin literature), and (4) Lethe [forgetfulness]. The four rivers of the lake of fire are obviously the counterpart to the four rivers of Eden (Gen.2: 10). Those who choose not to be part of the restored Eden described in the following chapters, end up in hell. (enduring destruction). These verses should not be approached with over literalness, but a shift in the topography of the land may well result in an actual lake of fire (magma) on the surface.

NOTES

1 John 7: 27; 9: 29 etc.

---

2 Both his birth and his death were shrouded in mystery.

NOTES

1 It is generally agreed that the hallelujah at the end of Psalm 104 belongs to Psalm 105: 1

NOTES

1 See the RV margin for Num.4: 4, 23 , 30; 8: 23

NOTES

1 For example: Reference to Jesus crying on the cross -"In my distress I called upon the LORD, and cried unto my God: he heard my voice out of his temple, and my cry came before him, even into his ears" (v.6). Reference to the darkness at the crucifixion -"He made darkness his secret place; his pavilion round about him were dark waters and thick clouds of the skies" (v.11). God is depicted as riding the storm clouds (the cherubim often associated with a storm or whirlwind). Jesus "made war" against sin in the flesh, his hands were nailed to the cross – "He teacheth my hands to war, so that a bow of steel is broken by mine arms"(v.34)

Chapters 20-22

THE MILLENIUM AND BEYOND

“Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years.” (Rev.20: 6)

“And when all things shall be subdued unto him, then shall the Son also himself be subject unto him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all.”

(1 Cor. 15: 28)

INTRODUCTION

The exegesis of the complex chapters 20-22 has caused many debates and even more dogmatism. The prolific use of symbology negates an over literalist approach and use of the literary device of hysteron-proteron (the arrangement of events in reverse of their logical order) has added to the confusion.

The author has decided therefore, to facilitate the exposition by departing from the usual verse by verse approach and to treat the last three chapters as a textual unit. If the correct questions are asked, then provided we apply hermeneutical principles, we should arrive at a satisfactory understanding.

The first question we need to ask is – Why is Satan is released after having been safely bound for a thousand years? He is confined in the first place to stop him from deluding the nations again. This plainly implies that throughout the thousand years there will be a considerable world population which would otherwise be susceptible to the attacks of Satan, and therefore a population over and above the conquerors, who have proved themselves impervious to these attacks. This impression is immediately confirmed by the twice-repeated statement that the conquerors are to reign with Christ, since it would be a singularly empty recognition of their services if they were to reign over a world of which they were the sole inhabitants. If we take these statements seriously, as indeed we must, it inevitably follows that the commentaries are wrong which treat the battle of the previous chapter as the end of world history and the wiping out of all members of the human race who have not lost their lives in the great martyrdom. The battle is the end of something, but not that sort of end; for the nations as a whole survive it. Now it cannot be argued that in this respect the present chapter is isolated from the rest of the book and at variance with it. What is here declared as a fact is no more than has already been promised. The conquerors have been told that they are to be kings and priests (1: 6; 5: 10), to reign on earth (5: 10), to have “authority over the nations…to smash them with an iron rod” (2: 27; cp.12: 5). This last quote reminds us that the nations are those mentioned in the second psalm, who rise in their wrath against the Lord and his Christ (11: 18).

They are the peoples among whom Christians were living, from whom they themselves had been ransomed (5: 9; 7: 9), and by whom they were to be persecuted (11: 2). They were the peoples made drunk and seduced by the great whore (14: 8; 17: 15; 18: 3,23). But they were also the peoples to whom John was bidden to speak his prophetic message (10: 11), to whom the angel of the eternal gospel was sent (14: 6), whose conversion the martyrs have confidently celebrated (15: 4), and who are now given the assurance of future freedom from Satan’s deceptions.

The smashing of the nations therefore cannot mean disappearance from the face of the earth, but rather the breaking of that political power which, with the undergirding of idolatrous religion and materialist seduction, has organised them into resistance to the sovereignty of God.

BACK TO THE GARDEN

God's angel implemented the incarceration of Satan, it must therefore follow that he is also released by God's angel. The liberation of Satan finds its counterpart in the introduction of the serpent into the Garden of Eden (Gen.3: 1).

The last visions in Revelation present an idyllic paradise, a picture of Eden restored with a similar enjoyment of communion between mortal and divine beings that Adam must have experienced. It is the immortalised martyrs that diffuse and mediate Christ's redemptive activity throughout the world. Through them the nations are brought to God and made fit to be presented to God. Whatever else may have stopped, the work of the gospel continues in each successive generation. For generations there must be. The world of the millennium is not a deathless world. Death and Hades are destroyed only when the thousand years are over (20: 14).

THE SERPENT IN PARADISE

The reintroduction of the serpent (Satan) into the picture serves as a test for mankind. It is once again the ultimate test that led to original sin – the desire to "be like God" (Gen.3: 5). That explains why the rebellion focuses on the beloved city (20: 9), for it is in the midst of the city that the tree of life is situated (22: 2 cp. Gen.3: 3). This is obviously highly symbolic language – the tree of life can be none other than Christ himself. By his death he transformed the tree he was nailed to (Gal.3: 13) into a life giving force. We are to understand then that this is an attack on Christ and his saints.

One way of man becoming morally independent and master of his own destiny is by abrogating to himself the power that rightly belongs to God. Another way is by replacing God with something that is not God. A third way is to destroy God. This is of course folly. Even if it were possible to destroy God (which it is not), humankind would perish, because without divine intervention sinful man carries the seeds of his own nemesis. Despite the stupidity of such action, the insurgents seem to have convinced themselves that it is possible to defeat the peaceful camp of the saints. In the past the enemies of God were allowed the allusive "victory" of putting his Son to death. As Jesus was the agent and representative of God, man was in actual fact expressing his desire to commit deicide. If this were possible man would become his own god – thus achieving his desire to "be like God."

The fate of the rebellious interlopers is the same as that of the pseudo-priests of the Korah rebellion, namely they were consumed by fire (20: 9 ; Num.16: 35). The challenge to God's authorised representatives (Moses and Aaron) amounted to seeking equality with God. Although the challenge was couched in reasonable terms, "all the congregation are holy" (Num.16: 3), for, they were indeed all "gods" (John 10: 35), God will not allow rebellion against his chosen agent, nor will he allow the power that he has gracefully shared to be usurped by others.

"I have said ye are gods; And all you are children of the Most High. Nevertheless ye shall die like men, and fall like one of the Princes." [i.e. Korah] (Ps.82: 6-7RV)

Satan is released at the end of the thousand years of bliss in order to sort out those who truly love Him from those who love self. God allows men the freewill to make choices even in the

millennium. God can command obedience and love but he cannot force men to love him – that is man's gift to God, a reciprocation of love, because God loved us first. The character of God is unchangeable and human nature is also unalterable (unless it is voluntarily transformed by the love of God). This explains why salvic history (and all history?) repeats itself, we have come full circle back to the Garden.

THE DRAGON THAT OLD SERPENT, WHICH IS THE DEVIL AND SATAN

It makes for an interesting exercise to juxtapose the shekinah, reflected in the four faced cherubim, and representing God's glory in his creation, with the spirit of disobedience expressed by the four names of Satan, and reflected in the faces of his subjects, the children of wrath. The whole spectre of human behaviour, endeavour and character is encompassed by these names, whether it be man's political-empirical aspirations (dragon), spiritual flaws such as megalomania (old–serpent), accusative morality (devil), 1 and outright opposition to God (Satan).

Nations and individuals are always deluded and deceived by their own lusts, for God does not tempt men (James 1: 13-14). He does however allow his angels to arrange circumstances to prove men, in order to examine what is in their hearts (Job1: 7-8; 1Kgs.22: 22).

Satan is bound with a large chain and sealed in the abyss 2 by an angel with a key. This is the same angel we encountered in 9: 1, who in that chapter released another angel called the destroyer 3 from the bottomless pit (9: 11). The destroyer is the angel who killed the firstborn in Egypt (Ex.12: 13), the same that is given the authority to examine men's motives (Job.1: 9-10), and who prosecuted Joshua (Jesus) in the heavenly law court (Zech.3: 1-3). These are the same principalities and powers that Christ triumphed over at his death (Col.2: 14-15). This is the angel who saw his accusations against Christ cast out of the heavenly law court (Rev.12: 7). His name is Satan because he acts as mans enemy – in the same way that unregenerate man acts as God's opponent.

At the end of the thousand years he is released for a little time (20: 3 RV). Although the accusation against Christ was cast out of the heavenly law court in the first century, the devil continued his work with great wrath on earth for a short time (12: 12). The devil principle was personified by Nero, who had the Christians prosecuted in the earthly law courts and thrown to the lions (1 Pet.5: 8). The short time must therefore refer to a three and a-half, or seven-year period of organised rebellion against God's rule.

The release of Satan at the end of the millennium is the precursor to the recrudescence of evil. This is symbolised by the invasion of Gog and Magog. The invasion of Gog and Magog is based on the Ezekiel prophecies. There has already been one fulfilment of this prophecy in the banquet of the birds at the start of the millennium, so why is their a second fulfilment at the end of the millennium?

This invasion is different from the earlier one, for although the language of Gog and Magog was employed, the nations were never referred to by name in Revelation chapter 19. Now "Gog of the land of Magog" from the prophecy of Ezekiel has become a pair of nations in chapter 20, Gog and Magog. Gog is therefore, being treated as a true myth, applicable to different historic situations. No longer does the attack come from the uttermost parts of the north (Ezek.39: 2), or even from the east (16: 12), but from the four- corners of the earth (20: 7). In this chapter Gog and Magog symbolise something greater than the constituent nation states, for as the Abrahamic descendants are prophesied to be like the sand of the sea shore (Gen.22: 17), so

Gog and Magog will be like the sand of the sea itself. Abraham will be a blessing to all his spiritual descendants who come from many nations, but Gog and Magog will bring the curse of death on all their followers, who also originate from many nations.

The object of the attack is the camp of God's people and the city he loves. Camp is the word used in the story of the Exodus for Israel's wilderness home, and reminds us that Gods people, even in the golden age of the millennium, the ecclesia in the wilderness is still the ecclesia in pilgrimage.

In order to complete the picture we must ask ourselves another important question. What occasion calls for all the saints to be gathered in the beloved city at the end of the millennium? We would expect the saints in their role as Christ's agents and as part of his theocratic government, to be dispersed all over the world. What occasion calls for this summit meeting? The author suggests that the only event that merits such a huge gathering is the last judgment. As king-priests it is not unreasonable to assume that they will participate in the judgment scenario just as they did in ruling the nations.

The author believes that those found wanting at the last (second) resurrection are cast outside the city – for, "without are dogs, and sorcerers, and whoremongers, and murderers, and idolaters, and whoso loveth and maketh a lie" (22: 15).

"There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when ye shall see Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets, in the kingdom of God, and you yourselves thrust out." (Luke 13:28)

It is these elements, who are refused entry to the city, who foment the last rebellion. The city, is of course the community of saints known as the "New Jerusalem", with Christ, the tree of life in the midst. It cannot be coincidence that the last rebellion and the last resurrection both occur at the end of the thousand years. The angel with the key has the authority to release Satan from the pit, but the key is also symbolic of the authority to raise the dead from the pit, for Christ has the key of David and whatever he opens cannot be shut and vies versa (3: 7). He has the keys to death and hades and can open or shut the doors of the kingdom on whomsoever he chooses. The prophet Isaiah seems to confirm that the release of Satan and the second resurrection are the same event.

"And they shall be gathered together, as prisoners are gathered in the pit, and shall be shut up in the prison, and after many days shall they be visited. Then the moon shall be confounded, and the sun ashamed, when the LORD of hosts shall reign in mount Zion, and in Jerusalem, and before his ancients gloriously." (Isa.24: 22-23)

If the release of Satan from the abyss equates with the wicked elements rejected at the second resurrection, what purpose does it serve? Why are the wicked not immediately condemned to the second death (lake of fire)? It seems that God allows them to function as emissaries of Satan, who go out into the world at the end of the millennium and preach rebellion. This is in contrast to the immortal ambassadors of Christ, who continued the gospel mission during the millennial age.

It is obvious that God has allowed this to occur in order to distinguish the "wheat from the chaff." In an age of longevity and peace, man is again faced with the same choices that he had at the beginning – love of God or love of self. The antagonistic elements of the mortal population will show their hand, in their folly they will attack the peaceful and seemingly unprotected camp of the saints. Those who join the insurrection will be instantly consumed by fire from heaven.

Those who choose the side of Christ will be immortalised. The wicked elements that started the rebellion because they were rejected at the second resurrection, will also be consumed by fire along with all the others. This second death is called the lake of fire. They will in fact join their friends the beast and the false prophet who had also been cast into the lake a thousand years earlier (20: 10).

Casting death and hades into the lake of fire (the second death- 20: 14) is a metaphor for condemning those who have the nature of death and the grave back to their natural home. Death to death and ashes to ashes but Spirit to Spirit, the last enemy, death has been abolished because effectively, all those who bore the nature of sin and death were consumed in the last rebellion. “O death, where is thy victory? O grave, where is thy sting?” (1 Cor 15: 55). Those humans who remained loyal to Christ become immortals and join the rest of the beloved city. The whole earth contains an immortal population at this point and is ready to be presented to the Father as a perfect gift, for it is covered with his glory.

THE ESCHATON

The kingdom is a process that begins with the conversion of a repentant remnant in Israel (Zech. 12: 10-14). It commences when a stone (Christ) shatters the kingdoms of men and grows into a great mountain, whose expanse fills the whole earth (Dan.2: 35). It is like a grain of mustard seed that grows into bush as big as a tree, or like a tiny amount of yeast that leavens a huge lump of dough (Mtt.13: 31-33). It starts as a fountain (Zech.13: 1) from under the throne (22: 1) and grows into a mighty river (Ezek.47: 5). The Holy Spirit is portrayed as a raging torrent, similar to a translucent crystal, flowing freely from the navel (throne) of the city as it does from the bellies of the saints (John 7: 38; 4: 14). It is the water of life (22: 1) or the spirit word of the gospel (John 4:14; 6: 35) which heals the nations, for, “words of a man's (Jesus Christ) mouth are as deep waters, and the wellspring of wisdom as a flowing brook” (Prov.18: 4). Earlier we saw how a sword came out of his mouth in order to smite disobedient nations (19: 15), but now he speaks comfortably to Jerusalem (Isa.40: 1), and his followers are sent out to heal the nations by their preaching. For I am the Lord that healeth thee [Yahweh Ropheka] (Ex.15: 26). He is able to turn bitter waters sweet by the introduction of a tree (Ex.15: 25). So also the tree in the midst and on either side of the river(s) will heal the waters of the seas into which they disgorge and cause the (Dead) sea to swarm with fish (Ezek.47: 7-12). Jesus made his disciples fishers of men (Mtt.4: 19) and their fishing expedition continues into the millennium.

The street of the great city, once polluted by the bodies of the witnesses (11: 8), is now adorned by the tree of life (22: 2). The death of the faithful witness (Jesus Christ) and his followers transforms the street into gold so pure that it is like transparent glass (21: 21). It almost defies description for it is the gold of tried faith (1 Pet.1: 7). The Old Jerusalem, spiritually Egypt and Sodom, has passed away forever for it has been recreated by the power of God into the New Jerusalem. Jesus provides the illumination for the city and together with his Father they form the temple of the city (21: 22,23). Jesus Christ is the tree of life in the midst of the city, and the crop of twelve fruits are the apostles. Under their guidance the crop is constant, for the twelve tribes are sent out to preach the gospel to all nations. They are no longer the tail but the head of the nations (Deut.28: 10-13) fulfilling their destiny as king-priests.

In Eden, an apron made of fig leaves covered the nakedness of humanity (Gen.3: 7). The fig tree was ever the symbol of Jewish nationalism and religious superiority with which they attempted to cover their vulnerability. In contrast the leaves of the tree of life are used for the healing of the nations, for there is no room any more for the narrow- minded exclusivity of the Jews. All the

glory of the nations is brought into the city – the gates are left permanently open, only the unclean are excluded (21: 24-26; Isa.60: 10-12). The re-creating hand of God has renewed the whole creation. God's curse pronounced over the whole creation because of Adam's disobedience is now abrogated (Gen.3: 17; Zech.14: 11); no flaming sword bars the way to the tree of life.

God is not content to save a handful of martyrs and allow the rest of mankind, along with all their achievements of culture and civilisation, to perish in the abyss. For into the holy city he now brings the nations and the kings of the earth. To suppose that by these phrases he means only the elect would be to run counter to his consistent usage throughout the whole of his book. The nations are the heathen, who had once been allowed to trample the holy city underfoot, who were seduced by the great whore, and who were finally reduced to subjection by the armies of Christ (11:2; 18: 3,23; 19: 15). The kings of the earth are those over whom Christ has asserted his authority only at the cost of untold suffering to his faithful people (1: 5; 6: 15; 17: 2,18; 18: 3,9). Those who once brought the splendour of their luxury trade to deck the great whore now bring their willing tribute to adorn the holy city. Nothing from the old order which has value in the sight of God is debarred from entry into the new. The heaven that John describes is no world-denying Nirvana, into which men may escape from the incurable ills of sublunary existence, but the seal of affirmation on the goodness of God's creation. The treasure that men laid up in heaven turns out to be the treasures and wealth of the nations, the best they have known and loved on earth redeemed of all imperfections and transfigured by the radiance of God. Nothing is excluded but what is obscene and false, that is, totally alien to the character of God. Nowhere in the New Testament do we find a more eloquent statement of the all- embracing scope of Christ's redemptive work.

The eschaton is couched in terms of vivid symbols and subliminal language, but even this beautiful imagery struggles to do justice to what God has in store for those who love him. The wilderness and the desert shall bloom (Isa.35: 1) for the Jews, who were once scattered in the "wilderness of the people" (Ezek.20: 35) will now preach the eternal gospel (Zech.8: 13; Isa.61: 6; 66: 19). The lame man shall leap as a hart (Isa.35: 6), for Jacob, who was made lame (Gen.32: 31-32) has finally acknowledged that God is prince or ruler in his life (the meaning of Israel). The blind will see and the deaf will hear (Isa.35: 5), for they will look on him whom they pierced (Zech.12: 10) and they will hear his voice- "this is the way, walk ye in it" (Isa.30: 21) for, "this is my beloved son hear ye him" (Lk.9: 35). It is possible for men to remain blind even when the light of the world is their midst (John 9: 39-41; 12: 36-40), but the one who is sent will effectively create new eyes (John 9: 5-8).

The messianic kingdom will be a period of unparalleled peace and prosperity:

"The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them. And the cow and the bear shall feed; their young ones shall lie down together: and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. And the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrice' den." (Isa.11: 6-8)

No longer will God send, "the teeth of beasts upon them and the poison of serpents of the dust" (Deut.32: 24), for, "they shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain" (Isa.11: 9).

The lion, bear, leopard and serpent (dragon) were all symbolic of the kingdoms of men in the visions encountered in Daniel.

“Therefore I will be unto them as a lion: as a leopard by the way will I observe them: I will meet them as a bear that is bereaved of her whelps, and will rend the call of their heart, and there will I devour them like a lion: the wild beast shall tear them.” (Hosea 13:7,8)

However, the symbolism of the beasts extends beyond foreign domination to the tribes of Israel itself (see chpt.4 pg.6), Dan was the serpent or adder in the way (Gen.49: 17), Judah the lion (Gen.49: 9) and Benjamin the ravening wolf (Gen.49: 7). The tribe of Ephraim, which in time came to denote the ten tribes, was an ox (Hos.10: 11; Isa.1: 3). Judah, the royal tribe will be domesticated like the ox, the old tribal rivalries between Judah and Ephraim will disappear in the eschaton (Isa.11: 13; Ezek.37: 15-20). The Jews are still split into many factions, no longer along tribal lines but along their origins from the different Diaspora countries, creating communities that are suspicious and even hostile to each other. Children (disciples) will be able to put their hand in the den of the serpent, because he has been sealed up and can no longer do any harm (20: 2).

The kingdom will initially encompass the Middle East from Egypt to Assyria (Isa.19: 23-25) the “way of holiness” (Isa.35: 8) will probably be the pilgrimage route to the New Jerusalem. No longer will the Muslim nations make the hajj to Mecca, but they will go to Mt. Zion to celebrate the feasts (Zech.8: 20-23 [note 10 nations]; 14: 16-19; Isa.66: 23)

WORSHIP IN THE KINGDOM AGE

There will be no blood sacrifices in the eschaton. It is possible to keep the feasts such as Tabernacles without animal sacrifices (the true Passover is kept with bread and wine for we have our Lamb). God has already made it apparent that he will transform the fasts of the fourth, fifth and seventh months into occasions of “joy, gladness and cheerful feasts” (Zech.8: 19). Sorrow and pain will be forgotten in the kingdom (21: 4; Isa.35: 10; 51: 11; 65: 19) nor will they “hurt in my holy mountain”(Isa.11: 9) – this rules out the slaughter of animals.

The Jews had already long since discredited the Mosaic system, the sacrifice of a lamb had become like “cutting a dogs neck” (Isa.66: 3), for God did not desire mere repetitive ritual, but rather mercy and justice. The temple of God is not a building but the man Jesus Christ, for, “to this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and that trembleth at my word” (Isa.66: 2).

Those who propose a temple along the lines of Ezekiel’s prophecy are suffering from the sort of over literalism that brings the scriptures into disrepute, and often misses the point altogether.

“Where then is the house that ye will build for me?” (Isa.66: 1)

“And I saw no temple therein: for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it.” (Rev.21: 22)

The divine will was made abundantly clear when their house (Mtt.23: 38) was swept away in AD 70 – animal sacrifices were replaced with a sacrifice that spoke of better things and the old covenant was reconstituted into the new covenant. The salvic history of Israel was always progressive never regressive. From the very beginning God did not desire a temple for he dwelt in a tabernacle (2 Sam.7: 5-7) that tabernacle was the Lord Jesus Christ (John 1: 14 RV). It was a sanctuary that could be disassembled (destroyed) and re-erected within three days (John 2:19). Why go backwards to the material when the spiritual is infinitely better? The Levitical blessing (Ex.32: 29) was turned into a curse (Mal.2: 2) the Levitical messenger of the Lord was replaced with my messenger (Mal.3: 1). The Mosaic sacrifices could not bring David forgiveness (Ps.51:

17) it was towards the Melchizedek priesthood that he looked (Ps.110: 4), an eternal priesthood, not an inherited office (Heb.7: 16). A priesthood that is always associated with bread and wine, never with animal sacrifice but instead with the body of our Lord (Gen.14: 18; 2 Sam.6: 19; Mtt.26: 29). A royal priesthood that offers up "spiritual sacrifices" (1 Pet.2: 5, 9). The man who sits on the throne and fulfils the old function of Davidic monarch and Levitical1 priest combines them both into the new function of king of righteousness [Melchizedek].

In fulfilling both rolls he is effectively building the temple of the Lord (Zech.6: 13), he offers sacrifices continually (Jer 33: 17) for his very life and being is a living sacrifice. These are not literal burnt offerings and meat (meal) offerings, but a life of complete dedication and self-sacrifice. They are not sin offerings but the sacrifices of righteousness, 2 metaphorically it is the burnt offering. Jesus' life was completely consumed by his self-sacrificing dedication, for, "the zeal of thine house hath eaten me up" (John 2: 17) just as the burnt offering was completely destroyed by fire.

The whole life of Christ was a sacrifice- the "true" sacrifice was Christ himself who "through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God" and "entered into the holy place for us". The emphasis here is not on the blood shedding but on the consecration of his will. "In burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin thou hast no pleasure.

Then said I, lo I am come

(in the roll of the book it is written of me)

To do thy will, O God.

He taketh away the first that he may establish the second.

By which will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus once for all." (Heb.10: 5-10).

If we now have that which is perfect, why do we desire that part which has been done away with?

THE SHADOW OF HEAVENLY THINGS

The Garden of Eden, the Tabernacle and the Temple were all made after the pattern of the heavenly sanctuary (Heb.8: 5). Once the true sanctuary has descended "from heaven" it is no longer necessary to have the shadow or type.

If the LORD IS THERE (Yahweh–shammmah Ezek.48: 35) why are animal sacrifices necessary? Those who propose the absurd notion that animal sacrifices are a retrospective reminder for the mortal population conveniently forget that Christ is in there midst. If they need reminding they need only look on him whom they pierced. In fact we may ask ourselves the question why we do not practice blood sacrifice now? – surely if it is done in a retrospective sense it is permissible? To ask the question is a reductio ad absurdum, but it serves the purpose of every reductio ad absurdum, which is to highlight how ridiculous the proposition has become. To suggest that animal sacrifice is necessary because people need reminding of death in an age of long-levity, is merely a ploy. People still die in the kingdom (remember the second resurrection?) and in an age of long-levity and peace, death will probably make a larger impact because it is less frequent than at present.

Gifts, meats, drinks, divers washings and carnal ordinances were imposed on the Jews until the time of reformation (Heb.9: 10), we have to be careful that our interpretation does not impose carnal ordinances on the kingdom age.

IN SPIRIT AND TRUTH

The worship of God in the kingdom age will not regress to animal sacrifice, nor will it be bound to a particular location.

“Jesus saith unto her, Woman, believe me, the hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father. Ye worship ye know not what: we know what we worship: for salvation is of the Jews. But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him. God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.” (John4: 21-24)

The Father is worshipped in spirit and truth in the body of Jesus Christ. He was the true temple of God, and so it is for every saint, for God must be worshipped in our very essence. While we see a pilgrimage to Jerusalem in the kingdom age, we must not confuse this with the Jebus of the past, for she will be made new. A metropolis whose foundation is the eye witness account of the apostles- accessible only through the gateway of the tribal heritage and patriarchal promises of Israel, fortified by the wall of righteous acts of martyred saints and finally crowned with the temple- the man Jesus Christ who is the indwelling of the Fathers shekinah (21: 11-27).

Jesus is the place where God is worshipped in “spirit and truth”. Wherever Jesus is present, whether Mt Gerazim or in Jerusalem, is the same place where the Father can be found. Wherever Jesus and his Father are, there also are his saints, for they are one (John 17: 16-26).

We see then that the holy city with it’s temple cannot be a building of bricks and mortar – not a worldly sanctuary (Heb.9: 1) but a spiritual. Neither will sacrifice be by the blood of goats and calves (Heb.9: 12) but true worshipers will worship in spirit and truth.

FOR ANY REMAINING QUESTIONS REGARDING EZEKIEL’S TEMPLE SEE THE DIGRESSION .

THE RESURRECTION

Before we attempt to establish the similarities and differences between the pre and postmillennial resurrections it is important that we achieve a general understanding of resurrection and how it is central to our faith.

Jesus Christ promised that the gates of hell would not prevail against his ecclesia (Mtt.16: 18). He is the firstfruits of many brethren, and as the apostle Paul states, “if the dead rise not, then is not Christ raised: and if Christ is not raised, your faith is in vain; ye are yet in your sins. Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished” (1Cor.15: 16-18). The atonement wrought by God in Christ does not stop at his death, nor even at his resurrection, for it is a continuing work of re-creation and transformation which will be brought to fruition in the eschaton.

Paul juxtaposes Jesus “the life giving spirit” with Adam who was “earthy” (1Cor.15: 45-49). Adam was made from earth and would return to earth (Gen.3: 19). Adam who was made in the image of God and claimed him as Father, chose to reject his heavenly origins. In so doing he was unable to escape his earthly existence, his whole character and psychological make up became estranged from God and locked into an “earthly nature” that was perishing.

The origin of Jesus Christ was however “heavenly.” This does not refer exclusively to his virgin birth, for, “such are they also that are heavenly” (1Cor.15: 48).

“That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born from above” (John 3:6-7 RV).

The Hebrew word for spirit is the same word for wind (ruach). Everyone that is born of the spirit is like the wind.

“The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit.” (John 3: 8 KJV)

This spiritual truth is not only valid for Christ but also for his followers, for they are also like the wind – the effect of which can be seen, but its origins or where it is dissipated cannot be ascertained. The birth and death of Christ was shrouded in mystery and is still incomprehensible to those who are “earthy.” In like manner, our origin and destiny remains unknown to outsiders. The life of the faithful believer is “hid with Christ in God” (Col.3: 3), no longer do we belong to Adam but to Christ, like him we come “from above” and metaphorically we will go home, where we belong, which is with our God.

The beauty of immortal nature is not an endless life, but an end to estrangement, for we are finally made whole. This is a process that came to fruition at the cross, but has by no means ended yet. We cannot change our nature by ourselves–it is as impossible as a man crawling back into the womb for a re-birth (John3: 4). A man must be born of water and spirit in order to enter into the kingdom of God (John 3: 5).

This was a literal truth in the first century, where the believers received the Holy Spirit as promise of the coming redemption (Acts10: 45-47). It was specifically epitomised at the baptism of Christ, who was endowed by the spirit without measure (John 1: 32-34). Unfortunately the excesses of the evangelical churches with their emphasis on charismatic gifts have clouded the issue and often prevented any rational discussion in the brotherhood. Nevertheless, if baptism represents identification with the death and resurrection of Christ – to newness of life- then the spirit is the power by which that new life develops. Man cannot change his own nature by an act of will. We are now born of water, an act of faith in the righteousness of God, but in order to enter the kingdom we must be born of spirit. Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God only spirit animated beings.

The act of resurrection is one of great mystery. It challenges everything we understand about our physical universe. It is a process that reverses the laws of nature, for according to the second law of thermodynamics all matter becomes energy, which dissipates into the void of the universe, but is never truly lost. How can a human be reconstructed if there is no physical substance remaining, not even a scrap of DNA? In essence the believer does not exist anymore except in the memory of God (written in the book of life).

This requires an act of pure faith on the part of the believer; “Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made out of things which do appear” (Heb.11: 2). Just as the earth was called into existence ex nihlo, by the word of God and his Spirit – so to with the resurrection. Resurrection is therefore none other than an act of creation.

Modern science has only recently realised that the whole universe was brought into existence when pure energy was converted into matter. Elementary particles are created ex nihlo, time is

relative not absolute and gravity is effectively the curvature of space. Even light is now perceived to be both a wave and a quantum of energy, but never both at the same time.

Mystery upon mystery – but I tell you this, the greatest mystery is the divine purpose centred in Jesus Christ – and nothing, absolutely nothing is impossible with our God, for he will not allow anything to separate us from his love;

“For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.” (Rom. 8: 38-39)

The difference between our body now and our future body is as great as that between the earth and the stars. But even amongst the stars there is a hierarchy of glory (1Cor.15: 40-41). We should probably not even speak in terms of a body, for “there is a natural and a spiritual body” (v.44). We know that this “spiritual body” is sexless (and ageless), for it no longer has the necessity to reproduce itself. Only dying, corruptible creatures need to replicate, immortal beings are removed from the “circle of life” (Mtt.22: 30). This “body” does not know the constraints of time and space, for it can pass through walls (Lk.24: 36) and can appear in different forms (Lk.24: 16, 31). This body can “eat” (Lk.24: 41), but does not need food for sustenance (and therefore presumably does not produce waste). It does not therefore resemble our old body in anyway – it is as opposite as light is to darkness. And yet this “body” although it does not resemble our old physical presence in any way – is the very essence of our individual being and character – which mystery upon mystery has been transformed into part of the eternal Godhead (Col.2: 9-10).

When confronted by the ultimate mystery of resurrection, we are confronted with the power and nature of God himself. We are left dumbfounded, groping in darkness;

“Therefore have I uttered that which I understood not….I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear; but now mine eye seeth thee, wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes” (Job 42: 1-6).

“For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known” (1 Cor.13: 12).

THE FIRST AND THE SECOND RESURRECTION

It has often been suggested that whereas the first resurrection is one of the righteous only, the last is a general resurrection. This cannot be correct, for the evidence of both the old and new Testaments refers to a general resurrection, when both righteous and wicked are raised and judged, “some to everlasting life, and some to everlasting shame and contempt” (Dan.12: 2).1 Both the first and the last resurrection are therefore resurrections of the just and the unjust (Acts.25: 15,25). The difference between them is that participants (those that have a part or share) in the first resurrection are accorded the blessing of ruling with Christ over the mortal population. This blessing is particularly directed at those martyrs who have lost everything because of their witness to Christ.

DANIEL REVELATION

But go thy way till the end be: for thou shalt rest, and stand in thy lot at the end of the days [1,335 days]. (12: 13)

Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: (from henceforth saith the spirit, Yea) that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them. (14: 13)

Blessed is he that waiteth, and cometh to the end of the 1,335 days.(12: 12)

Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests.....(20: 16)

The liars will take their part (mer`s) in the lake of fire (20:6; 21: 8; 22: 19), but the faithful will have their part (allotment) in the first resurrection. Although the first resurrection concentrates specifically on the fate of the martyrs this does not mean that it is an exclusive, elite resurrection, for both small and great are included (19: 5). We have already observed that what constitutes small and great in the eschaton reverses human notions of importance (see chapter 19). It should be recognised that all those who have part in the first resurrection have lived under the dispensation of faith and therefore their reward will be different in character from those who die during the millennium. John's vision is particularly concerned with those who suffered persecution during their witnessing. "The souls of them that were beheaded for the testimony (witness) of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years." (20: 4)

The only witness that is specifically mentioned as suffering the fate of decapitation is John the Baptist (Mk.6: 27-28). He was the witness to the first advent, and it is fitting that the best man (friend of the bridegroom John 3: 29) should have a place of honour next to the groom at the wedding feast. "Thou shalt be King over Israel, and I shall be next unto thee" (1 Sam.23: 17).

All those who suffer martyrdom will be rewarded with the privilege of sitting on thrones (positions of power) with their Lord. This particular blessing can only be rewarded to those who live and die under the dispensation of faith.

THE JUDGMENT

The doctrine of immortal emergence precludes the judgment and is therefore to be rejected. Everyone must appear before the judgment throne, for it is here that every human life is confronted with the justice and mercy of God. If God so wished he could condemn every human that ever lived, with the exception of one man.

"If thou shouldest mark iniquities who should stand? But there is forgiveness with thee" (Ps.103: 3-4).

"God hath not given us the Spirit of fear" (2 Tim.1: 7).

"Perfect love drives out fear because fear has to do with punishment" (1 John 4: 18).

The Father required Jesus to endure all the pain and temptation that we, his followers, may have to suffer if we follow in his way so that as his High Priest, touched with all our infirmities, he could be our advocate with understanding and experience, sympathy and love. "There remaineth now no condemnation....nothing shall separate us from the love of God" (Romans 8: 1, 39).

The judgment itself is described with a stark economy. The first books to be opened are the record books, containing all the evidence that the court needs if men are to be judged by their works (20: 12). But the judgment is no automatic affair, such as could be carried out by an

angelic clerk with enough arithmetic to recognise who had a credit and who had a debit account. What the record books contain is determined by what God decides to remember and what he chooses to forget. What God chooses to forget is not just forgiven but blotted out of existence.

“According unto the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions” (Ps.51: 1).

God does not remember the sin anymore (see Jer.31: 34 contrast Rev.18: 5). And before ever the ledgers are scrutinised by the auditors, another book is opened, whose contents must be thrown into the balance. This is the book of life, in which names have been “written from the foundation of the world” (17: 8), and it belongs to “the Lamb slaughtered from the foundation of the world” (13: 8). Thus into the scale in men’s favour is set the gracious, predestinating purpose of God and the redemptive love of him who died to ransom men for God (v.9). Scripture has allowed for the possibility that a man’s name may be expunged from the book (3: 5), that human disobedience may in the end prove impregnable to the assaults of love. For such people the presence of God could be nothing but a horror from which they, like the earth they made their home, must flee (20: 11), leaving not a trace behind.

Earth and heaven did not merely vanish like a puff of smoke, they fled; they fled in dismay before the moral grandeur of God, because they were unfit for his continued presence, because they were contaminated beyond the possibility of cleansing. The great white throne stands alone, with nothing to challenge, to qualify, or even mediate its sole supremacy. It is before this throne that men stand, and bear, if they can the burning bliss – the searching eyes like a flame (1: 14), the word of God, dividing the very soul and spirit – the thoughts and intents of the heart (Heb.4: 12).

Before this throne heaven and earth fled, leaving not a trace to be found – like the completely disintegrated image of the man Nebuchadnezzar (Dan.2: 35). It represents the removal not merely of the transitory, but of all that which is an obstacle to God’s purpose. Yet their removal does not leave a total void; they are to be replaced by a new heaven and earth.

The old earth is the spiritual home of those who are called inhabitants of the earth, who are unable or unwilling to see beyond it’s material seductions to the glory of it’s Creator; and the old heaven is the location of the sea of glass, that reservoir of evil that represents that structure of organised society in which idolatrous worship is offered and accepted. Throughout all the plagues this society has been the object of divine attack, and now it disappears without trace before the onset of his judgment.

THE THOUSAND YEARS

The thousand years or the millennium is presumed by literalists to be exactly that – a thousand – years, 1 but whether it is literal or not is largely irrelevant to the interpretation of Revelation. We know that, “a thousand years is as a day for the Lord” (2 Pet.3: 8), this is not a general hermenutecal principle that allows a direct substitution of days for years, but rather a statement of Gods nature that transcends time and space. The thousand years can be seen as the escathalogical “day of the Lord” – for it is the Sabbath of rest unto the Lord. It is a day in which man ceases from his own collective works (Satan bound) while he contemplates and enjoys the new creation (Gen.2: 1-3; Ex.20: 8-11; Mk.2: 27). We are obviously meant to draw a parallel with Genesis and a six- day creation, which according to a rough scripture chronology, occurred six thousand years ago, it is also equally obvious that creation is far older than six thousand years. The spiritual lessons in scripture far transcend the rigid structures of science and the

dogmatism of literalism. God “wants us” to look at things in a certain way; the ark was transported two thousand cubits in advance of the people and led the way into the promised land (Josh.3: 4), but are their exactly 42 generations between Abraham and Christ (Mtt.1: 17)? The spiritual man will draw the spiritual lesson and the wise man will discern the scientific truth, but it is only the whole man who will not be polarised by either view for he sees no contradiction.

THE HOLY CITY

The 144,000 who lived in the great tribulation are included in the description of the New Jerusalem. They are called to mind by the wall that is 144 cubits thick. To be sure the point is not lost, these walls are 12,000 furlongs in length and height, recalling 12,000 from each tribe that would make up the original 144,000. So, it turns out, the importance of the city’s dimensions was not just to create a sense of immense grandeur; its dimensions have a symbolic meaning. All measurements including the 144,000 represent the united people of God, the full measure of the city of God- only instead of 12,000 times twelve tribes, the number is 12,000 cubed. The walls are approximately 1,400 miles high and equally wide and long. The New Jerusalem would be a hundred times lager in surface area than the entire nation of Israel (thus encompassing the whole Middle East), and it would extend beyond the earth’s atmosphere. It is obviously not a literal city. John did not see a cube descending, but rather four walls.

The city was measured in cubits and furlongs (stadia), a common cubit being 17.72 inches and a royal cubit 20.67 inches. A Roman furlong was 607 feet and a Greek 630.8 feet. The cubit was originally the distance from elbow to fingertip; but as with the foot measurement, the value of a cubit became standardised, though the standards varied from country to country. A cubit of approximately 15 inches would give each wall a volume of 42 million cubits (and we know the significance of 42). But John does not mean the standard cubit, for the actual measure is of the angels forearm (21: 17). This must mean that the final volume of the wall can not be calculated by man – for it is God who lays down the measurement. When John himself was given a measuring rod and told to measure the sanctuary (11: 1), it was for the purpose of protection (sealing); whatever he did not measure was left exposed to gentile attack. This city, will however, receive the glory and honour of the gentiles (21: 24). Every sanctuary of God described in scripture was built with gentile resources. The Tabernacle with Egyptian plunder, Solomon’s temple from David’s military plunder and tribute, and fashioned with the help of gentile labour. The post captivity temple was funded by the Persian king and expanded by Herod the Great an Edomite.

Like the city of Ezekiel's hope, this city stands foursquare (Ezek.45: 2; 48: 20), and like the Holy of holies in Solomon’s temple its length, breadth and height being equal (1 Kgs.6: 20)1 it is a perfect cube. This does not mean however that it has a roof, for it is essentially four walls, the floor being the earth and the roof the heavens. Men had dreamt of building a Babel whose top should reach to heaven (Gen.11: 4), or of scaling the northern mountain on which stood the city of the gods. But here coming down out of heaven is a city so sublime that before it human aspirations dwindle into insignificance. It is the anti-type of the historical Babylon, which Herodotus describes as follows: ‘The city stands in a broad plain, foursquare, with each front a hundred and twenty furlongs, so that the entire perimeter is four hundred and eighty furlongs. In proportion to the vast size of the city of Babylon, in magnificence it excels every other city that eyes have ever seen. It is surrounded by a moat, deep, broad, and full of water, then by a wall fifty royal cubits in width and two hundred in height. (The royal cubit is lager by three fingers then the common cubit).’[Herod, I, 178].

Note that John also describes a city that stands foursquare, uses the stadia or furlong measure for the perimeter and the cubit for the thickness (not the height) of the wall, and like Herodotus, explains the size of the cubit measure he is using. Also the city walls are a hundred times longer (12,000) than the 120 furlongs of Babylon. Babylon had the river Euphrates running through the middle (which is subsequently dried up –16: 12), the holy city has a river of water of life. Babylon was famous for its hanging gardens, but the holy city has luxuriant trees on either side of the river 1, for it is the paradise of God.

This city has twelve foundation stones, bearing the names of the twelve apostles – for it is their eyewitness testimony that has established the city (Acts1: 21-22) and they had been promised to rule over the twelve tribes of Israel (Mtt.19: 28). The twelve foundations are necessary to support the twelve sections of wall, for the twelve gates do not require foundations.

The unimaginable wonder of the city is further evinced by its fabric. The fabric of the wall was jasper, the substance that most nearly serves to convey an impression of the being of God himself (4: 3). John no doubt recalls the prophecy of Zechariah that the restored Jerusalem would need no wall, because the Lord would be a wall of fire about her and a glory within her (Zech.2: 5). We, recalling the same prophecy, might be tempted to ask why the holy city needs a wall at all, now that there can be no threat to its security from without. To the ancient mind the possession of a wall is what constituted a city. John cannot dispense with a wall, but he makes it clear that the fabric is nothing else than the radiance of the divine presence which characterises the city as a whole (cp.v.11). That divine presence is reflected in the saints, who form the building blocks of the wall – " And the house, when it was in building, was built of stone made ready before it was brought thither: so that there was neither hammer nor axe nor any tool of iron heard in the house, while it was in building." (1 Kgs.6: 7)

"For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle (referring figuratively to our bodies) were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed with our house which is from heaven…that mortality might be swallowed up in life. Now he that hath wrought us (fashioned us) for this very thing is God, who also hath given us the earnest of the Spirit." (2 Cor.5: 1,2,4b, 5)

The fabric of the city itself is gold, but no earthly gold; it is bright as clear glass, (polished like a mirror), yet it is also translucent at all points, and so it reflects from the surface and within, from the core, the omnipresent shekinah glory. It is the gold of tried faith radiating from the temple (Jesus Christ) and the saints (the walls and streets). The twelve gates, three on each side, correspond to the twelve tribes of Israel. Salvation is of the Jews, and it is only through the fulfilment of the covenants made with the patriarchs, that are reflected in the tribal promises (Gen.49) that this city can be entered.

The gates are listed in a curious order (21: 13), which is also encountered in Ezek.42: 16-19(the reason for this order will become apparent later) ;

THE FOUNDATION GEMS OF THE CITY

Many commentators have struggled with the order of the gem stones (21: 19-20), for they are not based on the birth order of the tribes, nor on the arrangements of the gems on the breastplate of the high priest (which was the same order as the encampment around the tabernacle 1).

Part of the problem is due to the fact that the ancient writers were somewhat vague in their identification of precious stones, so that a single Hebrew stone could easily be equated with more than one Greek one. (The only systematic treatises on this subject in ancient times were Theophrastus' On stones and Pliny's Natural History Book 27).

If we use the alternatives suggested in the RV version and RV margin of Exodus chapter 28, then we can list them as follows:

1. Jasper Naphtali

2. Sapphire Simeon

3.Chalcedony =onyx Asher

4.Emerald Reuben

5.Sardonxy =diamond Gad

6.Sardius Judah

7.Chrysolite Zebulun

8.Beryl Dan

9.Topaz Issachar

10.Chrysoprasus =agate Manasseh

11.Jacinth= ligure Ephraim

12.Amethyst Benjamin

At first glance the tribal list seems arbitrary, but closer investigation shows that it bears a resemblance with the 'new birth order' that we encountered in Revelation chapter seven.

REVELATION 7

REVELATION 21

CAMP SITE

GEM

ORDER

EAST

1. Judah

4.

Reuben

2. Reuben

5.

Gad

3. Gad

6.

Judah

4. Asher

1.

Naphtali

NORTH

5. Naphtali

2.

Simeon

6. Manasseh (displaced)

3.

Asher

7. Simeon

8. Levi (substituted)

9.

Issachar

SOUTH

9. Issachar

8.

Dan

10. Zebulun

7.

Zebulun

11. Joseph

10.

Manasseh

WEST

12. Benjamin

11.

Ephraim

12.

Benjamin

We noted earlier that John enumerates the gates of the city in a curious order -ENSW, this corresponds with the order that the camps would have if derived from the 'new birth order' of the 144,000 in Revelation chapter seven. The problem is complicated by the fact that the foundation gems are listed in a different order – NESW, whereas the order on the high priests breastplate is ESWN. We also note that the tribe of Dan that was removed in chapter seven, now replaces the tribe of Levi, and that Joseph has been replaced by his sons, the tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh. The fact that the tribe of Levi is omitted from the gems is not unusual, for it is also not present amongst the gems on the high priest's breastplate. The families of Levi camped round about the tabernacle forming a buffer with the other tribes (see diagram chapter 4 page 6). Perhaps their omission is pointing to the fact that there is a better priesthood one not based on inheritance. The city has the following order:

N

1.Jasper-Naphtali

2.Sapphire- Simeon

3.Chalcedony (onyx) Asher

W E

12. Amethyst-Benjamin 4. Emerald-Reuben

11.Jacinth (ligure)-Ephraim 5. Sardonyx (diamond)- Gad

10.Chrysopras (agate)-Manasseh 6. Sardius-Judah

S

7. Chrysolite (carbuncle)-Zebulun

8. Beryl-Dan

9. Topaz-Issachar

THE HOLY CITY AND THE SIGNS OF THE ZODIAC

According to both Philo (vit. Mos. ii.124) and Josephus (Ant. iii.7.7), the stones on the high priest's breastpiece were symbols of the Zodiac. Neither of these writers had any interest in pursuing the subject to the point of linking any particular stone with a particular zodiacal sign. Josephus was trying to prove to his gentile reader that the Jewish religion was not indifferent to pagan cosmology, because the high priests vestments symbolised the whole cosmos (cp.Wis 18: 24), and he offered two explanations of the jewels: they might mean the twelve months or they might mean the Zodiac, the reader could take his choice. We have already observed that the stars were given for signs and seasons (Gen.1: 14) and thus associated with the feast days. Bullinger 1 remarks that the four cardinal points of the Zodiac are associated with the four camps of Israel – the eastern camp of Judah, leo the lion. The southern camp of Reuben, aquarius, the man, the western camp of Ephraim, taurus, the ox, the southern camp of Dan, aquila the eagle. (Bullinger substitutes the scorpion of Dan for the eagle, the enemy of the scorpion). This suggests that the four quarters of the Zodiac are associated with the faces of the

cherubim. If this is correct then the four Zodiac faces of the heavens look towards the earth. This would make the earth the mercy seat and footstool- the place where the shekinah glory will dwell and where divine mercy finds its outworking.2

We can but speculate that when Christ said, “In my Fathers house are many mansions (monf): if it were not I would have told you” (John 14: 2), that he was referring to the “heavenly sanctuary.” The “heavenly sanctuary” formed the pattern for all the earthly ones. The sun appears to move through one of the Zodiac signs each month – this path is called the Ecliptic. These are the twelve signs or mansions of the sun. Jesus was reassuring his disciples that he was going away to prepare an “abiding place” in the “heavenly sanctuary”, for in his Fathers house there are many mansions (room for everyone). This was contrary to current pagan superstitions, that the heavens were the abiding place of the “gods.”

This does not mean that believers go to “heaven”, but rather that the heavenly sanctuary descends to earth. God is even now shaping the “abiding places” or mansions – men and women, who will be the indwelling of his Spirit. In the east there was the idea of the city of the gods in the skies. There the gods dwelt; the sun moon and stars where its lights; the Milky Way was its great street; there were twelve gates through which the stars went in and out upon their business. Connected with the city of the gods there are the signs of the Zodiac, the signs of the parts of the heavens through which the sun passes. There is evidence from Egyptian and Arabian monuments that the Zodiac signs were associated with the following gems.

The Ram – Amethyst

The Bull- Jacinth

The Twins – Chrysoprase

The Crab – Topaz

The Lion – Beryl

The Virgin –Chrysolite

The Balance- Carnelian

The Scorpion- Sardonyx

The Archer- Emerald

The Goat- Chalcedony

The water-carrier – Sapphire

The Fishes – Jasper

This is exactly the reverse order of the gem list in Revelation 21, and explains why the foundation stones listed there depart from the usual ESWN orientation to the more unusual NESW described by John. Scripture has taken the myth and knowledge of the world and turned it upside down – the “city of the gods” is made new in the city of God. It is a disavowal of pagan astrological interest.

We now return to a description of the gates (21: 21) which is based on Isa.54: 11-12;

“I will…lay your foundation stones with lapis lazuli, I will make your pinnacles of agate, your gates of carbuncles.”

The Hebrew word ’eqdah (carbuncles), which does not occur elsewhere, is here taken to mean pearls. Each gate would consist of one great pearl. In the ancient world pearls were of all stones most valued. All his life the merchant man would seek the pearl of great price and then count it worth selling all his possessions to buy it (Mtt.13: 46). Gates of pearl are a symbol of unimaginable beauty and inaccessible riches. Pearls are formed in the oyster by a grain of sand acting as an irritant, and so forming a nucleus. The oyster coats it with a nacreous substance that hardens to form the coating of pearl. So it is “through much tribulation” that the redeemed develop characters fit for the kingdom. The pearls must be brought to the light from the depths of the sea (see 20: 13), where it is hidden from human sight. Its outer layer must be peeled away, and it’s full lustre revealed in the light of the sun (21: 23).

“But now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for he hath prepared for them a city.” (Heb.11: 16)

“Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out: and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, which is new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God: and I will write upon him my new name.”(Rev.3: 12)

“But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him.”

(1 Cor.2: 9)

THE OUTSIDERS

“For without are dogs, and sorcerers, and whoremongers, and murderers, and idolaters, and whosoever loveth and maketh a lie.” (Rev.22: 15)

We have already considered the fate of the outsiders, and recognised that those that “make a lie” are those who help create and support the “image of the beast.” They are idolaters, not in the strict sense of falling down and worshipping an image – but anything that competes with or replaces our affection for God. This can be material seduction, false religion, imperial power etc. We have already examined the nature of the beast in chapter 13. The sorcerers, are of course the false witnesses with their counterfeit signs and whoremongers and murderers are the followers of the harlot whose hands have been bloodied by the death of the martyrs of Jesus.

However, to all the above we have to add one more important category.

“The fearful and unbelieving” (21: 8)

Cowardice is a sin. Fear and unbelief imply a lack of faith in God. This is an extremely important lesson that has particular ramifications for brethren and sisters living in the end time. John saw a time of great tribulation and martyrdom, the saints must have an unshakeable faith in the heavenly Father to emerge victorious. It was a lack of courage that prevented the Israelites entering into their inheritance, and that generation perished in the wilderness. They remained outside the kingdom.

Joshua was exhorted to be “strong and very courageous”, his strength was to be drawn from meditating on the word of God day and night (Josh.1: 7-9).

“Be strong and of a good courage; be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed: for the Lord thy God is with thee (Emmanuel) whithersoever thou goest.”

The fear we must have, is not the fear caused by unbelief but the fear of coming short of his promise (Heb.4: 1). Our first century brethren were faced with the Nero persecution, the fall of Jerusalem – the end of the cosmos as they knew it. And, yet, many poured out their lives, without fear, in order to obtain a better inheritance.

This generation will also face a crisis of evil – God will again confront man with his saving grace – it is a time of regeneration and birth, but birth is always painful. The message to our first century brethren is therefore equally valid for us:

“Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God. But exhort one another daily, while it is called To day; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. For we are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end; While it is said, To day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts, as in the provocation. For some, when they had heard, did provoke: howbeit not all that came out of Egypt by Moses. But with whom was he grieved forty years? was it not with them that had sinned, whose carcasses fell in the wilderness? And to whom sware he that they should not enter into his rest, but to them that believed not? So we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief.” (Heb.3: 12-19)

We belong to the household of Joshua, let us then have his courage, and his assurance that God would never forsake him:

“But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.” (Josh.24: 15)

EVEN SO, COME, LORD JESUS.

“And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.” (Rev.22: 17)

This must be the prayer on the lips of every saint since the beginning of time, “Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven” (Mtt.6: 10).The only time Gods will has been done on earth is in the man Jesus Christ. “Nevertheless not my will, but thine be done” (Lk.22: 42). Truly the kingdom of God amongst men was personified (Mtt.12: 28; Lk.17: 21) in his life of service and his unselfish death. In him we see the compassionate and merciful face of our God.

When he returns, the kingdom and the temple will be truly amongst men, and we shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them (Emmanuel), and be their God (21: 3).

Even so, come, Lord Jesus.

Notes

The constellation called BOÖ TES (Grk.) means he cometh – the brightest star – Arcturus also means “He cometh.” The Hebrew root Bo (to come), meaning the coming is referred to in Psalm 96: 13;

“Before the LORD: for he cometh, for he cometh to judge the earth: he shall judge the world with righteousness, and the people with his truth.” (Ps.96: 13)

See, The Witness of the stars, Bullinger pg.42.

NOTES

1 The devil is often defined as the false accuser or adversary. It is more accurately expressed by the term prosecutor and signifies an opponent at law. Man stands accused in the heavenly law court by his own morality and character. Only in the case of Christ did this prove to be a false accusation (and by proxy also for his followers who are justified through him).

---

2 Legion was also chained (Mk.5: 4) contrast the sealing of Satan in the Abyss with Christ sealed up in the tomb.

---

3 Called Abaddon in the Hebrew and Apollyon in the Greek.

NOTES

1 Mary and Elisabeth were kinswomen and Elisabeth was a daughter of the house of Aaron, and bearing the name of Aaron's wife (Ex.6: 23) – though the women were from different tribes, this shows that Jesus was indirectly linked with the tribe of Levi.

---

2 "Then shalt thou be pleased with the sacrifices of righteousness, with burnt offering and whole burnt offering: then shall they offer bullocks upon thine altar" (Ps. 51: 19). The Hebrew for bullock is par and the Hebrew for cause to cease is parar. The hophal form means to be made void (see Isa.8: 10, Jer.33: 21). The author believes that a transcribing error has led to corruption, it would make more contextual sense to read : Then shall offerings be made void on thine altar. The sacrifice of Christ combines the burnt offering (dedication) and the peace offering as well as the sin offering – in him they are all fulfilled and therefore made redundant.

NOTES

1 A good overview of the passages can be obtained from Apocalypse for Everyman by A.D. Norris (pg.335-337).

NOTES

1 The author recommends to the reader the lucid discussion by A.D. Norris in Apocalypse for Everyman (pgs.321-326).

NOTES

1 Compare Ephesians 3:17-19 – "that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith, that ye, being rooted and grounded (cp 1 Kgs5: 17) in love, may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth and length, and depth, and height; and to know the love of Christ, which passeth

knowledge, that ye might be filled with the fullness of God." In this description it is the saints who are the dwelling place of God.

NOTES

1 The Greek is literally translated on this side of the river and on that was the tree of life, we should probably understand that the trunk stood in the midst of the river with the branches overhanging both banks.

NOTES

1 See chapter four pages six and ten.

NOTES

1 The witness of the stars pg.18,19.

2 The foremost representation of the mercy seat, is of course – Jesus Christ.