

The Last Days



ALETHEIA
Biblical Studies

Duncan Heaster

The Last Days

Duncan Heaster

Carelinks Publishing

PO Box 152, Menai NSW 2234 Australia

www.carelinks.net

Section 1: Types Of The Last Days

Chapter 1 The flood as a type of the last days

Chapter 2 Babel

Chapter 3 Sodom

3-1 Lot In Sodom

Chapter 4 Jacob and Esau In The Last Days

Chapter 5 Latter Day Passover and Exodus

Chapter 6 Arab invasions during the time of the Judges

Introduction: The Judges As Saviours

6-1. Chushan-Rishathaim

6-2. Eglon of Moab

6-3. Jabin And Sisera

6-4. Gideon And Midian

6-5. Jephthah and Ammon

Chapter 7 Arab invasions during the time of the Kings

7-1 The Type Of David And Goliath

7-2 Jehoshaphat And The Last Days

Chapter 8 The Assyrian Invasion

8-1 The Assyrian and Babylonian Invasions: Introduction

8-2 Assyria And Gog

8-3 Tiglath-pileser

8-4 The Assyrian Invasion As A Type

8-5 Hezekiah's Reformation

8-6 Rabshakeh

8-7 Assyria And Daniel 11

8-8 Hezekiah's Prayer

8-9 A Rebuilt Temple In The Last Days?

8-10 The Latter Day Remnant

8-11 Leviathan And Assyria

Digression 1: The Identity Of Rosh

The Identity Of Rosh

A Biblical Case For A Russian Invasion

The Significance Of The Georgia - Russia Conflict In Bible Prophecy

Unrest In The Arab World: The Perspective of Biblical Prophecy

The Situation in Syria in Bible Prophecy

Chapter 9

9-1 The Babylonian invasion of Judah

9-2 The judgment of Babylon

Digression 2 The Revival Of Babylon

2-1 Unfulfilled Prophecies About Babylon

2-2 Babylon As Capital Of The Beast

2-3 Babylon And Antichrist

2-4 Latter Day Babylon

2-5 A Possible Latter Day Sequence Of Events?

Chapter 10 The first coming of Jesus

Digression 3: The Earth - Land - Eretz

Section 2: The Holocaust To Come

Chapter 11 The tribulation in the Olivet prophecy

11-1 The Olivet Prophecy And The Last Days

11-2 Does The Olivet Prophecy Have A Break In Fulfillment?

11-3 An Exposition Of The Olivet Prophecy

11-4 The Olivet Prophecy And 1 Thessalonians

Digression 4: The Relevance Of Revelation To AD70

Chapter 12-1 The tribulation in Daniel and Revelation

12-2 The Beast And The Little Horn

12-3 The beast and the man of sin

12-4 Latter Day Persecution

12-5 The Seals

12-6 The Two Witnesses

12-7 The Dragon And The Child

Digression 5: Do We Know The day And Hour?

Digression 6: A Possible Chronology Of The Tribulation

Digression 7: The Palestinian Movement In Bible Prophecy

Section 3 : The Repentance Of Israel

Chapter 13 The marriage supper parable

Chapter 14 The fig tree parable

Chapter 15 The repentance of Israel

Chapter 16-1 The coming of Elijah

16-2 Malachi's 'Elijah' Prophecy

Section 4: The Coming Of The Lord And Judgment

Chapter 17-1 The Parousia
17-2 Christ's Coming As A Thief
Chapter 18 The judgment seat of Christ
Chapter 19 Wise and foolish virgins

Section 5: The Ecclesia In The Last Days
Chapter 20 "The promise of his coming"
20-1 2 Peter Chapter 3: An Exposition
20-2 The Judgment Of AD70
20-3 Is There A Delay In Christ's Return?
Chapter 21 Wheat and tares
Chapter 22 Latter day apostacy?
Chapter 23 The man of sin
23.1 The Antichrist In Daniel
Chapter 24 Letters for the last days
Chapter 25 Christ's Letters To The Churches
25-2 The Financial / Liquidity Crisis And Bible Prophecy
Digression 8: Knowledge Shall Be Increased

Section 6: The Kingdom
Chapter 26 Types of the Kingdom of God
Chapter 27 The Essence Of The Kingdom Of God
Chapter 28 What Will The Millennium Be Like?
Chapter 29 The nations in the Millennium
Chapter 30 The natural creation in the Kingdom of God
Chapter 31 The location of Eden
Digression 9: The Seven Last Visions Of Revelation

Appendices:

- 1) "Are there few that be saved?"
- 2) Identifying the beast
- 3) The Antichrist principle
- 4) Loving Christ's appearing
- 5) Protestant Phobia About Russia
- 6) Criticisms Of Futurism Considered
13. Images Of The Love Of Christ

SECTION 1: TYPES OF THE LAST DAYS

Introduction

The closer we look at Scripture, the more evident it is that its words are constantly inter-linked, both by means of direct quotation and allusion. The final " day of the Lord" will contain elements of all the previous 'days' of God's manifestation in the affairs of men. It will be the time when " the words of God are fulfilled" (Rev. 17:17), when " all is fulfilled" (Lk. 21:22,32) - presumably referring to the prophetic word. It is therefore fitting that there are many Old Testament historical backgrounds to the prophecies which relate to the Lord's return. Firstly we need to familiarize ourselves with them, which this Section does by picking out some of the more obvious ones.

CHAPTER 1: THE FLOOD AS A TYPE OF THE LAST DAYS

It is a commonly stressed theme throughout Scripture that the days of Noah are a type of the last days of AD70. The clearest is in Mt. 24:37: " As the days of Noe were, so shall also the coming of the son of man be" . It is generally understood among us that the events of AD70 and the " coming" of the Lord then, point forward to that in the last days. Thus it is not surprising that a number of passages describe the AD70 judgments of Israel in terms of the flood; which suggests that they also have reference to the last days:

- 2 Peter 3 is a clear example, describing the destruction of the Jewish system in AD70 as being by fire as opposed to water used in Noah's time. Yet the chapter also has reference, e.g. through it's links with the new Heavens and earth of Is. 65, with the destruction of the present age at the Lord's return.
- Nahum 1 describes the coming judgements on Israel in terms of mountains and hills splitting, and there being a great flood; all Genesis flood language.
- Dan. 9:26 describes the Romans in AD70 destroying " the city and the sanctuary; and the end thereof shall be with a flood" , the LXX implying with a sudden flood, as in Noah's time.
- Is. 54:9 describes the judgments on Israel being " as the waters of Noah" . The end of the flood, the end of Israel's judgments, therefore typifies the second coming.
- In the light of this the Lord's parable about the man building on sand whose house was destroyed when the heavy rain came (Mt. 7:25,27) must have primary reference (as so many of the parables do) to the judgement on the Jewish house in AD70. Those who built on sand as a result of not hearing Christ's words were the Jews- also described as shoddy builders in Mt. 21:42; Acts 4:11; 1 Pet. 2:7; Mic. 3:10; Jer. 22:13.
- The flood waters were upon the earth for 5 months. The siege of Jerusalem in AD70 lasted for the same period, coming after 3 years of the Roman campaign against Israel which started in AD67. The three and a half year suffering of Israel which culminated in AD70 may well point forward to a similar period in the last days; in which case the flood would typify the final months of that period, during which the judgments will be poured out most intensely. Other hints of this are discussed in Section 2. The five month tribulation of Rev. 9:10 may also have some relevance here.

Thus the state of Israel in AD70 was typified by the world of Noah's time, which therefore looks forward also to the last days, in the light of the evident connections between that period and our last days which are made in 2 Pet. 3 and the Olivet prophecy.

All things relevant

We can therefore look at the Genesis record of the lead up to the flood and be confident that every detail has some relevance to our time; and therefore grasp the reality of the fact that we should feel the same tenseness and intensity as Noah did as he waited for the rain. Note how Jesus' return is described as the rain in 2 Sam. 23:4; Hos. 6:3; Joel 2:23.

- Our present population explosion has only been paralleled in Noah's time. The longer life-spans could have resulted in each woman bearing up to 200 children; bearing in mind the lack of present constraining factors such as adverse climate, space, physical degeneration of the human stock over 6,000 years etc. which we now face, it is likely that in the 10 generations from Adam to Noah up to 2,000 million people were produced.

- These longer life-spans would have resulted in a great accumulation of knowledge and skills in the arts and sciences. Gen. 4:22 describes Tubal-Cain (contemporary with Noah) as " an instructor of every artificer in brass and iron" , hinting at technical education and industrialization. Similarly Jubal was " father of all such as handle the harp and organ" (Gen. 4:21); a growth in so-called culture (i.e. sophisticated pleasure- educated Christians please note). Note the emphasis on education- " an instructor..father..father" .

- God saw that " the imagination of man's heart" was evil from his youth (Gen. 8:21); not from his birth, showing that God is referring to the specific attitude of those times rather than to man's innate sinfulness. The implication is that God was especially saddened at the evil thinking of a reprobate, corrupted youth. And how much more today?

- Cain's first big city (Gen. 4:17) no doubt spawned others. Complex, selfish city life would have been apparent at Noah's time- as it is supremely throughout our modern world.

- " Lamech shall be avenged seventy and seven fold" (Gen. 4:24) he boasted. Does this hint at the war preparations and a spirit of personal vengeance and pressing for one's 'rights' which fills the earth today?

- There is an emphasis on there being a " father" of all the cattle keepers, all the musicians, and an instructor of every metal worker (Gen. 4:20-22); implying the kind of commercial cartels and unionism which we have today?

- The earth being filled with violence (Gen. 6:11) needs little comment. Note how this verse is quoted in Ez. 8:17 about the land (same word as " earth") of Israel being filled with violence. Similarly Gen. 6:13 is alluded to in Ez. 7:2,3,6. This opens up an understanding of Ezekiel along the lines that it is describing the events of AD70 as well as other periods. The flood being such a clear type of AD70, passages which allude to it must also have an AD70 context.

- The " giants" of Gen.6:4 comes from a Hebrew root meaning 'hackers or assailants'- implying arrogant gangs strutting round assailing people at will. Job. 22:15-17 R.V. gives the same impression. Compare this with the gang warfare and intimidation of the Americas and many countries.

- The world was characterized by *hamas*- "unrighteousness" (Gen. 6:11). 'Hamas' can mean "lawlessness perpetrated by force" (1). Perhaps we have here a suggestion that the 'land' promised to Abraham- the arena of the Biblical flood- is to be dominated by 'Hamas' or a like terrorist organization.

- Job 22:15-18 comments on the people living just before the flood that they cast off all commitment to God and yet God "filled their houses with good things"; i.e. material wealth despite a viciously God-forsaking attitude. Exactly the scene today.

- One of the few women mentioned as being contemporary with Noah was Adah- meaning 'to decorate, ornament'. And of such women the sons of God took wives of all that they chose (Gen. 6:2). Dolled up women picked up at will by sex-mad men could not be a more telling parallel with our age. Note too how the three periods picked out in Scripture as having major similarities with the last days- Sodom, Noah's time, Israel in AD70- all have the common feature of sexual misbehaviour. There can be no doubt that this is a major indication that we are in the last days.

- Signs within the ecclesia seem to herald the Lord's coming even clearer than those without. As a prelude to the flood, the Sons of God married the daughters of men (Gen. 6:2)- the true believers married unbelievers. However, the "sons of God" often refers to Israel (Is. 43:6,7; 63:8; Jer. 31:20; Ez. 16:20; Mal. 1:16; 3:7), hinting that there will be a big Jewish inter-marriage problem in the last days too. There is ample evidence of this.

- Given this apostasy of the sons of God and the unwillingness of the world to listen to Noah's preaching (2 Pet. 2:5) the size of the ecclesia must have declined, until it was only 9 strong. 'Methuselah' means 'When he dies, it shall come'- suggesting that he died a few days or weeks before the flood came. We can imagine the ecclesia falling away one by one until it was just that old brother, the middle aged Noah, and his three faithful sons (no doubt he had other sons and daughters who he failed to influence). The small, declining size of our ecclesias and the total apathy to our preaching should not discourage us- as with all negative things, a positive message can be read into them in the light of Scripture. And the message here is that such things clearly indicate that we are in the last days. The only people to survive the temptations of these 'last days' before the flood were one family unit. As these events are so pregnant with latter day relevance, it may be that we are to perceive here a faint hint that strongly led family units are the way to survive the last days. Noah is described as "the eighth" (2 Pet. 2:5), perhaps alluding to the fact that of the eight people saved in the ark, he was "the eighth"; he put the others first. The three who escaped the judgments on Sodom, another type of the last days, were all members of the same family; possibly implying the same thing. It must surely be significant that our strongest members are often from families with other strong members.

However, the general spiritual apathy grieved God at His heart, we are told. This reminds us of the often overlooked fact that God is an emotional being- the world today grieves Him, and it is to be expected therefore that He is all the more intently watching us, to see whether we are going to keep ourselves separate from the spirit of this desperate age.

Waiting for the rain

It is worth pausing to make a powerful devotional point. A careful reading of Gen. 7:7,10,13,16 reveals that Noah entered the ark twice- once before the seven days, and then finally at the end, perhaps when he had finished loading the animals. At the second entry he was shut in. Peter reasons in 1 Pet. 3 that the ark represents two things- being in Christ by baptism, and being saved from the tribulations to come on the world of the last days. These are typified respectively by the first and second entries of Noah into the ark. If our baptism is like that first entering in, then Noah's tense, earnest waiting for the rain in the next 7 days should typify our feelings towards the second coming

(cp. the rain). We should live our whole lives after baptism as if we know for certain that the second coming is but a week away.

For Noah and his family the reality of these things would have ebbed and flowed during that week—some days and hours more than others. But it would have remained with them in the back of their minds as an ever-present reality. Methuselah's death by the time they entered the ark would have heightened their awareness of the shortness of the time ('Methuselah' = 'when he dies, it shall come'). By being in the ark with them, that same intensity of feeling ought to be ours. Never before would they have felt so estranged from the world around them which they knew had such limited time left to satisfy its pleasures. And what scant interest they would have paid to their own possessions, homes, farms and all the other material things around them which they knew would so shortly be ended. In all this lies a powerful lesson to us. Instead their minds would have been obsessed with the ark, the symbol of their faith down through the past years. 'We need this for the ark...we must do that for it' would have been their way of thinking down through those years, as Noah in faith prepared the ark for the saving of himself (Heb. 11). And this lays the pattern for our dedication and consumption with the things of the truth, the ark, Christ our Lord and His ecclesia.

A refuge from the storm

The animals were gathered from all over the world. They cannot represent the saints—Noah's family represents them. They must therefore look forward to the people from all over the world who will survive the judgements on the world due to their association with us. Thus many of those to whom we witness but they do not respond may well survive the holocaust to come upon the world to live in the new age of peace, like that which followed the flood. This concept should give the ultimate fillip to our enthusiasm for preaching—no longer obsessed with numbers of baptisms but with the number of people being witnessed to. Far more clean animals than unclean were taken into the ark. Peter in Acts 10 saw a vision in which clean animals represented Jews and unclean were Gentiles. Does this indicate that more Jews will survive the judgements to come on the world than Gentiles? Given the many Jews that we know will die in the last day judgements, it follows that if this line of interpretation is correct very few Gentiles will survive at all.

This throws interesting light on the likely population in the Millennium. If each saint rules over some mortals, as Rev. 5:10 and the parable of ten and five cities indicates, then the population of the cities cannot be that great. For all the world to come and worship at Jerusalem to keep the feast of tabernacles (Zech. 14) could suggest small numbers relative to the present world population. Everything apart from what was in the ark was destroyed by the flood; the carnage was beyond description. Thus in the last days, which will be an even fuller cataclysm than anything yet seen on the earth, such wholesale destruction is to be expected, in which only a handful survive. "Every living substance was destroyed...man, and cattle, and the creeping things, and the fowl of the heaven (by the heavy downpour of rain?)" (Gen. 7:23). As only a remnant of the human and natural creation survived, so only a remnant of the world around us will come through the future judgments on the earth. The fact an olive tree survived indicates that there was not total destruction. This kind of mass destruction is typical of that which will come upon Israel in the last days: "I will utterly consume all things from off the face of the land...I will consume man and beast; I will consume the fowls of the heaven...and I will cut off man from off the land...that day is a day...of clouds and thick darkness...and I will bring distress upon men, that they shall walk like blind men" (Zeph. 1). This is clearly flood language; the description of blind men may connect with Zech. 14:12 prophesying the loss of eyesight for the latter day invaders of the land (cp. how the men of Sodom were smitten with blindness in another type of the last days). Is. 54:9,10 promises that although God will judge Israel

with the 'flood' of the second coming judgments, yet He will never totally reject them on account of the remnant: " As I have sworn that the waters of Noah should no more go over the earth; so have I sworn that I would not be wroth with thee, nor rebuke (reject) thee. For the mountains *shall* depart, and the hills be removed; but my kindness shall not depart from thee" . This is surely saying that the same order of physical catastrophe as came upon the earth at the flood will again come upon Israel in the last days; *but* we must not see this as God breaking His covenant of faithfulness to His true people. Heb. 11:1,7 stresses how much Noah really believed God's prophecy about the nature of the flood; he was " moved with fear" by these predictions. The physical world around us is going to be changed beyond recognition; this ought to make it easier for us to come to terms with the fact that *all* aspects of *our* surrounding world will likewise pass away.

Noah's response was to prepare " an ark to the saving of his house...and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith" (Heb. 11:7). We know that the ark represents Christ. Noah's response was not to smugly reflect how that soon he would be vindicated for his separation from the world, i.e. for his own personal righteousness. Instead he took seriously God's warning that sinners were to soon be destroyed. Noah was, of course, a sinner as we all are. He therefore must have cried out to God in faith, asking for God to count him as if he were righteous, so that he would be saved from the coming judgments against sin. This is how he had righteousness imputed to him. He showed his faith that God really had justified him by doing something physical- his faith led to the 'works' of building the ark; as our faith likewise leads us to baptism into Christ. Through Christ, God " scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts" (Lk. 1:51). This is quoting from Gen. 6:5 LXX concerning the wicked imagination of man's heart at the flood. This is even more evidence that we can read the events of the flood as typical of two things; our salvation from the judgment upon sin, and also of the events of the last days, when that salvation will be physically manifested. We are in Noah's position; we can see clearly the judgments which must come upon sin. By our nature, we are part and parcel of that sin which has to be judged. Our response *cannot* be to trust in our own righteousness, which we may feel we have as a result of our physical separation from the world. We must instead be motivated by imagining the reality of Christ's coming, to make sure that we are covered in the righteousness of Christ, so that the impending destruction of sin will not take us away with it. Perhaps at no time before has the body of Christ so needed to learn the lesson of Noah; to cease from our own works, " and become heir of the righteousness which is by *faith*" .

God "remembered Noah" (Gen. 8:1) whilst he was in the ark. Moses uses the same figure in Gen. 30:22 to describe how God 'remembered' Rachel in responding to her prayer. Likewise God 'remembered' the righteous in Sodom in response to Abraham's prayer (Gen. 19:29). Could this not imply that whilst Noah was spared from the world's judgment, he was earnestly praying for the days to be shortened, and to be allowed to emerge from the ark into the new world? This would point forward to the urgent prayer of the faithful in the last days- a theme which we will often have cause to underline in these studies.

Notes

(1) Umberto Cassuto, *A Commentary On The Book Of Genesis* (Jerusalem: Magness Press, 1998) Vol. 2 p. 52.

CHAPTER 2: THE TOWER OF BABEL

The 'coming down' of Yahweh to destroy man's evil intentions at Babel, points forward to His future intervention to judge the wickedness of men. The record of this in Gen. 11 is set against the

background of Gen. 10. " As *they* journeyed from the east...*they* found a plain..." (Gen. 11:2) is in the context of the record of the growth and rapid expansion of the Arab tribes in Gen. 10. That chapter spotlights particularly the greatness of Nimrod " the mighty hunter against the Lord" (Gen. 10:9, Hebrew). The Hebrew for 'Nimrod' is related to 'Gibbor', the title of Christ used in Is. 9:6. Nimrod appears to be a prototype anti-God and anti-Christ, and for this he was well known even then (Gen. 10:9). Gen. 10:10,11 shows his characteristic of building cities in the Babylon/Assyria area. Seeing that " the beginning of his kingdom was Babel" (Gen. 10:10), it is not unreasonable to assume that when " a man said to his neighbour, Go to, let us make brick" to build the tower of Babel, this is in fact referring to Nimrod (Gen. 11:3 A.V. mgn.).

At this time, " the whole earth was of one language, and of one speech" (Gen. 11:1). The Hebrew for " speech" here is not the same word used for " speech" later on in this record - this word more suggests a purpose/desire, often a wrong one. The implication is that this one desire was to build the tower of Babel; the confounding of languages affecting all inhabitants of the earth shows that all the families of the earth were either in the Babel region or represented there. Truly it was a tower " which the children of men builded" (Gen. 11:5), bound together in unity by a common allegiance to this renowned king of Babylon.

" Go to"

Three times in this record (Gen. 11:3,4 and 7) we read the phrase, " Go to" in the contexts of the men 'going to' in the building, and of God 'going to' in His dramatic intervention. It cannot be coincidence that this rare idiom occurs twice close together in James 4:13; 5:1. The context there is of warning believers not to build their own 'Babels' of wealth and monuments to human achievement, seeing that they would be suddenly destroyed by the Lord's coming. This in itself points to a latter-day application of this Genesis record - indicating that weak believers will get caught up in the latter day Nimrod's unity movement, and will benefit from it materially?

" Let us make brick" is literally 'let us make ourselves Laban'. 'Laban' meaning 'white' came to be associated with 'brick' because the bricks were presumably made from white clay. This created the picture of a dazzling white tower, gloriously reflecting the desert sun - which suggests that the tower was a piece of religious symbolism, perhaps a mock temple.

This impression receives Biblical confirmation in Zech. 5. This chapter describes the corruptions of the Jewish and Christian apostasies; chapter 4 speaks of the building of the true temple in Jerusalem, whilst chapter 5 matches this with a description of a false temple being built " in the land of Shinar" (Zech.5:11). 'Shinar' being used rather than 'Babylon' must be in order to take us back to the tower/temple which men built " in the land of Shinar" in Gen. 11:2.

Religious symbolism

The religious associations of the tower are strengthened by the similarity of this tower built by the first king of Babylon on a plain and the statue built by Nebuchadnezzar on the plain of Dura, also in Babylon. It may be that the locations are identical. And there is a continuity of theme to be found in Arab leaders (kings of Babylon) showing a distinct liking for large monuments and religious imagery expressed in big building projects. Saddam Hussein, claiming to be the latter day Nebuchadnezzar, tried to rebuild Babylon and fill the area with quasi-religious towers and obelisks glorifying himself. " Let us make ourselves Laban" (v. 3) continues the Arab connections, seeing that Laban's persecution of Jacob typifies that of Israel by the Arabs, especially in the last days.

There are other references to the persecution of Israel in the Babel record - the using of bricks and mortar to build a huge piece of religious symbolism recalls the work of Israel in Egypt (the same Hebrew word for 'bricks' occurs in the Exodus record). "Slime had they for mortar" (Gen. 11:3) also contains echoes of Israel in Egypt. "Slime" is the same word as "mortar" in Ex. 1:14, and "mortar" in Gen. 11:3 is the word translated "pitch" concerning how Moses' bulrush basket was made (Ex. 2:3). This conjures up the picture of Amram bringing home some mortar from the building site in order to make that ark.

These echoes of Israel under persecution are hard to make sense of until it is recognized that the context of this Babel passage is the account of Arab growth in Gen. 10, and that Babel was built under Arab auspices. Bearing in mind the certain Arab domination of Israel in the last days, it is surely justifiable to see in this record a hint of a latter day Arab-led coalition, which will perhaps express its grandeur in physical terms by the building of a structure.

Colossus of clay

This colossus being built of baked clay and mortar and being effectively destroyed by the Lord's 'coming down' inevitably connects with the feet of the statue which Daniel interpreted, also seen in Babylon. The feet were made of "miry clay", "mixed" (Heb. 'Arab'). Isa 41:25 also springs to mind, speaking of the second coming, "He shall come...he shall come upon princes as upon mortar, and as the potter treadeth clay." It has been suggested that the image of Daniel 2 can be interpreted in a primarily Arab context, and we have shown that the Babel-builders are also primarily Arab. "They journeyed from the east...they said...they builded" in Gen. 11 may refer in large part to the Arab peoples listed in Gen. ch. 10.

Their desire was to build "a city and a tower" (Gen. 11:4). Our Lord appears to refer to the temple as "a tower" in Matt. 21:33, supporting the previous suggestion that there was a religious aspect to this tower. It is hard to avoid emphasizing that in our last days Arab leaders are eager to rebuild Babylon and other historic cities, seeing them as a token of their unity and common connection with a glorious Babylon of old which subdued Israel. The original Babel was built with "slime" (Gen. 11:3); the Hebrew seems to refer to bitumen, literally meaning 'that which is brought up,' and today it is Arab oil money which is financing such building schemes.

"Whose top may reach unto heaven" (Gen. 11:4) is a poor translation - the A.V. putting "may reach" in italics indicates that these words are not in the original. The Hebrew for "top" is 'Rosh', familiar to students of Ez. 38:2, which correctly translates it as "chief prince". The chief leader of this tower was to reach unto and into heaven. Every Bible-minded student will race to Isa. 14, where another king of Babylon says the same: "Thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will sit also in the mount of the congregation (i.e. the temple mount), in the sides of the north (Jerusalem, Ps. 48:2)...yet thou shalt be brought down...that (his children) do not possess the land, nor fill the face of the world with cities" (Isa. 14:13,14,15,21).

This last phrase is definitely alluding to the record of Nimrod's city building programme as detailed in Gen. 10:9-11. This "king of Babylon" of Isa. 14 can refer with equal relevance to either Nebuchadnezzar or Sennacherib ⁽¹⁾, both of whose invasions of Israel are typical of that which is to occur in the last days.

Daniel 2

The connection with Is. 14 confirms that this tower had religious symbolism, and that with the image of Dan. 2 suggests that the chief prince ('rosh') of the image is based on Nimrod, the first king of Babylon. Daniel, of course, also made it clear that the head of the image was the king of Babylon, who was then Nebuchadnezzar.

There is an association between the head of the image and its feet; the clay used for the feet in Dan. 2 is used for the whole tower of Babel, including the "top" of the tower, the king of Babylon. Babylon's king is "he that ladeth himself with thick clay" (Hab. 2:6). Similarly Nebuchadnezzar's image on the plain of Dura was made entirely of gold, showing that he thought that he, as the head of gold, should be the whole image. Remember that the head and feet are destroyed *together* by Messiah's coming.

When we read that the summit of Babel was to touch the heavens (Gen. 11:4), we find that the Hebrew phrase refers usually to persons, elevating their head. There are many uninspired parallel accounts of the building of Babel in contemporary literature- the Enuma Elish speaks of how the builders "raised high the head of Esagila toward the Heaven". Clearly the tower was seen as headed up by a person, just as was the image of Dan. 2 and also that built by Nebuchadnezzar. These all indicate that the Lord Jesus will return to destroy a human system headed up by a specific, antiChrist individual.

The Canaanite tribes were noted for the very high walls of their cities - "unto heaven" (Gen. 11:4 cp. Dt. 1:28). This shows a continuity of theme between Babel and the tribes of Canaan (i.e. the Arabs). Significantly, God decided that nothing would be "restrained" from these people if their tower were completed - using the same Hebrew word translated "walled up" in Dt. 1:28 concerning the cities of Canaan.

"Let us make us a name, lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth" (Gen. 11:4) sounds as if they recognized Divine judgments might be imminent. This is one of many implications in the prophetic word that Christ may be back, or the sign of his presence be visible, so that the nations in the very last days will act with an awareness of the possibility of impending Divine judgment.

The flood

The memory of the Flood would still have been reasonably fresh with the generation of Babel. After the Flood the nations were "divided in the earth" (Gen. 10:25,32); so perhaps the Canaanites building the city and tower so that they would not "be scattered abroad upon the earth" was a conscious effort to resist the judgments brought about by the Flood and its effects.

We have shown that the Flood particularly represents the judgments of the last days, and in the typology of Gen. 11 it is these which the builders of Babel consciously try to avoid. This raises the question of how they will be so convinced that these judgments really are imminent. A display of the cherubim over Jerusalem (or a similar "sign of the son of man in heaven"), or, of course, the actual second coming of the Lord, seem the only feasible explanations of their convictions.

The image of Dan. 2 is fundamentally concerning the domination of Israel (the earth / land), and we have connected that image with the tower of Babel. The building of the tower is also linked to the persecution of Israel through various allusions to Exodus. The motive for building Babel (i.e. dominating Israel in the typology), is to stop the builders being scattered and to make them a

common name (Gen. 11:4). Prophecies like Ps.83, as well as an awareness of current Arab politics, indicate that the motive for the final Arab invasion of Israel will be in order to unite the naturally disparate Arab peoples. But it is twice emphasized that the Lord's 'coming down' resulted in their being "scattered abroad from thence upon the face of all the earth" (Gen. 11:8,9), using the very language which they used in v. 4 - "lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth." This clearly connects with the little stone destroying the desolating image and scattering the remains of it worldwide.

There is a definite similarity between the account of God's intervention at Babel and that of His 'coming down' to Sodom. "The Lord came down to see the city and the tower (and 'noticed' how evil their aims were)...Let us go down..." (Gen. 11:5-7). This is matched by, "I will go down now, and see whether they (Sodom) have done altogether according to the cry of it...and there came two angels to Sodom" (Gen. 18:21; 19:1).

We have our Lord's authority for seeing this 'coming down' of the Lord to Sodom as typical of the second coming; the designed similarity with His 'coming down' to Babel indicates that we can read that incident likewise.

Babel builders

"This they begin to do: and now nothing will be restrained from them, which they have imagined to do" (Gen. 11:6) slots into the Arab/Israeli context exactly. With the world supporting them, and with a unity of mind never before experienced, the Arab Babel-builders will be able to gleefully relish the prospect of completely destroying the Jews. The Hebrew for "begin" here is also translated "to profane", again showing the distinctly religious aspect of their actions in building the tower.

Dan. 12:1 describes this period as "a time of trouble (for Israel) such as never was since there was a nation." "Since there was a nation" may well refer to the time of Babel, when the nations became more clearly defined. If this is indeed a Babel allusion, then the suggested connection between the building of Babel and the persecution of Israel is indeed confirmed. Yet Babel appears to be a symbol of apostate Israel in Is.24:1: "The Lord maketh the earth (land) empty, and maketh it waste...and scattereth abroad the inhabitants thereof". The judgments to come upon the Arab Babel builders will also come upon the faithless Israel of the last days.

How God 'came down' to destroy their plans is revealing as to His methods in the last days. There is no indication in Gen. 11 that the tower was actually destroyed, indeed, "Therefore *is* the name of it called Babel" (Gen. 11:9) implies that at least part of the building was still standing when the record was written. It was the very action of confounding their language that resulted in their scattering, "so (i.e. because of the confounding of their language) the Lord scattered them abroad" (Gen. 11:7,8).

"They left off" building (Gen. 11:8) uses a Hebrew word meaning strictly 'to grow flabby', implying a gradual cessation rather than a momentous destruction. Likewise the persecutors of angel-protected Lot in Sodom (a certain type of the last days) "wearied themselves" in their efforts as a result of the Lord's 'coming down'. One of the 'plagues' that God threatens the Arab invaders of Israel with is that "a great tumult from the Lord shall be among them; and they shall lay hold every one on the hand of his neighbour, and his hand shall rise up against the hand of his neighbour" (Zech. 14:12,13).

This is how previous Arab invasions had been overcome (Jud. 7:22; 2 Chron. 20:23). Ps. 83 perfectly describes the Arab unity as they attack Jerusalem in the last days (vs. 3-5, 12), but concludes with the Psalmist praying that God would destroy them as He did Oreb and Zeeb (v. 11) - who were defeated as a result of God making their troops turn on each other (Jud. 7:22-25).

It will largely be through this means that the image will be broken up and scattered worldwide, as the Babel builders were. In its continuous historic fulfilment, the different parts of the image subdued each other; for them to stand together in the last days shows that a unity must be placed upon them by their head and also the feet upon which they stand; only for this unity to be destroyed by the Lord's coming. We have given reasons for believing that the head and feet are representatives of Arab powers, and especially a latter-day 'king of Babylon'.

In broad outline only, the following chapters of Genesis appear to have some possible chronological similarities with events of the last days:-

ch. 10 Arab growth and expansion

11 Babel/Shinar judged by God with confusion.

12 Abram leaves Babylon, creating the basis of "come out of her, my people" in the last days (Rev. 18:4).

13/14 Shinar has revived, and in a confederacy of others captures Sodom (Jerusalem? Isa. 1:10), taking Lot (apostate Israel?) captive. Note how the "slime-pits" of 14:10 were probably in the Babel area, providing the "slime" of 11:3. Abraham (faithful Israel?) and some (half Jewish?) Arab friends defeat the Shinar confederacy and save Lot.

15 Covenant confirmed

16 Hagar (Arabs) flee from Sarah

17 Covenant renewed

18/19 Judgment on Sodom, deliverance of Jewish remnant, snatching away, representing the second coming.

This can only be a very broad outline, since the events of chs. 11 and 19 both have clear reference to the second coming.

Notes

(1) See *In Search of Satan* (London: Pioneer, 1990).

CHAPTER 3: SODOM AND THE LAST DAYS

According to Gen. 18:17-19, the reason God told Abraham what He would do with Sodom was because Abraham would teach others, and his descendants would teach others. This implies that Sodom's destruction was to be a special lesson for all generations. And 2 Pet. 2:6 says the same-

Sodom was to be a perpetual "example unto those that after should live ungodly"; in this sense Sodom was "set forth for an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire" (Jude 7). The fire was "eternal" in the sense that the example of destruction was to be to all generations. This paves the way for Sodom's destruction to be understood as a particularly significant type of the last days.

Our Lord clearly understood the destruction of Sodom as being typical of the events of the second coming: "As it was in the days of Lot...the same day that Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven...even thus shall it be in the day when the son of man is revealed. In that day, he which shall be upon the housetop, and his stuff in the house, let him not come down to take it away...remember Lot's wife...in that night there shall be two men in one bed; the one shall be taken, and the other left" (Lk.17:28-34). Not only is the city of Sodom representative of the world of the last days, but Lot's calling out of Sodom by the Angels is typical of our being 'taken' by Angels to meet the Lord.

It is a breathtaking thought that all the intricate typology of the judgments on Sodom has been worked out for our benefit- the generation who will be alive at the second coming. To a lesser extent, the believers of the first century could have seen that the story of Sodom also represented the judgments to come upon Jerusalem in AD70. An impressive group of Old Testament prophets had associated Jerusalem with Sodom: Is.1:10; Am.4:11; Dt.29:23; Jer.23:14; Lam.4:6; Ez.16:46. Jer. 4 and 5 are prophecies which have relevance to Israel's latter day judgments (Jer.4:28=Mt.24:30). Jer.5:1 seems to allude to God's requirement for their to be some faithful men in Sodom to prevent its destruction: "Run ye to and from through the streets of Jerusalem, and see...if ye can find a man...that seeketh the truth; and I will pardon it". This associates Sodom, Jerusalem and the last days. As the faithful remnant were miraculously allowed to leave Sodom, immediately unleashing the Divine judgments by doing so, the faithful Christian remnant were allowed to leave Jerusalem just before the final Roman onslaught of AD70, doubtless spurred on by their Lord's command: "Let them which are in Judaea flee to the mountains; and let them which are in the midst of it (Jerusalem) depart out" (Lk.21:21). The reference to fleeing to the mountains would have suggested a conscious allusion back to the command to Lot to flee out of Sodom "to the mountain" (Gen.19:17).

As a result of Abraham's intense prayer, believing that this coupled with the spiritual preparedness of others really could change God's stated purpose, the judgment of Sodom need not have come. So with Jerusalem in AD70, had there been a suitably large, repentant 'remnant' those horrific judgments could have been avoided. Despite the definite associations of Jerusalem with Sodom in the prophets, the Old Testament also uses Sodom as a symbol of total, permanent destruction of the type which has not and will not come on Jerusalem, the future capital of the Kingdom (Dt.29:23; 32:32; Is.13:19; Jer.49:18; 50:40; Am.4:11; Zeph.2:9). It is for this reason that Paul makes the point that for the sake of the tiny group of Jews who did still hold and practice the truth, Israel would not suffer the judgments of Sodom in totality (Rom.9:29 cp. Is.1:9). This would indicate that there will also be a latter day Jewish remnant which will stop the faithless Israel of today receiving the judgment of permanent destruction. But of course for the individuals of both natural and spiritual Israel who have consciously rejected God, "it shall be more tolerable in that day (of judgment) for Sodom" than for them (Lk.10:12). Jer.20:16 has a graphic description of the people of Sodom screaming out in anguish,

both mental and physical, as the judgments of God fell upon them: " The cry in the morning (when the judgments began, Gen.19:23,24), and the shouting at noontide" . This is in reality a picture of the rejected in the last days.

Zeph.1:17,18 has a series of allusions to Sodom, indicating that its destruction prefigures that of Israel in the last days: " They shall walk like blind men (as the Sodomites did), because they have sinned against the Lord (" the men of Sodom were wicked and sinners before the Lord" , Gen.13:13)...neither their silver nor their gold (cp. Sodom's wealth) shall be able to deliver them...the whole land shall be devoured by the fire" (Zeph.1:17,18).

Sodom being a type of latter day events, it is not surprising that Scripture provides a wealth of detail concerning Sodom. The Genesis record summarizes what we glean from later revelation by saying that " the men of Sodom were wicked and sinners before the Lord exceedingly" (Gen.13:13). " Before the Lord" recalls the earth being " corrupt before God" prior to the flood (Gen.6:11), another clear type of the last days. Indeed their sin being " before the Lord" may hint that Lot (or Abraham?) had preached God's requirements to them, and therefore they were consciously disobeying Him. Thus Rom.3:19 speaks of the world becoming " guilty before God" by reason of their having the opportunity to know God's word (cp. Rom.2:12,13).

The specific sin of Sodom is well known- confirmed by the repeated emphasis on " the men of Sodom" in the record. The grossness of their perversion is shown by their clamouring for the Angels, who doubtless appeared as good looking young men, " that we may know them" (Gen.19:5). Lot's response " I pray you, brethren, do not so wickedly" and his offer of his daughters to them (Gen.19:7,8) clearly shows their intention. In the light of this, Jude warns the believers that their punishment for this was what awaited those of the new Israel who threw off their responsibilities. " As Sodom and Gomorrah...giving themselves over (implying this was a conscious apostasy?) to fornication, and going after strange flesh, are set forth an example" to us (Jude 7). In passing, it should be noted that all Jude's examples of Divine punishment involve people who were responsible to God, by reason of knowing His ways. Is Sodom an exception?

There can be no doubt that the sexual aspects of Sodom's sins have great similarity to the moral filth of our present world. But significantly it was not this aspect which our Lord chose to highlight when speaking of how " the days of Lot" typified those of His return. Instead He spoke of those things which were more likely to ensnare His people: " *They* (as well as our present world) did eat, *they* drank, *they* bought, *they* sold, *they* planted, *they* builded" (Lk.17:28). Their obsession with daily activities without an awareness of God was as bad as their other sins; a point we would do well to be aware of. However, their eating and drinking must have been to gross excess- Ez.16:49 defines " the iniquity of Sodom" as being " fulness of bread" among other things. Some lavish Christian lifestyles frequently feature " fulness of bread" - but because it is not perceived as a gross sin, this unhealthy similarity with Sodom slips by unchallenged.

" They bought, they sold" suggests that Sodom was a major trading centre, rapidly increasing in wealth; " they planted, they builded" (Lk.17:28) implies a real boom town. Such success resulted in the people being proud and haughty (Ez.16:49,50); the wealth

created at the expense of others brought about "abundance of idleness in her and in her daughters, neither did she strengthen the hand of the poor and needy" (Ez.16:49). It is these aspects of Sodom which are so precisely matched by our self-centred, money mad world. As our Lord realized, it is these aspects which are most likely to ensnare the child of God. Yet Sodom's people were not completely unaware of their religious conscience. Jeremiah likened the false prophets of Israel who effectively taught that sin was service to God to the people of Sodom, suggesting that they too said the same (Jer.23:14). This is another hint that the people of Sodom had some degree of responsibility, as have latter day Israel whom they typify ⁽¹⁾.

The calling of Lot out of Sodom is a type, on the Lord's authority, of our calling away to judgment. His position immediately prior to the Angels' coming must therefore connect with our situation now. We will see as this study continues that Lot was in no way as spiritually strong as he ought to have been, nor as enthusiastic for the Lord's coming as his complaining about the evils of the city recorded in 2 Pet.2:7,8 might lead us to think. The very fact that he chose to live in the area whilst Abraham steered well clear of it is testimony enough to his worldliness (Gen.13:10,11). The offering of his two daughters to the Sodomites also betrays a certain unspirituality (Gen.19:8). The fact that Sodom's fate was revealed to Abraham rather than Lot may also be significant.

Despite this, Abraham evidently rated Lot's spirituality- his conviction that Lot and his family must comprise at least 10 righteous people must have been the basis of his prayer for Sodom's destruction to be nullified (Gen.18:32). And so in the sight of the ecclesia, the high spiritual status of latter day believers may not be questioned- and yet the Lord's coming may find us seriously unprepared, as it did for Lot. It seems Jeremiah and Ezekiel likewise, on the eve of the coming of the Lord's day in their times, had to be taught that they had a far too exalted view of the state of the ecclesia. What latter day similarities with how the faithful remnant of today perceive things?

Lot sitting "in the gate of Sodom" (Gen.19:1) has been seen as an indication that he held some prominent public office in the city's administration. Yet despite this, he evidently maintained his separation- although this seems to have created suppressed bitterness amongst his colleagues, which they gave vent to in their sudden persecution of him just before the Angel came: "This one fellow came in to sojourn, and now he will needs be a judge" (Gen.19:9). Note how initially Lot lived in the smaller "cities of the plain", and then "pitched his tent toward Sodom", resulting in him eventually settling within the city (Gen.13:12). One wonders if he kept his tent in the loft. Ps. 1:1 seems to allude to Lot's progressive apostacy, speaking of the righteous man *not walking, standing or sitting* with the wicked- in other words, the righteous man will learn from Lot's mistakes. The way Lot progressively moved Eastwards has to be connected with a strange theme in Genesis of all the apostates moving ever further East (Gen. 4:6; 11:2 RV; 13:11; 16:12 RVmg; 28:9). This is not the only indication in Scripture that many latter day saints, whom Lot represents, will not be spiritually fit when their Lord returns. This gradual slump into worldliness to the spiritual detriment of his family (the wife, sons and possibly other daughters refused to truly leave Sodom) is not difficult to see matched in the present ecclesia. The material prosperity of Lot just before his short, sharp persecution period at the Lord's 'coming', matches Israel's prosperity in Egypt just before their holocaust started (Gen.47:11). The wealth of the latter day ecclesia may well be

proof in itself, in the light of these types, that we are heading for a like tribulation period.

Yet 2 Pet.2:7,8 reveals how Lot "vexed (Gk. 'tortured') his righteous soul from day to day with their unlawful deeds". Seeing that he failed to influence his family to properly appreciate the sins of that city, and that he was so attached to it that he was unwilling to leave, this must be interpreted as little more than the sort of middle class, respectable 'tut-tutting' that present day Christianity abounds with. After all, he had chosen to live there, he did not have to stay, and the record of his choice of Sodom in Gen.13 spotlights his unspiritual, worldly thinking in this regard when compared to Abraham, the stranger and sojourner. Whether this assessment of Lot's character is felt to be correct or not, it must surely be accepted that there was a serious dualism in his position which has strong similarities with ours today- vexing his soul about the sins of the surrounding world, and yet increasingly involved in it and greatly benefiting from it materially, at spiritual cost to himself and his family. Lot was effectively willing to betray his daughters to the men of Sodom, pointing forward to the Lord's prophecy of how in the holocaust to come, many will betray each other (Mt. 10:36), family life within the ecclesia will break up; a spirit of dissension will fall upon natural and spiritual families. The reason for this will be rooted in a lack of true spiritual concern for the family in the easier years of this present life. Not for nothing does Paul warn against marriage in the last days (1 Cor. 7:28).

Having been told to bring his "sons in law...sons...daughters" out of the city (Gen.19:12), it is recorded that Lot only went to speak with his sons in law, and that the daughters who came with him were young unmarried girls who were still living at home, rather than speaking to his married daughters (Gen.19:14). There is no mention of his speaking to them or his sons- perhaps because he knew that spiritually they were too far gone to be interested? It is possible that his speaking only to his "sons in law" rather than directly to his daughters also indicates a lack of urgency or comprehension of the seriousness of the situation. The Angels' words are full of exhortation: "Hast thou here any besides?...whatsoever thou hast in the city, bring them out of this place" (Gen.19:12). Lot seems to have gone to Sodom for material ends- our Lord holds up his wife as an example of those who love the materialism of this world more than the reality of his Kingdom (Lk.17:31,32). But the Angels speak of spiritually prepared people as being the only real possessions Lot had: "Whatsoever thou hast in the city, bring them out". This surely underlines the importance of "exhorting one another daily, and so much the more as ye see the day approaching", showing how in a healthy ecclesia we all belong to each other. Those who choose to separate themselves from this bond and their responsibilities to their brethren, either by geographical or other forms of isolation, surely cannot take these principles seriously.

The men of the city had their pent-up feelings of despise and jealousy towards Lot released by the coming of those Angels. This gave rise to their persecution of him before he was finally called away; during that period the Angels asked him to make a desperate 11th hour appeal to any who had the slightest inkling of spirituality. Whilst it is not possible to press this typology exactly, the fact that Lot was under persecution before being taken away by the Angels may be significant in a latter day context. Note too that just prior to his removal he was involved in active preaching. Section 3 gives good reason

to believe that we will be enduring a period of persecution just before the Lord's coming, and that there will be active witnessing during that period. Lot's persecutors being smitten with blindness creates the eerie picture of him walking through the streets of the city visiting those whom he hoped would heed the call, with his incensed enemies unable to lay hold on him. This doubtless required faith on his part; and all this fits in nicely with the implications to be considered later that there will be especial help made available during this witnessing period. However, Rev.11:8 speaks of the dead bodies of these latter day witnesses lying dead in the streets of spiritual Sodom- indicating that some will die during this great appeal (cp. Lk. 21:6)?

But Lot "seemed as one that mocked unto his sons in law" (Gen.19:14), the Hebrew idiom implying 'to pull the leg'- i.e. his message was treated as a joke. Our last appeal to the world will probably meet a similar response; but it must be remembered that if Lot's leaving of Sodom represents the calling away to judgment, then those whom he asked to leave with him may primarily represent other believers. Section 4 outlines a likely scenario of the judgment in which the willingness to respond to the call to leave the world is an indicator of our acceptability- those who refuse or delay to obey the call are punished (after judgment) in the sufferings of the world, whilst those who voluntarily obey the call to judgment immediately are those who will be accepted. The parable of the wise and foolish virgins illustrates this too. Thus Lot's appeal to those who presumably knew the true God to leave the city may parallel our frantic pleading with weak believers to immediately respond to the call to leave the world. Sadly there will be the same light hearted refusal on the part of some.

The smiting with blindness in a latter day context suggests Zech.14:12, where this is the plague with which God punishes those who have come against Jerusalem. In this case Lot would represent a feeble-faithed Jewish remnant in the last days, unsuccessfully pleading with others to obey the Lord's call. "Lot went out" into streets filled with blind, angry men of Sodom, in order to spread the message as the Angels requested (Gen. 19:14). This picture of preaching amidst bitter hostility but with Divine protection recurs in Rev. 11 concerning the two witnesses.

Lot's witness completed, he was told to leave Sodom "lest thou be consumed in the iniquity of the city" (Gen. 19:15), with "thy two daughters which are here" . "Are here" in the Hebrew means literally 'to come out'- as if to stress that although living with Lot, they still had made the conscious decision to leave. The fact that they did not look back like their mother would indicate a certain degree of spiritual strength- and perhaps they were still virgins because they declined to marry "the men of Sodom (who) were wicked and sinners before the Lord exceedingly" (Gen.13:13). This command to leave Sodom "Lest thou be consumed in the iniquity of the city" is clearly one of the source passages for Rev.18:4 concerning Babylon: "I heard another (Angelic) 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" . Note that it was also an Angel who said this to Lot. Babylon is directly equated with Sodom in Is. 13:19 and Jer. 50:40. Babylon geographically and culturally represents the Arab peoples of our last days- and therefore it is not surprising that related Arab nations like Edom, Moab and Ammon are also paralleled with Sodom (Jer. 49:18; Zeph. 2:9). This continues a long-standing Biblical theme that the curses on

apostate Israel are the same as those on the Arabs- thus Sodom is representative of both Jews and Arabs.

Of Gog's destruction it is written: " I will rain upon him...great hailstones, fire and brimstone" (Ez.38:22), associating Gog with Sodom. At the same time, Gog and his supporters will be fighting each other (Ez.38:21), clearly connecting with Zechariah's prophecy that the Arab invaders of the last days will do the same (and cp. Jud.7:22). God's pleading against Gog with these things is the language of Joel 3:2, again about the destruction of Israel's latter day Arab enemies. The Hebrew word for 'locust' in Joel is almost identical to 'Gog'. All this results in an association between the Arabs, the Sodomites, Gog and the northern invader. This prepares the way for the view that " the beast" is a symbolic epitome of all Israel's enemies.

It is to be expected, therefore, that the fall of Babylon chronicled in Rev.18 is shot through with allusions back to the Sodom record. The following are the more evident points of contact:

Babylon (in Rev.)	Sodom
" I will shew unto thee the judgment of the great whore" (Babylon); 17:2	Cp. God showing Abraham the judgment of Sodom.
The beast supporting Babylon " was and is not and shall ascend" ; 17:8	Sodom and surrounding cities were strong, then overrun by Abraham, then revived.
" Her sins have reached unto Heaven, God hath remembered her iniquities" ; 18:5	" The cry of Sodom...is great because their sin is very grievous ...the cry of it is come unto me" (Gen.18:20,21)
" She hath glorified herself, and lived deliciously" ; 18:7	" Pride...fulness of bread" (Ez. 16:49)
" Utterly burned with fire" ; 18:8	'Sodom' = 'burning'.
" Her plagues...death...and famine" ; 18:8	" He overthrew all the inhabitants of the cities, and that which grew upon the ground" (cp. " famine" ; Gen. 19:25).
" The great city...great Babylon" ; 16:19	The city of Sodom.

" There fell upon men a great hail out of heaven" (16:21)	" The Lord rained upon Sodom... brimstone and fire from the Lord out of heaven" (Gen.19:24).
" They shall see the smoke of her burning, standing afar off for the fear of her torment (18:9,10)	Abraham standing far away and seeing the smoke of Sodom's burning indicates that the surrounding kings did likewise (Gen.19:28).
Merchants suffered through Babylon's fall (18:11-19)	Sodom was a trading centre (Lk. 17:28)
" ...a great millstone cast into the sea ...thus with violence shall...Babylon..be found no more at all" (18:21)	Sodom now appears to be submerged in the Dead Sea, to be found no more.
" Her smoke rose up" (19:3)	" Sodom...the land of the plain...the smoke of the country went up" (19:28)

We have reasoned that Lot's call out of Sodom represents how the Angels will call us out of this present evil world. Indeed, our Lord said that Sodom represents the world just prior to the second coming (Lk.17:28). The evident connections with latter day Babylon would suggest that 'Babylon' too represents the world of the last days; " Come out of her my people" (Rev.18:4) therefore refers to the Angel's plea to us at the second coming, in addition to any previous historical reference it may have to the Catholic apostasy. The call for the first century Jews to leave Rome or for true believers to come out of Catholicism were pointers towards the ultimate fulfilment of these words, which will be in our leaving this life at the behest of the Angel who comes to call us away. Our obedience then will be the summation of all the previous decisions God's people have made to 'come out' from the 'world' in its various forms.

If 'Babylon' refers specifically to the Arab powers, it is possible to see Sodom representing the world under Arab control in the last days, offering great material wealth. Yet the obvious Biblical basis for the language of " come out of her my people" is in the many references to Israel being called on to leave the soft life of Babylon and return to the land during the restoration (e.g. Zech.2:6,7). In this there is a remarkable similarity with Sodom. The Jews in Babylon maintained their separateness, and yet became heavily involved in the government of Babylon (as witness Daniel and his friends, along with profane history). This is parallel to Lot's position in Sodom. Yet the prosperity of Babylon made the Jews disinclined to leave it in order to go to Jerusalem, as Lot had

a similar disinclination. And the easy life of the present world will also seem a greater attraction to the unworthy of the new Israel, when the Angel calls them to go to Jerusalem to meet their Lord.

Notes

(1) The responsibility of Sodom and latter day Israel would suggest that the level of knowledge that brings responsibility to Divine judgment is much lower than we may think. It isn't just those who do a correspondence course who are responsible. If the men of Sodom and latter day Israel will be held responsible, how very responsible are we, with all the wealth of doctrinal truth which has been revealed to us. And can there, in the light of even Sodom's responsibility, be *any* doubt that anyone brought up as a Christian can walk away from the call of Christ with no responsibility to future judgment?

3-1 Lot In Sodom

The importance of leaving the world immediately the Angel comes is shown by the consistent impression in the record that the Angels urgently "hastened Lot" (Gen.19:15-17,22), implying that if he did not hurry then he would perish. It was not foreordained that he would not perish- "Arise...lest thou be consumed in the iniquity of the city...escape for thy life; look not behind (the Hebrew root means 'to delay') thee, neither stay thou...lest thou be consumed" (Gen.19:15,17). It is quite possible that the *speed* of our response to the call will be the proof of our acceptability. The speed of response was the basic difference between the wise and foolish virgins. It was only after he had left Sodom that the Angel said that he could not "do any thing till thou be come thither", i.e. to Zoar (Gen.19:22). Yet Lot "lingered", the Hebrew meaning 'to question or argue', as we see him doing later in the record in his discussion with the Angel concerning the danger of going to the mountain as he had been told, and asking leave to go to Zoar. "Lingered" literally means 'Why?' or 'What!', indicating severe incomprehension on Lot's part. We would be foolish to think that we too will not be prone to a serious sense of incomprehension when the Angel appears. Only repeated meditation upon that moment and a true love of the Lord's coming will stop us being so flustered by the Angel's call that we fail to respond to it with the necessary speed.

Therefore the Angel "laid hold upon" Lot's hand (Gen.19:16), a Hebrew word elsewhere translated 'to take courage', and definitely meaning to strengthen or encourage. In our study of the judgment seat later the point is made that Angels frequently said to faithful men "Fear not" when they have appeared to them. It is therefore tempting to think that our Angel will speak similar words of strength and encouragement to us on their appearing. The typology of Lot would support this. But we have to remember that in Lot's case the Lord was "merciful unto him" - such grace as was shown to him cannot be presumed upon. "Merciful" certainly carries the idea of pity in Hebrew- if we have had a loving relationship with our guardian Angel now, surely we may look forward to their 'pity' then. Despite all this, Lot's wife still looked back; and 'remember her'. The pull of family and materialism was such for that woman, that all this supreme demonstration of mercy and love was not enough to convince her that nothing else mattered apart from obedience to God.

Thus having given Lot this strength, the Angel warned, or perhaps pleaded " Look not behind thee, neither stay thou in all the plain" (Gen.19:17). " Look" means to view intensely with love or pleasure; that these words were said to Lot must indicate that he was tempted to look on Sodom in that way. There seems to be a pointed contrast with Abraham, who looked at Sodom burning without being punished, presumably because he had no attraction towards it (Gen.19:28). Thus for all his vexing of soul for the sins of the city, Lot was still tempted to love it. Our repulsion at the ways of the world is not necessarily a sign of our spiritual safety- there is an uncanny love within human nature for the environment we know. Thus there can be homesickness for drab streets and scenes which we despised whilst living among them. Such love, taken to its logical end, is a love of the world which militates against our desire to see the end of this age and to enter the Kingdom.

It is amazing that with the clear command echoing in his ears, " neither stay thou in all the plain; escape to the mountain, lest thou be consumed" (Gen.19:17), Lot could ask leave to live in Zoar, a small city of the plain, and not go to the mountain. He clearly failed to appreciate the reality and seriousness of the Angel's coming- and this will certainly be a temptation to us in that moment when the typology of Lot is fulfilled in us. The only way to guard against this is by consciously living our lives now in awareness of the fact that now we have been called to leave the world and its ways, and therefore our whole life now should have the spirit which we will have when we leave this world when the Angel comes. This is confirmed by an oblique allusion which our Lord makes to this Angelic command " Look not behind thee" , in Lk.9:62: " No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the Kingdom of God" . The context shows that starting to plough represents the start of our new life in response to the Gospel call- but the allusion to the Angel's words to Lot show that we should live our whole lives in response to that call as if we are on the way to the judgment, having been called away by the Angel.

Lot's response to the Angel's call illustrates the contradictions which abound within human nature. He claims to appreciate that the Angel has saved his life, but then goes on to say that what the Angel is telling him to do will result in the loss of his life: " Thou hast magnified thy mercy, which thou hast shewed unto me in saving my life; and (but) I cannot escape to the mountain , lest some evil take me and I die" (Gen.19:19). Similarly our calling away may well present us with the prospect of apparent pain or loss. He feared that " some evil" would " take me" , using a Hebrew word that is not the one usually translated as " take" . This one means strictly 'to pursue after and capture', indicating that Lot was all too aware of the Sodomites' desire to kill him, and feared that if he lived alone in the mountains they would easily pursue and kill him. Instead, Lot suggested, there would be more safety in living in the small city of Zoar nearby, which presumably the Sodomites would be loath to invade just to take Lot.

All this shows an incomprehension of what the Angel had said. Firstly, Sodom was to be destroyed at any moment, including the men whom Lot feared. Either he did not properly believe this, or he thought that God's judgment would not involve total destruction. Secondly, he had been explicitly told " neither stay thou in all the plain (including Zoar)...lest thou be consumed" (Gen.19:17). Insufficient attention to the words of the Angels therefore resulted in his foolish reasoning which almost cost him his

life. It is easy to imagine that the moment of the Angel's coming will fill the weak latter day believer, perhaps distracted as he will be by the persecutions of the holocaust to come, with such a sense of confusion and incomprehension that he too will fail to take careful note of what is said to him. A love of God's word now, rejoicing in its detail, is surely the preventive for this.

Lot's flustered reasoning continued: " Behold now, this city is near to flee unto" . The Hebrew for " flee" is also translated 'to hide in', carrying the idea of being chased into. Again, his fear of the Sodomites is shown to loom large in his thinking. The Angel had bidden him flee from the Divine wrath that was soon to consume all the cities of the plain. But instead Lot was preoccupied with the fear of human vengeance against him. Such an attitude appears crazy to our cool, armchair analysis of what happened. Yet Lot is certainly a type of the believers who are alive at the Lord's return. There can be no doubting, therefore, that whatever our theoretical willingness now to leave all and follow the Angel, there will then be at least the temptation to get consumed with the kind of double-think that seized Lot's reasoning. He even tried to accommodate his human desires to the desires of the Angel: " Is it not a little one?" , as if to imply that there was little wrong with the place spiritually. The Hebrew translated " little one" is also rendered " a short time" - as if to say 'You are asking me to be quick about leaving Sodom- so I'll go to Zoar, as it won't take long to get there'.

" The sun was risen upon the earth when Lot entered into Zoar" (Gen.19:23) invites comparison with the description of the second coming as the rising of the sun in Mal.4:2. " But his wife looked back from behind him" (Gen.19:26) suggests the picture of the wife following behind Lot, filled with remorse at the loss of all she had held dear. Our Lord comments concerning not desiring our " stuff which is in the house" in the day of his coming: " Remember Lot's wife. Whosoever (like her) shall seek (Greek: 'plot') to save his life shall lose it" . We can infer from this that she plotted and schemed how to save her possessions- i.e. her 'life', seeing that for her, her life did consist of the abundance of the things which she possessed (Lk.12:15). These feelings grew so strong that she paused to take a loving, wistful look at the city. Remember that the fire only fell after Lot was in Zoar; therefore the city was looking as it normally did. Their exodus was at night- " the sun was risen upon the earth when Lot entered into Zoar" (Gen.19:23), so she would have seen the flickering lights of the city in the distance. Compare this with how the virgins of Mt.25 go out to meet their Lord at night.

She was walking " behind him" , so Lot would not have actually seen her turn into a pillar of salt. As he ceased to hear her footsteps behind him he must have guessed what had happened- but now the Angel's words seemed more vital to him: " Look not behind thee" . Likewise it will be a sore temptation for us to be side-tracked from our obedience to the Angel's call by consideration for our natural family. Dt.29:23 and Zeph.2:9 show that Sodom was turned into an area of salt, which explains why Gen.19:25 says that the fire destroyed " that which grew upon the ground" , by making the area salty. This salt was presumably formed through the fire intensely burning the rocks and earth until the elements dissolved into a 'salt'. It is reasonable to think that as Sodom was turned into salt by fire, so Lot's wife suffered the same punishment through a bolt of fire striking her and turning her too into salt. This is a prime example of how the unworthy will suffer the same punishment as the surrounding world which they failed to truly leave. There is good

reason to think that their punishment may also involve an element of literal fire, as that of Lot's wife did.

"Remember Lot's wife" suggests that we should meditate upon her position as it has especial warning for the last days. Her leaving of Sodom appears to have been due to the personal influence of Lot her husband, yet ultimately she failed to have that personal desire to obey God. It would not be pushing the type too far to suggest that the wives of latter day believers may feel that they can enter the Kingdom in the spiritual shadow of their husbands. One cannot help wondering whether she left Ur not through personal response to the promises but because the others were leaving. Doubtless her uncle Abraham would have led her and the whole family in regular prayer and meditation during the journey towards Canaan. But somehow the reality of the God of Israel was never allowed to touch her inner being, and the years of the soft life in Sodom would have sealed her spiritual state. It is hard to avoid making the point that many of us may be in a similar position.

Gen. 19:14 RVmg. brings out the likely immediate background to her decision. Lot's sons in law "were to marry" his daughters. The Lord too perceived that they were marrying and giving in marriage the very day the flood came, and He pointed out the similarities with the Sodom situation (Lk. 17:27-29). Could it not be that the very day of the double wedding, they had to leave? With all the build up to the wedding, Lot and his wife would so wanted to have stayed just another day to see the wedding of their two daughters. It is to the girls credit that they both left. But Lot's wife had invested so much in it emotionally that she just had to look back.

Thus the typology of Sodom is a warning which hits present day believers where it hurts. Surely Abraham is our real example; who in the years of his pilgrimage chose the barren uplands, despising worldly advantage, and who could look at Sodom's burning with no feeling of desire or sense of loss. Abraham dwelt on the mountains, from where he could look down upon Sodom; if Lot had been in these mountains, he would not have suffered when Sodom was invaded the first time (Gen.14:10); it took the final coming of the Lord to make him flee to the mountains (Gen.19:10), i.e. to the area which Abraham had chosen at the first. If we can only see the world for what it is, then the equivalent of Lot's experiences will be unnecessary for us.

It is recorded for our learning "that God remembered Abraham, and sent Lot out of the midst of the overthrow, when He overthrew the cities in the which Lot dwelt" (Gen.19:29). Thus in the type of the last days, the prayers and loving spiritual concern of the faithful remnant really can have an effect on the salvation of our weaker brethren. Note that Abraham's prayer that Sodom would be saved if ten righteous were found there, was not answered; but God knew the real spirit of his prayer, that Lot should be saved, and that God's justice should be upheld in not destroying the righteous with the wicked. It was this which God recognized and answered, even though Abraham had not specifically verbalized those thoughts in prayer. Our true spiritual love for our brethren, expressed in such intense prayer, will likewise be heard in these last days.

CHAPTER 4: JACOB AND ESAU IN THE LAST DAYS

It is difficult to look at the allegorical meaning of Gen.32 without noticing how the incidents look forward to the final day of Jacob's trouble at the hand of the Arabs (cp. Esau). Jacob's reliance on his own strength and subsequent semi-faith in God's word of promise typifies the Jews of today; his time of trouble truly humbled him, and his wrestling in prayer brought out the great faith which he was potentially capable of, as the final holocaust will do for the Jews. So many types of the last days emphasize the place of fervent prayer in the repentance of natural and spiritual Israel.

Note that Jacob's trouble had been preceded by an accumulation of great material wealth in the form of cattle in a devious and almost obsessive way; latter day Israel are described as a prosperous nation " which hath gotten cattle and goods" (Ez.38:12), at the expense of their Arab neighbours (cp. Laban?). The deliverance of Jacob will be definitely Angelic, as was that of Hezekiah in the Assyrian invasion which was the prototype of that of Ez.38; again, there will be a 'two camps' syndrome, the camp of Angels led by Michael facing the camp of the Arab invaders.

Jacob's prayer is peculiarly apt to a repentant Jewry: " O God of my father Abraham, and God of my father Isaac (going back to their roots), the Lord which saidst unto me, Return unto thy country (since 1948)...I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies, and of all the truth, which Thou hast shewed unto Thy servant; for with my staff I passed over this Jordan (cp. the Atlantic, Mediterranean; through the immigrant ports of Haifa, Tel Aviv...); and now I am become two bands. Deliver me, I pray thee, from the hand of my brother (cp. the Arabs), from the hand of Esau: for I fear him...and Thou saidst, I will surely do thee good, and make thy seed as the sand of the sea" (33:9-12). The reference to the Jewish fathers will be the result of listening to the Elijah ministry, which will turn " the heart of the children to their fathers" (Mal.4:6). There will therefore be a conscious awareness of incidents like Jacob's encounter with Esau among the repentant remnant of Israel. The examples of the patriarchs will figure significantly in the teaching of the Elijah ministry.

The following are some more detailed suggestions, based on the record in Gen.32:

- Jacob actually saw the Angels. " This is God's host" , he commented, with the implication that this sight further humbled him and led him towards the necessary contrition of mind for deliverance from Esau (Gen.32:2) . If " the sign of the son of man" which appears over Israel and leads the tribes of Israel to mourn in repentance is a literal vision of the Angel-cherubim (Mt.24:30), then this has a basis in Jacob seeing the Angelic vision in the time of his distress.

- Jacob's desperate humility before Esau is remarkable: " My lord Esau...I have sent to tell my lord, that I may find grace in thy sight...peradventure he will accept of me" (Gen.32:4,5,20). This was a far cry from his nonchalance and cold shouldering of Esau at the time of the theft of the birthright. Likewise the present Jewish attitude towards the Arabs will dramatically change. Jacob sending droves of presents to appease Esau will connect with Israel's frequent appeasement of their aggressive Arab neighbours.

- Jacob divided his forces into two, reasoning " If Esau come to the one company, and smite it, then the other company which is left shall escape" (Gen.32:8). Joab used

somewhat similar tactics when Israel looked likely to be overcome by a massive confederacy of Arabs (2 Sam.10:6-11). This would associate Esau at this time with the Arab peoples generally.

- If Jacob's prayer had not been heard, Esau would have smitten " the mother with the children" (Gen.32:11). This will be done by the latter day Esau to those Jews who do not match Jacob's intensity of prayer and repentance (Zech.14:2), as it happened at the time of the Babylonian invasion which prefigured the Arab attack of the last days (Lam. 5:11).

CHAPTER 5: LATTER DAY PASSOVER AND EXODUS

These happenings provide the background to many later prophecies, which speak of events around the second coming in language which alludes to God's mighty deliverance of Israel at this time (e.g. Hab. 3). Many passages, in Isaiah particularly, speak of Israel's latter day deliverance from persecution in terms of their salvation from persecution in Egypt at Passover and the Red Sea; clear examples are found in Is. 43:2, 16-19; 51:9-11. However, it is also true that because the Red Sea typifies the destruction of sin, it is therefore alluded to in some descriptions of the judgments to come upon Israel in the last days. In the same way as Pharaoh hardened his heart, so natural Israel have done (Rom.9:17,18 cp. 11:7 A.V.mg.). They will therefore receive the punishment that will come upon their enemies. Other clear indications that these events are typical of the last days are now considered:-

- The saints will sing " The Song of Moses" , which Ex. 15 records was sung after the triumph at the Red Sea. This indicates that Israel in Egypt prior to that represents the saints, just before the Lord's coming. Rev. 15:2-4 is all in the context of the Exodus: " I saw as it were a sea of glass mingled with fire (cp. the calm Red Sea after it had returned over the Egyptians): and them that had gotten the victory (God was victorious at the Red Sea, Ex. 15:1) over the beast (Egypt is the prototype beast, Isa. 51:9; Eze. 29:3)...having the harps of God (cp. Miriam's timbrels)...they sing the song of Moses...Who shall not fear Thee (cp. Ex. 15:14-16)...all nations shall come and worship before Thee; for Thy judgments are made manifest" , referring to how the Arab nations of Canaan were subdued as a result of the Red Sea victory (see Ex. 15:15). There must therefore be a latter day equivalent of the Red Sea.

- The promises to Abraham received their major primary fulfilment at the Exodus (Acts 7:17). Seeing that their ultimate fulfilment will be at the second coming, it follows that the deliverance of Israel from Egypt was typical of this.

- The experiencing of the events of the Exodus would make Israel " know how that I am the Lord" (Ex. 10:2), a phrase frequently used in the prophecies of Israel's latter day experience, notably in Ezekiel.

- The prophecy of Isa. 19 concerning the judgments on Egypt clearly has a latter day reference - and it contains several references to the events of the Exodus. " The Lord rideth upon a swift cloud, and shall come into Egypt" (v. 1) sounds like the second coming of the Lord, perhaps upon the cherubim chariot. The prophecy continues in language almost identical with that of Zech. 14:13 concerning the confusion of the Arabs in the last days, thus equating them with the latter day 'Egypt': " I will set the Egyptians against the Egyptians: and they shall fight every one against his brother" (v. 2). Then, " the land of Judah shall be a terror unto Egypt" (v. 17), as the Israelites were at the Passover. " The Egyptians shall know the Lord in that day" (v. 21), as they did through the events of the Exodus (Ex. 7:5).

- The Hebrew text says that " a great mixture" of people " went up also" with Israel out of Egypt (Ex. 12:38). There can be no doubt that this refers to the many references in the promises that the seed would come to include such a " mixed multitude" (Gen. 17:6; 22:17; 26:4; 28:3,14; 35:11), thereby showing that by reason of leaving Egypt and passing through the Red Sea these Gentiles became part of the seed (cp. 1 Cor. 10:1; Gal. 3:27-29). But the supreme fulfilment of these promises will be after the 'Red Sea' of the last days.

- Joseph's bones were 'carried up' with them when Israel left Egypt. The Hebrew word here is elsewhere translated 'to rise up', 'lift up', 'spring up', clearly hinting of the resurrection which will come at the Lord's return, which the Passover typifies.

- There are a number of hints in the record at a new creation. Whilst this has primary reference to the creation of Israel as a nation through the exodus experience, it is fitting that it points forward to the fuller 'new creation' that will be brought about by the Lord's return ⁽¹⁾. Ex. 14:20,21 speak of the Red Sea in terms of " darkness...(giving) light...sea...dry land...the waters were divided" , all reminiscent of Gen. 1:2,3,10,9,7, respectively. " This month shall be unto you the beginning (Heb. 'rosh') of months: it shall be the first month of the year" (Ex. 12:2) indicates how Passover was to be a new beginning. It is possible to see in the ten plagues brought about by God's word to Moses an echo of the ten times it is recorded that " God said" in Gen. 1. Ps. 105:28-36 describes the plagues on Egypt as a reversal of creation - starting with darkness (cp. " let there be light") and ending with the slaying of the firstborn to match the creation of man last of all.

- Israel both kept Passover and went through the Red Sea at night. Indeed, it is stressed six times in Ex. 12 that it was "night", and hence Deut. 16:1 reminds them to carefully keep the Passover (i.e. at night), "for...thy God brought thee forth out of Egypt by night". Other latter day prophecies speak of the events of the second coming being at "night": Lot left Sodom in the very early hours of the morning; and it was "at midnight (that) there was a cry made" informing the virgins of their Lord's return (Matt. 25:6).

- The record of Lot's leaving of Sodom (a remarkable type of our 'exodus' at the second coming) has the repeated hallmark of 'haste'. This is found repeated in the record of both the Passover and the crossing of the Red Sea. They were told, "Ye shall eat it in haste" (Ex. 12:11); "they were thrust out of Egypt, and could not tarry" because "the Egyptians were urgent upon the people, that they might send them out of the land in haste" (Ex. 12:39,33). Lot was "sent out" of Sodom (Gen. 19:29) by the hastening of the angels. It may be that in some cases our angels will hasten us to leave through their influencing of the surrounding nations (Egypt), rather than through their physical presence.

- The exceeding great plague of hail was one of the plagues which lead to Israel's passover deliverance (Ex. 9:22), and yet this is the language of the last days (Rev. 16:21)- as if there will again be a Passover deliverance for God's people, heralded by the pouring out of plagues upon those who persecute them.

- The Song of Moses in Ex. 15 describes the deliverance from the Red Sea in language which could easily refer to our final salvation from sin and death at the second coming: "Thou in thy mercy hast led forth the people which thou hast redeemed: Thou hast guided them in thy strength unto thy holy habitation...and plant them in the mountain of thine inheritance...the Lord shall reign for ever and ever" (Ex. 15:13,17,18). Ps. 97-99 (all parallel in terms of ideas) describe the coming Kingdom in the language of Yahweh being enthroned as He was at Sinai, after the Passover and Red Sea incidents. This further associates those events with the second coming.

New Testament Allusions

In addition to the evidence offered above, there are at least three New Testament allusions to these events which show that they typify the Lord's coming, thereby making Israel's position in Egypt a source of exhortation for us now, seeing that they represent us now, living just prior to the Lord's intervention to save us. As they were to spend 7 days

purging the home of leaven before the Passover deliverance, so it could be that the true ecclesia and Israel of God is forced to examine itself and purge itself in the very last [literal seven?] days before the final deliverance. It could be that there is some literal sign, "the sign of the son of man in heaven", which enables us to know for sure that the Lord's coming is so near.

Luke 12:35-39 speaks of the Master coming at night and then sharing the Passover meal with those who are "watching". Israel were told to 'watch' throughout that first Passover night (Ex. 12:42 RV mg.), eating the meal with loins girded. Our Lord matches this with "let your loins be girded about, and your lights burning" (v. 35), referring to the virgins parable. Israel eating that meal together, huddled around the slain lamb, the oil burning lamps revealing their tense faces, is therefore a picture of what the new Israel should be like just prior to their deliverance.

1 Peter 1 is packed with Passover and exodus allusions; v. 13 interprets the girding of loins: "Gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you". The sober minds of those families on that night, their thoughts like their garments pulled together and tightly bound, should resemble the type of mind control which we exercise in the face of our Lord's return.

The third New Testament reference which confirms that these events are typical of the second coming, is in Rev. 18, describing the latter day Babylon as being destroyed by being cast into the sea as a stone. This is definitely based on the description of Egypt as suffering the same fate in the Red Sea (Ex. 15:5,10), thus associating 'Egypt' in this parable of the last days with Babylon. All this would suggest that the Lord could return at Passover, or the final tribulation begin then [see the Appendix 'A Possible Chronology Of The Holocaust' for more on this]. "The day of the Lord" is the same phrase used about a Jewish feast. "Let the feasts come round: then will I distress Ariel" (Is. 29:1,2 RV).

Returning to the earlier New Testament allusions, our identification with Israel in Egypt suggests that we, too, will be under persecution at the time of the second coming. Pharaoh and his people being plagued is based on the pattern of Gen. 12:17, where this very thing occurred due to his holding Sarah in captivity. The Egyptian beast being so furiously determined to destroy Israel at the Red Sea (Ex. 14:5; 15:9) is the basis for the dragon being "wroth with the woman, and went to make war (as Pharaoh 'went') with the remnant of her seed", chasing her into the wilderness and trying to destroy her with water (cp. the Red Sea); but "the earth opened her mouth, and swallowed up the flood" (Rev. 12:13-17), as at the Red Sea (Ex. 15:12). This passage in Revelation has reference to the latter day persecution (see Section 3).

Passover feast

The commands to Israel concerning how they were to keep the Passover in order to avoid sharing the destruction of the surrounding world, had to be carefully followed. We have the same need of detailed attention to the Word if we wish to escape a similar fate. Gathered around the slain lamb, the memorial of their salvation, in their various homes, the command was clear: "None of you shall go out at the door of his house until the morning" (Ex. 12:22). This is surely an eloquent picture of the ecclesia of the last days, highlighting the urgent need to remain within the ecclesia, and to centre our fellowship around our Passover Lamb. The importance of physically meeting together in the last days, particularly to share the emblems of our Lord's death, is stressed in Heb. 10:25. For this reason every effort should be made to travel whatever distance necessary to break bread with those in isolation as frequently as possible. Instead of this, there appears to be a growing neglect of such vital work amongst us.

It is not difficult to imagine the close sense of community and family bond in those homes that night. Grandparents would have nervously eyed their firstborn, who would likewise have watched or cuddled their firstborn, summoning all their faith to believe in the power of that blood which they had publicly associated themselves with. Such should be the pattern of our ecclesial life - instead of the political battleground which it so frequently becomes in these, the very last days. Their having previously lived through, and suffered from, some of the plagues would doubtless have helped them towards developing this attitude. Whilst we may be spared some of the world's final plagues, it is reasonable to think that we will suffer their initial plagues too, for our spiritual benefit. Ez. 20:7,8, plainly states that whilst in Egypt Israel became grossly corrupted with the surrounding idolatry. This must therefore be a similarity with the new Israel just before the second coming.

Eating the Passover with "shoes on your feet, and your staff in your hand" (Ex. 12:11) captures the spirit of expectancy and readiness to leave at any moment which we should have, as we, too, await the coming of the angel. It was to be eaten "in haste"; the Hebrew word is from the root for a weasel, with the idea of quick, smooth, gliding motion. This may convey a sense of control and lack of panic which should be seen in the new Israel; we saw earlier how Lot's panic at the coming of the angel almost cost him his salvation, and that this flustering will be characteristic of the unworthy.

The feast of the Passover also teaches concerning the position we should be in before the angel comes. In the lead up to the feast (cp. our Lord's return), "no manner of work shall be done, save that which ever man must (do to) eat", or "that which every man must necessarily do" (LXX; Ex. 12:16). Thus in our lives now, having food and raiment

we should be content, not working any more than necessary, so that " the loins of our mind" will be girded, looking forward to the Passover feast. The occupations of many of the new Israel are hard to square with this teaching.

The focus of the Passover feast was the lamb, and this should be the centre of our thinking in these last days ⁽²⁾. Some very intense Hebrew words are used to describe their association of themselves with it: " Draw out (to seize) and take you a lamb...strike('lay the hand on', a word used about rape) the lintel...with the blood" (Ex. 12:21,22). And the run-up to Passover was to feature a business-like searching of the house for leaven (Ex. 12:19), reflecting the close self-examination which we should undertake individually and ecclesially (" your houses") in this prelude to the Passover-coming of our Lord. Not surprisingly, in the light of this, Passover night was to be " a night of watching" (Ex. 12:42 RV mg.), strongly suggesting " watching in prayer" (Eph. 6:18; 1 Pet. 4:7; 2 Cor. 11:27?). Similarly those who are found " watching" at the Lord's midnight coming (cp. that of the Passover angel) will be found acceptable (Lk. 12:37).

Apart from the jewellery taken from the Egyptians for the construction of the tabernacle, the total unmaterialism of Israel that night is something to be marvelled at. They only had the clothes they wore, and just the one pair of shoes. This is confirmed by the reminder that these things were miraculously preserved throughout the wilderness journey (Deut. 8:4). There is no mention of their taking any possessions with them; even though it appears from the later history that they did, the record here appears to be framed to show their lack of regard for such things on Passover night. The spirit of that night should be seen in our lives now. It is also highlighted that they had no food when they left - they just grabbed some dough which later they baked into " unleavened cakes" (Ex. 12:34,39).

Our Lord's perceptive mind picked out the picture of Israel as they were then, as an illustration of how his disciples should be on their preaching mission. " He called unto him the twelve, and began to send them forth...and commanded them that they should take nothing for their journey, save a staff only; no scrip, no bread, no money in their purse: but be shod with sandals; and not put on two coats" . All this is couched in the language of Israel on Passover night. His next words for them appear to be stating the obvious, unless they allude to Israel remaining at whatever place they reached until the fire and cloud moved them on: " In what place soever ye enter...there abide till ye depart from that place" (Mk. 6:8-10). It must be remembered that God intended Israel to be a missionary nation, teaching the surrounding world of His ways by their example of obedience to His law. As Israel left Egypt with the gold and jewels of Egypt, so, Jesus implied, the disciples were to carry the precious things of the Gospel.

The meaning of this in the typology of the Passover is twofold: firstly, it teaches that one way of being properly prepared for the second coming after the pattern of Israel that night, is to live a life committed to preaching; this will keep the loins of our minds girded, ever looking for the Lord's return which we preach, and often depriving us of the temptations of materialism. And, secondly, those of the new Israel who are found ready at the angel's coming will be prepared and eager to start on the greatest missionary campaign of all, in the establishment of the Kingdom.

Leaving the world

At this point it can be noted that Israel leaving Egypt must represent the faithful leaving the world at the second coming. Ps. 78:52 and Is. 63:9,11 describe God as leading Israel out of Egypt as an obedient flock of sheep, suggesting that they were all accounted worthy then. Similarly, Balaam said that at the Exodus God did "not behold iniquity in Jacob" (Num. 23:21,22).

The extreme truth of this is shown by Ez. 20:8 and Acts 7:43, which imply that they carried the Egyptian idols with them through the Red Sea. Indeed, Ez. 20:16,18 state that God gave Israel in the wilderness His statutes and judgments, but they actually lived according to their *own* statutes and judgments; and therefore He appealed to the younger generation not to walk in the statutes and judgments of their parents, but in those which He had given them. But "the children rebelled against me; they walked not in my statutes, neither kept mine ordinances to do them, which if a man do, he shall live in them; they profaned my sabbaths. Then I said I would pour out my wrath upon them, to accomplish my anger against them in the wilderness" (Ez. 20:21). Even in the wilderness, Israel didn't keep the Sabbaths, and the younger generation refused God's laws. Although unrecorded in the Pentateuch, Ez. 20:23,24 describes a threat from God to Israel, whilst they were still in the wilderness, that He would scatter them among the nations. Yet this drastic appeal went unheeded, because "their eyes were after their father's idols". They were so obsessed with the idols worshipped by their parents' generation- the generation who left Egypt. Yet for all this, God did "not behold iniquity in Jacob", such was the righteousness imputed to them. And yet that generation were indeed types of us.

Consistently the impression is given that those alive at the second coming will not be as strong as they could be - Lot, Israel in Egypt, the slumbering virgins, all convey this feeling. To some degree this will be overlooked, as were Israel's weaknesses, but as Lot's wife successfully left Sodom but failed to reach salvation, so Israel left Egypt but perished on the journey to the salvation of the promised land. Likewise the foolish virgins started off to meet their returning bridegroom, but ran out of oil on the way. The typology of all this indicates that some will respond to the Angel's call to leave the world, but will look back to Sodom as did Lot's wife, or back to Egypt, as did Israel, through a lack of the oil of the spirit-word.

If we feel that we will certainly not look back in any way when we follow the angel, we need to urgently remember that all these examples are warnings to us of the last generation.

The allusions in later Scripture to the deliverance from Egypt are often in reference to the deliverance of natural Israel from her latter day persecutor. This power must therefore be symbolized by Egypt. The latter day Assyrian is specifically associated with 'Egypt' in Isa. 52:4, and hard-hearted Pharaoh is connected with the Philistines (Palestinians) in 1 Sam. 6:6, and Nebuchadnezzar (Dan. 5:20). The command to Babylon to "give up" the Jews in the last days (Is. 43:6) is based on God's ordering of Pharaoh to 'give up' His people. Thus Is. 48:20,21 describes Israel's exodus from Babylon in language which refers to their leaving of Egypt: "Go ye forth of Babylon, flee (as Israel did from Egypt, Ex. 14:5) ye from the Chaldeans, with a voice of singing declare ye, tell this, utter it even to the end of the earth (cp. Ex. 15:14,15); say ye, The Lord hath redeemed (cp. Ex. 19:4-6) his servant Jacob. And they thirsted not when he led them through the deserts: He caused the waters to flow out of the rock for them: He clave the rock also, and the waters gushed out."

Babylon, Assyria and the Philistines are geographically located where the modern Arab powers are based. It is therefore fair to assume that natural Israel (and spiritual, too?) will be under persecution by these people just prior to the Lord's return, as Israel were in Egypt. The persecution will take the form of crass economic exploitation, as the Nazis similarly worked the Jews in slave labour camps until they dropped.

Many prophecies concerning the judgment of Egypt quite evidently have a latter day application. Isaiah 19 lists various judgments on Egypt, packed with allusions to the situation at the time of the Exodus (e.g. their turning to workers of false miracles, v.3), and then says that *at this time* "the land of Judah shall be a terror to the land of Egypt...in that day shall five cities in the land of Egypt speak the language of Canaan...in that day shall there be an altar to the Lord in the midst of the land of Egypt...and the Lord shall be known to Egypt, and the Egyptians *shall know the Lord*" (v. 18-21), exactly as they were made to at the time of the Exodus (Ex. 7:5; 14:4,18). Clearly enough, the events of the Exodus are typical of the latter day deliverance of Israel. The "cruel lord and...fierce king (which) shall rule over them" in the last days (v. 4) is to be connected with the king of fierce countenance of Dan. 8:23; this latter day meglomaniac will have power over Egypt, as also mentioned in Dan. 11:43.

Labour camps

The taskmasters 'afflicted' Israel in their forced labour (Ex. 1:7), the Hebrew meaning to browbeat/depress. These were exactly the tactics of Hitler's bully boys in the death camps. The Hebrew word translated "taskmasters" in the record of their persecutions is also used concerning Nebuchadnezzar (Isa. 14:4) and Arab peoples like Damascus, Tyre, Gaza etc. Concerning Israel's latter day deliverance from them, Zech. 9:8 reads, "I will encamp about mine house... because of him that passeth by (Passover language)...and no oppressor (same word "taskmaster") shall pass through them...for now have I seen" (cp. Ex. 3:7). Like the Nazis, the Egyptians seem to have excused their abuse of Israel with a concocted ideology. Stephen says that they "dealt subtly" with Israel, using the Greek word from which "sophistry" comes. The Arabs have already developed an equivalent to this.

Pharaoh's pursuit of Israel with a hand-picked group of 600 chariots, in addition to a host of other troops (Ex. 14:7), has connections with other Arab persecutors of Israel. Shamgar, who, like all the judges, typified the Lord Jesus at his second coming (see later), "slew of the Philistines six hundred men...and he also delivered Israel" (Jud. 3:31). In Saul's time the Philistines attacked Israel with "six thousand (lit. 'families of') horsemen" (1 Sam. 13:5), and Goliath, the prototype Philistine "man of sin", had a spear's head which weighed "six hundred talents" (1 Sam. 17:7). He himself was six cubits tall (1 Sam. 17:4). The Philistines are certainly symbolic of the latter day Arab enemies of Israel.

Although the events of the plagues/Passover and the Red Sea are often spoken of as one event, it is possible to see in them two stages in both the judgment of the world and our leaving of it in the last days. Israel, natural and spiritual, being under persecution by latter day 'Egypt', the plagues will start to come upon 'Egypt', some of which judgments will affect 'Israel'. Then there is the 'Passover', where natural Israel and the faithful among the new Israel declare their faith in the blood of Christ. The angel is then with us, in whatever form. In relation to natural Israel, Moses' role may well be filled by Elijah.

We then leave the world on our journey to the judgment seat (cp. God enthroned at Sinai pronouncing blessings and curses) and salvation in the promised land. The 'Egypt' power then tries to furiously destroy us (cp. the dragon in Rev. 12), but is destroyed by the final stage of God's judgments on the world, typified by the Red Sea. As Israel had no fear while crossing it (Ps. 78:53), so we will be confident of our salvation. Obviously there are many things which do not slot into place exactly, but this general concept of the world (at Passover and the Red Sea) is matched in the parable of the virgins. As Israel were fearful of being pursued by a people who were doomed to be destroyed at the Red Sea, so Lot feared pursuit by the Sodomites. His leaving Sodom may possibly be related, therefore, to the leaving of Egypt at Passover rather than at the Red Sea.

The result of our having the correct attitude to leaving the world when the angel comes is beyond our present appreciation - it will determine whether we are in the Kingdom. Because of this, it is vital to give our careful attention to the record of the Passover, seeing the call to leave Egypt represents our call to forsake this life and go to meet Jesus, which the angel will soon give us. It is fitting, therefore, to find that we will regularly keep the Passover in the Kingdom (Luke 22:16); we will thereby remember the sacrifice of our Lord, and also those moments of 'Passover' when we left the world and entered the Kingdom at the angel's bidding. Perhaps we will use our observance of that feast to teach the mortals during the Millennium: " This is done because of that which the Lord did unto me, when I came forth out of Egypt" , i.e. at the second coming (Ex. 13:8).

Notes

(1) This is all demonstrated at some length in Andrew Perry, *The Doctrine Of Salvation* (Sunderland: Willow, 1992).

(2) Whether we are a *Christ*-centred community rather than a Bible or Israel-centred community is a question which needs considering by us.

CHAPTER 6: ARAB INVASIONS DURING THE TIME OF THE JUDGES

Introduction: The Judges As Saviours

The book of Judges describes a consistent sequence of Israel turning away from God, being punished by neighbouring Arab enemies, and then being sent a 'saviour' - a 'Jesus'. This points forward to how Israel will be brought to her knees by the future Arab oppression, resulting in the coming of the true Saviour (cp. Matt. 1:21). It is significant that almost all the judges were initially rejected by Israel, and had various features which meant that they did not have charismatic appeal to the people. Those facts make them all types of our Lord ⁽¹⁾.

The pattern of 'serving' their Arab conquerors and then 'crying unto the Lord' (e.g. Jud. 3:8,9,14,15) recalls their servitude to the Egyptians, resulting in Israel 'crying to the Lord' (Ex. 2:23), and being answered by the Passover deliverance - which we have seen represented the second coming. Their deliverances by the judges therefore also typify this. " Saviours (judges) shall come up upon mount Zion to judge the mount of Esau (so that) the Kingdom shall be the Lord's" (Obad.21). " Saviours / judges" may be an intensive plural referring to the one true saviour / judge, Jesus.

It is difficult to make the many Arab invasions of Israel in the past all have specific future applications. All we can do is become familiar with their main features and watch current events for possible fulfilments. Yet it is certain that the final Arab persecutions of Israel will be a summation of all that has been done previously, and therefore certain elements of those previous events will be seen in the last days. It would also appear as reasonably certain that there will be two separate judgments on

these peoples, as there were on Egypt through the plagues and then the Red Sea. This will be due to there being two distinct periods of Arab persecution of Israel: firstly a protracted period of domination of Israel (cp. the Egyptians using them as slaves), followed by a short, intense persecution with the intention of their total annihilation (cp. Pharaoh's pursuit of Israel to the Red Sea), which will be after God's public 'coming down' to deliver His people.

The Arab dominations during the times of the judges being for several years at a time, would suggest that they may largely belong to the first stage outlined above. It should be noted that we speak of two stages of persecution rather than two invasions. The impression is given by many prophecies that Israel will become almost a wasteland, ravaged by a series of separate judgments. Thus there could well be a series of Arab raids on Israel during the first stage of persecution.

It should be noted that the Arab invasions of the Judges' period (and on many other occasions) were not designed to subdue Israel in terms of installing an army of occupation and bringing them to be part of their empire. Instead they were motivated by desire for personal gain, revenge or pure bloodlust against their traditional enemies. Israel were forced to 'serve' them as the Egyptians made them 'serve', i.e. through forced labour to meet inhuman production quotas (cp. Ex. 5:13). This effective death sentence was that favoured by the Nazis, and could well be that used in the holocaust to come.

Notes

(1) For more detail on this see my *Jesus of Nazareth* pp.80,81 (London: Pioneer, 1991).

6-1. Chushan-Rishathaim (Jud. 3:5-10)

This king of Cush (also featured in Ez. 38:5, N.I.V.) has the epithet 'Rishathaim', meaning 'double wickedness'. This serves to emphasize how the Arab invasion will be headed up by an individual who is unashamedly a 'man of sin', a true anti-Christ. He was "king of Mesopotamia" (Jud. 3:8), literally meaning 'Aram (Syria) of the two rivers', i.e. Tigris and Euphrates. This would point to a geographical location in modern Iran/Iraq.

The phrase "the Lord sold them into the hand of..." , which occurs here in Jud. 3:8, runs as a refrain throughout the record of Israel's punishment at the hand of her Arab enemies. The force of what this will mean in practice is brought out in Deut. 32:30: "How should one chase a thousand (Jews), and two put ten thousand to flight, except their Rock (protecting Angel) had sold them...?" Given the huge numerical superiority of Israel's Arab enemies, this shows a total military collapse by the Israelites in the face of this Arab aggression. This is a far cry from the arrogance, confidence, bravery and 'fight to the death' attitude of modern Israelis.

No doubt such a collapse could be due to a fear of some terrifying Arab weaponry, but "chase" implies a complete collapse and unwillingness to fight. The Hebrew word for "chase", 'radaph', is almost identical to 'rahab', the symbol of Egypt; their enemies would 'rahab' them in the sense of persecuting them after the pattern of the Egyptians, placing

these things in the first stage of persecution. Israel at that time seem to have been submissive and browbeaten by their persecutors (see previous comments on this).

The reason given for this at the time of Rishathaim's invasion is that Israel had married the surrounding Arab peoples, "and served their gods." If they could do it then, there is no reason why we should not expect to see a certain degree of rapprochement between Israelis and certain groups of Arabs living in the land, with, perhaps, a nominal acceptance of Islam thrown in. Far-right Orthodox rabbis claim that this is what is effectively happening today. Such a situation could more easily come about if Israel won a dramatic victory against the Arabs, apparently knocking out all possibility of any trouble from them in the foreseeable future. They would then live in the spirit of "peace and safety" which will have (has?) descended on spiritual Israel.

Historically, Jewry has always been persecuted after a period of intermarriage and mingling with the surrounding world. The holocaust which will fall upon Israel in the Land may therefore be expected to be a corrective to their doing these very things.

6-2. Eglon of Moab (Jud. 3:12-30)

This king "gathered unto him the children of Ammon and Amalek, and went and smote Israel." This should be seen against the background of many Scriptural indications that the latter-day Arab invasion will comprise a confederacy of Arab nations, united by the single desire of attacking Israel. Psalm 83 is a notable example of this. At the time of writing (1991) the potential for Arab unity is growing apace. It would seem that to fulfil the prophetic requirement of the Arab 'gathering together', this must develop much more.

The pro-Western Arab states are controlled by elite groups of nominal Moslems who could easily be deposed by a socialist flavoured, fundamentalist-Islam majority who would see no need to pander to the West's pro-Israel demands. Their unity could allow them to properly use their oil stranglehold to force the West to drop their support of Israel, and also enable them to launch a systematic, co-ordinated attack on Israel which she could never resist - especially if her people have had pro-Arab leanings. The fondness Israel developed for Egypt, as Lot for Sodom, has echoes of this.

"The Lord strengthened Eglon the king of Moab against Israel" (Jud. 3:12), hints, perhaps, at a sudden Arab revival, allowed by God in order to punish His people. It could be argued that this has indeed occurred since the discovery of oil in the Arab states; alternatively it could refer to a sudden revival after a dramatic defeat by Israel and/or her Western allies. Jer. 48:47 NIV clearly speaks of a revival of Moab's fortunes in the last days.

The repeated mention of Edom, Moab and Ammon in the prophets is hard to interpret specifically, seeing that these nations covered relatively small geographical areas which are now in Jordan and Syria. It may be that it is from these nations that the Arab onslaught is launched. We can, perhaps, therefore look to those countries becoming increasingly willing parts of the Arab military machine.

There is a strange emphasis on Eglon's physical form. "Eglon was a very fat man" is supported by the detailed and gory record of his death by stabbing: "Ehud...thrust it (the dagger) into his belly: and the haft also went in after the blade; and the fat closed upon the blade, so that he could not draw the dagger out of his belly" (Jud. 3:17,21,22).

The men of Moab are likewise described as "lusty" (Jud. 3:29), the Hebrew word meaning literally 'oily, greasy', and implying fatness. All this emphasis - and it is that - must be for a reason. Surely it suggests that the Moabites had indulged themselves in the good life, eating and drinking to excess - doubtless at the expense of the Israelites whom they were then dominating. This would indicate that the latter day Arab enemies of Israel will be enjoying great material prosperity, yet most standard-of-living indicators show that the Arab peoples generally are far from having this. A massive redistribution of wealth brought about by socialist revolutions, coupled with holding the West to ransom with oil prices and pillaging the wealth of Israel, would easily bring about this situation.

6-3. Jabin And Sisera (Jud. 4 and 5)

The record of Deborah and Barak's victory over "Jabin king of Canaan" is shot through with connections with other passages which are clearly latter day prophecies, e.g. Ps. 83, Eze. 38. There is also a very deliberate series of allusions in their song of victory to Israel's exodus from Egypt and the destruction of Pharaoh's army - which we have shown to be symbolic of Israel's future deliverance from her Arab oppressors by the Lord's return. Other expositors have shown the links between the song of Deborah and Barak and Ps. 68, which is clearly prophetic of Christ's work of deliverance both on the cross and in the final deliverance of Israel from the forces of evil.

"Jabin king of Canaan...the captain of whose host was Sisera" (Jud. 4:2) presents an identical scenario to Sennacherib king of Assyria having Rabshakeh as his field commander during his attack on Jerusalem, which beyond doubt was a major type of Israel's latter day invasion outlined in passages like Eze. 38 and Ps. 83. "I will draw unto thee...Sisera, the captain of Jabin's army" (Jud. 4:7) points forward to Gog, the chief (military?) prince of Meshech and Tubal (parts of Assyria?), being drawn into Israel with hooks in his jaws (Eze. 38:4,8).

"Jabin" meaning "man of great understanding", may suggest that he was the intellectual think-tank behind the Arab invaders, whose ideology was operationalized by a capable, well resourced, military leader. The motivation for the coming Arab attack on Israel must be ideological as well as just "to take a great spoil"; it seems not unreasonable to expect a similar two-fold structure in Israel's Arab enemy of the last days. However, the words of Sisera's mother imply that he (and she!) personally was motivated by a desire for the riches of the Jews: "have they not divided the prey...of divers colours of needlework...meet for the necks of them that take the spoil?" (Jud. 5:30). Such total confidence in Arab victory is yet to be seen in a Middle East scarred with the memories of Israel's victories over the last 40 years.

"Prey...spoil" is Eze. 38 language: "To take a spoil and to take a prey...Art thou come to take a spoil...a prey?" (Eze. 38:12,13). Thus the motivation for the average Arab

infantryman is quite clear - although this will most likely be wrapped up behind some pseudo-religious reasoning provided by a latter day 'Jabin'.

It must also be significant that the Jews were able to rejoice that they were free from "the noise of archers", thanks to Deborah and Barak's victory (Jud. 5:11); and Eze. 39:3 stresses how Gog will rely on his archery to terrorize Israel in the last days: "I will smite thy bow out of thy left hand, and will cause thine arrows to fall out of thy right hand." Assyrian bas-reliefs frequently show them posing with their bows. The importance of archery in warfare can easily be overlooked by us, who tend to lump bows, arrows, swords and shields etc. together as obsolete weaponry. Yet the ability to strike from a distance without personal combat was a vital innovation. The highlighting of the fact that the Arab enemies of Jud. 4 and Gog of Eze. 38 both used archery suggests that this may have a latter day equivalent - which must surely be in the use of missile power? The Gulf war demonstrated how a handful of mobile Scud launchers could bring Israel to its knees, indicating that in the holocaust to come, this form of weaponry will almost certainly be used. The vials of Revelation being poured out from the air onto the earth (land - of Israel) may also indicate that latter day judgments literally descend from the air.

Also relevant to this theme of Arab dominance over Israel in terms of weaponry is the statement of Jud. 4:3: "The children of Israel cried unto the Lord: for he had nine hundred chariots of iron." The implications of "chariots of iron" to the Israelites is hard for us to fully appreciate. "The children of Joseph said...the Canaanites that dwell in the land of the valley have chariots of iron" (Josh. 17:16), as if that were a totally understandable reason for their unwillingness to even challenge the Canaanites; whilst some years later Saul and Jonathan were the only Israelites to have iron weapons, thanks to the Philistines' monopoly over it (1 Sam. 13:19-22).

Possession of 900 "chariots of iron" was therefore like having some super-weapon into whose paradigm no other armaments could enter. The consistent use of these by the surrounding Arabs and Israel's inability to respond to them, may have its latter day equivalent during the coming period of Israel's total domination by the Arabs.

This stress on chariots, both in the record of the Arab attack and of God's defeat of them, takes the mind back to the Egyptian chariots which pursued Israel and were destroyed in the Red Sea: "The Lord discomfited Sisera, and all his chariots, and all his host" (Jud. 4:15) recalls how God "troubled (same Hebrew word translated "discomfited") the host of the Egyptians, and took off their chariot wheels...so that the Egyptians said, Let us flee...and the Egyptians fled" (on foot[Ex. 14:24-27]), just as Sisera "lighted down off his chariot, and fled away on his feet" (Jud. 4:15), due to the mud produced by the hail (Ps.83:9). "There was not a man left" (v. 16) of those Arabs; matched by the comment concerning the Egyptians, that "there remained not so much as one of them" (Ex. 14:28).

The chariots of Egypt and Sisera will finally be seen as a poor match for the Angel-cherubim "chariots of Israel and the horsemen thereof." "Then were the horsehoofs (of Sisera's chariots) broken by the means of the pransings, the pransings of their mighty ones" (Jud. 5:22) (Jud. 5:22), i.e. the Angel-cherubim. If there was a manifestation of

the Cherubim on that occasion, this would accord well with the gentle hint that there will be a Cherubim appearance associated with the second coming (Mt. 24:30), and this would also be the means of putting the latter day Arab 'chariots' out of business.

Speculation

With the connections between this record of Deborah's victory and Eze. 38 and the record of the exodus in mind, we can now make a few more speculative points.

" Mount Tabor...the river Kishon (Jud. 4:6,7) near the valley of Jezreel - Armageddon. Hence Jud. 5:19 " the waters of Megiddo" , " ...men of...Naphtali...and...of Zebulun" (4:6) were used to win the victory. 'Naphtali', meaning 'My (mental) wrestling' recalls Jacob, whose wrestling was a cameo of a whole life spent wrestling with his capacity to rely on human strength. The use of 'men of wrestling' to defeat the last Arab invaders would suggest that it is a repentant Israel which are used as a " battle axe and weapons of war: for with thee will I break in pieces the nations (confederate with Babylon)...the horse and his rider...the chariot and his rider" (Jer. 51:19-23), alluding to the destruction of " the horse and his rider...the chariot(s)" of Egypt at the Red Sea (Ex. 15:4,21).

The context of Jer. 51 is the judgment of Babylon and her supporters by Israel - which is yet to be fulfilled. The eight occurrences in the passage of " with thee (Israel) will I break in pieces" is an obvious signpost to the six-fold description in Dan. 2 of the metals of the image being broken in pieces. This connection would hint that the nations of the image, headed by Babylon, are matched by the nations confederate with Babylon at the time of Jer. 51. Whilst it will be the return of Christ which fells the image, the process of breaking it in pieces may well be the work of a repentant Israel. Alternatively, the men of Northern Israel, like Naphtali and Zebulun (in the vicinity of Armageddon?) may be active at Armageddon, which will, perhaps, be the point of initial impact between Christ and the image (although cp. Isa. 63:3).

Note that Zebulun humbly obeyed Hezekiah's call to repentance (2 Chron. 30:10,11) just before the great Assyrian invasion, which is the major prototype for that of the last days. However, this was preceded by Zebulun and Naphtali 'walking in darkness' (i.e. hate and self-glorifying bitterness, 1 John 2:11) and suffering great things at the hands of the marauding bands of Arabs who " afflicted the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali" in the run up to Sennacherib's great invasion (Isa. 9:1,2). The inhabitants of Northern Israel today have borne, and will bear, the brunt of similar attacks in the last days; but " the(se) people that walked in darkness (will see) a great light" in their acceptance of Christ.

Other implications that a repentant Israel will be used to win this great victory, are to be found in the mention of " the river Kishon" and " Harosheth" , which was near Mount Carmel. These places feature in the record of Elijah's great appeal to Israel; the apostate element among them were slain at the Kishon (1 Kings 18:40), as the faithless in Israel will be in the last days. The typical inference here in Judges that the Arab invader will be destroyed at this same place would suggest that they will share in the judgments that come upon God's enemies, and therefore perish in the same geographical location. Yet it was also in this same place that Israel repented, finally responding to

Elijah's ministry. The work of the Elijah prophet of the last days will likewise culminate in a spiritually revived Israel defeating their Arab enemies.

Just prior to the invasion, Israel was in a state of devastation and collapse, equating with the situation they will be reduced to during the Arab attacks of the last days. "The highways were unoccupied (cp. motorways wrecked by low-level Syrian bombing sorties), and the travellers walked through byways" (Jud. 5:6). Such a breakdown of infrastructure will result in a complete collapse of sophisticated Israeli defence systems, matched by the lament, "was there a shield or spear seen among forty thousand in Israel?" (Jud. 5:8). In their desperation "they chose new gods" (Jud. 5:8), which would accord with our earlier suggestion that some Jews may seek to placate their Arab conquerors by a nominal acceptance of Islam. "Then was war in the gates" (Jud. 5:8), features a Hebrew word for "war" which is not normally so translated, perhaps more implying "dissension". "Gates" being a figure of speech for the leaders who "sat in the gate" (cp. Gen. 19:1,9), "war in the gates" would refer to great friction among the remaining Israeli leadership - understandably, if some were 'choosing new gods' in the form of Islam.

Seed of the woman

This total breakdown of Israel was arrested by the appearance of a remarkable woman who was able to galvanize the nation to produce a group of brave, faithful warriors who could throw off the Arab yoke: "Until that I Deborah arose, that I arose a mother in Israel" (Jud. 5:7), the latter phrase implying that she inspired the people with a family spirit of responsibility for each other. The Elijah prophet will have been working on Israel for some time to kindle this: "I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the...day of the Lord: and he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers" (Mal. 4:5,6). This will then result in the Lord Jesus arising and being accepted as "a mother in Israel" after the pattern of Deborah.

The record's emphasis on the important roles of Deborah and Jael encourages us to see them as representative of the seed of the woman, the Lord Jesus, and Jael's smiting of Sisera on the head confirms this link with the imagery of Gen. 3:15. It is even linguistically possible that 'Deborah' can mean 'woman of the word'; the more common rendering of her name as 'bee' has come about because the Hebrew word for this means 'something which talks as it goes'. This clearly points forward to the description of Christ as "the Word" in His role of judging the latter-day enemies of God's people (Rev. 19:11-13). "The people willingly offering themselves" to Deborah (Jud. 5:2) perhaps forms the basis for the description of Christ's people in the last days being "willing in the day of thy power" (Ps. 110:2).

Jael smiting off Sisera's head may be the basis of Ps. 110:7: "therefore shall he lift up the head". It also connects with David cutting off Goliath's head in an encounter full of echoes of the latter-day conflict between Christ and the Arabs (see Chapter 7). In the same way as Israel then had to follow up David's token victory, so they had to do the donkey-work in the wake of Sisera's death, and so they will also engage in a process of subduing the nations after Christ's initial dramatic victory at Armageddon - the landing of the stone upon the feet, the killing of Goliath, the nailing of Sisera's head. "The hand

of the children of Israel prospered ('going, went and was hard', A.V. mgn.), and prevailed against Jabin the king of Canaan, until they had destroyed Jabin" (Jud. 4:24) definitely speaks of a subsequent process of subjugation.

All this is but one of several hints that after Christ's destruction of the military arm (cp. Sisera) of the Arabs in the land of Israel, the campaign is then taken to the civil headquarters (represented by 'Babylon' in the Apocalypse?), typified here by Jabin. This will all involve a fair degree of suffering by the Arabs - Sisera was 'sold' into the hands of Israel (Jud. 4:9), as God had sold Israel into Arab hands previously. The considerable sufferings of the Jews at Arab hands will therefore be meted out to the Arabs. Sisera's army "fell upon the edge of the sword" (Jud. 4:16), choosing suicide rather than face the fury of a repentant Israel.

The Song of Deborah

Other details in the Song of Deborah and Barak chime in with the general scenario we have described:-

Jud. 5:3: "Hear, O ye kings; give ear, O ye princes", sounds like the appeal to the nations that goes out after Christ's victory (cp. Ps. 2:10).

5:4: = the language of Hab. 3, Ps. 68 and other prophecies of the last days.

5:9,2: "...the governors of Israel, that offered themselves willingly among the people", "the people willingly offered themselves", speaks of a positive spiritual leadership among Israel which has been rarely seen, whereby their leaders truly inspire the people to follow their good example. The Hebrew for "governors" means a law-giver or teacher, literally "an engraver of laws", surely identifying them with the saints? If so, this presents a picture of them, or Elijah's assistants, being active in the land before the final Arab onslaught. Their being "engravers of laws" should send our minds to the prophecy of the law being engraved in Israel's hearts as it was on stone previously (Jer. 31:33), and the connection with Moses the lawgiver might hint at our instituting a partial restoration of the Mosaic law for Israel to keep. Remember that Elijah will be calling for a revival of true interest in the Mosaic law during his ministry, which may well coincide with Israel's period of Arab downtreading (Mal. 4:4-6).

5:19: The battle was fought "in Taanach by the waters of Megiddo". 'Taanach' meaning 'place of fasting' is another hint at *repentant* Israel taking part in the final defeat of the Arabs. Joel describes a call to fasting during the period when the land lies totally devastated during the initial period of Arab domination (Joel 2:15).

"Megiddo" and the descriptions of Sisera *gathering* his chariots and God *drawing* them into battle must link with the nations being *gathered* to Armageddon (Rev. 16:16). If this connection is valid, then "the kings of the earth (land - of Israel?) and of the whole world" which are gathered (Rev. 16:14) would primarily refer to the kings of the Arab world, or perhaps specifically to those within the 'land' at its maximum promised extent between the Nile and Euphrates.

5:20: " They fought from heaven; the stars in their courses fought against Sisera" , must refer to the Angels' part in the victory - something we must not underestimate in the future conflict, seeing that the Lord returns with His Angels to execute judgments. " The pransings of their mighty ones" (Jud. 5:22) is probably an indirect reference to the Angel-cherubim.

5:31: " So let all thine enemies perish, O Lord" , takes on an ultimate fulness of meaning when this battle is read as typical of Armageddon, when all God's enemies will perish once and for all. " But let them that love him be as the sun when he goeth forth in his might" is using the common figure of the dawn as being representative of Messiah's second coming (cp. other examples: Mal. 4:2; 2 Sam. 23:4; Ps. 19:4,5). Those who truly love the appearing of that sunrise will themselves be a light to this dark world of flesh; they shall personally go forth as the rays of sunlight, in whatever way, *just* as the light of knowledge of the person of Jesus will do.

6-4. Gideon And Midian (Jud. 6-8).

That the events of these chapters are to be read as typical of Israel's latter-day conflict with her Arab enemies, is indicated by two pointed allusions to them in later Scripture. Psalm 83 is a well-known description of the final Arab invasion of Israel to " cut them off from being a nation" , concluding with the imprecation, " Make their nobles like Oreb, and like Zeeb; yea, all their princes as Zebah, and as Zalmunna" (v. 11) - whom Gideon destroyed.

Isaiah 9 is set in the context of the Assyrian invasions of the land, the last of which they were saved from by Hezekiah, the primary fulfilment of the " great light" which appeared to an Israel under Assyria's dominance. The destruction of the invaders was to be " as in the day of Midian" (Isa. 9:4), i.e. it would be typified by Gideon's destruction of Midian previously. The context in Isa. 8:12, 19-22 speaks of Israel living in fear of an Arab confederacy, having thrown off their faith in God, stubbornly refusing to seek " to the law and to the testimony" , and with the land full of " trouble and darkness" so that " they shall pass through it, hardly bestead and hungry" , due to the invaders destroying the crops. This language recalls the scenario portrayed in Jud. 5:6,7, where the Jews creep around their own land after a total collapse of infrastructure.

Isa. 9 then speaks of how God " lightly afflicted the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali (in the first Assyrian invasion - 2 Kings 15:29) and afterward did more grievously afflict her" (Isa. 9:1) in the second invasion. The suffering of Israel at this time is spoken of in terms of their holocaust in Egypt, which is clearly typical of the last days: " Thou hast multiplied the nation (as God did in Egypt - Ex. 1:7), and not increased the joy...thou hast broken the yoke of his burden, and the staff of his shoulder (the language of Israel in Egypt), the rod of his oppressor" (same word translated " taskmaster" in Ex. 1:11 [Isa. 9:3,4]).

This was to be" as in the day of Midian" (Isa. 9:4) when Israel's saviour was Gideon. Yet Isa. 9:2 speaks of their saviour as " a great light" arising in the darkness, and is quoted in Matt. 4:15,16 as referring to Jesus. Gideon therefore becomes a type of Christ's breaking of the yoke of sin, and also of His latter-day deliverance of Israel from sin's

political manifestation. Similarly the account of David's victory over Goliath has reference to our Lord's victory over sin on the cross, and also over " the man of sin" who will oppress Israel in the last days.

The political restoration of Israel and the victory over her enemies which this implies is associated with the 'setting up' ('resurrection') of a " standard" (Isa. 49:22; 62:10), which is the same word translated " pole" on which the serpent was lifted up and which our Lord referred to - the stake on which He died. Thus the cross is associated with both Christ's victory over sin, and also over the political manifestation of sin in the last days.

Other studies have picked up the points of contact between Judges 6-8 and Ps. 72, a Kingdom prophecy. This fact provides a third strand of evidence for reading the account of Gideon as a type of the last days.

It is now possible to examine the record of Gideon and see its details open up with reference to the final Arab onslaught against Israel in the last days.

" The children of Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord" (Jud. 6:1) is a refrain which occurs seven times in Judges, recalling how Israel both over history and in the last days were to be punished " seven times" for their sins (Lev. 26:23,24).

It is possible that a 'time' may also refer to a year, so the fact that " the Lord delivered them into the hand of Midian seven years" (Jud. 6:1) may refer to this " seven times" punishment for sin, which was to come after their refusal to be reformed by their previous sufferings (Lev. 26:23,24).

A seven-year duration of Israel's final holocaust is hard to square with hints elsewhere that this will last for 3.5 years. The only way of reconciling this which occurs to the writer is through Dan. 9:25-27, which implies that after 69 weeks ('sevens') there would be a final week of punishment for Israel's sins, which would be split into two halves of 3.5 years each. I have explained in detail elsewhere ⁽¹⁾ how the first 3.5 years may apply to the AD 70 period, and the latter to the last days.

Wandering Jews

" The Lord *delivered*" Israel " *into the hand of* Midian" uses the same Hebrew word as in Lev. 26:25, " I will punish you yet seven times...ye shall be *delivered into the hand of* the enemy" . To fulfil this, " the hand of Midian became strong (Hebrew) against Israel" (Jud. 6:2). Such an Arab revival coupled with increasing military success against Israel is a process which is already beginning, and which, despite short-term fluctuations, we should expect to continue.

Because of this, " the children of Israel made them the dens ('dry river channels') which are in the mountains, and caves, and strong holds" (Jud. 6:2). Identical language is found in 1 Sam. 13:6 concerning Israel's pining away when under attack by the Philistines. There can be no doubt that these incidents are the focus of Heb. 11:37,38, which describes nameless men of faith as being " slain with the sword: they wandered

about in sheepskins...being destitute, afflicted, tormented...they wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth" .

We have shown how Jud. 5:6,7 indicates that Israel under Arab attack had to 'wander' about their country, and dwelling " in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth" is an undeniable reference back to Israel under Arab persecution in Jud. 6:2 and 1 Sam. 13:6. This therefore teaches us that there were definitely some in Israel at those times who had a remarkable degree of faith, and it surely follows that the final tribulation which these previous invasions typify will likewise lead to the existence of a minority of faithful in Israel.

The Hebrew word translated " caves" occurs again in Eze. 33:27 in a passage speaking of the final desolation of the Land which will lead to Israel's repentance. " They that be in the forts and in the caves shall die of the pestilence (cp. the plagues to come upon Israel in the last days , Lev. 26:25). For I will lay the land most desolate...none shall pass through (cp. " the highways were unoccupied" , Jud. 5:6). Then shall they know that I am the Lord, when I have laid the land most desolate" (Eze. 33:27-29). It should again be noted that all this does not suggest an army of occupation, but rather a desolation of the land physically and a state of total breakdown of infrastructure.

Scorched earth

Jud. 6:3-6 confirms this by speaking of how the waves of Arab incursions were specifically aimed at destroying the agriculture rather than focusing on slaughtering the inhabitants. Thus " when Israel had sown, the Midianites came up" (Jud. 6:3), implying that they waited for this season in order to inflict as much damage on the land as possible. They " destroyed the increase of the earth...and left no sustenance for Israel...they came as grasshoppers (which destroy crops rather than attack people directly)...they entered into the land to destroy it" (Jud. 6:4,5). This 'scorched earth' policy of the invaders is portrayed in more detail by Joel's prophecy of the grasshopper-invaders leaving the land physically empty.

This is exactly what one would expect from the allusion to Lev. 26:26, speaking of the curses to come upon latter-day Israel: " If...ye break my covenant I *also* will do this unto you (i.e. break My side of the covenant, in that) I will even appoint over you terror, consumption, and the burning ague (illness caused by Arab chemical weapons?), that shall consume the eyes (cp. Zech. 14:12 - what the Arabs do to Israel in the last days will be done to them), and cause sorrow of heart: and ye shall sow your seed in vain, for your enemies shall eat it" , just as " when Israel had sown, the Midianites came up, and the Amalekites, and the children of the east...and destroyed the increase of the earth" (Jud. 6:3,4).

It would seem that this group of Arab nations achieved this 'impoverishing' (Heb. 'to make thin' by famine, Jud. 6:6) of Israel by repeated raids, without a great degree of co-operation between them. Thus Gideon " threshed wheat by the winepress, to hide it from the Midianites" (Jud. 6:11), implying that they were being constantly raided by the Midianites, whose primary aim was to take away Israel's supply of food. The record goes on to suggest that after a period of such raids, these Arab groups began an organized

onslaught with the aim of totally destroying Israel: " Then *all* the Midianites and the Amalekites and the children of the east were *gathered together*" (Jud. 6:33). This is exactly the pattern for Israel's final holocaust which so many other prophecies indicate.

Note that the initial motive for the raids was to spoil the land and steal cattle: " They...left no sustenance for Israel, neither sheep, nor ox, nor ass" (Jud. 6:4). The Ezekiel 38 invader has similar motivation, " To take a spoil...to take a prey...to take away cattle and goods" (Eze. 38:13). It should be noted, however, that such connections do not necessarily indicate that the invasion prefigured in Judges 6 is to be equated with that of Ezekiel 38. The point is that all the latter-day invasions of Israel have broadly similar motives.

In their time of suffering just prior to this final onslaught, " the Lord *sent* a prophet unto the children of Israel" who reminded them of how God had delivered them from Egypt, and pointed out that their present desperate plight was due to their turning away from the true God to idols (Jud. 6:8). This must have a connection with the suggestion that Elijah will be " *sent*" to Israel during their suffering, " before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord" (Mal. 4:5). This " dreadful day" must be that of the final destruction of Israel's invaders rather than simply the return of Christ. Joel similarly speaks of how during the time when the Jewish heavens and earth are turned into " blood and fire, and pillars of smoke" , the Jews will possess the Spirit gifts " before the great and the terrible day of the Lord come" (Joel 2:28-31). This connection between Joel and Malachi would hint that the possession of these gifts is associated with the work of Elijah.

The typology of the Judges record cannot be pushed too strictly. The Judges as the 'saviours' (cp. 'Jesus') of Israel typify both Jesus and Elijah in the last days. Thus Gideon is likened to a loaf of barley bread tumbling into Midian, overturning it - pointing forward to Jesus, the barley-bread loaf (Jn. 6:35 cp. v 9), falling as the little stone on to the image (Jud. 7:13). The prophet of Judges 6 appears to typify Elijah, in addition to any way in which Gideon also may do.

The prophet reminding Israel of the covenant they made with God in Horeb (Jud. 6:10), is precisely the work of Elijah (Mal. 4:4). However, there is every reason to think that Gideon being told to " pour out the broth" upon his offering, which was then consumed by fire from heaven (Jud. 6:20,21 cp. 1 Kings 18:33,34), was encouraging Gideon to see himself as the prototype Elijah-prophet, providing the basis for Elijah dousing his sacrifice with water before it was accepted in an identical way. Gideon proceeds to ask that there should only be dew upon the ground (or perhaps even upon the whole land of Israel, see Hebrew text) according to his word of faithful prayer (Jud. 6:37-39). Elijah saying that " there shall not be dew nor rain these years, but according to my word" (1 Kings 17:1) is surely a conscious replica of this. It is quite possible that we, too, may be given certain prompts in life by reason of particular experiences repeating those of a Biblical character.

The desire of the Arab leaders for the wealth of Israel was couched in the language of religious zeal. Ps. 83:11,12 records how the leaders of the Midianite invasion said, " Let us take to ourselves the houses of God in possession" . The raw lust of the surrounding

Arab peoples for Israel's riches is currently camouflaged in the same way. Before the final onslaught in Gideon's time, those Arab nations had " encamped against" Israel. The Hebrew literally meaning 'to incline a pole' has an uncanny relevance to the pointing of missiles towards them. There can be little doubt that the vast Arab arsenals of missiles will come into use soon.

The early invasions " destroyed the increase of the earth, till thou come unto Gaza" (Jud. 6:4). The particular Arab invaders being typified here appear to concentrate on the South of Israel, stopping just short of Jerusalem. Other prophecies and passages typical of the last days speak of the sufferings of Northern Israel during this period; by bringing them all together a more accurate picture of the final period of holocaust can be obtained. The exact identification of the Arab invaders, e.g. the contemporary states which equate with Midian, Amalek and " the children of the east" , can at best be speculative. The purpose of these studies is to provide a general framework upon which such speculations can be hung in accord with current events. In broad terms it would seem likely that the intense Arab marauding of both Northern and Southern Israel will result in the faithful withdrawing to Jerusalem, which will be ravaged but not occupied, seeing that a righteous remnant will be found there at the Lord's final intervention (Zech. 14:2,3).

Gideon and Elijah

Israel, in Gideon's time, were in a like predicament, bracing themselves for the final blow. " But the spirit of the Lord came upon Gideon" , as it did upon other judges to effect Israel's deliverance (Jud. 6:34; 3:10; 11:29). This language is picked up in Isa. 61:1,2: " The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me...to preach good tidings...liberty to the captives...to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord, and the day of vengeance of our God" . Primarily this refers to Isaiah preaching an inspired message of deliverance to an Israel threatened by the Assyrian invasion, whilst it is also quoted in the Gospels concerning the work of Christ. Both these applications have their basis in the Spirit of God coming upon the judges, showing that they typify both the work of Christ and of the Elijah prophet, of which Isaiah was an early manifestation.

The Elijah prophet was manifested in both Isaiah and John the Baptist, both of whom had some kind of charismatic appeal to the potentially faithful remnant in Israel. Consider the implications of Isa. 8:18; Matt. 3:5. Gideon likewise had this characteristic - the record highlights how the people followed " after him" and " with him" (Jud. 6:34,35; 7:12).

The latter-day Elijah prophet will meet with a similar reception. The prototype Elijah was brought to realize that there were a considerable remnant who had not " bowed the knee to Baal" . In line with the other echoes of Elijah found in the Gideon record, it is possible that the remnant who refused to bow down upon their knees to drink water were those whose conscience was keenly attune to the need to shun all appearance of Baal-worship. It was this remnant whom Gideon used as God's " battle axe and weapons of war" (Jer. 51:20). It will likewise be the spiritually aware among latter-day Jewry who will be used, under the command of Jesus and 'Elijah', to smash Israel's enemies. It would appear that there will be at least two phases to this Jewish victory, after the

pattern of Gideon. Firstly he and the faithful remnant of 300 won the initial victory, and then called to the rest of Israel to join in, in similar fashion to the victory over Jabin and Sisera.

The following verse-by-verse comments fill in a few miscellaneous details:-

Jud. 7:2 "The people that are with thee are too many...lest Israel vaunt themselves against me, saying, Mine own hand hath saved me" is alluded to in 1 Cor. 1:26-29, where Paul explains that for this same reason God has chosen "not many" to bring about *His* way of salvation, through a small remnant of weak people bringing to nought the mighty things. This would equate Gideon's 300 with the true believers of both natural and spiritual Israel.

Jud. 7:12 The Arab enemy were "as the sand by the sea side for multitude", using the words of the Abrahamic promises (Gen. 22:17,18). These people were therefore a pseudo-Israel, having the appearance of being Abraham's true seed. Hagar had been promised "I will multiply thy seed exceedingly, that it shall not be numbered for multitude", after the pattern of the promises to Abraham (Gen. 16:10). This is confirmed by their description as being "by ranks of five" (Jud. 7:11), using the identical Hebrew phrase as used in Ex. 13:18 and Josh. 4:12 concerning Israel's marching against *their* enemies. The aptness of this to Israel's present enemies is obvious- the Arabs claim *they* are the true seed.

Jud. 7:17 Gideon's calm voice of inspiration, "Look on me...as I do, so shall ye do", echoes our Lord's invitation to look upon Him as the serpent on the pole, and to follow Him in very detail.

Jud. 7:19 The blowing of trumpets by the 300 points forward to the resurrection, and the breaking of the clay to reveal the burning lamps within the pitchers, is clearly at the root of 2 Cor. 4:6-8: "God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness (cp. the sudden appearance of those lights on that night)...we have this treasure in earthen vessels (cp. Jud. 7:19), that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us (cp. Jud. 7:2). We are troubled on every side" (cp. Jud. 6:2-6). All this would suggest that the 300 men are to be connected with the resurrected of the new Israel, whose "earthen vessels" are broken (by means of resurrection and judgment) at the end of Israel's Arab downtreading and immediately prior to the great destruction of their enemies by them. However, it is also correct to suspect that the 300 also typify the righteous remnant among Israel who will work with us to achieve this.

Jud. 7:20 "The sword of the Lord" has been interpreted as a reference to the cherubim. The point has been made that this whole scenario of flashing fire and swords was a conscious imitation of the cherubim. From this we can infer that the cherubim will be associated with the latter-day deliverance of Israel.

Jud. 8:12 They "discomfited all the host...the host ran, and cried, and fled" (7:21) uses very intense Hebrew, stressing the totality of panic among the Arabs. In the last days this can only be due to their recognition that they are up against dramatic, Divine intervention which will save Israel.

Jud. 8:17 After the victory, Gideon "beat down the tower of Penueel, and slew the men of the city" for their refusal to help him during the pursuit. This is the language of Christ's return in judgment upon the people of Jerusalem, who are elsewhere likened to a tower in Zion (Matt. 22:7). Thus those Jews who survive the Arab holocaust but still refuse to learn the lesson of total commitment to their Messiah, will be destroyed at broadly the same time as their Arab enemies.

Jud. 8:21 Gideon "took away the ornaments that were on their camels' necks" is correctly defined in the A.V. mg. as referring to the Arab 'ornaments like the moon'. The crescent moon which is stamped on so many Arab tanks (cp. camels), seems a fair latter-day equivalent to this.

Notes

(1) *Jesus of Nazareth* (London: Pioneer, 1991) pp. 82-89.

6-5. Jephthah and Ammon (Jud. 11)

The latter-day typology of Gideon and Midian outlines how the Southern area of Israel will be invaded in the last days, and the people of that area brought to an acceptable level of commitment to Messiah so that they can be used by God to defeat their enemies. The record of Jephthah refers to the land of Gilead on Israel's Eastern flank, and the threat posed by Ammon, the Arab nation directly to the East of Israel. It may be possible to interpret Ammon with reference to Syria in the last days.

At the time of the particular invasion recorded, Israel had repented: "The children of Israel said unto the Lord, We have sinned: do thou unto us whatsoever seemeth good unto thee; deliver us only...and his (God's) soul was grieved for the misery of Israel" (Jud. 10:15,16). Straight after this, "the children of Ammon were gathered together" to attack. The people were "sore distressed" after an extended period of devastation at the hands of these people (Jud. 10:8,9), as they will be in the last days before they come to repent. It would appear from this type that after their repentance they will be faced with a final Arab onslaught, and then tested as to whether they will really put their faith in Jephthah - Jesus.

Type of Christ

Jephthah had been "despised and rejected of men" during the time of Israel's suffering. In this and many other ways he is a clear type of Christ:-

- Jephthah reminded the "elders of Gilead" who were now seeking his help, "Did not ye hate me, and expel me out of my father's house?" (Jud. 11:7). The Hebrew for "expel" is also translated 'thrust out'; Jesus was 'thrust out' from his native town (Luke 4:29) as Jephthah was from Gilead. It was "the elders" who were also responsible for Christ's rejection.

- He was despised as "the son of a strange woman" (Jud. 11:2) as Jesus was accused of being born out of wedlock (John 8:41).

- He was a "man of valour" (Jud. 11:1), a word also translated "virtue", and coming from a root meaning 'to whirl around'. This may possibly suggest a connection with the cherubim, as if through their righteousness ("virtue"), Jephthah and Jesus were a manifestation of God.
- Jephthah's fair point to Israel, "Why are ye come unto me *now* when ye are in distress?" (Jud. 11:7) could have been the words of God, showing how Jephthah closely manifested God - as Jesus did.
- Having been rejected by his brethren, Jephthah "dwelt in the land of Tob" (Jud. 11:3), a word which can mean 'heaven'. Our Lord's return from heaven in response to Israel's plea for help clearly echoes this.
- During his time there, "there were gathered vain men to Jephthah, and went out with him" (Jud. 11:3) to effect Israel's deliverance. "Vain" translates a word which can mean 'emptied, poured out, drawn out' - a fair description of those who have been gathered to Christ by the Gospel's call.

The end result of Israel's suffering at the hand of Ammon was that they realized their desperate need for a firm leader. Both the ordinary people, and what remains of their leadership in the last days, will be unanimous in this same conclusion: "The people and princes of Gilead said one to another, What man is he that will begin to fight against the children of Ammon? he shall be head over all the inhabitants of Gilead" (Jud. 10:18). The fact that they then asked Jephthah to be this "head" (Jud. 11:8) would suggest that secretly they knew all along who they should follow. The Jewish conscience regarding Jesus will be similar. The collapse of infrastructure in Israel which we have outlined previously, indicates a complete collapse of Israel's leadership - Isa. 3:2-5 implies that no one in Israel will even want to be their leader, such will be the desperate personal plight of every Jew left in the land.

Hos. 1:10,11 alludes back to Israel's choosing of Jephthah as their head, implying that their choosing of Christ will be at the time of their national acceptance by God: "It shall be said unto them, Ye are the sons of the living God. Then shall the children of Judah and the children of Israel be gathered together (cp "the children of Israel assembled themselves together" to choose a leader to fight Ammon, Jud. 10:17), and appoint themselves one head, and they shall come up out of the land (Exodus language - as if their suffering in their own land will match what they experienced in Egypt): for great shall be the day of Jezreel" - where Gideon won his great victory over the Arabs, which prefigured that of the last days (Jud. 6:33). This confirms our view that the final Ammonite attack prefigures the very last threat to Israel, which will come immediately after their repentance.

Sequence of events

A careful analysis of the sequence of events hints that Israel will still be reluctant to accept Christ, even after their 'repentance', in the sense of accepting that they need to make a serious return to God:-

- Israel 'repent' (Jud. 10:15,16) after prolonged suffering at the hand of Ammon.
- They agree that they must choose a leader (Jud. 10:18).
- "The children of Ammon made war" is emphasized twice (Jud. 11:4,5), using a word which really means 'to eat down', as a cow does to a field. This tremendous physical carnage in the land (a result of biological weapons?) prompts them to "fetch Jephthah (Jesus) out of the land of Tob" (heaven).

As their acceptance of Jephthah was more than a last resort, so Israel's recalling of Christ from Heaven will only be after a final tribulation, which comes after their reaching the point of 'repentance' from idol worship. This two-fold repentance, firstly of straying from God and secondly of rejecting Christ, is something to watch for in other study. It may be typically significant that Elijah was from Gilead (1 Kings 17:1), as was Jephthah, showing that Israel's coming to repentance, in the typology of Judges 11, will be due to the work of the Elijah prophet.

There is a theme in the book of Judges of a prophet or Angel appearing in Israel to remind them of their sins, followed by the revealing of a judge/saviour. This points forward to the future work of Elijah before the return of Christ.

Links with Goliath

There are at least two links between this record and that of Goliath's destruction, which is also typical of the final victory over the Arabs by reason of Christ's return from Heaven. Jephthah was met with dances of rejoicing after the victory, as was David (Jud. 11:34), and Israel seeking a man to lead them against Ammon has similarities with their search for a champion to fight Goliath (Jud. 10:18).

The following verse-by-verse comments complete the picture:-

Jud. 11:5 Tob being in Ammon, Israel's reluctance to recall Jephthah from there may have been due to a wrong perception that he was on the Arab side. If Islam and Christianity continue to move together, this may be another temptation for Israel to be nervous at accepting Jesus.

11:12,13 As Jephthah briefly appealed to the Arabs to see Biblical sense before destroying them, will Christ do likewise? He will "plead with them" in the valley of Jehoshaphat (Joel 3:2). A remnant of repentant Philistines will be rulers in the Millennium (Zech. 9:5-7); other hints that some Arabs will repent are found in Isa. 19:23-25 ("Assyria the work of my hands" implies they will be the subjects of a new spiritual creation); Isa. 14:1,2 (those who took Israel captive will willingly be their slaves in the Millennium).

11:13 Ammon justified their invasion by a quasi-Biblical argument, based on their claim that "Israel took away my land, when they came up out of Egypt". Jephthah replied by saying that because God had dispossessed Ammon then, they should not keep raising this old land question (Jud. 11:23). Yet this issue of who really owns the land of Israel is as

live now as it was then, and indicates once again how the final Arab invasion will use this sort of argument to justify it.

11:27 "The Lord the Judge be judge this day between the children of Israel and the children of Ammon." The Jew/Arab question will be finally settled in this last conflict which is prefigured here.

11:33 Jephthah "smote them...unto the plain of the vineyards" - connecting with descriptions of Christ ministering judgment on Israel's enemies in terms of the treading of a winepress (Isa. 63:3; Rev. 14:19; 19:15).

Joshua's Conquest

Joshua's conquest of the Canaanite tribes inevitably looks forward to the work of his greater namesake at the second coming. Adoni-Zedek, king of Jerusalem, is replete with reference to the latter day anti-Christ figure who will rule there in the last days. He leads a confederacy of Arab nations against Joshua-Jesus, and is destroyed with hailstones (Josh. 10:11)- an event which is the basis for the latter day prophecy of Rev. 16:21. Joshua's men placing their feet upon the necks of their enemies (Josh. 10:24) is the prototype of all enemies being subdued under the Lord in the last day; and the way "the Lord God of Israel fought for Israel" at this time (Josh. 10:42) is the basis of many latter day statements to the same effect.

CHAPTER 7: ARAB INVASIONS DURING THE TIME OF THE KINGS

7-1 The Type Of David And Goliath

David must be one of the greatest types of Christ. At this time he was a shepherd, despised by his brethren, trying to save Israel at a time of dire physical suffering and spiritual apostasy. These connections alone should make us scan this record for deeper Messianic allusions. The giant strongman falling to the earth because of a stone suggests Nebuchadnezzar's image of Dan.2, where the stone refers to Christ. Note how lion and bear (17:34 cp. Dan. 7:4,5) and brass and iron (17:5-7 cp. Dan. 2:32,33) are all mentioned in the record. Goliath's death by a fatal wound in the head (1 Sam. 17:49) must look back to Gen. 3:15, again connecting David and the stone with the seed of the woman (Christ) and equating Goliath with the seed of the serpent. This is confirmed by the repetitious description of Goliath four times as covered in "brass" from head to foot (17:5,6); which is related to the word translated "serpent" and is a symbol of sin. Six being the number of the flesh it is significant that his "height was six cubits and a span...his spear's head weighed six hundred shekels" (17:4,7). It is even possible that the "man of sin" of 2 Thess.2 refers back to Goliath as his prototype, in which case the image of Dan.2 and the man of sin are equated.

Seed of the serpent

Goliath, representing the seed of the serpent, a personification of sin (i.e. the Biblical devil), needed a man to fight him (17:8,9). The men of Israel cowered in fear, wishing they could only have the strength and courage necessary, but looking one on another

helplessly as the invincible giant made his boast. How to overcome him and the evil intent of this man against God's people was what the men's conversation revolved around: "Have ye seen this man that is come up? Surely to defy Israel is he come up". They also discussed the glorious reward being offered: "It shall be, that the man who killeth him, the king will enrich him with great riches, and make his father's house free in Israel" - and throw in his daughter for good measure too (17:25). But "all the men of Israel, when they saw the man, fled from him, and were sore afraid" (17:24). Now what more precise description could we wish for of our feelings in the struggle against sin? There seems a similarity here with men and Angels weeping because no man was found worthy to look upon or open the book of life (Rev. 5:3-5)- until our Lord prevailed on the cross.

'Golgotha' meaning 'The place of the skull' may well be the place near Jerusalem where David buried Goliath's skull (17:54), greatly strengthening this connection. Whilst speaking of words, "Ephes-Dammim" meaning 'border of blood' suggests 'Aceldama', the "field of blood". Goliath coming out to make his challenges at morning and evening (1 Sam. 17:16) coincided with the daily sacrifices which should have been offered at those times, with their reminder of sin and the need for dedication to God. The thoughtful Israelite must surely have seen in Goliath a personification of sin which the daily sacrifices could do nothing to overcome.

The conflict between the seed of the woman and that of the serpent will have its political manifestation in the battle of Armageddon. The typology of David and Goliath therefore also points forward to the final conflict between Christ and the forces of evil in the last days. The significance of Christ's victory will therefore be not only that it gives physical deliverance to the faithful remnant; it will be the symbol of his victory over sin. Therefore the sufferings of the faithful in the last days are often described in the language of his cross (see Chapter 11). The fact that Armageddon will have this kind of spiritual significance must be watched for throughout our studies. Thus Edom in the last days will be possessed by their enemies, i.e. Christ and his true Israel, referring back to the promise that Abraham's seed would physically and spiritually possess the gates of his enemies (Num. 24:18 cp. Gen. 22:17,18).

We have mentioned the evident similarity between Daniel's image and the Goliath man of sin. The place of the conflict was a little South of Jerusalem, halfway between Jerusalem and the Mediterranean. This sounds like the king of the north planting his tents (cp. the Philistines) "between the seas (Dead and Mediterranean) in the glorious holy mountain" (Dan.11:45). The Philistines making their constant painful incursions into an apostate Israel may well have links with the P.L.O. activities today. Note that the RV renders "Palestine" in the AV as "Philistia". Goliath was from Gath (1 Sam.17:4), meaning "winepress", with its Armageddon and judgment hints. Similarly the conflict lasted for 40 days (1 Sam.17:16)- another link with the coming Divine judgements. Compare this, too, with the periods of 40 years Arab domination recorded in the times of the Judges. Zeph. 2:4,5 says that in the last days, "Gaza...the sea coast" will be singled out for especial judgment- because from here the Palestinian incursions will begin? An independent Palestinian state in the area where Goliath came from, headed up by an anti-Israel, latter day Goliath, really looks a possibility. In this case the situation in David's time will be exactly replicated before our eyes.

David's mocking " Who is this uncircumcised Philistine?" matches " Who art thou, O great mountain?" which was to be destroyed " not by might..but by My spirit" (Zech.4:6,7), as Goliath was killed by David without a sword in his hand, i.e. not by human might. Note that the Philistines were pitched on a mountain, comparing with the description of Babylon as " O great mountain" . Thus the king of the North, the man of sin, Babylon, Daniel's image of the last days are all subtly alluded to, implying that Christ will destroy all of them during one conflict. It is worth questioning whether all these various systems in opposition to Christ will be separate at the time of His return; present developments suggest there may be one huge opposing system (the beast) which incorporates all these others. Now the possibilities are opened up to work through 1 Sam.17 again from this political/ latter day prophecy perspective.

Place Names

It is twice emphasized that " the Philistines gathered together their armies...and were gathered together" , in response to which " Saul and the men of Israel were gathered together" (1 Sam.17:1,2). We commented in the previous chapter on how such 'gathering together' points forward to the final Arab uniting against Israel, to be matched by a feeble attempt on Israel's part to 'gather together' against them (cp. Jud.10:17). The conflict was at Shochoh, meaning 'shut in'. This connects with a theme of being 'shut in' which features in a number of incidents typical of the last days: Hezekiah was 'shut up' in Jerusalem, Noah was 'shut in' the ark, Israel were effectively shut up in their houses on Passover night, as was Lot in his house in Sodom.

Another place name mentioned in the record is Azekah (1 Sam.17:1), which was a target of the Babylonian invasion (Jer.34:7). The Philistines coming against Israel with " sword and spear" (1 Sam.17:47) is the language of Jer.6:23 concerning the Babylonian armies. This invites association of the Philistines with the latter day Arab Babylon. Azekah was also where Joshua/Jesus destroyed a five king Arab confederacy (Josh.10:5,10,11). These associations enable us to make the equation: Goliath= Daniel's image= the man of sin= Babylon= latter day Arabs. This is confirmed by Zech.9:13-15 describing Israel as the slingstone by which the latter day Philistines will be destroyed (v.1-5 concern judgments to come upon the 'Philistines'). The mention of the " Lord of Hosts" (v.15) perhaps looks back to 1 Sam.17:45. Likewise Israel's defeat of Moab (cp. latter day Arabs) with stones may recall the victory over Goliath (2 Kings 3:19,25).

The actual battle was in " the valley of Elah" (1 Sam.17:3). 'Elah' meaning 'the oak' connects with the many references to 'the oak' in Israel's early history, nearly all of them associated with Israel's repentance during times of Arab threat (Gen.12:6; 35:4; Dt.11:30; Josh.24:1; Jud.9:6,37). This is another indication that Jacob's final confrontation with Esau, as typified in the David/ Goliath conflict, will bring about his final repentance.

The Mouth Of The Beast

Goliath was the Arab " champion" (1 Sam.17:51), using the Hebrew word 'Gibbor'. This connects with the description of Messiah as 'El-Gibbor' in Is.9:6, and shows that the latter day Arab powers may well be headed up by one charismatic individual, who sets himself

up as a pseudo-Messiah. The Hebrew word used for "champion" in 1 Sam.17:4 literally means 'the man who goes between the two camps', again pointing forward to the mediatorial office of the true Messiah. The root meaning of 'Goliath' is 'to lead and to go into captivity', which fits in with his wager that the Philistines would go into Jewish captivity if they killed him, and vice versa. This may be the basis of Rev.13:10 concerning the little horn and mouth of the beast: "He that leadeth into captivity shall go into captivity". This power having "a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies" (Rev. 13:5) certainly corresponds with Goliath's loud-mouthed blasphemy. "He opened his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme His name, and His tabernacle, and them that dwell in heaven. And it was given unto him to make war with the saints, and to overcome them" (Rev. 13:6,7) is Goliath exactly (cp. his blasphemy of the Angels in 1 Sam. 17:26). "All that dwell upon the earth shall worship him" (Rev. 13:8) recalls Goliath's charisma, indicated by the Philistines fleeing once they saw that he was dead. "He that killeth with the sword must be killed with the sword" (Rev. 13:10) nicely concludes this set of allusions- Goliath was killed with his own sword. These parallels indicate that Goliath is a prototype of the latter day 'mouth' or personal figurehead of the 'beast'. Note in passing how Gen. 12:3 may have hinted at this figure right at the start of God's purpose with Israel: "him that curseth thee will I curse"(RV).

The details of this confrontation provide insights into the use of weaponry in the final conflict. Goliath's mocking of David as coming to him "with staves" (1 Sam.17:43) may reflect the Arabs laughing off the approach of Christ and the saints due to their total lack of military hardware. In passing, David's taking a staff with him when he evidently intended to use the sling to kill Goliath may have been a conscious association of himself with Moses, using his staff to gain victory over Pharaoh. The Red Sea is a clear type of Christ's latter day victory. 1 Sam.17:5-7 gives quite some detail concerning Goliath's armour; he evidently possessed all the mod cons in contemporary military technology. By contrast, there were no swords or spears with Israel (1 Sam.13:22; Jud.5:8), indicating the gross military inferiority of Israel in the last days. Yet Goliath being slain with his own weapons (1 Sam.17:51) may point forward to how the Arabs will be destroyed at the hands of their own weapons. Their eyes melting in their sockets (Zech.14:12) may well be as a result of their own nuclear/ chemical armaments backfiring on them.

"Fowls of the air"

The judgment of the Philistines is prophesied in terms which connect with many other latter day prophecies. Their destruction was so that "all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel" (1 Sam.17:46), which is a similar reason for the final humiliation of Gog: "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" (Ez.38:23). To do this, David confidently prophesied: "I will give the carcasses of the host of the Philistines this day unto the fowls of the air, and to the wild beasts of the earth" (1 Sam.17:46). The mention of wild beasts and fowls connects with the description of the nations controlled by Nebuchadnezzar's Babylon in just these terms (Dan.2:38). We will see in our later study of Babylon how latter day Babylon will meet its end at the hands of the nations who are confederate under it. If typical 'Goliath' and his Philistines were to be destroyed by these nations who were confederated under Babylon, there is a connection between typical Goliath and Babylon; confirming our suggestion that in terms of latter day

prophecy, we are dealing with an Arab Babylon. Dan.4:12,14,21,22 depicts Nebuchadnezzar as a tree with fowls and beasts living under its shadow. This makes Nebuchadnezzar a personal epitome of Babylon, as Goliath was the figurehead of the Philistines. This all lends support to the impression that the latter day Arab Babylon/beast will be headed up by one charismatic individual.

The carcasses of the Philistines being given to the fowls and beasts to devour rings bells with a number of passages which speak about apostate Israel having a like figure: 1 Kings 14:11 (Jeroboam); 1 Kings 16:4 (Baasha); 1 Kings 21:24 (Ahab). Jer.7:32,33 and 19:6,7 present the picture of the carcasses of Israel lying in the valley of Hinnom (Gehenna), being fed on by the fowls and beasts. Similar descriptions are found in Jer.15:3; 16:4; 34:20. The conclusion from this is that the punishment of apostate Israel in the latter days will be in the same manner and perhaps at the same time as that of the Arabs/Philistines. It may be significant that Ez.29:5 speaks of Egypt being given to the beasts and fowls- suggesting that they will be confederate with the latter day Philistines?

Rev.19:17-21 describes "fowls" being called to eat the flesh of the carcasses of "all men" who had "gathered together" to fight God's people in the last days. This connection would associate the Philistines, who also "gathered together" (1 Sam.17:1) against Israel, with these latter day aggressors. The "all men" whose flesh is to be eaten are the remaining followers of the beast and false prophet, whose association with the Philistines encourages us to interpret them as having an Arab reference in the last days. This eating by fowls is equated with burning in the lake of fire, or Gehenna (Rev.19:20,21). We have mentioned above how several passages in Jeremiah associate the mauling of carcasses by fowls with destruction in Gehenna. This creates the image of the Arab beast being ravaged by the 'fowls' of either natural Israel (as they represented in David's speech to Goliath) or the Arab nations once confederate with 'Babylon', as they seem to represent in Daniel.

Psalm 79

There are a number of interesting allusions to the Goliath scenario in Psalm 79, a passage which has undoubted reference to the latter day desolation of Jerusalem. The psalmist laments that the Arab invaders had given "the dead bodies of thy servants...to be meat unto the fowls of the heaven, the flesh of thy saints unto the beasts of the earth" (Ps.79:2). This was exactly what Goliath said he would do to Israel, further identifying him with Israel's latter day enemies. However, it was this very thing which actually happened to the Philistines, showing how what the Arabs both do and plan to inflict upon Israel will be measured back to them. The invaders mocked "Where is their God? let him be known among the heathen" (Ps.79:10), just as Goliath did. The victory of David/ Jesus proved and will prove again to the nations that "there is a God in Israel" (1 Sam.17:46). Thus God will "render unto our neighbours (the Arabs/ Philistines) sevenfold into their bosom their reproach, wherewith they have reproached thee, O Lord" (Ps.79:12), as He did to Goliath.

Israel's spoiling of the Philistines after the victory (1 Sam.17:53) is similar to what they did to Sennacherib's decimated Assyrian host, also typical of the latter day invasion. This would be in line with the consistent prophetic hints that the wealth of the surrounding

Arab nations will go to the remnant who survive of natural Israel, providing the basis for their prosperity during the Millennium.

7-2 JEHOSHAPHAT AND THE LAST DAYS

The record of the great invasion of Judah by a huge Arab confederacy in Jehoshaphat's time, has so many links with other Scriptures which speak of the last days, either directly or through typology, that it is clear that this event is to be read as a type of the final Arab defeat at the hands of Jesus and a repentant Israel. The record in 2 Chron. 20 has undeniable links with other 'last days' prophecies:-

2 Chron. 20	Joel	Zech. 14
:1	3:2	:2
:3	1:14; 2:15	
:7-12	2:17	
:11	:6,7,12	
:12	3:12	
:13	1:3; 2:16	
:16 AVmg	3:2,12	
:20 ("Tekoa" = 'blowing of trumpets')		
:23		:13
:25		:14
:27,28	2:23	
:29		:16
19:8	1:13	

The careful student will also pick up a number of connections with passages which relate to the Assyrian invasion during Hezekiah's time. Jehoshaphat's prayer for deliverance includes the imprecation "our eyes are upon thee" (2 Chron. 20:12), which is quoted in Ps. 123:1,2 - one of the Songs of Degrees written against the background of the Assyrian invasion, pleading for deliverance by God. At the battle front he also exhorted the people: "Believe in the Lord your God, so shall ye be established...so shall ye prosper" (2 Chron. 20:20). This is quoted in Isa. 7:9 to teach that Israel should have a stable faith in God, rather than being frightened by the Assyrian threat.

Judah "looked unto the multitude, and, behold, they were dead bodies fallen to the earth, and none escaped" (2 Chron. 20:24) is the language of the Assyrian defeat outside Jerusalem, probably in the same location as this Arab confederacy was also destroyed. The stripping of the spoil from the dead was also repeated in Hezekiah's time (Isa. 33:4; Mic. 4:13 cp. 2 Chron. 20:25). The returning to Jerusalem with joy and God giving Jehoshaphat "rest round about" (2 Chron. 20:27,30) is the language of Isaiah's prophecies of how Israel would be restored after their Assyrian trauma, returning to Zion with joy upon their heads (Isa. 35:10).

The Assyrian invasion being the basis for that of Eze. 38 (note the many similarities between 'Gog' and Assyria), it is definitely typical of the invasion of the last days. Therefore that of 2 Chron. 20, which alludes to it, must be likewise interpreted.

There are a number of other links with passages which are typical of the last days:-

2 Chron. 20

- :9 Lev. 26:40-42
- :15 Deut. 1:29,30 (the Arab tribes
initially in Canaan and the Egyptians
= the Arab confederacy).
- :15 1 Sam. 17:47 (David and Goliath)
- :17 Jud. 7:21 (Gideon and Midian)
- :17 Ex. 14:13,14 (the exodus deliverance).
- :21 The Jericho scenario.
- :25 Jud. 8:24-26 (Gideon and Midian).
- :27 A.V. mg. Jud. 11:6,9 (Jephthah as Israel's head)
- Jehoshaphat is
Israel's head.
- :28 Similar praise after the victories over
Pharaoh and Goliath.
- :29 1 Sam. 17:46; Eze. 38:23.

The sheer number of all these connections indicates that the invasion of 2 Chron. 20 is to be read as a summation of passages which speak of the final invasion of Israel. There is good reason to believe that 2 Chron. 20 typifies the very last part of the invasion, with its crushing by Jehoshaphat/Jesus as an immediate prelude to the establishment of the Millennium ("rest round about", 2 Chron. 20:30).

Elijah's work

The invasion is set against a background of apostate Israel having been punished by an Arab invasion, and Judah having set about a serious spiritual revival. Jehoshaphat set

about implementing a 'back to the Bible' reformation, enforcing a return to " law and commandment, statutes and judgments" (2 Chron. 19:10), lest " wrath come upon you...from the Lord" (2 Chron. 19:10,2). This is all reminiscent of Elijah's work, to make Israel " remember the law...with the statutes and judgments...lest I come and smite the earth with a curse" (Mal. 4:4,6). This suggests that Jehoshaphat's revival of Judah after Israel's apostasy, typifies the work of Elijah in the last days. As with the judges, Jehoshaphat typifies the work of both Elijah and Christ in the last days.

The repentance of Israel will be brought about by their sufferings at the hand of the Arabs, according to the typology studied so far. It follows that the invasion we read of in 2 Chron. 20 points to a final Arab onslaught against Jerusalem in particular, which will come after a period of Arab downtreading and the work of an 'Elijah' prophet among them. It is almost as if this final invasion is to test the depth of Israel's new faith and repentance. Whether Christ will have returned before this is purposefully ambiguous - Jehoshaphat in Jerusalem, as Hezekiah in Jerusalem, may typify the presence of the Elijah prophet among the newly-faithful remnant, or that of Jesus. Jehoshaphat being in the " forefront" (Heb. 'head') of the people as they return from the spoil, certainly echoes Christ rather than the Elijah prophet. Likewise Israel chose Jephthah/Jesus as their 'head' after their repentance (Jud. 11:6).

The many Joel allusions in 2 Chron. 20 support this general outline. Joel 1 describes the desolation of the land by a succession of Arab invasions, followed by a call to repent which leads to the invading army being called off, and then all Israel's enemies coming up again to " the valley of Jehoshaphat" to be finally destroyed, followed immediately by the establishment of the Millennium. The events of 2 Chron. 20 concern Jehoshaphat's destruction of the Arab invaders, showing that they typify the final stage of Israel's redemption in the latter day " valley of Jehoshaphat" .

Arab confederacy

" The children of Moab, and the children of Ammon, and with them other beside the Ammonites, came against Jehoshaphat to battle...and Judah gathered themselves together" (2 Chron. 20:1,4) again shows the emphasis on how the Arabs will gather themselves together to make this final onslaught, perhaps implying that during the desolation of Israel just prior to it by various Arab incursions, there will be no unity of the type which will then be seen. Time and again this 'gathering together' of Israel's enemies in order to attack them is highlighted, clearly showing how Arab disunity can only be solved by their concentration on capturing Jerusalem.

This 'gathering together' is spoken of in latter-day passages - Zech. 14:2 and Rev. 16:14. The previous Arab invasions which typify those of the future, also mention this 'gathering together': Sisera's forces did this (Jud. 4:13), as did those of Ammon (Jud. 10:19; 1 Chron. 19:7), the Amorites (Jud. 11:20), the Arab powers with Assyria in Hezekiah's time (Mic. 4:11), Gog's forces (Eze. 38:7), the Arab-Canaanite tribes (Gen. 34:30) and especially the Philistines (Jud. 16:33; 1 Sam. 13:5,11; 17:1; 25:1; 28:1; 29:1; 2 Sam. 23:11).

This is quite some emphasis. Thus while we can expect to see greater potential Arab unity developing around the Israel issue and perhaps a common allegiance to charismatic 'Nebuchadnezzar' figure for a brief period, their complete meeting of minds will not be until the final push against Jerusalem.

It is significant that this gathering together of Israel's enemies in the incidents typical of the last days, produced a parallel 'gathering together' of Israel in response. They 'gathered together' in response to the threatened Philistine invasions (1 Sam. 14:20; 17:2; 28:4), those of the Ammonites (Jud. 10:18); 1 Chron. 19:7,12), the Babylonians (Jer. 6:1) and during their deliverance from Egyptian persecution (Ex. 4:29). Their 'gathering together' under Jehoshaphat to fast and seek God's help (2 Chron. 20:3,4) is therefore typical of their doing so in the last days; indeed Joel 2:15-19 prophesies that this will happen. The implication is that a new spirit of unity develops among the Jews as they realize their common need for salvation. A like desperate awareness among the new Israel would have the same happy result.

Relevant to this theme is Mal. 4:6, which speaks of 'Elijah' reconciling the fathers to the children among latter-day Jewry. Recall, too, how we suggested that Deborah, arising as a "mother in Israel" typified the inculcation of a spirit of unity and familyhood among the faithful in Israel due to their sufferings (Jud. 5:7). Isa. 11:13,14 also speaks of how Ephraim and Judah sink their differences before devouring their surrounding enemies.

We have shown that the language of 'gathering together' is frequently used about the gathering of Israel's Arab enemies against her, which will be matched by her 'gathering together'. This will occur both within Israel, and may also be matched by a 'second exodus' of the diaspora, being gathered together to Israel. This could easily take place during the holocaust period within the land, which will doubtless be associated with Jewish pogroms world-wide. With this understanding of 'gathering', at least three passages repay careful study:-

Zech. 12:3

"In that day will I make Jerusalem a burdensome stone for all people (i.e. all around Israel, as this often means): all that burden themselves with it shall be cut in pieces, though all the people of the earth be gathered together against it".

The Septuagint renders the first phrase as "a stone trodden down by the Gentiles", clearly alluded to by Jesus in His description of Jerusalem being captured by the Gentiles (Luke 21:24). Those who are 'gathered together' against Jerusalem must be the Arabs, according to the other uses of the phrase outlined above. These Arab peoples will take Jerusalem, and suffer for it ("burden themselves with it"). The rejected likewise will be burdened with a heavy stone (Mt. 18:6), showing that they will share the judgments of Israel's enemies. Zech. 14:1,2 also indicates that we must expect the Arabs to 'take' Jerusalem in some sense during their latter-day invasions. "All the people of the earth" who are gathered against Jerusalem referring to the Arabs, indicates that "the earth" must be the area around Jerusalem. Alternatively, it may be read as 'the land' - of Israel. The 'people of the land' would then refer to the Canaanite tribes who originally lived in the land, who are the forefathers of many of the present Arab peoples. They

are called " the people of the land (earth)" in Gen. 23:7, 12,13; Deut. 7:6; Josh 4:24. Another possibility is that they are 'people of the land' in the sense that at the times they gather themselves against Jerusalem they are present within the land of Israel.

Rev. 16:14-16

This and Rev. 19:19 appear to be based upon the ideas of the 'gathering together' of Israel's Arab enemies previously outlined, and also upon Zech. 12:3 just considered.

" The spirit of devils...go forth unto the kings of the earth and of the whole world, to gather them to the battle of that great day...into a place called in the Hebrew tongue Armageddon" . " The kings of the earth" can be interpreted as in Zech. 12:3; " of the whole world" may refer to the world in relation to Israel (as in Dan. 2), or possibly to the fact that all nations literally will be incited to attack Israel. 'Armageddon' meaning 'the valley of Megiddo', takes us back to Zech. 12:9,11: " I will seek to destroy all the nations that come against Jerusalem...in that day shall there be a great mourning in Jerusalem, as...in the valley of Megiddon" .

The conclusion from this is that although Israel have repented before their victory in the valley of Jehoshaphat (the same area in terms of prophecy), according to the typology of 2 Chron. 20 and other passages, their full realization of the enormity of their sin of crucifying Jesus only comes home to them on seeing His complete rout of their enemies. Thus their returning to Jerusalem with joy (2 Chron. 20:27) will be preceded by, or mixed with, tears of pent-up emotional release. The similarity of the 'gather together' language has led us to associate the following:-

- The gathering together of Israel's Arab enemies against her at various times
- The gathering of the Arab nations into a valley near Jerusalem (2 Chron. 20:16, A.V. mg.) for destruction in Hezekiah's time
- Joel's prophecy of all nations being gathered into the " valley of Jehoshaphat" (3:2)
- The gathering together of the Arab nations into the 'valley of Megiddo' (Rev. 16:16) to fight Israel in the last days.

It could be objected that the valley of Megiddo is in the North of Israel whilst that of Jehoshaphat is in the South, near Jerusalem. However, the other similarities of language and context are so great as to suggest that they must refer to the same place. It may be that Megiddo having been the scene of many previous Arab battles in Israel's history, it is being used symbolically in Rev. 16:16 rather than as a literal geographical reference.

Back in Rev. 16, the sixth vial has described how the nations will be gathered to their place of judgment in Armageddon. The seventh vial then records the destruction of Babylon, who receives " the cup of the wine of the fierceness of his wrath" in the form of huge hailstones (Rev. 16:19,21). This equates the nations who are gathered to Armageddon with Babylon, which we will see is primarily a symbol of the Arab powers.

The cup of the wrath of God alludes to Zech. 12:2,3, where the Arab nations also are "gathered together" and have burdened themselves with Jerusalem are made to drink "a cup of trembling" by reason of doing so. The punishment with giant hailstones recalls how Israel's Arab enemies were destroyed in the time of Joshua/Jesus (Josh. 20:11). This confirms our interpretation of 'Babylon' as having an Arab context.

Rev. 18:19

"The beast, and the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against him that sat on the horse (Jesus, v. 11), and against his army". The connection with 2 Chron. 20 and the other references to Israel's Arab enemies 'gathering together' invites us to see the beast as a primarily Arab organization. If there is a detailed allusion here to the 2 Chron. 20 scenario, Jehoshaphat (against whom the Arab kings initially gathered together) would represent Jesus, and Jehoshaphat's army would tally with the resurrected saints. In this case, the final Arab onslaught will be after the return of Jesus. In passing, note the differentiation between the leaders in this conflict and their armies: "The kings of the earth, and their armies...him that sat on the horse (Jesus) and against his army".

This would suggest a specific Arab hatred of the Lord Jesus which is separate from, although in addition to, their antipathy towards Israel and the saints. It may also be possible to see in the separation between "the kings of the earth, and their armies" a certain degree of coercion, or difference of motivation, between leaders and people. It may be that an Arab-dominated U.N. or similar organization controlling some kind of global army will fulfill such requirements.

Final details

Back in 2 Chron. 20 a number of other details serve to confirm the general picture presented by other prophets:-

- The invaders approached Jerusalem from the South (2 Chron. 20:2) - as the final push will do in the last days?
- Jehoshaphat prayed, "Rulest not thou over all the kingdoms of the heathen? and in thine hand is there not power and might, so that none is able to withstand thee?" (2 Chron. 20:6). The implication is that by God's victory over the Arabs, they would be made to see the truth of this. The language of Dan. 4:17,32 appears to look back to this in that through his fall Nebuchadnezzar and his people of Babylon learnt the same lesson. This is yet another connection between 'Babylon' and the Arab tribes.
- "They...come to cast us out of thy possession, which thou hast given *us* to inherit" (2 Chron. 20:11) shows that those Arabs were using the same argument against Israel as they do today: 'God gave *us* the land, not you - we are the real seed of Abraham, so, shift!'
- "Then upon Jahaziel...a Levite (like Elijah)...came the Spirit of the Lord" - to give an inspired message of encouragement (2 Chron. 20:14). The role of the word of God

spoken forth by prophets or Angels to encourage Israel in their final suffering is a repeated theme in the Judges and other passages typical of the last days. 'Elijah' and his school of prophets who fill this role could be:-

- we who are living just prior to the second

coming

- the resurrected saints

- Angels

- natural Jews given the spirit gift of

prophecy just prior to the final judgment

of Israel's enemies (Joel 2:28-31).

Compare this with the comments on the two witnesses in

Section 3.

- "The wilderness of Tekoa" (2 Chron. 20:20) means 'blowing of trumpets' - associated with the rallying of natural Israel, and also the resurrection and judgment of the saints. This could be another hint that the final Arab invasion occurs after Christ's return. The feast of Trumpets may be the time for some significant event in the last days (see Chapter 12).

- The Arab invaders massacred each other: "every one helped to destroy another" (2 Chron. 20:23). This seems to have been sparked by their ambushing the wrong group: "The Lord set ambushments (amazingly, the Hebrew word for this is 'arab!') against the children of Ammon, Moab, and Mount Seir" (2 Chron. 20:22). Truly, Arabs against Arabs! This is a theme in the latter-days passages: Zech. 14:13; Jud. 7:22; 1 Sam. 14:22. Whilst such confusion is easily possible given modern high-technology warfare, it would seem more likely that a few initial mistakes of this sort could open up old rivalries which are then fought out to the death. Indeed, we could sensibly look for even more rifts to occur between the Arabs, e.g. over oil.

It would appear that they pick on one particular group of Arabs first: "when they had made an end of the inhabitants of Seir, every one helped to destroy another" (2 Chron. 20:23). The prophecy of Seir's destruction in Eze. 35 should be read as being executed by fellow Arabs.

The prediction of the Philistines' destruction by Babylon in Jer. 47 may also have its latter-day fulfilment at this time. Amos chs. 1 and 2 describe how apostate Israel and six Arab nations will meet their end by fire. This complete (seven-fold) destruction points forward to the last days, when apostate Israel will share the punishment of the

Arabs. The emphasis on fire is understandable if the Arabs unleash their missiles on each other.

- " They were three days in gathering of the spoil" (2 Chron. 20:25) inevitably suggests our Lord's three days in the grave in order to provide 'spoil' of spiritual riches for the people of God. This is one of many examples of Christ's victory over the political manifestation of sin in the last days, being described in terms which are reminiscent of His conquest of sin through His sacrifice.

8-1 The Assyrian and Babylonian Invasions: Introduction

Assyria and Babylon were empires based on the fertile crescent, formed by the Tigris and Euphrates rivers. Assur, the early capital of Assyria, was only 200 miles away from Babylon. In many ways Babylon was a reformation and continuation of the Assyrian empire: " The land of the Chaldeans; this people was not, till the Assyrian founded it" (Is. 23:13). The many similarities between them have been catalogued elsewhere, along with conclusive evidence of the way in which 'Assyria' and 'Babylon' are used interchangeably in Scripture. Both of them fall broadly within the boundaries of the land promised to Abraham (Tigris is to the *east* of Assyria, Gen. 2:14), making them " kings of the earth (land)" which we have identified with the present Arab nations. As the major aggressors towards Israel in Bible times, they must have much to teach us concerning the latter-day Arab invasion. We have explained in an appendix how 'Babylon' may well be revived in the last days. Assyria trode down Judah (Is. 10:6), and thus became the prototype for the latter day power which will tread down Jerusalem for a short period.

Geographically, those areas comprise modern Iran and Iraq, although in reality they coerced, or operated in tandem with, a number of the other smaller Arab powers around Israel (Is. 29:7,8; 30:28; 33:3; 34:1,2; 2 Chron. 22:22; Ps. 83). Herodotus called Sennacharib " king of the Arabians and the Assyrians". It seems reasonable to assume a literal geographical echo of this in the last days. To avoid repetition, a number of points which might appear obvious have been omitted from the analysis which follows.

The judgments to come upon Assyria are often described in terms which connect with those to come upon Babylon. Jer. 50:18 is explicit on this: " I will punish the king of Babylon and his land, as I have punished the king of Assyria". Zeph. 2:13-15 provides a good example: " He (God) will stretch out his hand against the north, and destroy Assyria...flocks shall lie down in the midst of her, all the beasts of the nations: both the cormorant and the bittern (the language of Is. 13:21,22 about Babylon)...This is the rejoicing city that dwelt carelessly, that said in her heart, I am, and there is none beside me: how is she become a desolation" (cp. Is. 47:8 and Rev. 18:7 concerning Babylon). Indeed, the entire prophecy of Nahum, which is primarily concerning the destruction of Assyria, is shot through with Babylon language (e.g. Nah. 3:13 = Jer. 50:37; Nah. 3:1 = Rev. 18:24; Nah. 3:4 = Rev. 17:5; Nah. 3:11 = Rev. 17:6); both were to be made desolate (Zeph. 2:13 cp. Jer. 50:3). The similarity of their judgments would indicate that they both represent the latter-day enemies of Israel, who are to be destroyed at the second coming.

It is also significant that the language used of the judgment of the Arabs in the last days, notably Babylon and Assyria, is also used concerning the punishments of apostate Israel (see Appendix 3 for a discussion of this). This is further proof that the wicked amongst God's people will perish with, and perhaps during, the punishment upon the world around them. The following are a few examples:-

Judgments upon Israel	Judgments upon Babylon/Assyria
Hos. 9:10	Nah. 3:12
Joel 1:4	Nah. 3:15
Dt. 28:37	Jer. 51:37
Is. 8:7,8	Jer. 51:42
Ez. 19:12	Jer. 12:14
Jer. 4:6; 6:1	Jer. 50:3
Jer. 19:8; 1 Kings 9:8	Jer. 50:13
Jer. 17:27	Jer. 50:32
Lam. 2:9	Jer. 51:30
Zech. 13:8	2 Sam. 8:8 (Moab)
Zech. 14:2	Is. 13:16
Judgment from " the north"	Judgment from " the north" , Jer. 50:3

" As Babylon hath caused the slain of Israel to fall, so at Babylon shall fall the slain of all the earth" (Jer. 51:49).

THE ASSYRIAN INVASIONS

The Assyrian confederacy which came against Jerusalem is described as being the foes of Israel who will be swept away as chaff (Is. 29:5 RV). This was fulfilled in Sennacherib's destruction outside Jerusalem. And yet the language of being swept away as chaff refers without doubt to the image of Dan. 2 being swept away as chaff. The conclusion surely is that the Assyrian attack against Jerusalem, comprised as it was of a confederacy of local Arab nations, is typical of the final destruction of a similar confederacy by the Lord's return.

The first mention of the Assyrian invasions is in 2 Kings 15:19,20: " Pul (Tiglath-Pilneser?) the king of Assyria came against the land: and Menahem gave Pul a thousand talents of silver...Menahem exacted the money of Israel, even of all the mighty men of wealth." This in itself would indicate a reasonable level of prosperity within Israel, and a willingness to buy off the invader rather than fight. It would seem that this was the position of Israel during some periods of the Judges in relation to the Philistines. There are several hints in the record of Samson of Israel's willingness to placate the Philistines rather than provoke them to direct conflict (Jud. 14:4 [Hebrew]; 15:11,12). Both the Philistines and Assyrians became more excessive in their demands, until they began to use direct military force to plunder Israel. The background of 2 Kings 15 gives the picture of the Israelites as plagued by infighting and assassinations; there is good reason to think

that latter day Jewry will also be plagued by this perennial problem. This would explain the otherwise pointless association of the Assyrian invasion with " the day that Ephraim departed from Judah" in Is.7:17. The new Israel, the NT hints, will be in a similar position.

The beginning of the holocaust to come upon Israel may well be in a similar way to which the first Assyrian attacks were carried out against Israel. They could slip into this position through a period of over-confidence after a dramatic success against the Arabs, or by being duped into thinking that the Arabs really want peace; alternatively, Israel may become so evidently inferior militarily to the Arabs (due to their trading oil for military hardware) that Israel resort to the use of commercial concessions to keep the enemy at bay. We must therefore look for Israel's present nuclear and missile capacity to be either taken out or far surpassed by the Arabs.

The first Assyrian invasion was confined to the Northern part of Israel (2 Kings 15:29), commented upon in Is. 9:1 as a 'light affliction' compared to the fury of the main invasion. The previous study of 'Gideon and Midian' has shown how this has an application to the initial prolonged period of overrunning the land in the future, which will lead up to the great final invasion.

The people of those Northern areas were " carried captive to Assyria" , raising the question of whether Jews will be literally transported out of Israel during the future Arab domination. Modern Arab leaders being so eager to replicate the actions of their historical heroes like Sennacherib and Nebuchadnezzar, it is within the bounds of probability that this will literally happen. Hitler's manic concentration on railroading Jews around Europe in huge numbers shows that 'carrying into captivity' is not just a thing of the past.

The prophecies of Israel's regathering from the lands of their persecution have only had a very small fulfilment so far. Their major realization must be in the future, which may possibly imply a future scattering of Jews from Israel before this happens. Passages which speak of Israel's latter-day regathering in terms of their restoration from Babylon under Ezra and Nehemiah would take on great significance if Jews are literally carried captive to 'Babylon' and her Arab satellites in the last days. Two passages in particular seem to call for a literal captivity in the last days:-

" In that day"

" It shall come to pass in that day (the period of the second coming), that the Lord shall set his hand again the *second* time to recover the remnant of his people, which shall be left, from Assyria, and from Egypt (cp. Deut. 28:68), and from Pathros...Cush...Elam...Shinar (Babylon)...Hamath...and there shall be an highway for the remnant of his people, which shall be left, from Assyria; like as it was to Israel in the day that he came up out of the land of Egypt" (Is. 11:11,16).

" It shall come to pass in that day, that the great trumpet shall be blown (cp. Matt. 24:31; Rev. 11:15), and they shall come which were ready to perish (from captivity) in

the land of Assyria, and the outcasts in the land of Egypt, and shall worship the Lord...at Jerusalem" (Is. 27:13).

However, the Hebrew for 'carrying away captive' means strictly 'to make naked', applicable to captivity because this is how captives were led away. This idea of nakedness is associated with public shame, and it may be that Israel's 'carrying away captive' in the last days may just refer to this rather than to a literal captivity. Thus 2 Chron. 28:19 speaks of Israel being made naked to the nations as a result of their sin. "He that is courageous among the mighty shall flee away naked in that day" of punishment at Arab hands (Amos 2:16).

Carrying captive

Speaking with some reference to Israel's final Arab 'captivity', Ezekiel wrote: "I will deliver thee into the hand of them whom thou hatest (her Arab neighbours), into the hand of them from whom thy mind is alienated (clear reference to the mutual abhorrence of Jew and Arab!): and they shall...leave thee naked and bare: and the nakedness of thy whoredoms shall be discovered" (Eze. 23:28,29 cp. Hos. 2:2,3). This is consciously referring to Israel being "naked and bare" in the innocent days of her national babyhood (Eze. 16:7,22). Thus Israel's 'making naked' or 'carrying into captivity' by the latter-day Assyrian will result in her returning to her spiritual youth, and once again entering into covenant with God.

It can be demonstrated that Adam walking naked and shameful after the fall is a figure of sinful Israel (Gen. 3:7-10). The fig tree symbolizing the law, with its initial glossiness in covering sin that soon faded due to man's weakness, it follows that only when Israel throw this down will they be fully 'naked'. Their 'making naked' by the Assyrian 'captivity' can therefore be expected to finally teach them the inability of the law to save.

The Hebrew for 'carry away captive' is translated 'uncover' in Is. 47:2,3 with reference to Babylon, again showing that what the Arabs do to Israel will be visited upon them: "O virgin daughter of Babylon...uncover thy locks, make bare the leg, uncover the thigh...thy nakedness shall be uncovered, yea, thy shame shall be seen." There is reasonable emphasis on this making naked of Babylon and Assyria in the last days - Rev. 17:16; Nah. 3:4,5; Hab. 2:15,16.

At this time of the initial Assyrian invasion there was large scale bickering going on within Israel (2 Kings 15:30). We can therefore expect there to be feuding in natural Israel in the very last days, a tragic mirror image of that which is prophesied to afflict spiritual Israel at the same time (Matt. 24:49).

"In those days the Lord began to send against Judah Rezin the king of Syria" (2 Kings 15:37) indicating that before the major 'Assyrian' invasion of the last days, we can expect Israel to be raided by the smaller, neighbouring Arab powers, as typified by "Syria" here. The record later summarizes what happened: "The Lord rejected all the seed of Israel, and afflicted them ('to browbeat/depress' - this mental suffering of Israel is also mentioned in Lev. 26:16), and delivered them into the hand of spoilers" (2 Kings 17:20). These "spoilers", or plunderers, probably refer to these early Syrian raids. The same

word is used in Jud. 2:14 to describe other Arab marauders which typify those of the last days (see the previous study of the Judges period). The ultimate 'spoiler' was, of course, the Assyrian (Is. 10:13).

8-2 Assyria And Gog

Arabs on the bandwagon

Not just the Syrians were involved in these raids. Speaking of this time, Is. 9:12 speaks of the Syrians and Philistines as being the mouth of a huge beast, closing around Israel: "The Syrians before, and the Philistines behind; and they shall devour Israel with open mouth." This image of an Arab beast devouring Israel is repeated in Joel 1:6 concerning the later Assyrian invader, showing how the period of invasions by Israel's smaller Arab neighbours is a prelude to the final invasion by Assyria/Babylon. These larger powers are symbolized by the lion (Jer. 50:17), as were the Philistines in the typology of Jud. 14:5,6, cp. Jud. 15:14 ("Vineyards" = Israel, the young lion roaring and shouting = the Philistines).

More detail concerning these Syrian raids which heralded the major Assyrian invasion is found in Is. 7:3-8, which we will now analyse. Remember that these raids typify the period of prolonged (3.5 years?) Arab downtreading of Israel which must occur before the final invasion.

"Syria is confederate with Ephraim" may suggest that the Arab invaders associate themselves in some way with the spiritually weak among Israel (those who have accepted Islam?) in order to terrorize the rest of Israel.

Isaiah the prophet then appears, inspiring the faithful in Judah to trust God. This would continue the theme traced previously, notably in Judges, of a prophet appearing when Israel is fearful (Is. 7:2), and under Arab attack. We have suggested that this typifies the work of the Elijah ministry. He encourages them: "Fear not, neither be fainthearted" (Is. 7:4), recalling the inspired encouragement to Israel at the time of Jehoshaphat (2 Chron. 20:15). Whilst the Jehoshaphat context typifies the final invasion rather than the period of preliminary raids which Is. 7 refers to, it seems largely true that those preliminary raids have a number of similarities with the final invasion. Thus Is. 7:4 speaks of "the fierce anger of Rezin" and the Syrians, echoing the rage and fury of Sennacherib and the Assyrians (2 Kings 19:27,28). This great Arab fury is hard to understand if they are only motivated by a desire for material betterment at Israel's expense. It would therefore seem due to some form of massive religious excitation." The two tails of these smoking firebrands" (Is. 7:4) recalls Samson's use of this method to destroy the Philistines' corn (Jud. 15:4), perhaps hinting that the Syrian raids aimed to destroy Israel's agriculture - something which seems likely from the typology of the Judges account of Israel's previous Arab invasions.

"Let us go up against Judah" (Is. 7:6) sounds like Gog deciding, "I will go up to the land" (Eze. 38:11). Note that Rezin is twice called "the head" (Heb. 'rosh') of Syria and Damascus (Is. 7:8) - cp. the 'rosh' of Eze. 38:2. This all indicates that Rezin is being

framed in the record as a mini king of Assyria, seeing that Eze. 38 is clearly based upon the Assyrian invasion:-

Eze. 38 / Gog	Assyria (Isaiah)
:4	37:29
:7	8:7
:8	8:8
:9	28:2; 8:9,21; the Assyrian "strong one" of Is. 28:2 is the 'Gog' figure
:11	37:24
:12	10:6
:19	30:27
:22	29:6 RV; 30:30
:19,20	29:6; 30:25
39:10	33:1

It is noteworthy that the rebuke of Sennacherib's Assyrian invasion is celebrated in language which alludes to that used about the destruction of Gog and Pharaoh (e.g. Ps.76:6=Ex.15:1; Ez.39:20), suggesting that the final invasions of Israel will summarize those of all her old enemies. And God's final deliverance of her will have been typified by scores of like interventions in time past. Note too the King of Babylon is described as taking counsel and conceiving a purpose (Jer. 49:30)- the very language of Ez. 38:10 about Gog conceiving an evil thought. Gog simply has to be read as a latter day Assyrian / Babylonian. The Assyrian is to be "broken in pieces" (Is. 30:31 RV), just as the whole image of Daniel 2 is to be. That image symbolizes a latter day confederacy of nations under the leadership of Babylon / Assyria, which will dominate the land / earth of Israel in the last days.

Rezin's invasions were a result of 'taking evil counsel against' Israel (Is. 7:5), just as Assyria and her Arab supporters were to do: " They have taken crafty counsel against thy people" (Ps. 83:3). Rezin's plan was to " set a king in the midst of (Judah), even the son of Tabeal" (Is. 7:6), meaning 'pleasing to God'. This supports the suggestion that the " fierce anger" of the invaders, both then and in the future, will be fuelled by quasi-religious reasoning - in this case 'You Jews are so displeasing to God, we're going to put a truly God-pleasing Muslim ruler in the holy city of Jerusalem.' The double emphasis on " Damascus" as being the nerve centre of Rezin's operations (Is. 7:8), may also be significant in that this very city is now a centre for Arab terrorism against Israel.

8-3 Tiglath-pileser And The Last Days

Wars and fightings

It is easy to get the impression that during this period preceding the main Assyrian invasion, all that was happening in the Middle East was that Syria, the Philistines and perhaps other Arab nations, were raiding Israel. However, Rabshakeh frequently

reminded the Jews that during that period preceding the invasion, Assyria had 'utterly destroyed' " all (Arab) lands" in the area (2 Kings 19:11), showing that we are to expect significant Arab squabbling during the domination period of Israel. This perhaps accounts for their lack of organized colonisation of the land in this period, and their apparent failure to make good their 'capture' of Jerusalem (Zech. 14:2) in that some Jews still remain there. It also explains how easily they turn to fight each other during the final invasion of Israel, if this invasion is seen as only a lull in a series of major inter-Arab conflicts raging throughout the Middle East. Wars and conflicts will be going on all around Israel during the last days, as they were in A.D. 70 - not just between Jews and Arabs (Matt. 24:6,7).

Thus Isaiah encouraged the faithful not to fear the Syrian raids because " the riches of Damascus...shall be taken away before (by) the king of Assyria" (Is. 8:4). The Bible-minded among the latter-day Israel may well take comfort from this same prophecy. It may be that " riches" , in the sense of oil rights, is the motivation behind this Arab infighting.

" At that time Rezin king of Syria recovered Elath to Syria, and drove the Jews from Elath" (2 Kings 16:6). Only a few years previously, Elath had been restored to Israel (2 Kings 14:22), as had Damascus and Hamath (2 Kings 14:28), which were also recaptured by Syria and Assyria respectively (Is. 7:8; 2 Kings 18:34). Modern Israel likewise has recaptured border territories over the past 40 years which soon will be taken again by her Arab enemies. If Elath is to be equated with Ezion-geber in the far south, Syria (to the north-east of Israel) must have achieved this in alliance with other Arab groups to the south of Israel. This Syrian pressure on Israel from north and south justifies the description of her raids as an open jaw about to close around Israel (Is. 9:12). Notice how many of the Arab invasions in the judges period, which typify the period of prolonged desolation of Israel, come up from the south.

" So Ahaz sent messengers to Tiglath-pileser king of Assyria, saying, I am thy servant and thy son: come up, and save me out of the hand of the king of Syria" (2 Kings 16:7). It may be that Israel is forced to rig up some deal with the large Arab power of the last days typified by Assyria, in order to fend off the threat of one of the smaller powers. This in itself indicates a lack of Arab unity in the lead-up to the Assyrian invasion, which we can expect to see again in our time.

'Accept Islam!'

As the miserable story unfolds, it becomes apparent that the granting of Assyrian help was conditional upon Israel rejecting the worship of Yahweh for that of Assyrian deities. One could well imagine 'Assyria' of the last days stipulating Israel's acceptance of Islam as a condition for military help and mercy. God was Israel's father (Jer. 3:19; 31:9; Mal. 1:6; 2:10) and master (Mal. 1:6; Deut. 32:36); both these concepts were well understood by Israel. To say to Tiglath-Pileser, " I am *thy* servant and *thy* son" was therefore a conscious rejection of Yahweh as Master and Father. For this reason Isaiah, prophesying in this period, stresses the fact that God claims Israel as *His* servant (e.g. Is. 44:1,2,21). The historical account sadly records how not only Ahaz but Hoshea (2 Kings 17:3) and Jehoiakim (2 Kings 24:1) also became 'servants' of their Arab dominators -

doubtless thinking that they could serve two masters. Note in passing how 'Islam' is a call to 'submit'. This conscious rejection of Yahweh worship is further shown by Ahaz cutting off "the borders of the bases" of the laver (2 Kings 16:17), i.e. the cherubic faces which were on the wheels. These would have been a distinctive part of Yahweh worship.

The conditions of this Assyrian aid agreement are more than hinted at in 2 Kings 16:10,11, which records how after meeting Tiglath-pileser at Damascus, Ahaz ordered a replica altar to one which he had seen there. It can be shown that the changes made to the temple in the aftermath of this show the extent to which Ahaz took on board the Assyrian religious system. Notice how while it was an Assyrian religion, the altar which was part of it was at Damascus, showing that Rezin and Syria, who were based there (Is. 7:8), worshipped the same gods as Assyria. Even though Rezin's gods had failed to save him, Ahaz was blind enough to still worship them. Likewise the 'Assyria' of the last days and the smaller Arab states who will also oppress Israel, all have the same religion - Islam. It is this which Israel will be forced to accept, although some of the earlier typology studied in Judges indicated that some amongst them will have willingly done so already - as many in Israel were probably already worshipping Assyrian deities.

Rabshakeh drove the point home to the Jews that the gods of the surrounding nations had not saved them - perhaps subtly hinting at the fact that many behind those Jerusalem walls had been worshipping those very gods (2 Kings 18:34). Eze. 23:7 confirms that Israel's receiving Assyrian help was in return for her acceptance of their idols, which she willingly agreed to: "She committed her whoredoms with...the chosen men of Assyria (i.e. the Assyrian diplomats with whom Ahaz's messengers negotiated)...with all their idols she defiled herself".

At the end, the final Assyrian invasion also seems to have offered Israel mercy if they made some religious agreement with Assyria. Rabshakeh's long list of gods who had proved inferior to the king of Assyria may carry with it the implication that *he* was the true God. Likewise Islamic leaders set themselves up as the representatives of Allah on earth. "Hearken not to Hezekiah...make with me a blessing (AV "agreement"), and come out to me" (Is. 36:16 AVmg.) suggests a religious acceptance. The implication may have been: 'Don't trust in Hezekiah's god, he's like the other gods of the nations, but accept *our* invincible god'.

8-4 The Assyrian Invasion As A Type

Money for time

"And Ahaz took the silver and gold that was found in the house of the Lord...and sent it for a present to the king of Assyria" (2 Kings 16:8). This might correspond with Israel offering oil exploration rights within her land (where there is oil - Deut. 33:24), or allowing oil or water pipelines to be built to the Mediterranean across her land. However, Is. 10:13 indicates that the Assyrians "robbed their treasures (a word usually used about the temple treasures)...their hand hath found as a nest ("the house of the Lord") the riches of the people...as one gathereth eggs that are left" after the previous Assyrian demands for money (2 Kings 15:19,20).

Thus the Assyrians clearly showed that it was their long-term intention to destroy Israel without mercy. The Jews must have realized this, but short of a whole-hearted repentance their only alternative was to trade what meagre wealth they had left for time, in delaying the massive Assyrian onslaught which was clearly inevitable.

At the time of the end Israel will be in a like predicament. 2 Kings 17 goes on to relate how Israel were invaded and carried away when this great Assyrian invasion came, and then 2 Kings 18 jumps ahead to the next Assyrian invasion, this time of Judah. It was this which was ultimately unsuccessful in taking Jerusalem, and was dramatically ended by God's direct Angelic intervention, clearly typifying the work of Christ through His second coming. Thus at least four waves of Assyrian invasions are recorded:-

- under Menahem (2 Kings 15:19) - bought off
- under Pekah (2 Kings 15:29) - northern Israel affected
- under Hoshea (2 Kings 17:3) - Israel carried captive
- under Hezekiah (2 Kings 18:9) - took fenced cities of Judah.

The typology of Assyria alone therefore indicates that it is surely over-simplistic to think of the invasion of Israel in the last days as being just one major attack which is crushed by Christ. The Babylonian and Roman invasions having similar sequences teach the same thing.

Israel and Judah

The juxtaposition of 2 Kings 17 and 18 concerning the destruction of Israel by Assyria, followed by their failure against Judah, implies that the ten tribes typify unfaithful Israel in the last days who refuse to be spiritually reformed during the period of Arab downtreading, while 'Judah' represent those Jews who make at least some effort to show faith in God, or who somehow associate themselves with this group.

Whilst in this book, and in many cases Biblically, 'Israel' is used in general terms to describe God's people, it is possible to see in some latter-day passages a conscious differentiation between the usage of the terms 'Israel' and 'Judah' along the lines suggested. This does not mean that all those in Judah at Hezekiah's time and at the time of the Assyrian invasion were members of the faithful 'remnant' category. Is. 33:14 speaks of the "sinners in Zion" during the Assyrian siege, implying that they were punished with the same "devouring fire" which the Assyrian host were consumed by (2 Kings 19:35 cp. Ps. 104:4).

This may suggest that there are two categories of unworthy in latter-day Israel - those who are destroyed or 'carried captive' by the Syrian and Assyrian invasions, and those who take refuge in Jerusalem as figurative 'Judah', although lacking a true faith. These will be destroyed along with the 'Assyrian' Arab confederacy, perhaps in the same valley of judgment. Thus Is. 33:14 calls these Jews 'hypocrites', seeing they are pretending to

have faith. Zech. 14:2 speaks of half those in Jerusalem ('Judah') as going into captivity - i.e. suffering the fate of 'Israel'.

The period of the Syrian raids would have brought more suffering to Judah than Israel, seeing the ten tribes were confederate with Syria (Is. 7:2). However, the Assyrian invasions were initially directed against Israel rather than Judah, so both had their share of suffering, as well as the awareness that soon they must be in line for a full blooded Assyrian onslaught. In the run up to this was a period of unparalleled prophetic activity in both Judah and Israel: "The Lord testified against Israel, and against Judah, by *all* the prophets, and by *all* the seers" (2 Kings 17:13). Isaiah, Micah, Joel, Amos and Hosea were all within this period, and at least Isaiah had a school of prophets (Is. 8:16,18).

There will be a similar intense appeal to Israel, either through the preaching of the old prophets' message to Israel, or through spirit-gifted prophets of the 'Elijah' ministry, speaking inspired messages provoking repentance. As a result of Israel's sufferings at the hand of the latter day Assyrian, her teachers [perhaps an intensive plural, indicating her great teacher, i.e. Jesus] shall not be hidden from her any more (Is. 30:21 RV). The veil will be taken from their eyes through their experience of tribulation.

The Isaiah type

It must be significant that Isaiah, the paramount prophet of this period (Is. 1:1) is a confirmed type of Christ, and his school of prophets typical of the saints. "I (Isaiah) and the children (prophets - Is. 8:16) whom the Lord hath given me" (Is. 8:18) is quoted in Heb. 2:13 as referring to Christ and His brethren. These "children...are for signs and for wonders in Israel" (Is. 8:18), suggesting that in addition to speaking forth the word of God after Christ's return, they perform miraculous signs and wonders with the Spirit gifts to validate their message, after the pattern of Joel 2:28-32, which may well have had a primary fulfilment in the times of Hezekiah and the Assyrian invasion. Elijah and Elisha's schools of prophets seem to have had similar powers.

Other instances of Isaiah being a type of Christ can be found by comparing Is. 6:10 with John 12:39-41 and by appreciating that "The spirit of the Lord God is upon me...to preach good tidings...to comfort all that mourn" (e.g. Hezekiah) is primarily concerning Isaiah's message of hope to Israel during the Assyrian invasions, although it is quoted concerning Jesus (Is. 61:1,2 cp. Luke 4:18).

The important role of Isaiah and his associated prophets in bringing Judah to an acceptable level of faith in God during their Arab downtreading prior to the final invasion, must be typically significant in a latter-day context. It may be that they represent the Elijah ministry, or that the "sons of the prophets" refer to the believers, indicating that it will be us who go forth to preach to Israel during their holocaust. This possibility is investigated further in Section 2. Isaiah being a type of Christ, it may be that Christ will be back on earth, even in the land physically, pleading with Israel during their tribulation. However, this is too large a conclusion to safely rest on just this one piece of typology.

" The king of Assyria found conspiracy in Hoshea: for he had sent messengers to So king of Egypt, and brought no present to the king of Assyria, as he had done year by year" (2 Kings 17:4). This regular paying of tribute was a feature of Israel's domination by the Philistines (Jud. 3:15), which we earlier demonstrated was typical of the future period of Arab domination of Israel. Hoshea's failure to get out of giving tribute contrasts with Hezekiah being ultimately successful in doing so (2 Kings 18:7), perhaps indicating that the faithful remnant in latter-day Israel refuse to be dominated by the Arabs in terms of commercial monopoly as well as religion, although these two things will probably be related as they were under the ancient Assyrian domination.

" Then the king of Assyria came up throughout all the land, and went up to Samaria, and besieged it three years" (2 Kings 17:5). The emphasis on him going throughout all the land rather than just 'to Samaria', may imply a conscious effort to destroy the land physically, which we have seen was a major theme of many Arab invasions. This three-year period of domination rings bells with the three and a half years of the (latter-day?) Elijah ministry, and the same period spoken of in the 1,260 days, the 42 months and " a time, times, and an half" (Dan. 7:25; 12:7; Rev. 11:2,3; 12:6). The subsequent colonization of the land after Israel's defeat by the neighbouring Arabs may be briefly repeated in the last days (2 Kings 17:24). The terrible living conditions and lack of fertile land to support ever large populations in many Arab countries, makes such a suggestion feasible. These Arab settlers were eventually taught the fear of Yahweh (2 Kings 17:28), as those also will be in the Kingdom who survive the final carnage in Israel.

8-5 Hezekiah's Reformation

Hezekiah and a minority within Judah took the prophets' call for reformation seriously. The detailed records of his reform given in 2 Kings 18 and 2 Chron. 29-31, recall those of Jehoshaphat in 2 Chron. 19:5-11, which we have shown to be typical of how Israel's latter-day Arab tribulations make a minority among them take a firm spiritual grip upon themselves. Hezekiah's campaign against idolatry may be matched by an effort in the last days to wrench Israel away from the worship of Islam (the present god of the surrounding Arab nations), which some of them will have adopted. This would explain the religious motivation which we have seen will underlie the rage of the final Arab invasion.

Hezekiah sent envoys throughout Israel with the message, " Turn again unto the Lord...and he will return to the remnant of you, that are escaped out of the hand of the kings of Assyria" (2 Chron. 30:6). This confirms our previous comment that some who survive the earlier Arab invasions will still not have a true faith - otherwise this call to repentance would be unnecessary.

The language of Israel turning, and God returning, provides a definite link with Joel 2:12-14: " Turn ye even to me...turn unto the Lord your God...he (God) will (then) return and repent" . Like the typology of 2 Chron. 30:6, this passage is speaking of the final call for Israel to repent after the prolonged Arab devastation described in Joel 1. Both Joel (2:17) and the record of Hezekiah (2 Chron. 30:17) show the important role of " the priests and Levites" in bringing about this repentance. They either typify the Elijah

ministry (he was a priest), or they may point to the revival of some kind of spiritual leadership system from within natural Israel.

" The priests and the Levites arose...and their voice was heard, and their prayer came up to his holy dwelling place, even unto heaven" (2 Chron. 30:27) uses the language of 1 Kings 8:37-39, which is in turn alluding to that of Lev. 26 and Deut. 28, describing how, after having suffered great plagues and invasions due to their sins, Israel are brought to offer powerful prayers of repentance. This must all have some reference to the last days.

During this time of reformation, Hezekiah (epitomizing the repentant remnant) " smote the Philistines even unto Gaza" (2 Kings 18:8). We have shown from Is. 9:12 that the Philistines were successfully invading Judah and Israel at this time. Hezekiah's victory against them would therefore indicate that the faithful remnant which develops among latter-day Israel may literally fight off the Arab marauders or, alternatively, be spared their ravages in some way, once they have experienced enough of their venom to develop an acceptable level of reformation. By contrast, the rest of faithless Israel will be left to suffer from these attacks.

Section 2 provides significant evidence to show that while natural Israel suffers persecution, so, too, will spiritual Israel. However, it may also be true that their sufferings will last only as long as is necessary to produce the required reformation. We have also seen that both in Hezekiah's time and in the last days, some of natural Israel will associate themselves with 'Judah', the righteous remnant in Jerusalem, purely to escape the tribulations, whilst in their heart they are unreformed. Thus Is. 33:14 calls them " hypocrites" .

There will also be a tendency for this to happen among the new Israel. We commented in the study on 'Lot and Sodom' that Lot's wife was typical of this class; she associated herself with her righteous husband and thus started to escape the judgments on the world around her, but was eventually destroyed with the same destruction that came upon them - as the " sinners in Zion" probably were in Hezekiah's time (Is. 33:14). Compare, too, how the spiritually dozy of the last days try to enter the Kingdom on the backs of their righteous friends (Matt. 25:8).

Fragile faith

The faith of Hezekiah's righteous remnant was by no means as robust as it might have been. There certainly seems to have been a hiccup in Hezekiah's own faith when he " sent to the king of Assyria...saying, I have offended; return from me: that which thou puttest on me will I bear" (2 Kings 18:14). This suggests that the faith of the latter-day remnant (in both natural and spiritual Israel) may be in a similar state. " I have offended" has a definite religious connotation - 'I have sinned'. This would fit into the scenario of the Arab invaders saying that Israel should be subject to them for religious reasons; any rebellion against this would then be a sin.

" Hezekiah gave him all the silver that was found in the house of the Lord, and in the treasures of the king's house" (2 Kings 18:15) is an exact quotation from 2 Kings 16:8,

concerning Ahaz of faithless Israel doing exactly the same. " Hezekiah cut off the gold (faith) from the doors...which Hezekiah king of *Judah* had overlaid, and gave it to the king of Assyria (2 Kings 18:16). The apparently needless repetition of the name " Hezekiah" in this verse serves to show that we are now dealing with a different spiritual man to the previous " Hezekiah king of *Judah*" , typifying, as he then did, the faithful remnant.

8-6 Rabshakeh And The Last Days

" The king of Assyria sent Tartan and Rabsaris and Rab-shakeh from Lachish to king Hezekiah with a great host against Jerusalem (2 Kings 18:17). The Hebrew for " great" here is not the usual word so translated. " Kabad" used here means literally to be heavily laden down, being related to the word for 'glory'. This could refer to a large amount of (relatively) sophisticated military hardware being carried by them, which accords with other indications that the final Arab push against Jerusalem will be noted for its extensive use of the latest military gadgetry. It could be a malfunctioning of this which causes the Arab invaders to destroy each other, as required by Zech. 14:13; Jud. 7:22; 2 Chron. 20:23 etc. Note, too, how the prophecy of Gog's invasion, being based on this Assyrian invasion, stresses the huge amount of military equipment used by the invader (Eze. 38:4,5). The Gulf war of 1991 demonstrated how a number of nations, each using such sophisticated hardware, must work in absolute co-operation for it to be effective, showing that there must be at least a superficial unity amongst the Arab aggressors before the final invasion.

The Assyrian army was split up under three leaders, Tartan, Rabsaris and Rabshakeh. " Tartan" is related to the Assyrian god Tartak (2 Kings 17:31), further confirming that there was and will be a religious aspect to the final invasion. More proof of this is found in the great emphasis on their desire to take Jerusalem as opposed to anywhere else (2 Kings 18:17); 2 Chron. 32:2 AV mg.). " Rabsaris" is mentioned in Jer. 39:3 as being one of the princes of Babylon who came against Jerusalem during that invasion, again demonstrating the similarity between the invasions of Babylon and Assyria (see introduction to this study). The attack comes against Jerusalem from the south (Lachish, 2 Kings 18:17), as do the attacks in the historical incidents which typify this final invasion.

The subdivision of the Arab invader into three groups, as in the original Assyrian battle plan, may also be seen in the last days, seeing that some previous Arab invasions may have had this feature too:-

- " The spoilers of the Philistines (raided Israel) in three companies" (1 Sam. 13:17).
- The Israelites fought their Ammonite enemies " in three companies" , perhaps because there were three groups of
Ammonites (1 Sam. 11:11).
- The account of Gideon's victory over Midian, a clear type of the latter-day Arab destruction, has a triple emphasis on

Israel attacking them in " three companies" (Jud. 7:16,20,22) - perhaps for the same reason.

- The " great city" of Bablylon/Assyria will be " divided into three parts" for its destruction (Rev. 16:19).
- The Chaldeans (Babylonians/Assyrians) attacked Job, symbolic of faithless Israel ⁽¹⁾ in three bands (Job 1:17). The book of Job has many other links with the Assyrian invasion (see later).
- Is there some reference to this in the enigmatic three frog like spirits of Rev. 16?

Rev. 9:14-18 describes how 200,000,000 horsemen came from just beyond the Euphrates (i.e. Babylon/Assyria), using " fire and smoke and brimstone" to punish God's apostate people. " By these three was the third part of men killed" , suggesting that this invading army has three aspects to its work. The huge number of horsemen must allude to the " great company" of horsemen of Eze. 38:4, which we have shown to be rooted in the Assyrian invasion. The 200,000,000 horsemen of Rev. 9:16 may correspond to the fact that profane history records the strength of the Assyrian army which came against Jerusalem as being 200,000 men.

Jerusalem was truly "compassed with armies", and perhaps the Lord has this in mind when He predicted that Jerusalem would again be like this in the last days. His subsequent warning to those in the country areas not running into Jerusalem for refuge is also an allusion to the situation in Hezekiah's time- for this was exactly what happened then (Lk. 21:20,21 RV).

The final trauma

With Jerusalem surrounded by such a huge army, it was inevitable that fear would reign within its walls. Rabshakeh's continual propaganda " to affright them and to trouble them" (2 Chron. 32:18) egged this on, as jubilant Arab propaganda will likewise intensely test the faith of the remnant within Jerusalem in the last days. It would appear from this typology that there will be this final intense testing of Israel in the very last moment before God's intervention. It may be similar for the faithful remnant among spiritual Israel, too.

Against this background, Isaiah is framed as the epitome of sedate spirituality and faith, calmly assuring the people from God's word. Rabshakeh realized their dependence on Isaiah's prophecies, and he mocked their reliance on these abstract, apparently academic things as opposed to anything physical: " Thou sayest (but they are but vain words,) I have counsel and strength for the war" (2 Kings 18:20), the implication being " But we Assyrians have 200,000 warriors to fight the war with!" The ministry of the (Elijah?) prophets in the last days will have a similar central role in continuing to motivate the faith of the righteous remnant.

House to house fighting

Presumably these prophets will actually be physically with this faithful group, tucked away in underground bunkers in Jerusalem. This is certainly what Zech. 14:2 implies - Jerusalem taken by the Arabs, but the righteous remnant somehow remaining there. One can imagine the Arab troops flushing out the Jews from the wreckage of the city in house-to-house fighting, killing half of those who were in it at the time it fell. Is. 4:3 surely speaks of this scenario: "He that is left in Zion, and he that remaineth in Jerusalem, shall be called holy, even every one that is written among the living in Jerusalem".

Those killed will be the faithless, although they will not necessarily be physically separate from the righteous. When the last of these is shot or knifed by Arab soldiers and the destruction of the faithful ones looks inevitable, the Lord will dramatically intervene. It is hard to imagine another scenario which fits the requirements of Zech. 14:1-4. That remnant are those typified by the faithful within Jerusalem at the time of the Assyrian invasion, so it is reasonable to imagine the latter-day equivalent of Isaiah and his school of prophets uttering and expounding words of prophecy, perhaps these very ones which this study reflects upon, in Bible classes held in sewers and barricaded buildings. Truly, "in that day shall the Lord defend the inhabitants of Jerusalem", i.e. the remnant (Zech. 12:8). This final remnant of Israel is referred to in Obadiah 17- "in Mount Zion there shall be those that escape" (RV), "the captivity of this fortress of the children of Israel" (Obadiah 20 RVmg.), and they will be saved by the appearance of saviours / Angels on Mount Zion (Obadiah 21) at the Lord's return to the place from which He ascended to Heaven.

It is worth noting that two thirds of the Jews within the land are to be "cut off" in the holocaust, meaning that a third survive it (Zech. 13:8,9). Having spoken of this period in Rev. 6, Rev. 7:4 speaks of 144,000 Jews as surviving it. A third of the Jews in Israel is about 1.4 million people; it may be that only a tenth of those will ultimately be found worthy. The 144,000 are sealed so that they avoid God's judgments, which would fit the idea of the righteous remnant miraculously surviving in an Arab occupied Jerusalem.

Western intervention?

The equivalent of Rabshakeh's propaganda may well be in the form of Arab megaphone broadcasts to the Jews they know to be hidden away. Rabshakeh mocked their trust in Egypt, the "king of the south", which was the only other main power bloc opposed to Assyria, "the king of the north" (2 Kings 18:21) reporting how so many other surrounding nations had fallen to Assyria. The Arab "Assyria" of the last days will broadcast similar messages, although the equivalent of 'Egypt' in the sense of the only other major world power may be the U.S.A. As in Hezekiah's time, many Jews will be tempted to put their real faith in a Western intervention, on humanitarian grounds alone, rather than in the words of the prophets concerning the second coming. Such Western intervention may well look likely, as Egyptian help did in Hezekiah's time - but it will not come in time.

Immediately prior to the final Angelic destruction of the Assyrians, "Tirhakah, king of Ethiopia" came to fight them (2 Kings 19:9). The mentioning of this shows how tempting it was for the Jews to put their faith in this sort of thing. There may be a similar situation in the last days, so that literally "all nations" are involved in a Middle East conflict when the Lord intervenes.

Sophistry

Rabshakeh's foghorn blared on: "Make an agreement with me...and then eat ye every man of his own vine, and every one of his fig tree...until I come and take you away to a land like your own land, a land of corn and wine, a land of bread and vineyards, a land of oil olive and of honey" (2 Kings 18:31-32). The repetition of the word "land" and the evident allusions to the description of the promised land Israel would have if they were faithful (e.g. Deut. 8:7,8), show that Rabshakeh was offering the Jews a fake kingdom of God. The reference to each man eating his own vine and fig tree is alluding to Mic. 4:4, a prophecy which was uttered during this period, and doubtless repeated by the prophets within Jerusalem: "They shall sit every man under his vine and...fig tree".

These conscious allusions by Rabshakeh again show that there was a strong religious element in his reasoning - as if to say, " Make a deal with us, and we can offer you something better than the kingdom your prophets tell you will soon come and is worth suffering for" . The Arab propaganda of the last days may run along similar lines: " Become Muslims, and *then* you will be the real children of Abraham and have hope of being in a real paradise" . The language of vines, oil, corn, honey etc. are prominent in the Islamic concept of 'paradise', their equivalent to the Kingdom of God.

It follows that the Kingdom prophecies of Micah and the early promises of the land of Israel - i.e. the Gospel of the Kingdom - will be under much discussion amongst persecuted Israel of the last days, taught to them by the prophet-preachers who come among them during the preceding period of Arab domination. The Elijah ministry will turn their hearts back to the Jewish fathers- Abraham, Isaac and Jacob (Mal. 4:6). These prophets were, and will be, dynamic in their work; thus Rabshakeh told Israel not to be *persuaded* by the prophetic promises that " The Lord will deliver us" (2 Kings 18:32). In the last days this aspect of the message will be in the form of assurance that the second coming, the ultimate deliverance, will soon occur.

In passing, it is intriguing that the Nazis told the Jews of occupied Europe that the death camps were holiday resorts, dressing up in exotic terms their means of destroying and 'carrying captive' the Jews. This may have been a purposeful echo of Rabshakeh's style: describing the Jews' certain death in captivity, in the language of their being invited to a peaceful place of freedom and plenty. If the Arabs do the same in the last days, they will be knowingly imitating both Hitler and Rabshakeh/Sennacherib. Their evident attention to historical symbolism makes this quite likely.

Isaiah's prophecies have reference to both Sennacherib's invasion and the last days. In what is very much a last days prophecy, Is.51:12 encourages Israel not to " be afraid of a man that shall die, and of the son of man which shall be made as grass" . Primarily this must have referred to Rabshakeh's threats which so pulverized the Jews with fear. It is quite possible that there will be a specific man who co-ordinates the holocaust upon Israel, a real 'anti-Christ'; a fake " son of man" .

Notes

(1) See *James and other Studies* (London: Pioneer, 1992).

8-7 Assyria And Daniel 11

Isaiah was able to give explicit assurance concerning their survival against Assyria. He accurately foretold how the Assyrian army would begin to retreat due to rumours of other neighbouring Arab armies threatening his own security: " I will send a blast upon him, and he shall hear a rumour, and shall return to his own land" (2 Kings 19:7). Thus at the very time of Assyria's destruction by God, her previous allies turned against her, exemplifying how Arab in-fighting will be one of the means which God will use to finally destroy them (Zech. 14:13, etc.).

" A blast" (Heb. 'ruach', a spirit/angel?) being sent upon Sennacherib is the same term used about Pharaoh's destruction (Ex. 15:8) and that of Babylon (Jer. 51:1), both of which are typical of the final Arab defeat. Babylon also hears 'rumours' at the time of her destruction (Jer. 51:46). It is to these 'rumours' of Arab wars which Christ may

allude in Matt. 24:6, speaking of "rumours of wars" in the very last days. The smaller Arab nations associated with Babylon/Assyria also hear "tidings" (same word as "rumour") in Jer. 49:23, showing that they meet the same judgment as 'Assyria' to some extent.

Daniel 11

The same word is also translated "tidings" in Dan. 11:44. Close analysis of Dan. 11:40-44 reveals that it is couched in terms of the Eze. 38 invasion, which is based upon that of Assyria. However, it is also full of direct allusions to the Assyrian invasion:-

"The king of the north" (Dan. 11:40) - Assyria (cp. Zeph.2:13).

"Shall come against him like a whirlwind" (Dan. 11:40), as God will against the Arabs in response to this (Zech. 9:14; Is. 28:2). God comes up "like a storm...a cloud to cover the land" in a similar way (Eze. 38:9). A whirlwind attacks from all sides. The combined typology of the previous Arab invasions has shown them coming from all points of the compass. The final combined 'Assyrian' invasion will also have this feature, as it did in Hezekiah's time.

"With chariots, and with horsemen" (Dan. 11:40), for which the Assyrians were famous, and Gog likewise (Eze. 38:4).

"He shall enter into the countries" (Dan. 11:40) as Assyria did en route to Israel, "And shall overflow and pass over" (Dan. 11:40), as Assyria under Sennacherib (Is. 8:8; 43:2) and Babylon (Jer. 47:2) are said to have done. The Hebrew root for "overflow" means "to cleanse", occurring in Eze. 16:19 concerning God 'thoroughly washing away' Israel's sins in the last days, as a result of their Arab tribulations. Thus the 'Assyrian'/Arab 'overflowing' of the land in the last days will result in Israel's spiritual cleansing. "The consumption decreed (the Arab/Babylonian invasion) shall overflow in righteousness" (Is. 10:22). "He shall enter also into the land of delight" (Dan 11:41 A.V. mg.). At the time of Sennacherib's destruction, God termed the land 'delight' (Is. 62:4).

This could indicate that this invasion comes after the return of Christ and the establishment of the Kingdom. The ambiguity is because of the 'variable' timing of Christ's return, seeing this is related to Israel's spiritual reformation - at least it appears this is how God wishes us to see it.

"Many countries shall be overthrown" (Dan. 11:41). 2 Kings 18:34 lists these countries in the Sennacherib context. This confirms that there will be inter-Arab conflict immediately prior to the final 'Assyrian' attack on Israel.

"But these shall escape out of his *hand*, even Edom, and Moab, and the chief ('rosh') of the children of Ammon (Dan. 11:41). These areas were not meddled with by Sennacherib. There is a triple emphasis on how the other nations fell into his "hand" in 2 Kings 18:33-35.

"He shall stretch forth his hand also upon the countries, continues this "hand" connection, "and the land of Egypt shall not escape" (Dan. 11:42). There is a possible

allusion here to Moses stretching out his hand upon Egypt (Ex. 9:15), which would show that the latter-day "king of the North" will claim that he has received Divine guidance to judge Israel. Assyria's invasion of Egypt was associated with that of Israel, further demonstrating that Dan. 11:40-43 was Sennacherib's battle plan.

"He shall have power (the Hebrew signifies political power) over the treasures of gold and silver" (Dan. 11:43). This is the Assyrian extraction of gold and silver from Hezekiah's Israel (and other countries?) by their political bullying (2 Kings 16:8; 18:15,16).

"The Libyans and the Ethiopians shall be at his steps" (Dan. 11:43) may appear to contradict Ethiopia suddenly becoming opposed to Assyria during the final attack on Jerusalem (2 Kings 19:9). This can be reconciled by realizing that Dan. 11 speaks of two phases in this final invasion. Ethiopia is with Assyria during the blitzkrieg towards and through Israel, but is not necessarily with her in the final 'going forth with great fury' against Jerusalem (Dan. 11:44).

There were these same two phases in the Assyrian prototype - the "great fury" of the king of the north is modelled upon Sennacherib's rage of 2 Kings 19:27,28. The fact that Ethiopia is described as being with Gog in the Ezek. 38 invasion may be an indication that this prophecy is not concerning the final push on Jerusalem, but rather the Assyrian/Arab pillaging of the land for "a spoil and a prey...cattle and goods" (Eze. 38:12) after the pattern of the Arab raiders in the Judges period.

Ethiopia being mentioned in tandem with Libya in both Eze. 38:5 and Dan. 11:43 could suggest that the North African Arabs break ranks with those of 'Assyria' during the attack on Jerusalem, as evidently occurred in Hezekiah's time (2 Kings 19:9). At the very moment, the Angel slew the Arab invaders (2 Kings 19:35), typifying how God's destruction of the latter-day Arabs will be partly by their turning against each other (Zech. 14:13 etc.). Someone hitting the wrong button could so easily spark this off.

Is. 20:4-6 records how Assyria was at war with Egypt and Ethiopia some years before Sennacherib's invasion; it is not surprising that even though those nations initially support Assyria's invasion of Israel (Dan. 11:43), they will easily turn against them. Thus major Arab wars should not lead us to think that the invasion of Israel is far off.

The rampant spread of Islam in black Africa may mean that African Moslem troops will be among 'Libya and Ethiopia' mentioned in these latter-day prophecies. In this case racial tensions would never be far below the surface, and could easily rise during the confused house-to-house fighting for Jerusalem, which we earlier reasoned the Arab forces will have to engage in.

According to the prototype, Ethiopia will turn against Assyria specifically. This may be part of the process whereby the horns "hate the whore" of Babylon/Assyria during the final stage of their persecution of God's people (Rev. 17:16 cp. Hab 2:8). Nah 3:9 points out that the real strength of Assyria against Israel was on account of the support she received from the smaller Arab powers. Similarly no one Arab nation presently has any likelihood of dominating the Middle East in terms of military power. Iran and Iraq

(geographical 'Assyria') will need the assistance of the other Arab nations to realistically invade Israel.

" *Tidings* out of the east and out of the north shall trouble him" (Dan. 11:44) uses the same word translated "rumour" in 2 Kings 19:7, concerning the 'rumour' Sennacherib heard of his Ethiopian allies turning against him. These 'tidings' can be interpreted in a last-days context as referring to news reaching 'Assyria' of her smaller Arab allies turning against her - the horns hating the whore (Rev. 17:16). "Therefore he shall go forth with great fury to destroy, and utterly to make away many" (Dan. 11:44) is a commentary on Sennacherib's rage (2 Kings 19:27,28). Rabshakeh boasted immediately after the receipt of the "rumour" that Assyria would 'utterly destroy' Israel still (2 Kings 19:11). This is matched by "to *destroy*, and *utterly* to make away" in Dan. 11:44. The fury of Assyria against Jerusalem because of their recognition that they only had limited time to destroy it before having to turn their attention against the Arab rebels is the basis of the Arab beast of the last days going forth against God's people with "great wrath, because he knoweth that he hath but a short time" (Rev. 12:12,17).

"He shall plant the tabernacles of his palace...in the glorious holy mountain" of Zion (Dan. 11:45) is the language of Is. 14:13,14 concerning both Sennacherib and Nebuchadnezzar desiring to take Jerusalem. Thus Dan. 11:45 is saying that the latter-day Assyria/Babylon will do this, seeing that Jerusalem will be taken by their final invasion (Zech. 14:2). Dan. 12:1 says that it is at this time of the latter-day Assyrian/"king of the north" being in Jerusalem, that Israel will suffer "a time of trouble such as never was", out of which the righteous remnant will be delivered ("every one that shall be found written in the book") by God's intervention, which will be associated with the resurrection (Dan. 12:2).

The structure of this aspect of the prophecy appears to be purposefully ambiguous as to whether this salvation of the remnant out of Arab-occupied Jerusalem will be due to Christ's return and resurrection of the dead, or due to Christ's intervention, having already returned to earth. The exact timing of Christ's coming appears impossible to dogmatically slot into the sequence of events which the latter-day prophecies present.

8-8 Hezekiah's Prayer

Desperate prayer

In the final throes of the Assyrian agony, Hezekiah prayed, "O Lord God of Israel...thou art the God" (2 Kings 19:15), quoting the words of Israel on Carmel as they shouted, "Yahweh, he is the God" (1 Kings 18:39) in wholehearted response to Elijah's call for reformation. Likewise the faith of the righteous remnant of the last days will have been motivated by the work of the Elijah ministry. He continued, "Thou art the God, even thou alone, of all the kingdoms of the earth; thou hast made heaven and earth" (2 Kings 19:15), alluding to Jehoshaphat's prayer of 2 Chron. 20:6: "O Lord God of our fathers, art not thou God in heaven? and rulest not thou over all the kingdoms of the heathen?" . We have earlier demonstrated how Jehoshaphat's prayer will be one of the model prayers for the latter-day Jewish remnant.

" Lord, bow down thine ear, and hear: open, Lord, thine eyes, and see" (2 Kings 19:16) alludes back to Solomon's prayer for the temple (2 Chron. 6:40), where he prophesies that God's eyes and ears will always be open to the prayer of repentant Israel, particularly after their tribulations of the last days. There is also a connection here with Daniel's prayer in which he reminds God of Jerusalem's desolation at the hand of the Arabs, and pleads for God's forgiveness of Israel so that there can be a restoration of the kingdom: " O my God, incline thine ear, and hear; open thine eyes, and behold our desolations, and (those of) the city which is called by thy name" (Dan. 9:18).

God's response to this prayer was to prophesy the sending of Messiah to restore Israel's fortunes (Dan. 9:25) - all beautifully typical of the prayers of Israel in the last days. Peter urges spiritual Israel to pray earnestly in the very last days too (1 Peter 4:7). Our Lord bids us " pray always" in the time of the end (Luke 21:36) - but we may need the sort of experiences natural Israel will go through before we, like them, take our prayer life as seriously and intensely as we should. Thus Joel 2:17 prophesies that it is only their period of prolonged Arab persecution that will make Israel pray with real fervour.

Hezekiah concluded his prayer by asking for Israel to be delivered from the Assyrians, " that all the kingdoms of the earth may know that thou art the Lord God, even thou only" (2 Kings 19:19). This is the language of so many last-days passages (1 Sam. 17:46; Josh. 4:23,24 concerning the effect of the exodus; Eze. 38:23). In no fuller sense can it be fulfilled than at Christ's victory over Israel's enemies at the second coming, which will lead to the political establishment of God's Kingdom world-wide.

Isaiah's final prophecy against Sennacherib is shot through with allusions to other latter-day passages. Is. 14:13,14 shows that it was the specific desire of Sennacherib (as well as of Nebuchadnezzar) to take the temple. Isaiah now repeats Sennacherib's openly-broadcast war aims: " Thou hast said, With the multitude of my chariots I am come up to the height of the mountains (a Hebrew intensive plural, i.e. to the one great mountain - Zion), to the sides of Lebanon, and will cut down the tall cedar trees thereof, and the choice fir trees thereof" (2 Kings 19:23). This is packed with temple language (cp. Ps. 48:12; 1 Kings 5:5-8; 6:15). His desire was to replace the system of Yahweh worship which the temple symbolized, with that of himself.

8-9 A Rebuilt Temple In The Last Days?

It is quite possible that there will be a literal temple rebuilt by the Jews before the Arab downtreading begins. This might be possible if there is to be a brief period of Israel's power and victory over the Arabs before this commences; the existence of a literal temple in the last days would suit a number of latter-day prophecies. Daniel's prophecies in Dan. 11:31 and 12:11 about the antichrist desolating the temple are applied by the Lord Jesus to the last days. And yet the previous fulfilments of those prophecies all had a literal reference to the desecration of the literal temple in Jerusalem. The immediate fulfilment was in 167 BC when Antiochus Epiphanes erected an altar to Zeus Olympios in the temple. The Hebrew for Olympios, *shamayim*, has the same consonants as the word *shomem*, translated "desolation". The next fulfilment was

in AD70, again in a literal sense; and thus it would seem there has to be a literal temple in place in Jerusalem for there to be the final latter day fulfilment of the prophecy.

The temple of God being representative of His true people (1 Cor. 3:16; 2 Cor. 6:16; Eph. 2:21), it is possible that Sennacherib's blinding desire to possess and destroy the temple speaks of the acute desire of the latter-day Assyrian to destroy the righteous remnant which he knows are in Jerusalem. The final fury of the Arab beast against this group, from which they are delivered, has already been shown to be based on Sennacherib's final fury against Hezekiah, who epitomized the faithful remnant (Rev. 12:12,17 cp. 2 Kings 19:27,28).

The 42 months of the Arab beast's prolonged persecution of Israel is also aimed specifically at God's "tabernacle, and them that dwell in heaven" (Rev. 13:5,6), i.e. the temple (1 Kings 8:30 cp. 2 Sam. 15:25; Heb. 7:26; 2 Chron. 30:27; Ps. 20:2; 11:4). The figurative 'temple' is therefore the faithful of the last days. The Arab beast specifically persecutes "the remnant" (Rev. 12:17), i.e. the truly righteous within 'Judah'. The manic desire of the latter-day Assyrian to destroy them can only be due to his awareness of their existence. This may be due to their public refusal to become Moslems, or because of the open preaching forth of the word by themselves and/or the Elijah ministry. The fact that Babylon/Assyria refused to "lay these things to thy heart" (Is. 47:7), implies that they were preached to them. Nebuchadnezzar's personal knowledge of Jeremiah (Jer. 39:11) may point forward to future contact between the 'king of Babylon' and the latter-day prophets.

8-10 The Latter Day Remnant

That the destruction of the remnant will be high on the list of Arab objectives in taking Jerusalem (as the destruction of the temple was so important to Sennacherib) further indicates that the motives for the final attack on Jerusalem will be more religious than materialistic. The incursions of the previous period will have probably used the 'religious' motive as an alibi for indulging in greedy plundering of Israel's wealth.

Isaiah encourages the remnant that Sennacherib's victory over the surrounding nations and the "fenced cities" of the rest of Israel was because God had sent the Assyrians to do these things as a punishment for sin (2 Kings 19:25 cp. 18:13). "Therefore their inhabitants...were as the grass of the field, and as the green herb...as corn blasted before it be grown up" (2 Kings 19:26). Ps. 90:5,6 and Is. 40:6-8 speak of apostate Israel as blasted grass, the latter passage being written against the Sennacherib background. The righteous remnant within Arab-occupied Jerusalem in the last days will have reason to reflect much upon this, seeing that the implication of this (and Zech. 13:8-14:2) is that whoever is killed by the 'Assyrian' in this final period is not among the righteous in God's sight.

Wild rage

Isaiah assured the remnant that God knew Sennacherib's "rage" or (Hebrew) 'trembling' (2 Kings 19:27). As literal vibrations spread, so the 'trembling' of his rage had affected Israel - he had made the whole land of Israel to tremble, too (Is. 14:16 - the same word for "rage" is used here and cp. Deut. 28:65). Yet Joel, writing in the context of the

Sennacherib invasion, exhorts the people of the land to "tremble" instead before the Lord in repentance (Joel 2:1). The temptation in the last days for Israel, as in all our trials, will be to become so swamped with the immensity of their suffering, that they find it impossible to concentrate their faith upon God. Yet Babylon/Assyria will be made to tremble at God's judgment of them (s.w. Is. 13:13) as Nebuchadnezzar literally trembled (s.w. Dan. 3:13).

God describing Sennacherib's rage " ...and tumult" as rising "up into mine ears" (2 Kings 19:28), is the language of the flood, Babel and Sodom, where the sins of God's enemies came to His notice with the result that He 'came down' in judgment upon them in a way which typified the second coming (Gen. 6:5,12; 11:6; 18:21). The same word for "tumult" occurs in Is. 13:4 concerning the "tumultuous noise of the kingdoms of nations gathered together: the Lord of hosts mustereth the host of the battle" - of Armageddon (cp. Rev. 16:14,16). By all means compare this with the rage of the Arab beast in the final phase of persecution of God's people in Rev.12:12,17.

Because of Sennacherib's rage and tumult, "I will put my hook in thy nose, and my bridle in thy lips, and I will turn thee back" (2 Kings 19:28). This is one of the clearest links with the prophecy of Gog's invasion (cp. Eze. 38:4; 39:2), showing how this is modelled upon that of Sennacherib. Latter-day Egypt will receive the same 'hook in nose' treatment (Eze. 29:4), and Israel will be bound with "chains" (s.w. "hook", Eze. 19:4,9). This not only shows how the apostate among God's people will receive the same judgment as their Arab enemies, but encourages us that all elements of the apparently crazy scenario of the last days will be under God's clear Angelic control, moving the nations round with hooks.

The remnant

Isaiah went on to speak of how the righteous remnant would be preserved. "The remnant that is escaped of the house of Judah...out of Jerusalem shall go forth a remnant, and they that escape out of mount Zion" (2 Kings 19:30,31). These are "the residue (remnant) of the people (that) should not be cut off from the city" during the Arab capturing of it (Zech. 14:2). Note again how there is a difference between 'Judah' and 'the remnant'. This would divide the people within the land into three categories:-

1. 'Israel' - the unrepentant wicked who are destroyed by the Arab invasions during the period of desolation.
2. 'Judah' - those who make a superficial repentance, but are later massacred during the final Arab invasions and capture of Jerusalem.
3. - 'The remnant' - those who are left as the only Jews alive in the land. Once this is the case, the Lord will openly intervene to save them.

A similar sub-division of 'spiritual' Israel will also occur in the same period.

The description of "the remnant" being saved out of Jerusalem and mount Zion, the temple mount, may mean that they go into the temple area to seek safety, and this is

where they are at the moment of the Lord's intervention. Joel 2:32 must have had its primary fulfilment in the redemption of this remnant, and it therefore has an application to the salvation of the latter-day Jewish remnant out of Arab-occupied Jerusalem: " Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord (i.e. truly pray for deliverance in faith, perhaps through calling upon themselves the Lord's name through baptism into Christ) shall be delivered: for in mount Zion and in Jerusalem (cp. 2 Kings 19:30,31 for the mention of those two terms) shall be deliverance, as the Lord hath said (through Isaiah and his prophets), and in the remnant..." .

This passage is quoted in a different context in Acts 2:21 and Rom. 10:13, but this does not preclude its application to the faithful remnant in Jerusalem in the last days. This New Testament usage is regarding how a convert should eagerly call upon himself the Lord's salvation/deliverance from sin in Christ. This should therefore be done with the same sense of urgency and desperate intensity as the persecuted remnant of the last days will do, like their counterparts within Jerusalem in Hezekiah's time.

Isaiah's final assurance that Sennacherib " shall not come into this city" (2 Kings 19:32) seems to be in purposeful contrast to Zech. 14:2 " the city shall be taken" . This is to teach that the final Arab invasion, which Zech. 14 undoubtedly speaks of, will have many similarities with that of Sennacherib, *but* with this significant difference. The triple reference to Assyrian military technology may teach that Arab plans to use this in the last days will likewise come to nothing: " He shall not...shoot an arrow there, nor come before it with shield, nor cast a bank against it" as he had planned, doubtless in some detail (2 Kings 19:32).

" The zeal of the Lord of hosts shall do (all) this" (2 Kings 19:31) is a phrase picked up in Is. 9:7 concerning how God would achieve His purpose in the birth of Christ and the establishment of the Kingdom. Thus again we see how the language of Christ's spiritual conquest of sin is used concerning His supreme political destruction of it in His victory at Armageddon. A fine appreciation of this will enable us to eagerly await and desire the victory for this ultimate spiritual reason, rather than just to see the final redemption of Israel from their Arab enemies.

8-11 Leviathan And Assyria

Sennacherib having a hook in his nose " and my bridle in thy lips" to turn him around (2 Kings 19:28), portrays him as a huge beast, strengthening our view of there being an Arab manifestation of " the beast" of the last days. There is an unmistakable link here with leviathan, and the other mighty animals spoken of in Job 39-41. There is good reason to think, from the number of references to Isaiah and Hezekiah, that the book of Job was rewritten, under inspiration, at the time of the Sennacherib invasion ⁽¹⁾. These beasts whom God alone controls, therefore become typical of Israel's neighbouring Arab enemies, headed up by the awesome " Leviathan" (cp. Assyria?). God alone can put a hook in Leviathan's nose (Job 41:2), as He did to Sennacherib (2 Kings 19:28). Leviathan is thus a prototype of the Arab/Assyrian beast of the last days, which is further developed by Daniel and Revelation.

A few other intriguing connections are now presented:-

- The mighty horse is noted for swallowing " the ground with fierceness and rage" (Job 39:24) as Sennacherib's rage was directed against swallowing up Israel and Jerusalem (2 Kings 19:27,28).
- Behemoth " trusteth that he can draw up Jordan" (Job 40:23), as Sennacherib thought he could swallow Israel, represented by their river Jordan. Babylon " swallowed (Israel) up like a dragon" (Jer. 51:34).
- Leviathan is God's servant (Job 41:4), as it is emphasized Nebuchadnezzar was (Jer. 25:9; 27:6; 43:10).
- Men were " cast down even at the sight of him. None is so fierce that dare stir him up" (Job 41:9,10) makes Leviathan sound like Goliath, the symbol of Israel's Arab enemy.
- God could kill Leviathan with spears and arrows (Job 41:7), which, figuratively, was how He destroyed Babylon (Jer. 50:29).
- Leviathan's " teeth are terrible" (Job 41:14), as are the teeth of the Arab beast which devours Israel in the last days (Dan. 7:7; Joel 1:6 cp. Rev. 9:8).
- He has " strong pieces of shields" for scales (Job 41:15, A.V. mg.), giving Leviathan the appearance of a besieging army advancing behind shields, not one of which is out of rank (Job 41:16 cp. Joel 2:7).
- " He is a king over all the children of pride" (Job 41:34) makes him sound like the leader of a confederacy.

Notes

(1) See J.W. Thirtle, *Old Testament Problems*.

DIGRESSION 1: The Identity Of Rosh

I am aware that there are many reasons for thinking that *rosh* in Ez. 38:2 should be merely translated "chief". Basically, Ez. 38:3,4 has to be read one of two ways. Either it speaks of "Gog, chief prince of Meshech and Tubal"- or, it speaks of four entities: "Gog, Rosh, Meshech and Tubal". The issue is really resolved for us by considering a simple piece of grammar. 'Thee' in the KJV refers to 'you singular'. And so clearly one, and not four, is being addressed here: "I am against *thee* O Gog, chief prince of Meshech... I will turn *thee* back, and put hooks into *thy* jaws". It is a *singular* person or power being referred to, not a plural. However, I would like to make a few comments about another possibility for locating *rosh*- assuming for the moment that it is indeed to be read as an actual place name. The observation that *rosh* and 'Russia' sound similar, so therefore they are the same place, is to my mind altogether too primitive a way to interpret Scripture. In any case, modern 'Russia' is far bigger than any such single area could have been in Ezekiel's time. The translators of the Septuagint must have known the place, because they transliterated the word as a place name. So, there was a *rosh* known at least a few hundred years before Christ. And clearly enough, it wasn't Russia as we now

know that country. For 'Rus land' or 'Russia' wasn't even spoken of until at least 1500 years after Ezekiel. Ezekiel's primary audience must surely have known where *rosh* was; for all the other areas named by him were contemporary nations.

The following two quotations sum up the view of many commentators:

"It is a reflection on evangelical scholarship when some of its spokesmen continue to adhere to the groundless identification of *rosh* as Russia , and the association of Meshech with Moscow and of Tubal with Tobolsk, when we have had cuneiform texts and discussions of them that provided the true clarification of these names since the end of the 19th century"⁽¹⁾.

"Gesenius suggested Russia , but this name is not attested in the area, and a very distant people named thus early is unlikely in the context. Most follow Delitzsch in identifying Rosh with Assyria, *Rasûu* on the NW border of Elam (*i.e.* in Media)"⁽²⁾.

Even if we insist on reading *rosh* as a proper noun, it's rather a big jump to make 'Russia' equal 'rosh'. 'Russia' derives from the word *Rus*, not *rosh*. And it was the Vikings who introduced the word *rus* to describe the area around Kiev, Ukraine [not Russia] in the Middle Ages (3). Meshech and Tubal likewise have been identified as areas of Eastern Turkey / Kurdistan (4)- to apply these terms to Moscow and Tobolsk is sheer guesswork. There are records of the Assyrian kings receiving tribute from the Mushki, whose capital was at Mazaca (modern Kayseri) in Eastern Turkey; and of the Assyrians attacking Tabal / Tubal in the Taurus mountains (5). The same sources speak of Sargon II making a treaty with the city of Til-garimmu, the Togarmah of Ez. 38:6 (6).

The Bible is written from the perspective of the land promised to Abraham. An invader from the "sides / boundaries of the north" (Ez. 38:6,15) would correspond to someone who appears from the northern boundaries of that land- *i.e.* around the Tigris and Euphrates rivers. Jer. 6:22; 50:41 and many other passages clearly identify the invader "from the north" as Babylon. Gog's "place" is from here- perhaps implying that this charismatic leader of latter day *rosh* will have been born in this area. It is awesome to discover that Saddam Hussein was born in Tigrik- exactly in this area! And further, to discover that this is the very area where it is known that chemical and nuclear weapons are being developed with which to destroy Israel . But in addition to this plain Biblical identification, there are other reasons for seeing *rosh* as being located in the Tigris / Euphrates area, in modern day Iran and Iraq (and therefore not in Russia).

Within the Semitic languages, the same basic word can be repeated in slightly different forms- the word passes through what are called phonetic shifts. A well known example would be how the Hebrew word shalom becomes the Arabic salaam. When the phonetic shifts and differences in pronunciation are taken into account, one can find the name *Rosh* (or its phonetic equivalents) many times in the various ancient documents. It's rather like how the Latin term Caesar is spelled as "Kaiser" in German, "Cesar" in French, "Kaisar" in Greek, and "Tzar" in Russian. But these are all variants on the same original Latin term.

Other Mentions Of *Rosh*

The word *rosh* is found in modern Arabic place names such as Ras Shamra, Ras Naqura, Ras el-Ain, etc. Further, the word is found as a component of many ancient personal names: Râshi-ili, Rêsh-Adad king of Apishal, Rêsh-beli father of Tubalî-Bini, Rêsh-Dumuzi, Rêsh-Ea, Rêsh -ili son of Sulalum, Rêsh-Irra, Rêsh-Marduk son of Ipqu-Amurru, Rêsh-Nabium, Rêsh-Shamash, Rêsh-Shubula son of Ibn-Adad, Rêsh-Sin, and Rêsh-Zababa. The place name *Rosh* is found ten times in Sargon's inscriptions, once on Assurbanipal's cylinder, once in Sennacherib's annals, and five times on Ugaritic tablets.

Following are some samples.

(1) The Annals of Sargon (year 12, 11. 228-316): "Til-Hamba, Dunni-Shamshu, Bubê, Hamanu, strong cities in the land of Râshi, became frightened at the onset of my mighty battle(array) and entered Bît-lmbî."

(2) Sargon's Display Inscription: "In the might and power of the great gods, my lords, I cut down all my foes...the lands of Ellipî and Râshi which are on the Elamite border on the banks of the Tigris."

(3) Sargon's Display Inscription of Salon XIV: "In the might of Assur, Nabû and Mardu, the great gods, my lords, who sent forth my weapons, I cut down all my enemies...the lands of Râshi and Ellipi which are on the Elamite frontier, the Arameans who dwell on the banks of the Tigris...."

The land of Râshu is mentioned in Assurbanipal's Texts on the Rassam cylinder, the eighth campaign against Elam (col. IV, 11. 63ff): "In my eighth campaign, at the command of Assur and Ishtar, I mustered my troops, (and) made straight for Ummanaldasi, king of Elam, Bît-lmbî, which I had captured in my former campaign,—this time I captured (together with) the land of Râshi, (and) the city of Manamu with its (surrounding) district."

The land of Rêshu is mentioned in the annals of Sennacherib: "Afterward Sennacherib marched down to Elam and destroyed...(the country) from the land of Rishi as far as Bit-Burnaki". There is even one cuneiform document from the reign of the Assyrian King Sargon II which actually names all three peoples [*Rosh*, Meshech, Tubal] mentioned by Ezekiel 38. Therefore these nations were known in Ezekiel's time. Sargon II wrote: "I deported (the people) of the lands of Kashu, Tabalu, and Hilakku. I drove out Mite (Midas), king of the land of Muski ... the lands of Rashi and Ellipi which are on the Elamite frontier...".

These references to *Rosh* (Râshu/Rêshu) demonstrate that it was a well-known land on the banks of the Tigris River, bordering on Elam and Ellipi. George C. Cameron, a specialist in the history of early Iran, identified the land as "the Râshi tribe of Arameans, well known to the Assyrians from Sargon onward and located in the mountains east of Der, where was its capital, Bit Imbi". Other of its prominent cities were Hamanu, Bube, Bit Bunakki, and Bit Arrabi.

All four groups of people who lived in northwest Mesopotamia (the Eblaites, Ugarites, Hittites, and Assyrians) mention a city called "Urshu/ Rish/ Urash" in the area of Aram-

Naharaim. It seems likely that the name of this city is directly connected to the *Rosh* mentioned in Ezekiel 38-39. Ancient texts from the city of Ebla mention a city named "Urshu." The exact location of ancient Urshu is unknown. However, Ebla was a city located in northern Syria.

Tubal and Meshech are defined by Bochart in his *Geographica Sacra* as the Assyrian Tabali and Mushku, Assyrian tribes which existed at the time of Tiglath Pileser I. In passing, note that Bochart is quoted by John Thomas in order to support his assertion that 'rosh = Russia'- but Bochart's evidence on this point is disregarded. For Bochart clearly did not see the primitive equation of Meshech and Moscow, and Tubal and Tobolsk. It should be noted that the nations associated with Rosh in Ez. 38- Tarshish, Togarmah, Tubal, Meshesh etc.- all occur in the table of nations of Gen. 10. Yet this list of nations comprise those inhabiting the land promised to Abraham (i.e. the area repopulated after the flood?). They were all nations known to Israel. Modern Russia clearly wasn't in the picture.

Cushan King Of Rosh

In Judges 3:8-11 we read that the Israelites served "Cushan-Rishathaim" who was the "king of Aram-Naharaim." I have demonstrated in *The Last Days* that these times of Arab domination of Israel followed by a Saviour rising to deliver them are all typical of the latter day deliverance of Israel by the arising of the Lord Jesus. Aram-Naharaim is a combination of the name of a people "Aram" [i.e. the Aramaeans] and the name of a place, "Naharaim." Naharaim means "the land between the two rivers"- Tigris and Euphrates. The Hebrew word "Naharaim" is the exact equivalent of the Greek word "Mesopotamia," which also translates as the "land between the two rivers." "Aram-Naharaim," therefore, means "Mesopotamia where the Aramaeans live." The Aramaeans originally lived in northwestern Mesopotamia in an area that is today located in northern Syria and Iraq.

Judges 3:8-11 states that in the days of the Judge Othniel, the area of "Aram-Naharaim" was ruled by a king called "Cushan-Rishataim." Cushan is the actual name of this king. However, "Rishataim" is not the name of a person, but of a people. The "-im" ending on "Rishataim" is the Hebrew plural ending; in other words, the Hebrew ending "-im" is the same as the English plural ending "s." The Hebrew word *Rishataim*, therefore, cannot be a part of King Cushan's name. The Hebrew "-im" ending clearly indicates that the Rishataim were a people. The name "Cushan-Rishataim, therefore, translates into English as "Cushan of the Rishataim people". The entire phrase "Cushan-Rishataim king of Aram-Naharaim" found in Judges 3:8 could be translated into English as "Cushan of the Rishataim people, king of Aramaean [northwest] Mesopotamia". The Rishataim people of Judges 3:8-11 are almost certainly the same as the Reshet, a variation on the *rosh* of which we have spoken. Cushan then becomes a type of Gog, the latter day Israel-hating leader of *rosh* spoken of in Ez. 38.

Colossal Conclusions

It can be no accident that the most committed and dangerous enemies of Israel are now Iran and Iraq, Biblical *rosh*. The pro-Jewish lobby in the USA is urging a major American

war with these nations because of their avowed intentions to destroy Israel. They are funding and equipping the Palestinian Arabs and other front line enemies of the Jewish state. There is every evidence that Bible prophecy is coming to its climactic fulfilment in the invasion of Israel by *rosh* under the charismatic leadership of the 'Gog' figure who will lead it, after the patterns of Sennacherib and Nebuchadnezzar of old. Any moment we could wake up to find that Iran / Iraq, Biblical *rosh* and the latter day Assyrian and Babylonian, perhaps lead by Saddam Hussein or a figure like him, whose "place" is from exactly this area, have invaded the land. Even if the invasion of Ez. 38 is to come after the Lord's return, when Israel are dwelling in "peace and safety". there is ample evidence that *rosh*, *meshech* and *tubal* and their charismatic "Gog" leader are right now preparing for it. Which means that, with no sense of exaggeration, but in utter soberness and intellectual honesty, we can conclude: that the return of Jesus could truly be imminent. The evidence presented in this article is therefore no mere expository and historical excursion. For grasping the reality of the fact that our Lord is truly about to return ought to have colossal impact upon our daily living and thinking and being.

Notes

(1) Edwin Yamauchi, 'Meshech, Tubal and Company', *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society*, Vol. 19 No. 3, Summer 1976.

(2) *The New Bible Dictionary*, entry 'Rosh'.

(3) Magnus Magnusson, *Viking Expansion Westwards* (New York: Walck, 1974) p. 14; H.R.E. Davidson, *The Viking Road To Byzantium* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1976) pp. 58-61; Basil Dmytryshyn, *A History Of Russia* (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1977) pp. 37-41.

(4) Josephus, *Antiquities Of The Jews* 1.124; I.E.S. Edwards, ed., *The Cambridge Ancient History* (Cambridge: C.U.P., 1975 ed.) Vol. 2 Ch. 30 pp. 417-442.

(5) A.K. Grayson, *Assyrian Royal Inscriptions* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1976) Vol. 2 p. 123.

(6) Grayson *op cit* pp. 80,81.

A Biblical Case For A Russian Invasion

Jeremiah and other prophets predicted a great invasion of Israel "from the north". These prophecies had some primary fulfillments which pointed forward to the final *denouement* of the latter days. Around the time of Jeremiah, the Scythians had marauded much of the Middle East, including Israel. Although this is barely recorded in Biblical history, it is a well attested historical fact. When Jeremiah spoke of an invasion from the North, and Ezekiel spoke of marauding bands of Scythian-related tribes attacking the land, everyone would've thought of the recent attacks by the Scythians. As John Skinner put it: "In these events, especially the Scythian incursion into Palestine, most historians have found the suggestion and background of Jeremiah's prophecies of the Foe from the North" (1). Significantly, "Jeremiah's ministry is stated to have begun at approximately the time to which Herodotus assigns the Scythian invasion" (2). It could be argued that Jeremiah and Ezekiel's prophecies of a northern invader had a primary fulfillment in the lives of the prophets in the Scythian invasion, which were then to be understood as a type of the latter day invasion "from the north". This would be in keeping with the Mosaic test of a true prophet- his predictions must come

to pass, otherwise he is to be seen as a false prophet. It could therefore be the predictions of the Biblical prophets about a northern invasion had to have a short term fulfillment, which had relevance to their ultimate 'fulfillment' in the events of our last days. Whilst the prophecies do have some application to the Babylonian invasion of Judah, we must recall that Ezekiel was prophesying *after* that event, as Israel sat by the rivers of Babylon; and Jeremiah's descriptions of the northern invasion have some elements which fit better with the Scythian incursions than the Babylonian capture of Jerusalem. Not least the sudden, unexpected nature of the attacks is better fitted by far to the Scythians than to the Babylonians. It could be that his prophecies had an immediate primary fulfillment in the Scythian invasions, and then another dim fulfillment in the Babylonian capture of Jerusalem, both of which primary fulfillments look forward to the final denouement in the latter days.

Who, then, were the Scythians? The question is important to understand because their invasions are a shadow of the latter day invasion of Israel. Much Soviet and Eastern European archeological research into the Scythians remains only in Russian and has never been released in English. If it had been, the Scythian invasions would perhaps have featured more prominently in the prophetic thinking of the Western brotherhood. Excavations of Scythian settlements throughout Russia and the Ukraine have yielded various objects which have also been found in the Middle Eastern areas which the Scythians invaded around the time of the Old Testament prophets. The *Great Soviet Encyclopedia*, the USSR's answer to the West's *Encyclopedia Britannica* (although much larger), has a wealth of information about these findings. Here are a few examples:

- The Scythians had a very specific style of bronze arrowhead. The Soviet archaeologist A.M. Leskov discovered many of these in sites around Kakhovka and Lubimovka in the Ukraine- incidentally, the location of thriving Christadelphian ecclesias today. The very same style of arrowhead was unearthed in Samaria, Lachish and Amman (Jordan).
- The same goes for Scythian horse bridles and iron axes.
- The Scythians had very specific and distinctive styles of burial. Being horsemen from the steppes of Ukraine and southern Russia, the forerunners of the Cossacks, their leaders were buried with many horses. Thus there was the mass slaughter of horses, which were then buried with the dead leader. Throughout the former Soviet Union, such burial mounds have been unearthed- from the southern Ukraine to the frozen Scythian tombs in Pazryk in the Altai mountains (in Siberia, central Russia) (3).
- The layout of Scythian burial chambers from the Ukraine through Russia and down to modern day Israel and Iran has been found to be identical (4).

The various studies also contain the observation that the Scythian remains in Russia and Ukraine include not only loot they had taken back with them from the Middle East (e.g. Persian carpets preserved in the frozen burial mounds of Scythian villages in Siberia), but also reflect evidence of how the Scythians became influenced by Middle Eastern culture. This indicates how the Scythians made some alliances with some of the local powers during their time 'down South'. In some of the Scythian sites, notably Pazryk in Siberia, there are the motifs of the eagle, gryphon, winged lion etc.- which were all associated with Assyria and Babylon (5). This indicates some degree of co-operation between the Scythians and the Babylonians, rather than raw conflict between them. Indeed, there is both historical and archaeological evidence that the Scythians were mercenaries used by Nebuchadnezzar in his attack upon Jerusalem. Yamauchi reports how Scythian arrowheads

have been found around Jerusalem in the same material which dates to the Babylonian destruction of the city and temple (6). That "day of the Lord" was a clear type of the final "day of the Lord" when the Northern armies attack God's people. This could well suggest a latter day coalition between latter day "Babylon" and the latter day Scythians- the inhabitants of Ukraine and Russia. In the early meetings between the Byzantines and the inhabitants of Ukraine and Southern Russia in the 9th century, the surviving records show the Scythian leaders (e.g. Prince Svetoslav) being addressed as "Prince of Rosh" or *Rus* by the emissaries from Byzantium. Several connections between Rosh / Rus and the Scythians are made by the Byzantine historian Leo the Deacon in his 10th century records; at times he uses the terms interchangeably (7).

Conclusions

Given this background, we can look for the final 'northern invader' to be led by Babylon / Assyria, and yet to be supported by the latter day Scythians. We need to remember that most of the military achievements of Babylon / Assyria were not achieved by their own forces directly; their military and organizational genius was in mustering the support of mercenaries and other fighters. The Scythians played a large part in this when it came to Israel, even if Western versions of ancient history has been relatively quiet about it. Significantly, Ezekiel 38 speaks of the invasion with specific reference to this Scythian element. If we are to interpret the latter day Scythians geographically, then this would lead us to search for their latter day equivalent in the lands of Ukraine, Russia and the steppes of northern Kazakhstan.

(1) J. Skinner, *Prophecy And Religion* (Cambridge: C.U.P., 1922) p. 39.

(2) H.H. Rowley, as quoted in Edwin Yamauchi, *Foes From The Northern Frontier: Invading Hordes From The Russian Steppes* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1982) p. 88.

(3) Evidence for all this was presented in articles over the years in the Soviet academic journal *Советская Археология* ['Soviet Archaeology']. For example, V.S. Olkhovski, 'Скифские катакомбы в Северном Приерноморе' ["Scythian catacombs in the northern Black Sea region"], *Sovetskaia Arkheologia* Vol. 4 (1977) pp. 108-128. S.I. Rudenko, the leading Soviet archaeologist at the Pazryk site, later defected to the West and some of his research was published in English in *The Frozen Tombs Of Siberia: The Pazryk Burials Of Iron-Age Horsemen* (Berkeley: University Of California Press, 1970).

(4) See the articles by the Soviet archaeologist A. Terenozhkin who excavated the burial mounds in Melitopol, Ukraine, in *Большая Советская Энциклопедия* ['The Great Soviet Encyclopedia'] Vol. 16 p. 100; and V. Bidzilia, who excavated the Gaimanovo graves near Zaporozhye, Ukraine, in *Большая Советская Энциклопедия* ['The Great Soviet Encyclopedia'] Vol. 6 p. 38.

(5) S.I. Rudenko, *Культура населения Горного Алтая в скифское время* ["The culture of the Mountain Altai in Scythian times"] (Moscow: AN USSR, 1953) pp. 129-132.

(6) Edwin Yamauchi, *Foes From The Northern Frontier* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1982) p. 99.

(7) See information at <http://www.vert.kiev.ua/articles/320/> and in M. Y. Syuzyumov, *Leo Deacon And His Time* (Moscow: Nauka, 1988)

DIGRESSION 1 (cont.):

The Significance Of The Georgia - Russia Conflict In Bible Prophecy

The well known Bible prophecy of Ezekiel 38:1-4 describes a latter day invasion of Israel by a group of nations, amongst whom would be a "chief prince" who would have power over (or 'cause to ascend') Meshech and Tubal. "Some modern Georgian... claim descent from Tubal and Meshech; a Georgian historian, Ivane Javakhishvili, considered Tabal, Tubal, Jabal and Jubal to be ancient Georgian tribal designations" (1). The words 'Tbilisi' and 'Tubal' share the same consonants- 't'b'l'. There's a fascinating piece of research which explains how the word 'Tubal' developed through the phases tabar-tibar-tibar-tibilisi' (2). Further, Gen. 4:22 speaks of Tubal as "an instructor of those who work in brass and iron" and Ez. 27:13 states that Tubal traded in brass. The Institute of Metallurgy in the Georgian Technical University and Georgian Academy of Sciences is one of Georgia's few academic claims to fame to this day. Their museum features the earliest known samples of tinned bronze (3). The following quote not only underlines Georgia's association with metallurgy, but demonstrates her role in spreading the technology of metallurgy, as required by the Gen. 4:22 reference to Tubal being "an instructor of those who work in brass and iron":

"The ancient Greek and Roman authors would also refer to Colchis (the homeland of the Golden Fleece) as a country abundant with gold. What the so-called "barbarian" Colchis then created with this mined ore is really astonishing. In fact, if Georgia can boast a significant contribution to the world's culture that would probably be its legacy of unique masterpieces of goldsmith and jewelry out of which some date back as early as the 8th century B.C. Many archeological sites throughout Georgia and recent archeological research find all new evidences and proof that the Georgians were among the first to start processing metal. Therefore, they would recognize high qualities of precious metals as early as the 4th millennium B.C. It is even mentioned in the Bible that the chief of the Iberians- one of the Kartveli tribes –Tubal-cain, was "a smith who forged bronze and iron tools." By the beginning of the 3rd millennium B.C the technology of smelting and working metals had reached such a high level, that various alloys of bronze were known and the complicated technique of cire perdue was already used-to say nothing of soldering, cold and hot forgery, chasing and other know-how...The development of gold mining and processing techniques gave birth to a new profession of goldsmith" (4).

And Georgia's metallurgy wasn't only limited to gold and brass: "The Manganese Industry in Georgia (Manganese of Chiatura) had very great importance for European Metallurgy (about 70% of the manganese industry of the world in 1920s-1940s)" (5). "Archeological excavations have proved the existence of large centers of metallurgy in Georgia. The art of metal-working was developed and perfected during many centuries" (6). Even today, Georgia is characterized by a reliance upon metallurgy: "Metallurgy and the manufacture of machinery are the chief industries" (7).

There seems little doubt, then, that Biblical Tubal has some reference to Tbilisi and Georgia. The question is, in what sense will this area be part of a latter day invasion of Israel? If the "chief prince" of the invasion is seen as Russia, then it would follow that we should expect Russia to take full control of Georgia. For the country lies strategically right in the path of a Russia-Israel assault route. I have elsewhere discussed the pros and cons of identifying the leader of the invasion as Russia (8). The current situation between Russia and Georgia would therefore give much encouragement to those who see things from this perspective. However, there's another possibility. The Islamic world

has been strangely supportive of Georgia in its conflict with Russia- and the reason is because the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan oil pipeline runs through Georgia. This is vital for the export of oil from the Islamic oil producing states to Europe. They want control of that pipeline, and would wish to control Georgia to that end. Those who see the final invasion of Israel as coming from an Islamic-dominated oil cartel of Middle Eastern and Asia oil-producing states- who would fit in well with a Babylon or Assyria *redivivus*- will also be eager to see in Georgia's instability a sign that the stage is being set for the invasion of Israel which Ezekiel prophesied.

Tobolsk?

Many commentators have previously claimed the Siberian town of Tobolsk as the equivalent of 'Tubal'. On one hand this could be viewed as an opportunistic association of vaguely similar names- and it's tempting to simply derive 'Tobolsk' from the river Tobol upon which it stands. The connections between Georgia / Tbilisi and Biblical 'Tubal' are far more solid. On the other hand, there is evidence that there was major emigration of the 'Tubals' into Siberia. I have documented elsewhere the evidence from archaeological remains of burial mounds in Siberia that the Scyths and Caucasian groups emigrated deep into Siberia and settled there, especially in the 6th and 7th centuries AD (9). They tended to follow the major rivers in their emigration path- hence their burial mounds are generally found close to rivers. This would explain why the Tubals would have given their name to the river Tobol. This approach would account for the connection between Tubal / Tbilisi / Georgia, and a Siberian city of the same name. The same argument can hold true for the Mushki / Moschoi, also from the Caucasus originally, who emigrated north and settled around Moscow, hence giving their name to the town which later became the capital of Russia (10).

The question is, of course, ultimately personal: are we personally ready for the return of Christ to earth which Israel's final invasion will lead up to?

Notes

(1) <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tubal>

(2) <http://www.proza.ru/texts/2003/08/29-53.html>

(3) www.concordtravel.ge/portal/alias__concordtravel/lang__en/tabid__1398/default.aspx - 86k

(4) http://www.georgiatoday.ge/article_details.php?id=3612

(5) www.geocities.com/levan_urushadze_98/DRG.doc

(6) <http://www.detour.ge/aboutgeorgia.htm>

(7) geography.howstuffworks.com/asia/geography-of-georgia-nation.htm

(8) Duncan Heaster, *The Identity Of Rosh* <http://www.aletheiacollege.net/ld/d1a.htm>

(9) *ibid*

(10)

http://groups.msn.com/AncientWisdomCulturesPeople/mesopotamia1.msnw?action=get_message&mview=0&ID_Message=60&LastModified=4675527381500717454

DIGRESSION 1 (cont.):

The Arab Spring: The Perspective of Biblical Prophecy

2011 saw countries which have been ruled for so many years by the same rulers suddenly thrown into the heat of revolution. Ben Ali in Tunisia, Mubarak in Egypt, Gaddafi in Libya- were all overthrown by a disgruntled, poverty stricken majority who want a better life. And there's ample evidence that the rest of the Arab world is likewise unhappy. The Old Testament prophecies a latter day invasion of Israel by her Arab neighbours; this will bring Israel to her knees, making her cry out to God in repentance for the crucifixion of Jesus, and He will then return to save them from their enemies. The prophecies of Daniel 11:43 and Ezekiel 38:5 clearly mention Libya as being one of those latter day invaders. Ez. 30:5 talks of Libya being condemned when all the nations are judged, in "the time of the Gentiles" (Ez. 30:3; the "time of the Gentiles" will ultimately come at Christ's return, Lk. 21:24). Libya will be judged "along with all the mingled people"- and the Hebrew word translated "mingled" is *arab*! They will be judged because of their "league" they have made against Israel- which sounds just like some kind of political union of Arab nations sworn to Israel's destruction. The Babylonian invasion and destruction of the first temple involved not only Babylon, but it was a confederacy of nations- including Libya (Jer. 46:9). This was a prototype of the final, latter day invasion of Israel- by the same group of nations. The Assyrian invasion of Israel was another such prototype of the latter day invasion; and again, Libya was a major supporter of it (Nahum 3:9).

The significance of the uprisings in Israel's Arab neighbours in 2011 is that moderate Moslem regimes have been overthrown. Leaders like Mubarak and Gaddafi may have been abusive, but they were left-leaning Socialists and not radical Islamists. The West sometimes behaves really foolishly. The simplistic cowboy and Indian, black and white, we're right and you're wrong, 'my enemy's enemy is my friend' dichotomy is simply mismatched to reality. They wanted Gaddafi out, demanded a regime change, and smashed and bashed their way to that end. Gaddafi's enemies were assumed to be their friends, just as in the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan in the 1980s, the West backed the very groups who later became the Taliban and Al-Qaeda. The USSR was the West's enemy, and so the Afghan enemies of the USSR were seen as the West's friends. It was conveniently overlooked that those warlords the West were supporting were radical, extremist Moslems who also had as their aim the destruction of the Judaic-Christian culture upon which the West was [supposedly] founded- at least according to the Western capitalist myth. As the Soviet leader Mikhail Sergeyevich Gorbachev several times commented in dialogue with Western leaders, the real enemy was not each other, not Capitalism nor Communism- but radical Islam; and the years proved him right. And the same is set to happen in Libya, Egypt, Syria and other Aran states which feature in Bible prophecies of the last days. Old, long established regimes have been brought down, but a power vacuum has been created. Already in Libya, the rebels who have taken power have shown themselves to be hopelessly divided. The promise of any revolution is "A better time's coming". But the poor masses of Arab north Africa are unlikely to find that prosperity and those good times for which they fought. The bankrupt West cannot just make them rich overnight. And so those

impoverished, disillusioned masses will turn to radical Islam, with its hatred of Israel at the very heart of its credo. And there in the centre of their Middle Eastern, Arab world is the state of Israel, prosperous and thriving. Looking at it from this macro level, bird's eye view, I would say that the revolutions of the "Arab Spring" of 2011 will lead to Islamic extremists taking power in the Arab world, using their oil and geographically strategic positions as a stranglehold against any Western opposition to their policies concerning Israel; and ultimately an invasion of Israel by those very nations. As someone who has travelled and interacted extensively in the Arab world, including Libya, as someone living in the ex-USSR for 25 years and who was originally from the West, that is my honest opinion. But as a Bible student, the possibilities are exciting indeed. The stage is being set for the final invasion of Israel, by the very players required by the prophecies such as Libya, who for centuries lay dormant and insignificant in geopolitical terms. Whether or not the stage is being set, He who shall come, will come; and we are to prepare against that day, living as if His return is imminent, however we understand the prophecies.

Zion Forsaken

Zion at her last end shall be forsaken of all her lovers (Jer. 30:14); Israel must stand alone. Bible prophecy speaks of a massive invasion of the land which will bring the Jews to their knees, and the minority who survive will repent of their rejection of the Lord Jesus as Messiah. He will then come and save them through His visible, literal second coming to earth (Zech. 12-14). For this situation to arise, Israel's neighbours won't be passive- they will be aggressive to her. The situation in the Arab world seems set to follow the classic pattern of popular unrest and revolutions- the jubilation at toppling the old regime soon gives way to disillusion when the imagined good life doesn't materialize. And into the vacuum comes extremism, often coming to its ultimate term in a war of aggression to steal or grab the 'good life' from those who are perceived to unfairly have it. And so it wouldn't take any great gift of prophecy nor serendipity to predict that the Arab world is set to go through the same. The extremism which will fill the void left by the crumbling regimes is going to be Islamic extremism. If they use their oil stranglehold, the West will be speeded up in its path towards decay and at best irrelevance. A bankrupt America and an EU held to ransom by Arab oil and Russian gas will be unable and unwilling to stand up for Israel. There will be no longer be any buffer between Islamic extremism and the state of Israel.

"To take a spoil"

The motive for the final invasion of Israel is made explicit in Ez. 38:12,13: "To take a spoil, to take plunder". The way Babylon [modern day Iraq-Jordan-Syria] invaded Judah was a prototype of the final Arab invasion of Israel in the last days (1). And that invasion had this same feature- of taking a spoil (Jer. 20:5). The poverty stricken masses of the Arab world have been failed by the socialist revolutions of the previous generation. Socialism and Communism didn't come up with the goods; the fine rhetoric and great ideas had no cash value for the majority, and only enriched an elite minority, just as Colonialism had done previously. But there amidst all those poverty stricken masses- there will lie Israel, undefended by the West, and with spoil worth taking. The economic growth and prosperity of Israel is therefore something we as Bible students could also be expecting in the last days. It just is obvious that she will be invaded by those impoverished militant Islamic masses. And this would exactly fulfil Bible prophecy. When the Egyptians charged into the Red Sea against the Israelites, their cry was: "I will pursue, I will overtake, I will divide the spoil; my lust shall be satisfied upon them; I will draw my sword, my hand shall destroy them" (Ex. 15:9). But the Egyptians at that time are the prototype, the basis, for prophecies of Israel's latter day invasion (2). Likewise the way in which Israel's Arab neighbours invaded her previously is understood by later Bible prophets as precursors of the final invasion of Israel by her neighbours immediately prior to Christ's second coming (3). And those invasions were likewise to "take a spoil" (Jud. 5:30). Time

and again, we are given to understand that ‘taking a spoil’ is the motive of Israel’s invaders. I suggest that this Arab desire to take a spoil of Israel is more than primitive jealousy, wanting what another has got. The rhetoric of the PLO and other Palestinian organizations has repeatedly been a desire to, as they see it, ‘take back’ from Israel what they consider is rightfully theirs (4). This has its historical and psychological root in the situation between Jacob and Esau, the forefathers of the peoples who are now commonly known as Jews and Arabs respectively. The Arabs have a desire to take that which is Jacob’s because they consider it to be rightfully theirs, and thus this sense is far more passionate than mere greed or jealousy, the kind of mindset a person has as they cast their covetous eye over their neighbour’s wealth. What we’re seeing in the current changes in the Arab world is the growing power of the impoverished majority- and make no mistake, they want a better life. And if they can’t get it by reforming their own economies, then they shall go on to take it by force from their Jewish neighbours. And it will be so much ‘easier’ for them to do this, when their religion and extremist Islamic leadership [which will have come to power on the ruins of the old regimes] urge them to do this. Zech. 14:1 specifically says that Israel’s latter day invaders will capture Jerusalem and sit down there to “divide the spoil”. And *then*, “Then shall the Lord go forth, and fight against those nations, as when he fought in the day of battle. And his feet shall stand in that day upon the mount of Olives, which is before Jerusalem on the east” (Zech. 14:3,4). The Lord Jesus ascended to Heaven from the mount of Olives, and at that time it was promised that He would return in the same manner (Acts 1:11). What we’re seeing in the Arab world at the moment is creating the desire for Israel’s Arab neighbours to attack her in order to “take the spoil”.

The Identity Of The Invaders

But looking in more detail at the prophecy of Ezekiel 38, we find the invading powers as including “Persia, Ethiopia and Libya”. They are joined by “Sheba, Dedan and the merchants of Tarshish”. These people say: “Are you come to take a spoil... a prey?” (Ez. 38:13). Harry Whittaker pointed out many years ago that the Hebrew here could imply ‘If you’re coming to take a spoil and prey- we shall join you!’: “Instead of the words: “Art thou come to take a spoil ...?” being read as a challenge and a rebuff to the northern invader, they can be taken to mean: “You are going to invade Israel and profit from its prosperity? then we will join you in this and share in the plunder.” Such an interpretation is not impossible, and would certainly accord well with the historic character of the Arab races in their dealings with Israel” (5). Sheba, Dedan and the merchant powers who traded with Tarshish or Tyre are the Gulf States- the very areas where right now there is an impoverished majority who are turning to aggressive, radical Islam and seeking to “take a spoil” from Israel.

These people will be in league with “Ethiopia and Libya” (Ez. 38:12) in the final invasion of Israel around the time of Christ’s return. “Ethiopia and Libya” in Ezekiel’s time may refer to the whole of North Africa as we know it today. “Ethiopia” may refer to areas south of Egypt- not just Ethiopia as we know it, but perhaps also northern Sudan, Somalia and Eritrea. Watch for changes there too. These various Islamic neighbours of Israel will be united in their invasion and ‘taking a spoil’ from Israel. Pan-Arabism will in the end come to its full term (however shortlived), in the final invasion of Israel. The Hebrew word translated “Libya” is also translated “Phut” or “Put”, which was another name for Libya in Bible times. “Mizraim” likewise is the Biblical name for Egypt. Significantly, Phut, Mizraim and Canaan were brothers (Gen. 10:6). There is therefore a strong and valid idea of Arab brotherhood between the Palestinian Arabs [i.e. the Arabs living in Canaan or the land of Israel] and the Arabs of Libya, Egypt and the other countries in the surrounding Arab world. The Babylonian invasion of Judah was a type of the invasion of Israel by latter day ‘Babylon’, which will bring on the return of Christ. But this invasion [as at the time of the Assyrian invasion of Israel] was really by a confederacy of nations- including the Ethiopians, Lydians, Egyptians and Libyans

(Jer. 46:8,9 cp. Nahum 3:9). And history will repeat itself- in that these nations along with Babylon will invade Israel in the last days. But where history shall stop, the red line of human time come to a terminus, will be in the simple fact that this time, the Lord Jesus shall return to earth to establish God's Kingdom here.

Notes

- (1) I've made the case for this in *The Last Days* chapter 9 and Digression 2- online at <http://www.aletheiacollege.net/ld/9.htm>
- (2) See *The Last Days* chapter 5- online at <http://www.aletheiacollege.net/ld/5.htm>
- (3) See *The Last Days* chapter 5- online at <http://www.aletheiacollege.net/ld/6.htm>
- (4) An example would be Niqula Al-Dor (one time member of the P.L.O. Executive), *Thus Lost and Thus to be Returned* (Beirut, Lebanon: Al-Hawadith Press).
- (5) H.A. Whittaker, *The Time of the End* (Cannock, UK: Biblia) ch. 19.

The Syria Situation in Bible Prophecy

Tags: Syria, Assad, Civil war, Bible, war, Prophecy, Bible Prophecy, Christian, Christadelphian, Carelinks, predictions, Syrian, ערב, Arab spring, revolutions, Israel, invasion, Aram, Ezekiel, Daniel, prophecies, significance, Christ, return, second coming, Jews, state, Islamic state, Palestine, Assyria, Al Sham, Sham, Greater Syria, Levant, Lebanon, Ahrar al-Sham, al-sham, as-sham, والشام العراق في الإسلامية الدولة, **Damascus**, **Arab unity**, **Arab**, **Islamist**, **arab disunity**, **Biblical**, **meaning**, **nuclear**, **nuclear weapons**, **Aram**, **signs**, **signs of the times**, **Islam**, **Moslem**, **sharia**, **Islamic state**, **Iraq**, **regime**, **Nasiri**, al-Islamiyya

The civil war in Syria is fulfilling Bible prophecy in that it is leading to the creation of a radical Islamic entity which is a re-formation of the ancient Assyrian empire, with a similar agenda of destroying Israel and incorporating Palestine in a pan-Arab state. This is exactly the situation described in the Bible as existing before Christ returns- and is therefore a sign He may well return very soon. Duncan Heaster's book "The Last Days" is available free at www.heaster.org/ld.pdf. Prepare yourself for Christ's return by studying the Gospel and being baptized. Free book "Bible Basics" from www.biblebasicsonline.com and free Bible with commentary from www.n-e-v.info

What's Happening in Syria

There's a complex civil war going on in Syria, as various factions seek to overthrow the Assad regime. It must be viewed in the wider context of the 'Arab Spring' throughout the Arab world, whereby established regimes were overthrown and replaced with populist leadership. But in every case, from Tunisia to Egypt, the new leadership was more radically Islamic and more determined than the previous regimes to exterminate Israel. Israel is now more than ever before surrounded by an Arab world united by one common theme- to overthrow Israel and establish an Islamic state in Palestine. And that's where the whole scene becomes so significant in terms of Bible prophecy, which predicts an invasion of Israel from her neighbours which will lead to a minority turning to Jesus Christ in repentance- and then, He will return. At no other time since the feet of the Lord Jesus were upon this earth has His return looked more imminent. Because there was no previous time in the last 2000 years when Israel existed as a nation and was surrounded by such well armed and capable enemies.

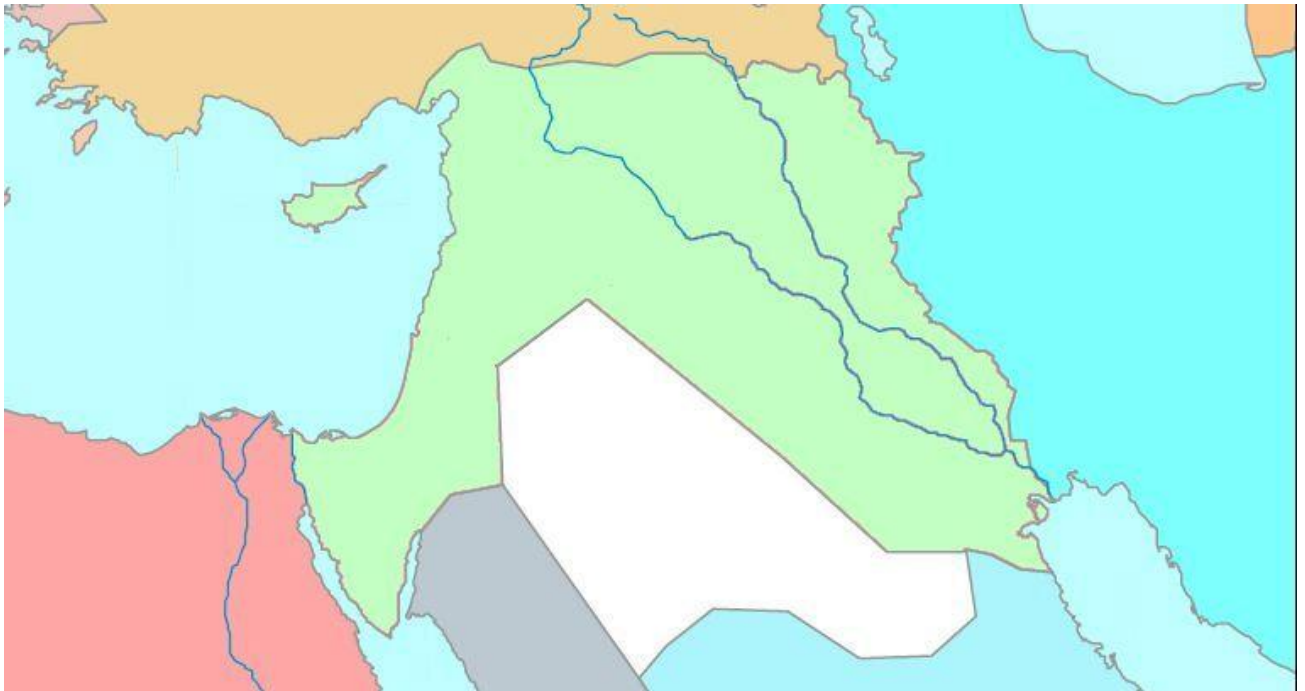
The West clearly doesn't know what to do about Syria. They can't support the undemocratic and abusive Assad regime. But the opposition is radically Islamic. If they support them, then they will make the same fool of themselves as they did when they backed, armed and trained the mujahideen groups in Afghanistan against the USSR in the 1980s- and now those same groups have morphed into Al Qaeda and become the West's greatest enemies. Clearly, the Assad regime will not hold out much longer. But they will be replaced by Moslem extremists who clearly have an agenda to destroy Israel. And Syria has powerful weapons, located right on Israel's northern border.

One feature of the civil war is the bitter disparity between the various Islamic groups opposed to Assad. And the same is true in much of the Arab world. The *only* factor which can unite them is their joint hatred of Israel and desire to destroy her. The bitter disunity between the Arab factions is great indeed- tens of thousands of deaths in Syria bear witness to it. They are aware of their problem- and the classical resolution of such a situation is to focus upon an agreed external enemy and unite in a military endeavour based around religious and ideological principles that all factions are totally agreed upon. And there is indeed such a solution, right on their doorstep- an invasion of Israel.

Al-Sham- Greater Syria

The significance of what's happening in Syria is that this solution is becoming the more obvious. And further, there is much talk amongst the opposition groups about the concept of *Al-Sham*, the formation of a 'greater Syria', incorporating not only Syria but the territories formerly in the Assyrian empire- including Israel. This is not a new idea; it is one of the tenets of faith of the Syrian Social Nationalist Party (SSNP), who were the largest opposition party to the ruling Ba'ath party even before the current civil war broke out. The Wikipedia article about this party gives a good overview of their vision of a 'Greater Syria'. In continuity with this, one major body of factions fighting against Assad in Syria have given themselves the official title of **والشام العراق في الإسلامية الدولة - "The Islamic state of Iraq and Greater Syria". Or to quote the aims of another group:** "On the goal of Katibat al-Muhajirin the spokesman is quite frank: the defeat of the al-Assad regime and the establishment of an Islamic state in the Levant (Greater Syria; the medieval *Bilād as-Shām*)" [source: <http://pietervanostaeyen.wordpress.com/category/syria/>]. Further, "On January 31st 2013, Syrian Islamist groups announced they would unite in one single group; known as Harakat Ahrar **al-Sham** al-Islamiyya (*The Islamic Movement of Freeman of Greater Syria*)" [Source: <http://pietervanostaeyen.wordpress.com/2013/02/02/ahrar-al-sham-the-greater-islamist-union-in-syria/>]. From the same source we read: "We thank Allah for the affection between the believers ...Here are your brothers from the Islamic Groups, who are fighting the criminal Nasiri ['Alawi] regime to overthrow and remove it from our beloved Levant and to form a Muslim society under Shari'a Law... [we] were united completely under the name of Harakat Ahrar **al-Sham**. [This organization] belongs to the same group in obedience to Allah's order to the believers to unite and reject to be divided. As Allah says "hold fast, all together, by the rope which Allah (stretches out for you) and be not divided among yourselves" and "obey Allah and His Messenger; and do not fall into dispute, lest ye lose heart and your power depart". Your brothers of Harakat Ahrar **al-Sham** al-Islamiyya want to announce to all the Muslims in Levant their unity. [They] give them the glad tiding (that will please them) and will establish the moral strength of the believers'. In its first audio address, Ahrar **al-Sham** stated its goal to replace the Assad regime with an Islamic state governed by the Shari'a".

Al-Sham, 'Greater Syria', 'the Levant', refers to an area including Syria, Iraq, Israel and Lebanon. Here's how it's envisaged:



This map is taken from Wikipedia, and as of April 2013 the comment is attached: “Antun Saadeh's and the SSNP's vision of a unified "natural Syria", corresponding closely to the maximum extent of the Neo-Assyrian Empire”. Notice in the declaration from *Harakat Ahrar al-Sham* the rhetoric of unity amongst the disparate, the religious appeal, and the intention to unite Iraq into this ‘greater Syria’. Syria and Assyria, despite their similarity as words, referred to different entities in Bible times. Syria was part of Assyria, but was then better known as Aram. But what is envisaged within the new *Al-Sham* is the creation of a latter day Assyria. Compare the map of the envisaged *Al-Sham* with this map of the Assyrian empire in Biblical times:



What's happening before our eyes is the preparation of a restored Biblical Assyria- even if the significance is lost to Western observers because they generally don't know Arabic or appreciate the significance of the *Al-Sham* rhetoric.

Shaun Waterman in the **Washington Times** of April 9th 2013 in his article, □Al-Nusra comments: "the Syrian extremist militia Jabhat al-Nusra admitted to being a branch force of al-Qaeda's coalition in Iraq □ and has been all along! This was acknowledged by the Islamic State (*not the Democratic State*) of Iraq early in April. No less a personage than the Emir of the Iraqi coalition group, Abu Bakr al-Hussayni al-Qurayshi al-Baghdadi, issued an audio message avowing this heretofore hidden fact: □It's now time to declare in front of the people of the Levant and world that Jabhat al-Nusrah is but an extension of the Islamic State of Iraq and part of it... Iraqi intelligence officials... [said] that the border between Iraq and Syria is not even a real thing" (Quoted in Harold Lafferty, *Present Day Events* April 2013).

The Biblical Perspective

Daniel 2

Daniel chapter 2 contains an outline of the powers who were to dominate the people of Israel within the land of Israel. It begins with a head of gold (Babylon), then breast and arms of silver (Persia), thighs of brass (Greece), two legs of iron (the two halves of the Roman empire) and then feet part of iron, part of clay. Each part of the image corresponds in proportion to how long each empire dominated the land of Israel and the Jewish people- thus the legs were longest because the Romans dominated the land for longest. After AD70, the Jewish state ceased to be a nation. But now, it is once again, for the first time in nearly 2000 years. The final part of the image therefore represents a group of nations (perhaps divided into two groups, symbolized by the two feet) who will dominate Israel in the last days. A stone cut out of a mountain without hands (representing the Lord Jesus Christ) then hits the image on its feet, growing into a mountain which fills the earth. The interpretation is given, and it clearly refers to the second coming of Christ to destroy the kingdoms of men who have dominated His land and His people, and to establish God's Kingdom on earth: "In the days of those kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed, nor shall its sovereignty be left to another people; it shall crush to powder and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand forever" (Dan. 2:44).



Arab Unity and Disunity

Who, then, are these nations who were represented by the feet partly of iron and partly of clay? Some will be strong, others weak. "Then you saw the feet and toes, part of potters' clay, and part of iron, that shall be a divided kingdom; but there shall be in it of the strength of the iron, because you saw the iron mixed with miry clay. As the toes of the feet

were part of iron, and part of clay, so the kingdom shall be partly strong, and partly broken. Whereas you saw the iron mixed with miry clay, they shall mingle themselves with the seed of men; but they shall not cling to one another, even as iron does not mingle with clay” (Dan. 2:41-43). One only has to look at the various groups currently fighting Assad in Syria to see how deeply divided is the Islamist group. Most of the names of the factions would be unfamiliar to Western readers, but the following at least are almost general knowledge to any who read Middle East news:

Palestine Liberation Front

Palestinian Islamic Jihad

The Muslim Brotherhood

Hamas

Hezbollah

Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine

Fatah

Al Aqsa Martyrs Brigades

Abu Nidal

The situation in Syria could actually lead to a fragmentation of the country into a group of smaller states, all united under the *Al-Sham* concept and a desire to drive Jews out of Israel. The same is true for Iraq and other Moslem states bordering Israel. Writing on the *Al Jazeera* website in May 2013, Murtaza Hussain wrote a penetrating article "Iraq, Syria and the death of the modern Middle East" (at <http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/2013/05/2013567200437919.html>). The following sounds exactly like the ten toes of Daniel's image, formed out of larger powers but now weak and yet united against Israel:

"The countries of Syria and Iraq, formerly unified Arab states formed after the defeat of their former Ottoman rulers, exist today only in name. In their place what appears most likely to come into existence -

after the bloodshed subsides - are small, ethnically and religiously homogenous statelets: weak and easily manipulated, where their progenitors at their peaks were robustly independent powers".

We of course are reading the Bible through translation. But take a closer look at the original Hebrew and Chaldee translated "they shall *mingle* themselves" (Dan. 2:43). They were to be a mingled people- and that's exactly who Syria and the nations of 'Greater Syria' are. The original word translated 'mingle' is *arab*. One easy way to check that is to use an online concordance to poke under the surface of Dan. 2:43. And you will see it- Strong's number H6151. *Arab*. Surely there is a reference here to the Arab peoples! Here's what you see in Strong's concordance:

H6151

ערב

ʿārab

ar-ab'

(Chaldee); corresponding to H6148; to *commingle*: - mingle (self), mix.

The 'feet and toes' section of the image is proportionally not a very long part of the body. The domination of Israel by this group will not be for long- perhaps the three and a half year period which occurs in several latter day prophecies.

Psalm 83

The way the Islamists will seek to bind together their divided state is made clear in Psalm 83, where we have ten Arab nations, mostly in *Al-Sham*, Greater Syria, who unite themselves with a common aim of capturing the holy places in Jerusalem and blotting out the name of Israel:

"They conspire with cunning against Your people, they plot against Your cherished ones. Come, they say, and let's destroy them as a nation, that the name of Israel may be remembered no more. For they have conspired together with one mind, they form an alliance against You. The tents of Edom and the Ishmaelites; Moab, and the Hagrites; Gebal, Ammon, and Amalek; Philistia with the inhabitants of Tyre; Assyria also is joined with them" (Ps. 83:3-8). Note that 'Philistine' and 'Palestinian' are the same word...

This 'conspiring together with one mind' and 'forming an alliance' is exactly what we see coming out of the uniting of the disparate Islamist factions in Syria and elsewhere. "Form an alliance" translates a Hebrew phrase more commonly translated 'to cut a covenant' (Ps. 83:5). The Palestinian Covenant unites these groups, and that covenant emphasizes the aim of overrunning Israel. Psalm 83 mentions ten nations- perhaps corresponding with the ten toes of Daniel's image, and the ten horns on the beast which will dominate God's people in the last days (Daniel 7, Revelation 13). Joel 3:9 is another prophecy of the invasion which happens just before Christ's return, and it speaks of how the invaders will make a 'proclamation' to "sanctify war"- a *jihad*, a holy war. And that is exactly the rhetoric of the groups now calling for Islamist unity based around a *jihad* against Israel in order to establish *Al-Sham*.

Syria, then known as Aram, frequently invaded Israel in Bible times. The invasions under the Syrian king Rezin were a result of 'taking evil counsel against' Israel (Is. 7:5), just as Assyria and her Arab supporters are to do in Ps. 83:3: "They have taken crafty counsel against Your people". The double emphasis on "Damascus" as being the nerve centre of Rezin's operations (Is. 7:8), may also be significant in that this very city is now a centre for Arab terrorism against Israel.

I've written more about Psalm 83 and the Palestinian Covenant in *Unrest In The Arab World: The Perspective of Biblical Prophecy* [an appendix to chapter 8 of *The Last Days*]; and in the same book, Digression 7: The Palestinian Movement In Bible Prophecy. You can get a free PDF from www.heaster.org/ld.pdf.

Ezekiel 38

Ezekiel 37 and 38 predict that when the Jews have returned to their land, then there will be a ten nation invasion by a group of surrounding nations, headed up by 'Gog' - which is to be destroyed by the direct intervention of God to establish His Kingdom. This invasion is to be after the Jews have returned to their land, and will begin with an incursion onto "the mountains of Israel"- which are bordering Syria, the Golan heights:

"In the latter years you shall come into the land that is brought back from the sword, that is gathered out of many peoples, on the mountains of Israel, which have been a continual waste; but it is brought forth out of the nations" (Ez. 38:8).

Only since 1948 and the uprise of serious Arab powers around Israel could this prophecy come true. All we're waiting for is the Arab confederacy to push into the Golan Heights. And we could view the news on the internet or turn on the telly- and find it's happening. Any moment now. And the next step will be the actual return of Christ to earth.

***Al-Sham*- A Reborn Assyria**

Zechariah 9 is clearly a prophecy of the return of Christ to earth and the establishment of His Kingdom (see Zech. 9:1,9-11 especially). But this worldwide Kingdom will be established after judgments are executed upon Damascus, Hamath, Tyre, Sidon, Ashkelon, Ekron, Ashdod and Gaza- a collection of peoples likened to a beast with a mouth and teeth which have enclosed Israel (9:7). These areas are geographically exactly where the 'greater Syria' is envisaged as being. They surround present day Israel, from the Gaza Strip to Lebanon. And they are likened to some latter day beast descending upon Israel, which must be destroyed before God's Kingdom can be established. This encourages us to see the beast of Daniel and Revelation as referring in its final form to Israel's Islamist neighbours who now surround her. Is. 9:12 uses 'beast' imagery when it speaks of the

Syrians and Philistines [same word as 'Palestinians'] as being the mouth of a huge beast, closing around Israel: "The Syrians before, and the Philistines behind; and they shall devour Israel with open mouth". This image of an Arab beast devouring Israel is repeated in Joel 1:6 concerning the later Assyrian invader.

The great invasions of Israel by the Assyrians are prototypes of the latter day invasion. Micah 5 is specific that the Lord Jesus will appear to save Israel when "the Assyrian" invades them in the last days. Balaam's prophecy about Israel's final destiny speaks of how finally both Assyria and Eber ['the other side', a similar meaning as the words 'Syria' and 'Aram' in Hebrew, and effectively referring to Syria] will be judged for their abuse of Israel in the last days. They are mentioned together because they will be operating together- and now we see that they actually are coming together (Num. 24:24). Whilst we must remember that Syria and Assyria were historically different, the current talk of a 'Greater Syria' and 'The Islamic state of Iraq and Greater Syria' is nothing less than Biblical 'Assyria' born again. Assyria invaded Israel in waves, initially just attacking the Northern part of Israel (2 Kings 15:29), commented upon in Is. 9:1 as a 'light affliction' compared to the fury of the main invasion. And it is the northern part of Israel which borders with modern day Syria. This is where any land invasion from Syria would naturally begin.

At least four waves of Assyrian invasions are recorded:

- under Menahem (2 Kings 15:19) - bought off
- under Pekah (2 Kings 15:29) - northern Israel affected
- under Hoshea (2 Kings 17:3) - Israel carried captive
- under Hezekiah (2 Kings 18:9) - took fenced cities of Judah and destroyed by God's direct intervention.

The gap between the third and fourth invasions was around six months. The third invasion took three years: "Then the king of Assyria came up throughout all the land, and went up to Samaria, and besieged it three years" (2 Kings 17:5). This three-year period of domination followed by six months rings bells with the three and a half years of the (latter-day?) Elijah ministry, and the same period spoken of in the 1,260 days, the 42 months and "a time, times, and an half" (Dan. 7:25; 12:7; Rev. 11:2,3; 12:6).

The final Assyrian invasion is the seedbed from which the language of Gog in Ezekiel 38 is taken. Look up these Bible passages at your leisure:

Ezekiel 38 / Gog	Assyria (Isaiah)
:4	37:29
:7	8:7
:8	8:8
:9	28:2; 8:9,21; the Assyrian "strong one" of Is. 28:2 is the 'Gog' figure
:11	37:24
:12	10:6
:19	30:27
:22	29:6 RV; 30:30
:19,20	29:6; 30:25
39:10	33:1

The Assyrian is to be “broken in pieces” (Is. 30:31 RV), just as the whole image of Daniel 2 is to be. That image symbolizes a latter day confederacy of nations under the leadership of Babylon / Assyria, which will dominate the land / earth of Israel in the last days.

And so I repeat my basic point: The historical Assyrian invasions of Israel form the prototypes of the latter day invasions which the Bible prophesies, and which will immediately precipitate the return of Christ to the earth. The re-formation of ‘Assyria’ which is being called for by the groups coming to power in Syria today, along with the clear demand for a *jihad* to destroy Israel and Islamize Palestine, means that the Bible prophecies of the last days are being fulfilled before our eyes. It would seem that the return of Christ will be soon. Jerusalem is truly “compassed with armies”, exactly as the Lord Jesus said it would be just prior to His return in glory has this in mind when He predicted that Jerusalem would again be like this in the last days:

“But when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then know that her desolation is at hand... For these are days of vengeance, that all things which are written may be fulfilled... Jerusalem shall be trodden under foot by the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles [three and a half years of Gentile domination?] be fulfilled... And then shall they see the Son of Man coming in a cloud, with power and great glory. But when these things begin to happen, look up, lift up your heads, because your redemption draws near” (Lk. 21:20-28).

For most of the last 2000 years, Jerusalem has been surrounded by Bedouin tribes- not nations with armies and oil wealth behind them. Only in our times has the whole jigsaw started to come together.

The Faithful Remnant

Isaiah opens his prophecy by stating that once all Israel has fallen to the Assyrian invaders, only Jerusalem will be left- and will only be saved because of a “remnant” within the city (Is. 1:7-9). But the rest of Isaiah chapter 1 goes on to state that Jerusalem as a whole is as sinful and far from the true God as the rest of Judah. The size of this faithful remnant may have been very small indeed. They were “I (Isaiah) and the children (prophets - Is. 8:16) whom the Lord has given me” (Is. 8:18); and this is quoted in Heb. 2:13 as referring to Christian believers. That small group centered around Isaiah perhaps point forward to a small remnant of faithful Jewish believers in Jerusalem, for whose sake the whole race is not destroyed completely. And it seems that this part of the latter day jigsaw is already in place, thanks to a number of baptisms there recently.

Opportunistic Interpretation?

I can’t stand opportunistic interpretations of Bible prophecy. What I mean by that is the forcing of Bible verses to somehow have relevance to any current event. I was guilty of this myself. Here’s a photograph of me 30 years ago standing up in London’s Hyde Park and dogmatically declaring that Bible prophecy required a Soviet invasion of Israel, and that Christ’s return was ‘imminent’. That means, any time right now. And that God’s “more sure word of prophecy” would absolutely make all this come about. Right then, in 1983. I was wrong. Get it- *I was wrong*.

I have spent most of the subsequent 30 years living in the former Soviet Union, speaking Russian and having Russian speaking believers as my closest friends. As I sit here in 2013 in my apartment in Riga, Latvia, I can overhear my daughter speaking Russian as she watches a Russian movie. I was wrong. The USSR collapsed in 1991. Christ didn’t return in 1984. So, am I just having another crack? Maybe in a sense, yes. And I might be wrong again. I was wrong then and I might be wrong again. I am no prophet nor did I ever claim to be one. But from the late 1980s I shifted my attention from Russia and the West to the land promised to Abraham [from the Nile to the Euphrates], which is the

focus of Bible prophecy. That is not to say that Russia, Europe, the Catholic church and the West generally have no role to play, but I do not think it is the leading role. I expressed the bulk of my thinking as presented in this article in a book, *The Last Days*, published in 1992 and still in print. You



can get a free PDF of it from www.heaster.org/ld.pdf. I mention this personal perspective because the crisis in Syria and the Arab Spring revolutions aren't being just forced into the mould and requirements of some Bible prophecies which I had a look at just last week. The overall picture of Bible prophecy requires the creation of an entity like *Al-Sham* and a focus of the Arab peoples upon overrunning Israel and establishing an Islamic state there just prior to Christ's return. And all seems going to plan. I'm excited about this, and that's why I've been bold enough to share

my thoughts with you.

A Personal Appeal

"He that shall come, will come" (Heb. 10:37). Whether I am right or wrong in my take on Bible prophecy. Effectively, Christ's return is only so far away as our death. And that could be any moment. And so my appeal to you is to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ who shall return- and soon, relatively speaking. Give your brief, fragile life to Him by identifying with His death and resurrection by baptism into Him. Become one of the true children of Abraham by baptism (Gal. 3:27-29), and rejoice with me in sure hope of resurrection and eternal inheritance of the land in God's eternal Kingdom. About *that* there is no doubt. That much is sure. Matching geopolitics with Bible prophecy is one thing. Maybe I got it wrong about Syria, just as I got it wrong about Russia. But in the bigger picture that is neither here nor there. What is sure and certain is that the Lord Jesus Christ lived, died *for you*, 2000 years ago, on a day in April, on a Friday afternoon, on a hill just outside Jerusalem. And three days later, He rose again, is now in Heaven, and shall surely return to establish God's Kingdom upon earth. And you really, really can connect with Him now and live with Him eternally then. Please give yourself no rest until your future is assured. Get a free Bible from us, and / or the free book *Bible Basics* which explains the Bible's message and prepares you for baptism into Him:



www.n-e-v.info
www.biblebasicsonline.com

Or write: Carelinks
 Ministries, PO Box 152,
 Menai NSW 2234
 AUSTRALIA

Duncan Heaster

Email us for more
 information:
info@carelinks.net or email
 Duncan directly at
dh@heaster.org

APPENDIX: Some Speculative Suggestions

Accept Islam!

Initially, the Assyrians demanded that Israel pay them tribute and accepted their religion. One could well imagine 'Assyria' of the last days stipulating Israel's acceptance of Islam as a condition for military help

and mercy. God was Israel's father (Jer. 3:19; 31:9; Mal. 1:6; 2:10) and master (Mal. 1:6; Deut. 32:36); both these concepts were well understood by Israel. For king Ahaz to say to Tiglath-Pileser, "I am *thy* servant and *thy* son" (2 Kings 16:7) was therefore a conscious rejection of Yahweh as Master and Father. For this reason Isaiah, prophesying in this period, stresses the fact that God claims Israel as *His* servant (e.g. Is. 44:1,2,21). The historical account sadly records how not only Ahaz but Hoshea (2 Kings 17:3) and Jehoiakim (2 Kings 24:1) also became 'servants' of their Arab dominators - doubtless thinking that they could serve two masters. Note in passing how 'Islam' is a call to 'submit'. This conscious rejection of Yahweh worship is further shown by Ahaz cutting off "the borders of the bases" of the laver (2 Kings 16:17), i.e. the cherubic faces which were on the wheels. These would have been a distinctive part of Yahweh worship. 2 Kings 16:10,11 records how after meeting Tiglath-pileser at Damascus, Ahaz ordered a replica altar to one which he had seen there. Ez. 23:7 confirms that Judah were forced to accept Assyria's religion: "She committed her whoredoms with... the chosen men of Assyria (i.e. the Assyrian diplomats with whom Ahaz's messengers negotiated)... with all their idols she defiled herself".

During the final invasion, the Assyrian commander Rabshakeh demanded: "Make an agreement with me... and then eat ye every man of his own vine, and every one of his fig tree... until I come and take you away to a land like your own land, a land of corn and wine, a land of bread and vineyards, a land of oil olive and of honey" (2 Kings 18:31-32). The repetition of the word "land" and the evident

allusions to the description of the promised land Israel would have if they were faithful (e.g. Deut. 8:7,8), show that Rabshakeh was offering the Jews a fake kingdom of God. The reference to each man eating his own vine and fig tree is alluding to Mic. 4:4, a prophecy which was uttered during this period, and doubtless repeated by the prophets within Jerusalem: "They shall sit every man under his vine and... fig tree". These conscious allusions by Rabshakeh again show that there was a strong religious element in his reasoning - as if to say, "Make a deal with us, and we can offer you something better than the kingdom your prophets tell you will soon come and is worth suffering for". The Islamist demand of the last days may run along similar lines: "Become Muslims, and *then* you will be the real children of Abraham and have hope of being in a real paradise". The language of vines, oil, corn, honey etc. are prominent in the Islamic concept of 'paradise', their equivalent to the Kingdom of God.

Three Groups

The Assyrian army was split up under three leaders, Tartan, Rabсарis and Rabshakeh. These names all have religious meanings, just as do the names of the leaders of the various Islamic brigades today- e.g. "Tartan" is related to the Assyrian god Tartak (2 Kings 17:31). The subdivision of the Arab invader into three groups, as in the original Assyrian battle plan, may also be thus foreseen in the last days, seeing that some previous Arab invasions may have had this feature too:

- "The spoilers of the Philistines (raided Israel) in three companies" (1 Sam. 13:17).
- The Israelites fought their Ammonite enemies "in three companies", perhaps because there were three groups of Ammonites (1 Sam. 11:11).
- The account of Gideon's victory over Midian, a clear type of the latter-day Arab destruction, has a triple emphasis on Israel attacking them in "three companies" (Jud. 7:16,20,22) - perhaps for the same reason.
- The "great city" of Babylon/Assyria will be "divided into three parts" for its destruction (Rev. 16:19).
- The Chaldeans (Babylonians/Assyrians) attacked Job, symbolic of faithless Israel, in three bands (Job 1:17)
- Is there some reference to this in the enigmatic three frog like spirits of Rev. 16?
- Rev. 9:14-18 describes how in the last days, 200,000,000 horsemen came from the Euphrates (i.e. Babylon/Assyria), using "fire and smoke and brimstone" to punish God's apostate people just before Christ returns. "By these three was the third part of men killed" might suggest that this invading army has three aspects to its work. The huge number of horsemen must allude to the "great company" of horsemen of Ez. 38:4, which we have shown to be rooted in the Assyrian invasion. The 200,000,000 horsemen of Rev. 9:16 may correspond to the fact that the strength of the Assyrian army which came against Jerusalem is claimed in some inscriptions to have been 200,000 men.

The Koran has interpretations attached to it called the Hadith, written by various Imams [Molek pastors and teachers]. One of them is most significant in our context: "Abdulla Ibn Hawala, the Messenger صلى الله عليه وسلم said: "You will be split up into groups of armies. An army will be in Al-shaam, an army in Iraq, and an army in Yemen". Here we have it- three groups of armies coming against Israel, one of them being from A-Sham! This teaching is now being appropriated by the Islamist factions who are coming to power in Syria- just search for these sentences on the internet and you'll see how common they now are!

The Burden of Damascus

“The burden of Damascus. Behold, Damascus is taken away from being a city, and it shall be a ruinous heap” (Is. 17:1). As has often pointed out, there is no time in previous history when Damascus was completely destroyed and became a pile and a heap- in fact, it is the world’s most lengthily inhabited city. The verse is in the Isaiah context of warning Judah not to trust in Damascus- so it may mean that *effectively* Damascus would be as nothing for Judah and would not save them from the Assyrian threat. However, the verse has a more comfortable interpretation if we look for a literal fulfillment. And now for the first time in history, this verse has the possibility of a literal fulfillment at the touch of a few buttons. For Israel have made it clear that in the event of a nuclear attack upon them, they will take out Damascus with their nuclear weapons.

In the prophecy of latter day invasion by Gog in Ezekiel 38, Syria isn’t mentioned. It could be that by the time of that invasion, Syria in the sense of Damascus has been taken out by Israel and is therefore not a player in the very last invasion.

CHAPTER 9: THE BABYLONIAN INVASIONS

9-1 The Babylonian Invasion Of Judah

As with the Assyrian invasions, there were several waves of Babylonian attacks against Israel, culminating in the capture and sacking of Jerusalem. We have earlier explained how Assyria and Babylon typify the same Arab aggressor of the last days, although the details of their invasions and judgment in the past serve to highlight different features of the same last days scenario. The Babylonian invasion led eventually to a spiritual revival among Israel, the production of the good figs of Jer. 24:5 (Jehoiachin would be a personal example of this, 2 Kings 25:27-30; he repented after 38 years in Babylon, cp. the period of time Israel were in the wilderness). And so too in the future: "I will also leave in the midst of thee (as a result of the Babylonian invasion) an afflicted and poor people, and they shall trust in the name of the Lord. The remnant of Israel shall not do iniquity..." (Zeph.3:12,13). As the Babylonian tribulation made the spiritually weak get weaker and the potentially strong get stronger (Jer. 24:3), so the final Babylon-led holocaust of Israel, natural and spiritual, will have the same effect.

The Assyrian typology points forward to the destruction of the Arab invaders in the Jerusalem area, as a result of God's direct intervention through the second coming. Their destruction will be associated with severe in-fighting among themselves. The information given concerning Babylon fills in what the Assyrian typology omits - the actual capture of Jerusalem, the means by which the latter-day 'Assyria/Babylon' is destroyed by the smaller Arab powers who are confederate with them in their invasion of Israel, and especially details concerning the destruction of Babylon/Assyria in their homeland, as opposed to their military destruction which the Sennacherib typology explains.

As a prelude to the Babylonian taking of Jerusalem, there was a three-year period of servitude to Nebuchadnezzar, during which "the Lord sent against him (Jehoiakim) bands of the Chaldees, and bands of the Syrians, and bands of the Moabites, and bands of the children of Ammon...against Judah to destroy it" (2

Kings 24:1,2). This corresponds exactly with all the other indications that there will be an extended period of Arab raiding and desolation of Israel (for 3.5 years?), culminating in the final, organized invasion of the land by 'Babylon' and her smaller Arab allies in order to take Jerusalem.

The Hebrew for "bands" here is elsewhere translated "troops of robbers", showing the lack of large scale organization during the desolation period, and the big motivation of taking the spoil of a once prosperous Israel. It should be noted that historical evidence indicates that Babylon was greatly increasing in power at this time; as the future Arab invasions will be associated with a revival of 'Babylon' too. Jer. 48:47 NIV speaks of the revival of Moab's fortunes in the last days. And Jer. 6:22 speaks more specifically of Babylon's revival: "A great people shall be *raised* from the sides of the earth". "The sides of the earth" (land) may speak of Arab troops and weaponry being amassed on the borders of Israel, or perhaps along the original boundaries of the land promised to Abraham, just prior to the final invasions. It is not difficult to see this happening today. The nations round about Israel are those which are the primary concern of Bible prophecy: "The Lord hath commanded concerning Jacob, that they that are round about him shall be his adversaries" (Lam. 1:17 RV).

The raids led to a concentration of the population in Jerusalem (Jer. 35:11), as it may do in the last days. The continual emphasis on Jerusalem being besieged would have a latter-day relevance if the Israelis create some form of defence barrage around Jerusalem - possibly in the form of 'walls' built from some hi-tech defensive material. The language of 'gathering' of all nations against Jerusalem in particular in the last days (Zech. 14:2) would then slot into place.

Jehoiakim had "filled Jerusalem with innocent blood" (2 Kings 24:4), which, in addition to human sacrifices, may also refer to the result of some kind of civil war or ruthless 'purging' of the population, especially the righteous remnant, as occurred within besieged Jerusalem during the lead up to its A.D. 70 destruction. There are plenty of similar indications that a spirit of partisanship will plague latter-day Israel, both natural and spiritual, in their greatest time of need for united supplication towards their God. Judah was also plagued by false prophets at the time: Jeremiah and the true prophets had to work in competition with Hananiah and the false prophets, who replicated his signs and just slightly changed God's word, teaching that there was peace and safety in the ecclesia, and that God was actually pleased with His people (Jer. 28:3). This fits in to the scenario presented in Section 2, whereby in the last days there are true and false prophets in competition with each other within the ecclesia, at the time of Babylon's final persecution of Israel, natural and spiritual.

The records stress how extremely wicked the last few kings of Judah were before the final sacking of Jerusalem (2 Kings 24:19; 2 Chron. 36:8). This verdict appears to have been on account of their zealous dedication to the idols of Babylon and the surrounding nations (Eze. 16:29; 23:15-17). The only explanation for this (bearing in mind that these were the very nations who were oppressing them) would seem to be that they hoped they could placate their enemies by religious association with them. Likewise the grievous sin of faithless Israel in

their very last days may be in their willingness to accept the Islamic beliefs of their Arab attackers.

We are pointedly reminded that just prior to this final invasion of Jerusalem, Babylon had been at war with Egypt (2 Kings 24:7; Jer. 46:2,13). There are many prophecies in Jeremiah and Ezekiel of Babylon being at war with the Arab nations who supported her in the attack on Jerusalem, e.g. concerning Ammon (Eze. 21:20) and Tyre (Eze. 26:7). Ammon is mentioned as *escaping* out of the hand of the king of the North during his invasion of Israel and Jerusalem (Dan. 11:41). This again shows that there will be much inter-Arab conflict both before and during Israel's prolonged desolation period. "The sea and the waves roaring" at the time of Israel's final suffering (Lk. 21:25) is a figure taken from Jer. 49:23 concerning the Arab nations around Israel being like the troubled sea in their fighting with each other. However, the outstanding inter-Arab conflicts will be temporarily forgotten in the last days to concentrate on a combined push against Jerusalem. But once this is captured, the old rivalries will suddenly violently surface, which is how God will destroy the invaders and save the righteous remnant who are still barely alive in the sewers and basements of Jerusalem.

Israel are described as doing "that which was evil in the eyes of the Lord" (Jer. 52:2), alluding to the language of the book of Judges concerning Israel doing just that, and which led to Arab invasions.

The actual invasion is described in terms which are so reminiscent of the Sennacherib scenario that it is just possible that Nebuchadnezzar consciously modelled his campaign upon this, with the implication, 'And this time we'll succeed in taking Jerusalem!' The various points of contact which we have highlighted between those previous invasions, which typify the extended period of victorious Arab harassment of Israel and those which underlie the final attack on Jerusalem, serve to suggest that this may be an attitude seen in the latter-day Arab onslaught, too. The following are a selection of similarities between Nebuchadnezzar's attack and Sennacherib's:-

- "The servants (military commanders) of Nebuchadnezzar...came up against Jerusalem, and the city was besieged" (2 Kings 24:10). "The king of Assyria sent Tartan and Rabsaris and Rabshakeh...with a great host against Jerusalem (2 Kings 18:17).
- Rabshakeh being Sennacherib's right-hand man in the field is perhaps echoed by the relationship between Nebuchadnezzar and "Nebuzar-adan the captain of the guard" (Jer. 52:12).
- "Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came, he, and all his host, against Jerusalem" (2 Kings 25:1) shows the tremendous personality cult which he enjoyed. The personal rage of Sennacherib against Jerusalem is also spotlighted (2 Kings 19:27,28). This clear distinction between the king of Babylon/Assyria and their people leads us to look for a single, charismatic Arab leader who will lead latter-day Babylon. The mass charisma of leaders like Ayatollah Khomeini and Saddam Hussein (the latter actually claimed to be the embodiment of Nebuchadnezzar) indicates that even in human political terms the uprise of such a leader is quite

likely. The "king of fierce countenance" (Dan. 8:23), "the king of the north" (Dan. 11:40), 'the chief prince' (Eze. 38:2 R.V. mg.), all speak of one specific personal leader who will lead the Arab powers against Israel. This enables more sense to be made of the New Testament references to a personal anti-Christ who will arise in the last days, a "man of sin" (2 Thess. 2:3) based upon Goliath, whom we have shown to be a personal embodiment of Israel's latter-day Arab enemies. Another prototype of this person is the Arab Tobiah, who intermarried with God's people (Neh. 3:1), and dwelt within the temple of God, putting Israel to financial tribute (Neh. 13:4,5).

Nebuchadnezzar's success against Jerusalem was primarily due to the severe famine which crippled the city (2 Kings 25:3). The phrasing of this shows how people from the whole land of Israel had crowded into Jerusalem, thus exacerbating the problem: "The famine prevailed in the *city*, and there was no bread for the people of the *land*". The typology of the invasions recorded in Judges teaches that the Arab incursions during the period of prolonged downtreading will have consciously aimed to destroy the agriculture and even the physical structure of the land of Israel. Deut. 28 and Lev. 26, which we have earlier shown to have an application to the latter-day curses upon Israel, emphasize this curse of famine and its related problems of disease and death. This is exactly the language of the

seal, trumpet and vial judgments of Rev. 6,9 and 16, largely falling upon the earth/land of Israel.

Our Lord's prophecy of famines at the time of the end had its primary fulfilment in the land of Israel around A.D. 70 - and its secondary reference is fundamentally to the land of Israel too (Luke 21:11), although this does not rule out this prophecy's partial reference to famines in the surrounding world also.

The invasion of Babylon was and will be "against this land, *and* against the inhabitants thereof" (Jer. 25:9), implying that there is a specific destruction of the land physically as well as of the people. The great emphasis upon the physical desolation of Babylon and its barrenness which came as the punishment for the invasion, must stand directly related to how Babylon received and will receive judgment in the same form which it gave Israel (Jer. 25:12 etc.). We have previously shown this to be a very consistent principle. Rev. 18:8 is specific that latter-day Babylon will be punished with famine. The Philistines, clearly typical of Israel's present Arab neighbours, will also die from severe famine in the last days (Isa. 14:30). This may well be due to the weaponry used to inflict this upon Israel being used by the Arabs against themselves. Babylon's famine coming "in one day" (Rev. 18:8) would suggest something along these lines - how else can a famine be suddenly created in a day?

It should be noted that famines brought the prodigal son back to the father in repentance (Luke 15:14). Closer study of this parable reveals its relevance to the return of apostate Israel in the last days.

"The city was broken up" (2 Kings 25:4) uses a word which literally means 'to tear into two'. The mind flies to Zech. 14:2, "The city shall be taken...and half of the

city shall go forth into captivity" in the last days. This could mean that the city will be physically divided during the house-to-house fighting, e.g. along the present Jew/Arab divide. The present Arab population within Israel will obviously play a part in the period of domination and final invasion. It could be speculated that the Arab tribes which Israel failed to drive out remained in the land, and rose up against Israel during the Babylonian and Assyrian invasions.

" And they slew the sons of Zedekiah before his eyes, and put out the eyes of Zedekiah, and bound him with fetters... and carried him to Babylon" , along with his ministers (2 Kings 25:7,18-20). Given the present Arab desire to replicate Nebuchadnezzar, it is quite possible that they may subject the Israeli Prime Minister and his Cabinet to a like public humiliation. The removal of all the instruments of Yahweh-worship to Babylon (2 Kings 25:13-17) may find its echo in the tokenistic removal of Judaica from looted synagogues by the latter-day Arab invaders.

Despite all this tribulation, Jeremiah chapters 40 and 41 make it clear that there were significant numbers of Jewish forces still at large throughout the land, operating a guerilla warfare against the Babylonians whilst also engaging in vicious civil war with their own people. This corroborates the earlier evidence we have seen for believing that faithless Israel will, in the latter days, be engaged in bitter feuding right until their destruction, after the pattern of A.D. 70.

We have also seen that a spirit of unity develops amongst the righteous remnant due to their application to God's word spoken by the Elijah ministry (Mal. 4:6), their united repentance, and combined yearning for God's salvation through the second coming. Spiritual Israel may go through a like process.

There is considerable emphasis in the record upon the use of fire in Jerusalem's destruction - e.g. 2 Kings 25:9: " He burnt the house of the Lord, and the king's house, and all the houses of Jerusalem...burnt he with fire" (cp. Lam. 2:3,4; 4:11). Thus Eze. 24:3 likens the Babylonian invasion to a fire around the boiling pot of Jerusalem.

Unlike at that time, the fire of the future invasion will be one of spiritual purging as well as of destruction (Zech. 13:9), again showing how the future 'Babylon' invasion will lead to a true faith in the remnant of Israel, whilst 'burning up' all who refuse to have faith. Again we see a picture of the Arabs killing the Jews until the only ones left alive are the righteous remnant. It is then that God intervenes.

Joel also emphasizes the use of fire, both in the prolonged desolation period of the land (Joel 1:19,20) and in the final push against Jerusalem (Joel 2:3,5). There is good reason to think that Joel has primary reference to both the Babylonian and Assyrian invasions. Joel's description of the invaders as locusts is similar to Jer.10:22 speaking of the Babylonians as " a great commotion (the Hebrew root means 'to spring as a locust') out of the north country" . The use of fire mentioned by Joel to physically destroy the land and parts of Jerusalem, is markedly suggestive of the use of incendiary bombing and/or local scale nuclear weapons. Lam. 4:19 likens Israel during the Babylonian invasion to small animals being

attacked from the air by huge birds of prey (cp. helicopter gunships and aircraft-launched bombs and missiles?): " Our persecutors are swifter than the eagles of the heaven: they pursued us upon the mountains, they laid wait for us in the wilderness" .

The Remnant

The first Babylonian attack on Jerusalem resulted in only " the poor" being left, most of the others being taken captive to Babylon. After its final sacking, only the very poor were left behind (2 Kings 24:15 cp. 25:11,12). These poor of the poor who remained were symbolic of the righteous remnant who will remain in Jerusalem after the latter-day Arab invasion. It may be that they are drawn largely from the ranks of the present Israeli working-class. The digression concerning the Rechabites in Jer. 35 may also serve to show that there was a righteous remnant in Israel in Nebuchadnezzar's time, as there was in Sennacherib's. In the run up to the final fall of Jerusalem, Jeremiah was present within the city, speaking forth God's word to Israel. This matches Isaiah's ministry during the Assyrian invasion; they both typify the future work of 'Elijah' and his helpers.

There is ample evidence that Jeremiah had to work amid considerable opposition from false prophets who mocked his prophecies of impending Arab victory and the need to repent; they will have their counterparts among the ranks of modern Judaism in the last days (Lam. 2:14; Jer. 20:6; 28:1-9; 29:24-26; Zech. 13:2-5). It is these false prophets within Israel which our Lord spoke of in Matt. 24:24. In the A.D.70 fulfilment, these people operated under the umbrella of fundamentalist Judaism, as they will in the last days. Their false bearing of the Lord's name (Matt. 24:5) alludes back to the pseudo-prophets of Jeremiah's time doing the same (Jer. 14:14). Zedekiah's trauma of being torn between wanting to accept the words of the false prophets whilst inwardly knowing the truth of Jeremiah's words, will perhaps be repeated in the leadership of latter-day Israel, to whom the Elijah ministry will teach the true word of God. The apparent mimicry of Jeremiah's style by the false prophets will perhaps be seen in the last days too.

The appeal of these people to national and religious pride during the period of Arab domination of the land before the final attack on Jerusalem is easy to imagine as occurring in the last days. The bold, absolutist statements of men like Passhur match the spirit of the far right in present Israel's religious/political circles: 'O.K., these Arabs have had a bit of success, but with God on our side we'll smash them for good in the next few years! Don't let anyone tell you we won't!' (cp. Jer. 28:1-11). In view of this, it is understandable that when Israel was totally and utterly smashed by the final Babylonian invasion, Judaism broke down: " The law is no more" , Jeremiah lamented (Lam. 2:9). The whole of Lamentations contains many other passages concerning Jeremiah's regret at how the whole system associated with the law had ended. As a priest, he would have felt the pathos of this so keenly.

This same break-up of the law could also be brought about by a nominal Jewish acceptance of Islam being sanctioned by the Rabbis. However, in the same way as Israel in Babylonian times worshipped their gods as well as Yahweh, so it will

probably be in the last days. The opposition to Jeremiah was so intense that it appears some of those who truly believed his word were killed as several times the false prophet brigade attempted to take him out of the way. "The sins of the (false) prophets and the iniquities of her priests, that have shed the blood of the just in the midst" of Jerusalem (Lam. 4:13) would indicate that it will be the orthodox Rabbis who raise this persecution against the Elijah ministry and those who respond to it. Note how the two witnesses of the last days are killed while doing this work of witness (Rev. 11:8, and see comments on this in Section 3).

Whilst we have shown that there was a righteous remnant among Israel before the Babylonian sacking of Jerusalem, and that the remnant of population left in Jerusalem after this can be seen as vaguely typifying the latter-day remnant, the Jews who were carried captive to Babylon also typify this remnant, they are styled "the remainder" (remnant) Jer. 51:35 (A.V. mg.). The parable of the figs in Jer. 24 shows that those who were taken to Babylon spiritually revived as a result of their experiences there (Jer. 24:5). God pleaded there with His people (Eze. 17:20), both through their experiences of captivity and by the words of prophets like Haggai, Ezekiel, Daniel and Jeremiah (Jer. 51:59,60). Thus Isa. 41:15, cp. v 7, describes how repentant Israel in Babylon encouraged each other to destroy their idols.

A literal captivity of Israel to 'Babylon' after the early Arab invasions in the last days now appears likely in the light of this typology. Their spiritual revival will be due to the ministry of God's word by the Elijah prophets. Spiritual Israel's getting a grip on themselves in their parallel experience will be through a similar devotion to study of the Word. More on this in Section 2. The prophecies of Babylon's judgment normally speak at the same time of Israel's revival. Jer. 50:18,19 does so in Elijah language, encouraging us to see this revival as the work of the Elijah ministry: "I will punish the king of Babylon...and I will bring Israel again to his habitation, and he shall feed on Carmel (where Elijah persuaded Israel to repent [1 Kings 18:39])...his soul shall be satisfied upon mount Ephraim and Gilead", where Elijah was from (1 Kings 17:1).

Jeremiah spoke of Israel's being taken captive by Babylon and returning from it in language which recalls Jonah being swallowed and ejected by the sea monster (cp. Babylon): "I will bring forth out of his (Babylon's) mouth that which he hath swallowed up" (Jer. 51:44). Jonah's experience being typical of the death and resurrection of Jesus, it follows that by their experience of Arab captivity, Israel will be brought to fellowship the sufferings of Christ. Several times in Section 2 it is pointed out that the description of spiritual Israel's latter-day sufferings is also couched in the language of our Lord's passion. In like manner it has been shown that the description of Jeremiah's and Jerusalem's sufferings at the time of Nebuchadnezzar in Lam. 3 is shot through with allusions to the mental and physical agonies of the cross. Thus through their experiences at the hands of their Arab captors, Israel will be brought to truly appreciate and fellowship the sufferings they inflicted on Messiah (cp. Zech. 12:10; 13:6).

The command to "remove out of the midst of Babylon, and go forth out of the land of the Chaldeans...be not cut off in (the judgment of) her iniquity" (Jer. 50:8; 51:6) may be an appeal to the Arabs, especially those smaller states roped in with

'Babylon', to repent and dissociate from her. However, it must have fuller reference to the righteous remnant in captivity there, who are asked to rise up in rebellion and make their way back to Jerusalem. Israel's making its way to Zion will immediately precede Babylon's judgment, and will indicate their repentance (Jer. 50:4,5 cp. 8,9), showing the spiritual effect of their Arab sufferings. The clear echoes of their being called to leave Egypt demonstrate that they will be undergoing major persecution at this time:-

- " The children of Israel and the children of Judah were oppressed together (i.e. Jews taken out of the land of Israel plus others from the diaspora alike taken to concentration camps in Arab lands?): and all that took them captives held them fast; they refused to let them go" (Jer. 50:33) - the language of Pharaoh (Ex. 4:23).
- Similarly Babylon is described as not opening " the house of the prisoners" (Isa. 14:17).
- Many prophecies of the restoration from Babylon are described in exodus language, thus equating Babylon with Egypt (e.g. Isa. 48:20,21).
- "...in the day that the Lord shall give thee rest from thy sorrow, and from thy fear, and from the hard bondage wherein thou wast made to serve (all terms alluding to Israel in Egypt), that thou shalt take up this proverb ('victory song', Hebrew) against the king of Babylon" (Isa. 14:3,4).
- " I will break in pieces the horse...the chariot and his rider" concerning Babylon (Jer. 51:21) is quoting Ex. 15:1 about Egypt's destruction.

9-2 The judgment of Babylon

The detailed descriptions and repetitions concerning Babylon's punishment given in Jer. 50, 51; Isa. 47 and many other passages must be for a reason. In the light of this, the purpose of Babylon's destruction must be understood. The real significance of her fall is that the false claims of her gods and her conscious blasphemy of Israel's God, in short her epitome of sin's manifestation, is to be finally destroyed. She is called " the seed of evildoers" (Isa. 14:20), suggesting that her defeat will be the political victory of the seed of the woman over the serpent.

For this reason, the religious motive behind Babylon's invasion of Israel, both historically and in the last days, must be appreciated. The Arab use of Islamic fundamentalism as their reason for attacking Israel is evident to all at the present time; we should therefore be able to discern a corresponding religious motive behind the aggression of earlier 'Babylon'. The following are clear indicators of this:-

- " The Chaldeans...shall...possess the dwellingplaces that are not theirs" (Hab. 1:6) sounds like Ps. 83:12, concerning the latter-day Arab confederacy saying, " Let us take to ourselves the houses of God in possession" . The implication is that Babylon, too, wished to possess the holy places of Jerusalem for religious reasons.

- Thus the king of Babylon wanted to place his throne in the temple, thinking, "I will be like the most high" (Isa. 14:13,14), mocking the claim of Yahweh to be 'most high' above all other gods. The latter-day "man of sin" says likewise (2 Thess. 2:4).
- The rejoicing at Babylon's fall is therefore because "Babylon is taken, Bel is confounded, Merodach is broken in pieces; her idols...her images are broken in pieces" (Jer. 50:2).
- The prophecies of Babylon's judgment emphasize that it is the judgment of her idols (e.g. Jer. 50:38; 51:18,47).
- We saw in Chapter 8 how the Assyrians likened captivity in their land to the wonders of being in God's Kingdom. Babylon is likewise depicted as a fake Kingdom of God. All the nations flowed together unto her (Jer. 51:44), as they will to the true Kingdom of God (Is. 2:2). She is called "that great city, which *reigneth* (Gk. 'basilia') over the kings of the earth" (Rev.17:18). 'Basilica' is normally used about God's Kingdom. When Jesus described His Kingdom as a tree "greater than all herbs" with "great branches; so that the fowls of the air may lodge under the shadow of it" (Mk.4:32), He was actually quoting from the description of the kingdom of Babylon in Dan.4. By doing so, He was pointing out that Nebuchadnezzar's kingdom, legendary as it might be, was but a fake replica of His.
- The Babylonians taunted the captive Jews with requests to sing them the temple songs, "Yahweh's song" (Ps. 137:3,4). This conscious mocking of Yahweh-worship shows how the Babylonians conceived of the conflict with Israel in terms of their gods being opposed to Yahweh, whom they claimed to have vanquished. Today's Arabs see their struggle within the similar construct of Mohammed against Israel's God, Yahweh.

Thus strong religious motivation of latter-day 'Babylon' can be expected to grow. Babylon caused the nations around her to drink her wine of fornication, making them "mad" (Jer. 51:7; Rev. 14:8). Wine being a symbol of doctrine, this must point to 'Babylon' spreading the idea of Islamic fundamentalism to the nations around Israel (as "the nations" seem to normally refer to), making them "mad" in their hatred of Israel. Iran and Iraq, geographical Babylon/Assyria, are already noted for this. As Sennacherib relied heavily on propaganda and religious rhetoric, so Nebuchadnezzar and his latter-day equivalent will do even more so. Jer. 51:55 speaks of Babylon as "the great voice", referring to her religious propaganda. This will be quite complex, carrying with it all the power and persuasion of a pseudo-intellectuality: "Thy wisdom and thy knowledge, it hath perverted thee" (Isa. 47:10).

As Sennacherib described captivity in his kingdom as being better than having a place in God's future Kingdom (2 Kings 18:31,32), so Nebuchadnezzar and Babylon are exposed by the language of the record as being an anti-Christ and false kingdom of God respectively. Nebuchadnezzar and the nations he leads are described as "the shepherd and his flock" (Jer. 51:23), in pointed contrast to Christ, the good shepherd, and His flock, comprised of natural and spiritual Israel.

The stones of Babylon being used as corner stones and foundation blocks (Jer. 51:26) seem to request contrast with Christ as the true foundation and corner stone (Ps. 118:22).

Jer. 51:25 calls Babylon a "destroying mountain" which is to be judged by fire to become "a burnt mountain". The use of identical language in Rev. 8:8 must make that passage have some reference to the fall of latter-day Babylon. "Destroying mountain" is the language of Dan. 2:44 concerning the little stone destroying the image and growing into a mountain, symbolizing God's Kingdom. Jer. 51:20-23 stresses no less than nine times how 'Babylon' is to be "broken in pieces", which is another connection with Dan. 2:44 concerning the breaking in pieces of the nations who are confederate with 'Babylon', the head of gold.

As the image stands erect in the last days, it follows that its latter-day application must be to the Arab powers around Israel who become confederate under the king of 'Babylon', "the head of gold". Some of these powers with Babylon are called "mingled people" (Jer. 50:37), connecting with the "mingled" feet of the image (Dan. 2:43).

Babylon's description as "the praise of the whole earth" (Jer. 51:41), connects with Jerusalem during the Millennium being spoken of in similar language (e.g. Ps. 48:1,2; Isa. 62:7). As the kingdom of Nebuchadnezzar was a fake kingdom of God, so the city of Babylon was a pseudo-Jerusalem. Likewise the nations 'flowing together' unto Nebuchadnezzar in Babylon (Jer. 51:44) seems a parody of how they will flow to Christ in Jerusalem (Isa. 2:2).

9-3 The Babylon confederacy

The prophecies against Babylon have many similarities with those against the smaller Arab nations around Israel, showing that they were and will be confederate with Babylon in the latter-day attack upon Jerusalem. Thus Jer. 44-49 concern the judgment of these nations, as a preface to Jer. 50,51 which concern Babylon. As Babylon had made Israel and Jerusalem "desolate" (Isa. 24:12; Zeph. 1:13; Jer. 4:7; Zech. 7:14), so she would be "desolate" (Jer. 50:3). This same word is used in the preceding chapters concerning the judgments on Moab (Jer. 48:9), Bozrah (Jer. 49:13), Edom (Jer. 49:17), as well as concerning Assyria (Zeph. 2:13) and the Philistines (Zeph. 2:4). The clear implication is that all these Arab allies of Babylon will have an identical punishment. The time period in which this occurs in the time of the end will be relatively short - the Arab powers firing nuclear weapons at each other almost simultaneously, would neatly overcome this problem. Ps. 137:7 and Obadiah v.12 speak of Edom as being with Babylon in her taking of Jerusalem. 'Edom' seems a name for several Arab powers.

Is.34 describes the judgments of "all nations" around Israel, notably "upon Idumea", in language which is clearly taken from the prophecies of Babylon's doom (v.9,10=Rev.14:11; 17:16; 18:9; v.11=Is.14:23). Indeed, all God's prophecies against Israel's enemies have marked points of contact with each other. Thus the prophecies against Tyre in Is.23 are shot through with links with those against Babylon in Revelation; and "as at the report (prophecy) concerning Egypt, so shall they be sorely pained at the report of Tyre" (Is.23:5). Is.14:3 says that Babylon

treated Israel like the Egyptians did; they too gave them " sorrow...fear, and...hard bondage wherein (Israel) wast made to serve" . Because of these similarities in how they treated and will treat God's people, their judgments will be similar. Yet a number of these nations, notably Egypt and Tyre, are described as being judged and destroyed by Babylon (e.g. Ez.26:7). However, there is good reason to think that Babylon's own judgment will be at the hands of nations like these, who come under her umbrella during their invasion of Israel. The resolution of this apparent contradiction lies in the prophecies concerning the Arab powers destroying each other in the final conflict, thus fulfilling all these prophecies concerning their judging of each other.

The close association of these other Arab powers with geographical 'Babylon' in the last days is shown by Jer. 42:11 encouraging latter day Israel against Babylon in the very language used to inspire Joshua against the Arab tribes of his day: " Be not afraid of the king of Babylon...for I am with you to save you, and to deliver you" (cp. Josh. 1:5). Hab. 2:5,15,16 describes the king of Babylon in language reminiscent of both Lot's daughters (mothers of Moab and Ammon), and Canaan, father of the Arab / Canaanite tribes (cp. Gen. 9:22-25; 19:31-37). Isa. 13:14,15 also shows the connection of the Arab peoples with Babylon; people of these areas are urged to " flee every one into his own land (because) every one that is...joined unto (Babylon), shall fall by the sword" in the day of Babylon's judgment. This sounds like another hint that the Arab peoples will be given the opportunity to repent and avoid God's judgments. Their previously being " joined unto" Babylon is the language of marriage/intercourse, showing the brief intensity of their association (remember Babylon is called a whore in Rev. 17:5). The intensity of their joining together is shown by the fact that Babylon is spoken of as the 'hire of the north', although " the north" can refer to other Arab powers apart from Babylon (Jer. 1:14,15; 25:9; 46:24). Passages where " the north country" is Babylon include Jer. 3:18; 6:22; 10:22; 16:15; 23:8; 31:8; 46:10. The conclusion to be drawn from this is that these powers became part of 'the king of the north' for the purposes of Israel and Jerusalem's invasion and judgment.

Note, too, how Jer. 51:20-23 speaks of Babylon as an individual controlling others, i.e. the other Arab nations - e.g. a rider of a horse, a shepherd over a flock, a plowman over his oxen. This paves the way for Babylon being the whore who rides the beast (Rev. 17:3). In similar vein Isa. 49:26 speaks of Israel's Arab enemies being fed " with their own flesh" , whilst Babylon's flesh will be eaten by the powers confederate with her (Rev. 17:16). This shows their close association.

However, Babylon and the beast with which it is associated is said to have power over the nations of whole earth (Dan. 7:23; Rev. 13:12). This is referring back to the way in which historical Babylon was praised by the whole earth (Jer. 51:41), and had an army which included men from " the whole earth" (Jer. 34:1). As Babylon of the last days will influence all nations of the earth with her wine, so Babylon of old is spoken of in the same way (Jer. 51:7 cp. Rev. 17:2,4). Thus several prophecies speak of how Babylon's fall had effects on the whole earth (e.g. Jer. 50:46); and latter day Babylon likewise (Rev. 18:9,10). If we are correct in interpreting " Babylon" as a revived Arab power of the last days, based on the prototype of historical Babylon, then we must look for a nation like Iran or Iraq to gather together the surrounding Arab powers for an assault on Israel, and to

somehow bring the whole world under the control of this confederacy. An Arab-dominated UN or other global political power could bring this about. "The Charter of Allah" makes it clear that Islam aims for world domination, within which "co-existence is possible with other religions, but only on Islamic terms and under Islamic domination". Thus the control of the Western world may not be as difficult in practice as it may seem; if, for example, the Pope makes some suitable deference to Islam on behalf of all 'Christians', such a situation would come into existence. As we have often said, we need to concentrate more on interpreting the prophecies on a purist level, rather than examining them only within the constructs of what seems politically feasible at the present time.

The Arab nations in this confederacy will turn against 'Babylon' in the ultimate 'time of the end'; through them God's judgment against her is administered. Babylon "gathereth unto him all nations", but "shall not all these take up a parable against him, and a taunting proverb against him, and say, Woe to him...shall they not rise up suddenly (and) bite thee...and thou shalt be for booties unto them?" (Hab.2:5-8). First of all the islands (nations) flee away from Babylon (Rev.16:20), the birds and animals scatter from under the big tree as it starts to totter. This may well speak of those Arab individuals who repent and 'come out of' Babylon. Yet seeing that all these nations on a national level drink the same cup of judgment as Babylon (Jer. 25:19-26, cp. Rev. 16:19), it follows that their destruction must be through their judging and desolating Babylon. A hit-tec war situation in which they all desolate each other with missiles urges itself upon us as the likely fulfilment of this. Note that Babylon's king drinks the cup slightly after this (Jer. 25:26), in the same way as the Arab leaders of earlier invasions were singled out by Gideon for especially symbolic destruction (Jud. 8:12-21), which we are informed will have its latter-day counterpart (Ps. 83:11).

"An assembly of great nations from the north country...shall set themselves in array against her" (Jer. 50:9). The Hebrew word translated "assembly" is also rendered "company", and is used concerning the Babylon-led confederacy which attacks Israel in the last days (Eze. 16:40; 23:46,47). It is used four times to describe Gog's "company" that invades Israel (Eze. 38:4,7,13,15). As that invasion was to come out of the north (Eze. 38:15), so would Babylon's judgment. Their "array" against Babylon is the same word used in Joel 2:5 concerning their "array" against Jerusalem. "Their arrows (against Babylon) shall be as of a mighty expert man: none shall return in vain" (Jer. 50:9) is the language of Joel 2:7 concerning how they attacked Jerusalem. Their being in array against her and firing arrows sounds like a siege of Babylon, akin to that of Jerusalem. Cyrus literally encircled historical Babylon (cp. Jer. 50:14). This suggests that this prophecy focuses on what will be done to 'Babylon's' homeland and perhaps her capital at the time of Israel's invasion.

"Chaldea shall be a spoil" (Jer. 50:10) may just have reference to the historical taking of Babylon; if it has a latter-day application, this would suggest that the repentant Arab peoples take some of her wealth for themselves during the Millennium. Note how her spoil will be taken in the same way as she came to take a spoil from Israel (Eze. 38:12). It would appear that the powers with Babylon were coerced into support by previous military defeat, as well as by religious rhetoric (Isa. 14:6). This helps explain how easily the coalition falls apart once

Jerusalem is captured, and supports our previous conclusion that there will be major inter-Arab wars going on, especially between 'Babylon' and the smaller Arab powers right up to Jerusalem's invasion.

The subsequent hate of these nations for Babylon is foreshadowed by the Medes, who conquered historical Babylon, disregarding silver and gold in order to kill the women and children of Babylon (Isa. 13:17,18). This may indicate that some of them are doing this on Christ's behalf, having previously repented, or, alternatively, it may just indicate the extent of inter-Arab hatred that will exist. The destroyers of Babylon will rise against her like the sunrise (Isa. 47:11 A.V. mg. cp. Jer. 50:9), which is the language of Christ's return (Mal. 4:2). This may indicate that they are acting on Christ's behalf, or that Christ returns at this point. It may be that 'Babylon' will have offered them some reward for co-operating in the attack on Jerusalem which she fails to realize. The suddenness of Babylon's judgment indicates a very quick, united turning against her (Isa. 47:9). There is copious other evidence that 'Babylon' of the last days is punished by the Arab powers that were once confederate with her:-

- " Wild beasts of the desert" occupying Babylon is probably a figurative reference to the Arab tribes (Isa. 13:21).

- Babylon will be " filled with men, as with caterpillars" in judgment (Jer. 51:14). This is recalling Joel 1:4, speaking of the Arabs who come against Jerusalem as " caterpillars" .

- " The spoilers shall come unto her (Babylon) from the north" (Jer. 51:48) - as Israel's Arab invaders are termed " spoilers" in Jud. 2:14; 1 Sam. 13:17; 2 Kings 17:20.

- Babylon's " sea" , i.e. the Arab nations she had power over, will be dried up from her - i.e. she will no longer control them (Jer. 51:36; Rev. 17:1,15), but " the sea" (those Arab powers) will then come up against Babylon to destroy it (Jer. 51:42).

The physical presence of the Arab armies in the geographical homeland of 'Babylon' will therefore make that the place of judgment for the nations, as well as just outside Jerusalem, where other armies of those same powers will also turn against each other. Thus Babylon becomes " like a threshingfloor" , another place of Armageddon (Jer. 51:33, cp. Isa. 21:9,10). As Babylon took Jerusalem by house-to-house fighting, so this will happen to the city of Babylon (Jer. 50:30); as she burnt Jerusalem with fire, so a fire will be 'kindled' in her (note the similarity between Jer. 17:27 and 50:32); as she robbed the treasures of Jerusalem, so will hers be (Jer. 50:37, cp. 2 Kings 24:13). " Her young men...all her host" will be destroyed (Jer. 51:3) - referring to the Iranian/Iraqi habit of fielding huge armies composed of fanatical Muslim schoolboys?

In the same way as " the king of Babylon heard the report" of the Medes' invasion and was troubled (Jer. 50:43), so the latter-day " king of the north" , while personally present conducting the campaign against Jerusalem, will be troubled by " tidings" of this massive Muslim mutiny against him, and will therefore go ahead in a furious rage to try to exterminate every Jew left in Jerusalem (Dan. 11:44,45).

Jer. 51:31,32 stresses how the report of the attack on Babylon will spread like wildfire. This relates to the beast launching a final burst of persecution against God's people, "having great wrath, because he knoweth that he hath but a short time" (Rev. 12:12). "The earth helped the woman" (Rev. 12:16) might refer to the Arabs indirectly 'helping' Israel by turning against Babylon.

One final point. Those who judge Babylon are told, "As she hath done, do unto her" (Jer. 50:15). This is quoted in Rev. 18:6 concerning the saints as the judges of Babylon. It would appear from this that there must be two stages in Babylon's judgment:-

1) The Arab armies attacking her armies, both near Jerusalem

and in geographical 'Babylon'. They are themselves

largely destroyed while doing this.

2) The saints possibly directing some of the repentant Arab peoples, complete the judgment, giving some of the spoils to these Arabs. Several times in our studies we have shown the likelihood of a minority Arab repentance.

It may be that the similarities between the judgments of Babylon by the saints and by the nations of the Babylon confederacy may be because those Arab nations repent- an idea mentioned elsewhere in our studies. At this stage it may be appropriate to catalogue some of the passages which speak of this latter day Arab repentance:

- Gen. 12:3 LXX speaks of how all the tribes of the land of Israel will be blessed (i.e. forgiven) due to Abraham's seed, the Lord Jesus. This has yet to be fulfilled- but it will be if the tribes of the land (i.e. the native Arab peoples living between the Nile and Euphrates) repent and accept Messiah's forgiveness. The picture of Christ's Millennial rule in Ps. 72:8,9 is similar: "He shall have dominion from sea (the Mediterranean?) to sea (the Persian Gulf?) from the river unto the ends of the earth (land). They that dwell in the wilderness (the Arab peoples) shall bow before him".

- "The remnant (i.e. repentant remnant?) of Syria will be like the glory of the children of Israel" at the time of Syria's latter day judgments (Is. 17:3 RSV).

- When Moab receives her judgments in the last days, "Moab shall be ashamed of Chemosh" (Jer. 48:13)- they will renounce their false religion (cp. Islam).

- When Edom receives her judgments, Yahweh will plead with the poor, humbled remnant: "Leave thy fatherless children, I will preserve them alive and let them widows trust in me" (Jer. 49:11)- all very much the language of God's mercy to a not unspiritual Hagar (Gen. 21:17).

- Even Babylon itself will be encouraged to repent through her latter day judgments. In this context we read: "Babylon is suddenly fallen and destroyed: howl for her (cp. Rev. 18:2,9); take balm for her pain, if so be she may be healed"

(Jer. 51:8). Truly God does not willingly afflict, but in judgment remembers mercy, and His ultimate aim of achieving His glory.

- Some of the latter day Philistines who repent will be given positions of authority in the Millennium on a par to natural Israel: "I will cut off the pride of the Philistines. And I will take away his blood out of his mouth, and his abominations from between his teeth (as if the Philistine tribes were a beast of prey): but he that remaineth (the spiritual, repentant remnant), even he, shall be for our (Israel's) God, and he shall be as a governor in Judah, and (a man from) Ekron as a Jebusite (Jew born in Jerusalem)" (Zech. 9:6,7).

We can now summarize the broad theme presented by our studies of latter-day typology so far:-

- a) Israel under Arab domination for an extended period (3.5 years?) after an initial time of prosperity. Arab wars all around, with 'Babylon' emerging as leader. No Arab army of occupation; wealth of Israel raided; land physically destroyed. Division amongst Jews; possible turning to Islam. Jewish false prophets. Elijah ministry during this period resulting in a righteous remnant developing. Some Jews go into captivity.
- b) Arabs call a truce, and, under the leadership of 'Babylon' and its charismatic leader, attack Jerusalem.
- c) Great suffering of Jews. Jerusalem captured, although righteous remnant still manage to survive. Simultaneously, righteous remnant develop in their captivity in Babylon (in extermination camps?)
- d) Smaller Arab powers turn against 'Babylon'. Inter-Arab fighting. Final desperate rage against the Jews until only the righteous remnant remain alive among Jewry. Arab powers destroy themselves.
- e) Christ with saints; repentant Jews and Arabs complete the judgment of Babylon. The prophecies concerning Israel destroying Babylon which have never had a previous fulfilment (e.g. Jer. 51:19,20) thus come true.

It should be remembered that there have been hints in our studies that Christ could return at any of these stages. It is not for us to be able to pinpoint exactly when.

Note

(1) There is a strong theme throughout Scripture that all that is untrue, apostate from the true God, of the flesh etc., is in fact a false Kingdom of God, a pseudo-Jesus, a fake God. Any human ruler is to some degree an incarnation of sin; all the kingdoms of men are to be seen as offering an alternative to the true Kingdom of God. Through recognizing the extent to which this is true, we will be better able to see and resist the temptations to associate ourselves with them rather than the things of God's Kingdom. The beasts of Daniel and Revelation are an epitome of the flesh and rebellion against God. It is to be expected, therefore, that they and the

powers they represent will have many such characteristics. The record of the kings of north and south in Daniel 11 are shot through with Kingdom language:

" His dominion shall be a great dominion" (v.5; cp. 6:26; 7:27)

" Out of a branch of her roots shall one stand up" (v.7; cp. Is. 11:1)

" There shall many stand up" (v.14; cp. 12:1)

" Upright ones with him...he shall give him the daughter of women" (v.17; cp. Zech. 14:5; Ps. 45:9)

" the prince of the covenant" (v.22; cp. 9:25,27)

" at the time appointed he shall return" , as will Christ.

The whole principle of Antichrist is discussed in more detail in Appendix 3.

DIGRESSION 2: The Revival Of Babylon

2-1 Unfulfilled Prophecies About Babylon

The whole prophetic meta narrative of the Bible is in many ways a tale of two cities- Babylon and Jerusalem. There are times when Babylon masquerades as Zion- a false city of God with a false Messiah leading her. Babylon / Babel was a city built to reach unto Heaven, in contrast to the true city of God which comes down from Heaven (Gen. 11:4 cp. Rev. 21:2). And there are times when Zion in her apostasy has appeared as Babylon. But in the final conflict of the last days, these two cities will be literally pitted against each other. Zion will briefly succumb under the might and pride of Babylon, to rise again in eternal glory. It was in Babylon where Nimrod first built the tower of Babel, the first organized rebellion against God; and it was there that God first entered into open judgment of flesh and humanity *en masse*. And it is here likewise that His purpose with sin and His true people will likewise be fulfilled. Babylon was also called Su-anna, "the holy city". Yet "the holy city" is Jerusalem, thus making Babylon a fake Zion. Herodotus says the city was square, just as new Jerusalem. We have shown elsewhere that the events of the Babylonian invasion are typical of the last days. That invasion was "the time of [Israel's] trouble" (Jer. 11:12), clearly typical of Jacob's latter day "time of trouble".

"Babylon, the jewel of kingdoms, the glory of the Babylonians' pride, will be overthrown by God like Sodom and Gomorrah" (Isaiah 13:19). And yet Babylon was never suddenly overthrown like Sodom and Gomorrah in their fiery destruction. It was conquered by the Medes and Persians and fell into decline, but it was not violently destroyed. Likewise: "The Lord will have compassion on Jacob; once again he will choose Israel and settle them in their own land....They will make captives of their captors and rule over their oppressors.... On the day the Lord gives you relief from suffering and turmoil and cruel bondage, you will take up this taunt against the king of Babylon: How the oppressor has come to an end! How his

fury has ended! . . . All the lands are at rest and at peace; they break into singing” (Isaiah 14:1-4, 7). When Babylon is ultimately destroyed, Israel will finally be at Peace and will dwell in safety. Israel has been a nation since 1948, but not for one day has the nation of Israel known real peace or ease. It has never been able to claim all the lands God promised the Israelites, and Israel's Arab neighbours have been a constant threat and danger.

There is the assumption by many that all the O.T. prophecies about ‘Babylon’ were fulfilled in the overrunning of Babylon by the Medes. However, there are many details of those prophecies which didn’t have a total fulfilment, and this we must see what the Medes did as but a partial, incipient fulfilment of what is going to come in the last days. This also requires that we understand ‘Babylon’ as literal Babylon- for it was against her that the prophecies were uttered in the first place. And quite clearly, the prophecies of Revelation against ‘Babylon’ are extensions of those of the Old Testament. We therefore are encouraged to see the ‘Babylon’ of Revelation as the Babylon of the prophets- i.e., literal Babylon. Jeremiah 51 predicts the judgment of Babylon, and yet v. 46 says this is a time when ruler will fight ruler. And this is quoted in Mt. 24:6,7 as being specifically applicable to our last days.

Here are some of the unfulfilled details, which require a latter day fulfilment:

- Literal Babylon decayed due to the ravages of time, whereas Babylon was to fall “suddenly” (Jer. 51:8). And Rev. 18 tells us that the fall of Babylon will be “in one hour”, smiting her down suddenly in her prime. This must be future in its fulfilment. Rev. 18:22 and 14:8 both speak of “Babylon is fallen” as applying to a latter day scenario. And yet these words are lifted straight from Is. 21:9 and Jer, 51:8, prophecies about *literal* Babylon being destroyed suddenly- a destruction which is clearly future, seeing the city was never so suddenly destroyed in the past. The suddenness of the destruction is a keynote of these prophecies.
- Jer. 51:42 states that Babylon is to be submerged underwater. Maybe this is yet to come upon a revived Babylon.
- When Babylon falls, Israel and Judah would repent and unitedly return to Zion with singing and enter into the everlasting covenant (Jer. 50:4,5). This didn’t happen when Babylon ‘fell’ before, even if it had the potential of coming true.
- The poor and needy would trample down Babylon (Is. 26:6).
- It is not true that Babylon has been uninhabited “for ever”. “The city of Babylon has never ceased to exist. Although its name was changed on two occasions, it has never been totally unpopulated. Hillah presently has 250,000 citizens and was built almost entirely of bricks from the parts of the old city of Babylon” (Joseph Chambers, *A Palace For The Antichrist* p. 146). Note too that the Babylonian Talmud was written by Jews living in Babylon in the 6th century AD. 1 Pet. 5:13 may well imply there was even an ecclesia there in the first century.
- “For the Lord will have mercy upon Jacob, and will yet choose Israel, and set them in their own land: and the strangers shall be joined with them, and they

shall cleave to the house of Jacob. And the people shall take them [the Babylonians], and bring them to their place: and the house of Israel shall possess them in the land of the Lord for servants and handmaids: and they shall take them captives, whose captives they were; and they shall rule over their oppressors” (Is. 14:1,2) has never been fulfilled yet. It will be in the last days; and at this time, as Is. 14 goes on to detail, Babylon [literal Babylon, in the context] will fall.

Other prophecies about the sudden destruction of literal Babylon- which can only be latter day in their application- are also the basis for the words of Revelation about latter day Babylon. Consider:

“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 a widow, neither shall I know the loss of children” (Is. 47:8)	“How much she hath glorified herself, and lived deliciously...for she hath said in her heart, I sit a queen, and am no widow, and shall see no sorrow” (Rev. 18:7).
“But these two things shall come to thee in a moment in one day, the loss of children, and widowhood” (Is. 47:9)	“Therefore shall her plagues come in one day, death and mourning” (Rev. 18:8)
“Let now the astrologers, the stargazers, the monthly prognosticators, stand up” (Is. 47:13)	“For by thy sorceries...” (Rev. 18:23)

Therefore we conclude that the Babylon of Revelation is the Babylon of Jeremiah and Isaiah, literal Babylon, which awaits her full punishment. This conclusion is strengthened once it is appreciated how the harlot Babylon of Rev. 17, loud, gaudy, decked with jewellery and painted face, is replete with reference to Semiramis, the goddess / mother of Nimrod, and one of the patron gods of literal Babylon.

We have shown elsewhere that the antichrist is a mimic of the true Christ; his kingdom is a parody of God's Kingdom. And the King of Babylon claiming "I am and none else beside me" are the very words of Yahweh- the King of Babylon is clearly to be identified with the man of sin, who sits as God in God's temple (2 Thess. 2). But the similarities run deeper. The Babylonian epic of creation is a parody of the Genesis account; the flood has its' counterpart in the epic of Gilgamesh; and the Code of Hammurabi, an early ruler of Babylon, was clearly an anti-law of Moses. And Saddam Hussein's supporters used to greet him as the Messiah of the Arab world (Chambers, p. 45). Now Saddam has passed off the scene, but the point is that a similar charismatic leader could arise and be the antichrist.

The accounts of the latter day invasion of Israel all feature a single charismatic individual, who will be destroyed personally by the Lord Jesus at His coming. This is Paul's "man of sin", Daniel's aggressive king of fierce countenance, Ezekiel's Gog, the chief prince. It is also the person referred to by Micah: "And this man [Messiah] shall be the peace, when the Assyrian shall come into our land" (Mic. 5:1,2). The Lord Jesus will save His people in the latter days from an "Assyrian". It has been shown that Assyria and Babylon are used almost interchangeably in Scripture (H.A. Whittaker,). Gog was a Jew who apostatized and went to live in Assyria / Babylonia, according to 1 Chron. 5. This is why he has the appearance of spirituality; and he may even be an Arab Christian. I say this because 2 Thess. 2 describes him as "the son of perdition", exactly the phrase used about Judas, the false disciple of Jesus. Notice how Tariq Aziz [Iraqi foreign minister at the time of writing] and other leading members of the Iraqi cabinet are in fact Arab Christians, not Moslems.

Historical Evidence That Literal Babylon Has Yet To Fall

Summing up, the following prophecies were given against Babylon by Isaiah and Jeremiah:

1. Babylon to be as when God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah.
2. Never to be inhabited.
3. Never to be built from generation to generation.

4. Never an Arabian to pitch his tent there.
5. Never shepherds to make their folds there.
6. To be destroyed suddenly.
7. To be made a desolation.
8. Not a stone from ancient Babylon to be used in building.
9. To be a desolation, wilderness; no man to dwell or pass there.

Yet in 1900 it could be said of Hilprecht, an archaeologist: "Before Professor Hilprecht left Babylonia, he accepted a cordial invitation from the German expedition working at Kuwairish, a small Arab village on the Euphrates, beautifully situated between the palm groves at the foot of the ruins which cover Nebuchadnezzar's palace in ancient Babylon" . This contradicts prophecies 1-5 above.

Again, "The expectations that interesting treasures of art would be discovered in the interior of the palace have not yet been realized, the history of Babylon's *gradual decay* being unfavorable to such expectations" - contradicts 6-7 above.

Again, "The expectations that interesting treasures of art centuries has served as the almost inexhaustible quarry for public and private buildings, from the embankments of the Tigris opposite Bagdad to the modern structures of the Hindiya canal and in the town of Hillah"- contradicts 8-9 above. [These quotes are taken from an article in *Bibliotheca Sacra*, July 1950].

The prophecy of Isaiah 13:5-13 seems to be a picture of the final "day of the Lord," and not necessarily of Babylon's fall in 538 B.C. Never did anything like this destruction occur when Babylon fell. She fell quietly. In fact one part of the city did not know that the Medes and Persians had entered the city until sometime later. The invaders dried up the Euphrates' river-bed and marched in beneath the city gates. The Babylonians were taken completely by surprise. Pember says, "After Cyrus entered Babylon with joy and gladness, he enlarged the royal palace, the seat of royalty; and Merodach, whom the Babylonians had grieved, daily rejoiced the heart of his followers. His wide-spreading forces were distributed over the land peacefully; and he repaired the cities, and made the children of Babylon joyful". Babylon has never been without an inhabitant. No violence was done in 538 B.C., as already seen. In 516 Darius made a siege to quell a revolt. Only 3,000 were killed. The rest of Babylon he allowed to remain. In 478 Xerxes plundered, but did not destroy the city. In 331 Babylon received Alexander with open arms. Strabo says that Seleucia, a city named after the Seleucidae, was situated near Babylon. It drew many people from Babylon, so that Babylon became almost, but not quite, deserted. In 450 A.D. Theodoret said that Babylon was inhabited by only a few Jews- so there was clearly some habitation there. However other sources say that three universities flourished there. At this time the Babylon Talmud became widely known. In 917 Babylon was still in existence, though now a small village. In 1100 Babylon's name was changed to Hillah ("rest"). It had two Arab mosques,

therefore had grown a bit. The name Hillah has designated Babylon to the present day. In 1585 the bishop of Freisingen said that half of the old city of Babylon was desolate, but the other half was flourishing. He obtained this information from travellers. In 1888, Pember's time, Babylon had grown to about ten thousand in population. In 1920 Hillah had about twenty thousand people, mostly Arabs. It boasted wool and cotton textile manufacturing, but its chief occupation was cultivating the date palm. In 1936 the population had grown to 30,000. The city lies on the Bagdad to Basra rail-line. Pember also mentions the stone taken from Babylon for building purposes which, according to Jeremiah, was never to be done after it fell. He claims that many villages and towns have been built from Babylonian stone. Such cities as Seleucia, Ctesiphon, Al Modain, and Kufa are some of these.¹ The destruction of the city is a sudden thing. The phrase "in one hour" occurs several times in Rev. 18. This destruction is like that of Sodom and Gomorrah. Literal Babylon was not destroyed "in one hour" in 536 BC. The predicted fall of Babylon must therefore be in our last days.

2-2 Babylon As Capital Of The Beast

The image of Daniel 2 must stand complete in the last days- the whole image, not just the toes, are to be broken in pieces "together". Babylon, the head of gold, must therefore rule over the system which the image represents. Daniel 7 depicts the various metals of the image as various beasts. The final beast of the last days incorporates all the elements of the previous beasts. But her head will be Babylon, replete with a latter day Nebuchadnezzar. Note that the first three of the empires of Daniel's image had Babylon as their capital. It is appropriate that the latter day revival of the image and beast has Babylon likewise as its capital. It surely cannot be accidental that in Babylon today, "the ancient temple of Ishtar has been rebricked, replastered and whitewashed...carved into the bricks are reliefs of oxen and a mythical beast called the mushrushu, with the head of a serpent, body of a fish, front legs of a lion, and back legs of an eagle" (*Chattanooga New Free Press*, April 5, 1987). Latter day Babylon chooses to identify itself as an amalgam of beasts! 2 Thess. 2 says that the man of sin will sit in the temple of God showing himself to be God. This exactly fits what we would expect of an Arab dictator- Nebuchadnezzar carried the vessels of Yahweh's temple into his own temple, setting himself up as God Himself.

Habakkuk speaks of how Babylon will be headed up by an individual- he speaks sometimes of "he", sometimes of "they"; the RV cp. AV interchanges the pronouns. Babylon will be headed up by her charismatic ruler, who will "gather to himself all the nations and take captive all the people" (Hab. 2:4,5). This is just the picture in Ez. 38- the 'chief prince' of Gog / Assyria / Babylon will be like an iron guard around the other nations which will come up with him. The Babylonians are raised up as an "hasty" people- i.e. the whole time scale will be limited. He will sweep across the whole earth / land in a kind of *blitzkrieg*. His cavalry will "fly"- the whole impression is of a lightening rise to power and invasion. It won't be something that can be predicted and mapped out over decades of 'signs of the times' articles in Christian magazines. Hab. 1:15 describes him as fishing with a drag net, gathering men of all nations- exactly the same image used by the real Christ in describing His saving work, as opposed to the destructive work of this

Arab / Babylonian antichrist. Note too how Nebuchadnezzar was described as a *lion*, with *eagle's* wings, eating grass like an *ox*, his hair like an *eagle*, with the heart of a *man*. In him were manifested the four faces of the cherubim: lion, ox, eagle, man. He was a fake manifestation of God, just as antichrist will be.

2-3 Babylon And Antichrist

Zech. 5:5-11 outlines a vision in which a woman who personifies “wickedness” is put into a basket with a heavy lead over, to stop her from escaping. This basket is then taken to Babylon to have a temple built around it. The idea of God restraining wickedness is undoubtedly picked up in the prophecy of the “man of sin” who is presently restrained, but will be released in the last days. Zechariah’s vision says that the “house” or temple of Babylon will rise again “when it is ready” (Zech. 5:11). The city where mankind’s first rebellion began against God will be the place where the final rebellion will be based.

2 Thess. 2:3 is clear enough that the “man of sin” will arise in the last days immediately before the Lord’s return. We need not think that Christ is about to return until we see this person gloriously enthroned “as God”. This is what Paul seems to be saying. And when the Lord was asked for the signs of His coming, he started off by warning that false Christs would come (Mt. 24:4,5). 1 Jn. 2:18 says just the same: “It is the last time [RV “hour”]: and as ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last time”. This was true in the run up to AD70, and it will be true in the ultimate last hour too. Ezekiel 38 likewise speaks of a man called ‘Gog’, a “chief prince”, who would come against God’s people at the time of the end.

This is the man of whom Dan. 8:25 speaks- “he will destroy many and will stand up against the Prince of princes”, the Lord Jesus. This person is therefore and thereby ‘anti-Christ’, against Christ. One of Daniel’s terms for the antiChrist is “the little horn”. This alludes to the Semitic practice of anointing leaders- when the horn of oil was poured on the head, it seemed as if a horn was coming out of the head of the leader. This “little horn” is associated with, to the point that he *is*, the “abomination that maketh desolate” (Dan. 9:27; 11:31; 12:11). This only had a partial fulfillment in Antiochus Epiphanes, because the Lord Jesus says Himself that this “abomination” will appear in the very last days as the special sign of His return. The vision concerned “the time of the end” (Dan. 8:16,17). There are often big leaps in Bible prophecy to the end time- and here we have such an example. Having spoken of the break up of Alexander’s Kingdom, Dan. 8:23,24 jumps right ahead to the last days: “In the latter part of their reign...a stern-faced king, a master of intrigue, will arise. He will become very strong, but not by his own power. He will cause astounding devastation and will succeed in whatever he does. He will destroy the mighty men and the holy people”. And yet he, or “the Prince of [his] host” will by himself offer “the daily sacrifice” [see *Pulpit Commentary* on the textual problems here]. This along with 2 Thess. 2 and other passages demands a rebuilt temple to exist in Jerusalem, where Antichrist sits. And it can be no accident that the Jews are determined to build one. Perhaps they may have short term victory over their Arab enemies in order to do this. And then

the Lord will come suddenly to His holy temple (Mal. 3:1) to destroy the Antichrist system enthroned there.

The little horn takes a stand against the Prince of princes and then is destroyed “but not by human power” (Dan. 8:25), i.e. he will be destroyed by the stone [Jesus] cut out without human hands. This is just the language of 2 Thess. 2, of how the Antichrist will be destroyed by the Lord’s sudden return. Micah and Isaiah call this individual “the Assyrian” (Is. 10:5; 14:25). We have shown elsewhere that the description of Lucifer being thrown out of heaven can be read as describing the fall of a future King of Babylon in the last days. The most comfortable understanding of antiChrist as being an Assyrian / Babylonian is that he will be an Assyrian / Babylonian, and ruler of those areas. A leader of Iraq would ideally suit this. And their leadership shows every sign of the aggression, meglomania and anti-Semitism which will characterize the antiChrist. Note too that Gog is the chief prince of Meshech and Tubal- areas identified by some as being in present Iran / Iraq. The number of the beast is the number of a man (Rev. 13:18); he becomes personally identified with the system that persecutes the saints and Israel in the last days.

The “man of sin” will sit in the temple of God and proclaim that he is God. This is surely the “abomination that maketh desolate” that the Lord Jesus predicted would sit in the temple just prior to His return. The abomination makes “desolate”, clearly referring to *Jerusalem* being made desolate by Babylonian / Iraqi invaders (Dan. 9:2,17). Luke 21:20 parallels “the abomination that maketh desolate” in Mt. 24 and Mk. 13 with “the desolation of Jerusalem”. The abomination / abominator will stand “where *he* ought not” (Mk. 13:14 RV). He is the “one that maketh desolate” (Dan. 9:27 RV). A specific individual is clearly implied. Dan. 8:13 RV describes this person as “the transgression that maketh desolate”- yet it is the abominator that makes Jerusalem desolate. Therefore “the transgression” is surely being put by metonymy for a man, who will sit in the Most Holy place and make Jerusalem desolate. And 2 Thess. 2 says just the same- “the man of sin / transgression”. The whole tenor of the Daniel prophecies is that they refer to an individual who will arise in the last days- not someone like a Pope sitting in St. Peter’s for centuries. The vision of the 2300 days of abomination- the days during which the abominator will make Jerusalem desolate- “belongs to the latter days” (Dan. 8:26). These are the days during which the sanctuary and the host of God’s people will be “trodden under foot”; interpreted by the Lord as Jerusalem being trodden down of the Gentiles until “the times of the Gentiles were fulfilled”.

It is quite clear that the Iraqi leadership would dearly love to sit and stand in the Sanctuary if they could get their hands on Jerusalem [as they vow they will]. He will sit there “as God”. Another place where we read of a man sitting in the temple proclaiming that he is God is in Ez. 28:2, where the King of Tyre proudly says that he sits as God ruling the seas of the people. The King of Tyre was a prototype for the latter day man of sin. And he was an Arab, too- what we would call a Lebanese. It could even be that the rebuilding of Babylon is to be associated with a rebuilding of Tyre. One of Nimrod’s characteristics- the founder of Babylon- was that he filled the face of the earth with cities. The King of Tyre was “in Eden the garden of God” where he was “anointed” and beautifully adorned (Ez.

28:12,14). These descriptions may be further information about the serpent in Eden, although omitted from the Genesis account. In this case, the fake-Christ [annointed one] is “the old serpent”, just as the latter day beast leader will be (Rev. 12). The beast is so often paralleled with its leader, just as the little horn seems to refer to both a leader and a nation / political system. The sudden destruction that comes upon Antichrist in 2 Thess. 2 is the same kind of thing spoken of in 1 Thess. 5:3- “When they shall say, Peace and safety, then sudden destruction cometh”. The saying of peace and safety is exactly the language of Daniel regarding the false peace produced in the very last days by Antichrist. It could well be that under Babylon’s domination there is a brief boom period for the entire world. This ensures his political survival, and explains why all the world’s merchants will weep at his fall. This sorrow by the traders hardly seems likely to happen if the Vatican was destroyed. This person will accuse the brethren of Christ before the throne of God (Rev. 12:10), but will be thrown down by the Lord’s return and the establishment of the Kingdom. This is exactly the language of 2 Thess. 2 about the antichrist who is to be destroyed by the Lord’s coming. Yet the idea of a false accuser of the brethren before the throne of God takes us back to Job’s satan- who seems to have been an Arab pseudo-disciple, bringing down the outpouring of vial-like judgments upon God’s ’eople (cp. the scene in Revelation).

Antichrist, the man of sin, sitting in the temple of God, is surely the abomination that Jesus said is to be in the temple in the last days, leading to the final desolation. Is. 14 describes the rise and fall of the King of Babylon; he too desired to set himself as God in the temple of God, having first terrorized the nations that dwell on the ‘earth’, those situated in the land promised to Abraham between the Nile and Euphrates. This seems so on the cards for latter day Babylon in the form of Iraq- to terrorize the Arab world into accepting her leadership, and then to seek to set up the King of latter day Babylon on “the mount of God”, Zion. Finally, Nahum speaks of how there was one specific Assyrian leader who was to be destroyed by the coming of Messiah. The phrasing is so similar to that found about the “man of sin”: “There is one gone forth out of thee, that imagineth evil against the Lord, a wicked counsellor...behold upon the mountains the feet of him [Messiah] that bringeth good tidings...the wicked one shall no more pass through...he is utterly cut off. He that dasheth in pieces is come up before thy face” (Nah. 1:11,15; 2:1 RV).

2-4 Latter Day Babylon

How this could come up about in reality need not worry us; if it does, then we would be guilty of seeking to fit current events into Bible prophecy, rather than being led by the prophecy itself. The beast will arise suddenly, from the barren desert, and will be destroyed suddenly. It will take the world by surprise; we shouldn’t be surprised, therefore, if we can’t perceive the signs of these things far in advance. It may be that Iraq uses an oil stranglehold to silence the West; Iraq has the world’s second largest production of oil. Jeremiah 49 contains a fascinating prophecy about Babylon’s conquests, which serves as a prelude to her sudden destruction in chapters 50 and 51. She will take Jordan (Ammonites and Moabites, :1-6), then Saudi Arabia (Edom, :7-22), then Syria (Damascus, :23-27), followed by “Kedar / Hazor” (I suggest this refers to Kuwait, :28-33), and finally Iran (Elam, :34-39). The reasons for identifying Kedar / Hazor with Kuwait are as follows:

- Kedar lived “in the northern part of the Arabian desert” (Zondervan Pictorial Bible Dictionary)- where Kuwait is situated.
- “Hazor” means “the enclosed place”; and “the name Kuwait is a diminutive of the Arabic ‘kut’ or fortress” (Ahmad Mustafa Abu-Haninia, *History Of Eastern Arabia* p. 47).
- “Hazor was located near the Euphrates and the Persian Gulf”- exactly where Kuwait is (Finis Dake, *Dake’s Annotated Reference Bible* p. 794)
- The descriptions of Kedar / Hazor having their wealth stolen and them paralysed with terror is reminiscent of the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait in 1990. The riches of Kuwait were taken back to Babylon. This feature of the prophecy (Jer. 49:28-33) could never have meaningfully been fulfilled in the past.
- Note that the horn / antiChrist moves to the south [Kuwait?], to the east [Afghanistan?] and against Israel (Dan. 8:9).

Already Iraq / Babylon has attempted to invade Iran and Kuwait. Saddam Hussein and his successors were all distinctly pan-Arab in their outlook. They seek Arab unity under their leadership, however aggressively they achieve it, with a distinctly anti-Zionist agenda for that unity. Alternatively, it could be that Kedar is a more generic term for the Arabic peoples. The Zondervan Pictorial Bible Dictionary says that Kedar “helped originate the Arab peoples”. They are called “the men of the east” (Jer. 49:28), which is “the general designation of the Arabs” (J.P.Lange, *The Lange Commentary*, Zondervan. 1976, p. 399). Whichever way we take it, Babylon never did all these things historically- they never invaded all the nations defined in Jer. 49, some of which never meaningfully existed at that time. So they must be fulfilled in our last days. And so we ask, Who is Babylon of the last days? It seems clear enough it cannot be the Roman Catholics- there is no sign they plan a violent invasion of the Arab world. But Babylon in its literal sense of Iraq, lead by an antiChrist, charismatic leader- this fits the bill admirably. In passing, the statement is often made that the “temporal power of the papacy” ended in 1870, according to some continuous historical views. If this is really to be accepted, then Babylon has lost its power, if it is to be equated with the Catholic church. Yet Babylon must be alive and powerful in the last days to fulfil the prophecies still outstanding. And there is no evidence that the ‘temporal power of the Papacy’ is over at all. But this in passing.

It seems likely therefore that ‘Babylon’ of the last days will rise to political and military dominance in the Arab world. The 10 nations / horns / leaders which exist in the land promised to Abraham- the “kings of the earth / land”- will give their power to Babylon, by force and by political manoeuvre, and this system will then invade Israel. The horns hating the whore implies there will be inter-Arab friction apparent in the beast system throughout its' existence. "Nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom" (Mt. 24:7) will be a sign of the last days. In the AD70 context, this referred to friction between the Semitic peoples living around Israel; and the Lord's words are clearly an allusion to 2 Chron. 15:6, which specifically uses the phrase about inter-Arab friction. The fragile alliance between them will then be broken by the Lord's return, the horns will hate the whore and destroy her. They give their power to the beast for but “one hour”. Daniel seems to associate a covenant which is then broken with the latter day Antichrist. Is. 30:27-31 speaks of the latter day Assyrian as placing “a bridle in the jaw of the people causing them to err”, referring to some kind of covenant / agreement which forces others to follow their direction. The Lord's

especial fury will be against the individual latter day Nebuchadnezzar who leads the invasion. The future leader of Babylon, after the example of Saddam Hussein, will see themselves as Nebuchadnezzar. Isaiah and Micah describe the latter day invader of the land as “the Assyrian” (Is. 10:5; 14:25; 30:31; Mic. 5:1-6). This itself suggests we are to see the individual who heads up the invasion, the rosh / chief prince of Ez. 38:2, as an ethnic Assyrian / Iraqi. Dan. 8:24,25 invites us to see the same- the “king of fierce countenance” stands up out of the area of northern Iraq / northern Iran.

The great, terrible beast of the last days is an aggregate of all those that went before it. It includes the total number of heads and horns which they featured. Likewise the whole image of Dan. 2 stands erect in the last days, headed up by a latter day Nebuchadnezzar [note that *he personally* was the head of gold, rather than the gold representing Babylon’s empire). All the nations which formed part of the Babylonian, Medo-Persian, Greek and Roman empires will be amalgamated into this latter day beast system, under the leadership of a latter day Nebuchadnezzar. These nations include:

Pakistan, Afghanistan, Kuwait, Iran, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, Egypt, Libya, Algeria, Tunisia, Portugal, Spain, France, England, Holland, Belgium, Switzerland, Germany, Italy, Austria, Hungary, the former Yugoslav republics, Romania, Albania, Turkey, Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, Georgia, Armenia, Azerbaijan- as well as Iraq. It is chillingly significant that this list of nations is almost identical with a list of those areas which for the first time ever now have many true Christian converts living in them. It could be that this is God giving them a final opportunity to repent. It would seem that the core of the beast system will be the 10 kings of the earth / land promised to Abraham that will be the horns who form part of the system but then turn against the whore finally. Daniel 7 says that the Antichrist takes three of the other nations of the former Roman empire by force. But Dan. 8:25; 11:21 say that he will have power over the other nations by treachery, cunning treaties and manipulation. We will only finally understand all this when we see it happen. Dan. 8:26,27 and 12:6 tell us that the meaning of the visions are sealed until the time of the end, i.e. when they start to be fulfilled. “The revelation awaits an appointed time; for it speaks of the end” (Dan. 12:2). We may speculate about who and what and where, but these things are sealed up until they actually happen- *then* we will understand. It is therefore not so that these prophecies are designed to encourage “saints of all ages”- for the meaning of the prophecy is sealed up until the time of the end. However, it is possible to see in the process of *formulation of correct understanding* that seems to be happening in our community that we are being prepared for the last days. Likewise the world-wide spread of the Gospel and the return of the Jews to their land are beginning *in embryo*. The vision was to be made plain, so that a herald may run with it (Dan. 12:2,3 Heb.). The latter day preaching of the Gospel world-wide will be motivated by this true and thrilling understanding of latter day prophecy. We will see our place in God’s larger plan, and respond to it. Many will run to and fro to increase knowledge, i.e. to increase knowledge amongst others- for running to and fro will not increase knowledge amongst the runners (Dan. 12:4). Yet according to 2 Thess. 2, there will be a massive apostasy from the Truth in the very last days, whilst antiChrist is enthroned. Could this not be because so many of the true Christian community have been expecting that antiChrist will *not* reign like this, that Israel will never possibly be overrun, and that they have had to own up to having been looking the wrong way in their decades of analysis of the Roman Catholic church and Russia? When they finally own up to the anti-Semitism of Britain, will it not be they will find it hard to maintain faith in a God whom they had hitherto believed had prophesied that Tarshish / Britain would save Israel ⁽¹⁾? And yet, the Gospel will be accepted world-wide in the final preaching of it; and when it has gone into all nations, then shall the

end come. It could well be that a materialistic, self-satisfied, dogmatic, divisive Anglo-saxon brotherhood is replaced in the very last days by a genuinely international world-wide community of new believers.

Latter day Witnessing To Babylon

According to Rev. 17 & 18, the latter day Babylon persecutes the saints, both Israel and the believers, and extends her power over “all the earth”. Her leadership sits on seven mountains. All attempts to identify these with literal hills in Jerusalem or Rome seem to me rather futile as the prophecy states clearly enough that these seven mountains represent seven kings (Rev. 17:9,10 RV “they are seven kings”). And there are very few symbols in Revelation which we are intended to interpret dead literally. The latter day Babylon will therefore head up a confederacy of seven nations. When the mountains flee in Rev. 16:10, Babylon loses the support base of the coalition she leads. These kings are described in Rev. 17:18 as the kings of the land- that promised to Abraham. And within the boundaries of that land we find seven such nations- Palestine, Egypt, Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, Iraq and Iran. The appeal in Rev. 14:6-8 and Rev. 18:4 for Christian believers to “come out of her” would imply that there are believers within those nations and that there will be a major witness made to her- and it is surely highly significant that there has been a great growth in conversions in those areas in recent times! This is a sure sign that we are approaching the time of the end. Sadly Rev. 18:24 implies that believers will be murdered in these areas in the final tribulation- and already the persecution and murder of Christian converts is in full swing there. The description of Babylon sitting upon various peoples, nations and tongues is to be connected with the same use of the phrase in Rev. 5:9 and 7:9 to describe the world from which Christian believers are drawn out. And significantly, the same phrase is very commonly used in Daniel to describe the area ruled over by historical Babylon (Dan. 3:4,29; 4:1; 5:19; 6:25; 7:14). God will make the various nations under Babylon’s rule to “agree” (Rev. 17:17)- there will be an unprecedented unity amongst those nations located within the land promised to Abraham. Pan-Arabism will triumph in the end. The resolution of the Iran-Iraq tensions is one example of this ‘agreement’ being reached. This union will lead to economic prosperity for the region (Rev. 18:3)- easy to imagine, given the huge oil wealth of these areas. Babylon will become a fake Kingdom of God; hence she is described in terms elsewhere applied to the people and land of Israel (Rev. 18:22,23). Babylon is arrayed in fine linen (Rev. 18:16) as a pseudo-bride of Christ.

2-5 A Possible Latter Day Sequence Of Events?

So a possible sequence of events could be:

1. Literal Babylon is rebuilt, consciously reliving the ancient Babylon, and reviving her gods
2. A charismatic antichrist figure arises there, based on Nebuchadnezzar
3. He takes control of the Arab world by force and by political treaties, uniting them as a pan-Arab confederacy against Israel. This is the beast of the latter days. It persecutes true Christian believers.
4. This system then invades Israel; after the spirit and pattern of Nebuchadnezzar they take them into captivity in the Arab world (hence Ez. 20:33-38; Is. 11:11-16;

Dt. 28:63-68 speak of the Jews being brought back in the last days from Babylon, Egypt, Arabia etc- where there are presently scarcely any Jews).

The Gospel is preached to the area dominated by Babylon; some respond.

5. The horns hate the whore- the members of the confederacy turn against Babylon.

6. The Lord Jesus intervenes and destroys Babylon so that the city is literally never again inhabited.

Current Evidence

There is ample evidence that the stage is being set for the fulfilment of stages 1-3.

1. Literal Babylon is rebuilt, consciously reliving the ancient Babylon, and reviving her gods

1.1 This is happening right now (see photos).

1.2 Saddam City, as it [was once] dubbed — or more correctly Saddamiat Al Tharthar (That Which Belongs to Saddam at Tharthar Lake) — is 85 miles west of Baghdad. It is so big that it includes 625 homes for the Iraqi leader's "favourites", Peter Hain, the Foreign Office Minister, said yesterday. The resort has stadiums, an amusement park, animal park, hospitals and the latest communications systems.

[Source: The Times - UK](#)

1.3 On the exact site of ancient Babylon, he has reconstructed the Southern Palace of Nebuchadnezzar, including the Procession Street, a Greek theater, many temples, what was once Nebuchadnezzar's throne room, and a half-scale model of the Ishtar Gate" (Charles Dyer, *The Rise of Babylon*, p. 27)

Shafqa Mohammed Jaafar, chief archaeologist of Babylon, explains : "Because Babylon was built in ancient times, and was a great city, it must be a great city again in the time of our new great leader".

2. A charismatic antichrist figure arises there, based on Nebuchadnezzar

2.1 Saddam issued commemorative coinage with his image on one side, and King Nebuchadnezzar's image on the other. He saw Nebuchadnezzar as his hero. The final leader of Babylon will ultimately do the same.

2.2 Placed atop some of the original bricks, marked with Nebuchadnezzar's name, are others that declare, "In the era of Saddam Hussein, protector of Iraq, who rebuilt the Royal Palace". A palace tour guide said, "Nebuchadnezzar was a man of war and peace, just as Saddam Hussein is".

Charles Dyer, author of "The Rise of Babylon" documents a fascinating event that took place in 1988 on the actual site of the ancient city of Babylon:

"It is a cloudless September night, and the moon casts its shining image on the banks of the gentle Euphrates River. Thousands of guests and dignitaries walk by torch light to Babylon's Procession Street and enter the city from the north. Instructed to line the streets along the massive walls, the guests obediently follow orders. When the audience is in place, the dark-eyed man in charge nods, and the procession begins. Rows and rows of soldiers parade in, dressed in Babylonian tunics and carrying swords, spears and shields. Interspersed among the ranks of soldiers are groups of musicians playing harps, horns and drums. Clusters of children carry palm branches, and runners bear bowls of incense. Then come soldiers and still more soldiers in a seemingly endless line of men and weapons. After the procession, the guests attend a ceremony paying tribute to Ishtar, the mother goddess of Babylon." The director of that event, the International Babylon Festival, was celebrating the revival of the city from ancient times. By 1990, over sixty million bricks were on top of the very bricks that Nebuchadnezzar had laid."

2.3

Modern King of Babylon

By Ken Raggio

Modern-day Equivalent of King Nebuchadnezzar

"Nowhere is that more visible than in Babylon, where the Iraqi leader is cast as the modern-day equivalent of King Nebuchadnezzar, the warrior and builder who came to power in 605 BC at the tender age of 25. Hussein, who helped stage a coup at age 31, has restored part of Nebuchadnezzar's 600-room palace".

2.4 No one has ever mentioned the achievements of "Hammurabi," the founder of the first organized sets of law in human history. Or "Nebuchadnezzar," the national hero who was able to defeat the enemies of the nation on the land of "Kennan" [Canaan] and to take them as prisoner of war to Babylon. What we need now is to increase awareness in this regard. -- **Saddam Hussein**. He clearly had in mind to take Jews captive to Babylon from the land, perhaps thereby fulfilling Dt. 28, Zech. 14:1-3 and other prophecies which suggest that the Jews will be briefly taken into captivity in the last days. This kind of rhetoric is alive and well to this day in Iraq.

2.5 Noted John Burns in the ***New York Times International*** --

When Mrs. Jaafar, the archaeologist, was asked if Iraqis considered Mr. Hussein to be "the new Nebuchadnezzar," she laughed and replied, "Yes, of course!" Among Arabs, King Nebuchadnezzar is remembered as much as anything for the fact that he three times conquered Jerusalem, carrying tens of thousands of Jews back to Babylon. -- "New Babylon Is Stalled by a Modern Upheaval," October 11, 1990, p. A13.

3. The antichrist figure takes control of the Arab world by force and by political treaties, uniting them as a pan-Arab confederacy against Israel. This is the beast of the latter days.

3.1 Pan Arab unity is a major thrust of Iraqi policy:

Said Saddam Hussein in 1979 --

The glory of the Arabs stems from the glory of Iraq. Throughout history, whenever Iraq became mighty and flourished, so did the Arab nation. This is why we are striving to make Iraq mighty, formidable, able and developed. -- *Los Angeles Times*, October 12, 1990, p. 14A.

Note how Saddam saw the Arab 'nation' as one, led by Iraq / Babylon. This is exactly what we would expect from prophecies about the latter day beast.

3.2 Wrote Walter Laqueur in the *Washington Post* --

Saddam Hussein first appeared on the scene as a pan-Arab politician. His great hero is Nebuchadnezzar II, who was neither an Arab nor a Moslem, but the builder of a great empire (and the conqueror of Jerusalem). "Like Hitler, but Different," August 31, 1990, p. A25.

Saddam was not alone in his dream of a unified Arab nation. Nasser of Egypt reached for that goal in the fifties, and other Arab leaders strive for it today.

3.3 The Palestinian National Covenant (1964) "Article 10. Palestinians have three mottos: National unity, National mobilization, Liberation" [in English translation: Sadat Hasan, *Introducing The Palestinian Liberation Organization*, New York, USA: P.L.O., pp. 12-14]. Quoted in Y. Harkabi, *The Palestinian Covenant And Its Meaning* (London: Valentine, Mitchell, 1979 p. 109). These three principles are perhaps the three frog like spirits which come out of the beasts of the last days. These are the spirits which unite the kings of the land, i.e. the nations situated in the land promised to Abraham, in their unity against Israel. What is most important to me about Nebuchadnezzar is the link between the Arabs' abilities and the liberation of Palestine. Nebuchadnezzar was, after all, an Arab from Iraq, albeit ancient Iraq. Nebuchadnezzar was the one who brought the bound Jewish slaves from Palestine. That is why, whenever I remember Nebuchadnezzar, I like to remind the Arabs -- Iraqis in particular -- of their historical responsibilities. It is a burden that should not stop them from action, but rather spur them into action because of their history. -- *Saddam Hussein*, 1979

3.4 There was from earliest times an association of 10 kings with Babylon. Much is made of how Babylon began with the reign of "the ten kings". Berosus, a priest of Marduk's temple at Babylon about 300 BC, in the second book of his history tells of the ten kings of the Chaldeans who reigned before the Deluge.

3.5 Sept. 21, 2000 - At least 47 countries will participate in Iraq's 10-day Babylon cultural festival which opens on September 22. The annual festival was launched in

1987, but was cancelled in 1990 and 1991 due to the Gulf War. *Source: Yahoo* . Thus many Arab nations will come together under the leadership of Babylon.

4. This system then invades Israel

Iraq is a major supporter of the P.L.O. *Filastin* is the Arabic word the P.L.O. uses to describe 'Palestine'; they consciously see themselves as latter day Philistines in their struggle against the Jewish state; see Anis Sayegh [ed.], *Filastiniyat* (Beirut, Lebanon: P.L.O. Research Centre, 1968). Iraq and her Arab confederacy may be the beast, but the Palestinians may be the eagle power who come upon Israel so suddenly. The eagle is the heraldic emblem of the Palestinian National Authority.

Summing up: it could really be that very, very soon this Arab confederacy / beast emerges under the leadership of the antichrist. The stage is perfectly set. It will arise suddenly and be destroyed suddenly- by the Lord's return. May we be ready and waiting and separate from it.

Notes

(1) It should be noted that in 1922 the UK was given a mandate to establish a Jewish *home*- not a state. But the British allowed only 75,000 Jews to enter Palestine and then barred all further entry by Jews, in order to appease the Arabs. The British were seeking the support of the Arabs in their empire building in southern Arabia. After 1945, the British lost the mandate and the Jews had to force their way into Palestine. The state of Israel was established in the teeth of British opposition; it came into being as a result of a guerilla warfare *against* the British. And the Arabs had been schooled by the British to oppose Jewish settlement and statehood. In no way can it be said that the British enabled the establishment of the state of Israel- they fought *against* it, and turned away the Haganah ships, carrying Jewish refugees from Nazi Europe back to the land. They even sunk some of them...

CHAPTER 10: THE FIRST COMING OF JESUS

Many of the incidents in the first coming of the Lord Jesus are intended to point us forward to events which will happen at his second coming. Thus Zech. 9:9-11 speaks of the Lord Jesus coming to Zion with salvation, establishing his Kingdom and resurrecting the dead. This is all about his second coming, but the idea of him coming into Jerusalem with salvation is obviously applicable to his triumphant entry in the last week of his ministry (Mt. 21:5). There is clear indication in the records of Luke 1 and 2 that there were a faithful remnant in Jerusalem at the time of our Lord's birth, whose attitude points forward to that of the latter-day remnant at the time of His second coming. Whilst only Zacharias, Elizabeth, Simeon and Anna are mentioned, we can be sure that there were others in this group - Anna "spoke of him to all them that looked for redemption in Jerusalem" (Luke 2:38); "many" rejoiced even at the birth of John, on the understanding that he was Christ's forerunner (Luke 1:14 - unless the "many" refers to Angels?). It is possible that the shepherds, too, were in this group, which would confirm the impression that the 'remnant' were in the lower ranks of society - Zacharias a superannuated priest, Anna a servant of the temple (Luke 2:37) - the equivalent of a 20th Century office cleaner. This connects with the 'remnant' left in the land

by Nebuchadnezzar being the poorest of the poor (2 Kings 24:15 cp. 25:11,12), and suggests a working-class Jewish 'remnant' in the last days.

There is much language used concerning the birth of Jesus which is easily applicable to His second coming. This in itself encourages us to see the record of those awaiting His first coming as typical of the last days. The birth of John and Jesus is described as God 'visiting and redeeming his people' (Luke 1:68); what better way of describing God's latter-day intervention? "The sun rising from on high hath visited us" (Luke 1:78 A.V. mg.) was Zacharias' comment upon God's purpose in John and Jesus, making an unmistakable allusion to Mal. 4:2 concerning Christ's second coming being like the rising sun. Note how this sun rising is upon the righteous remnant of the last days (Mal. 4:12) - identifying Zacharias with them.

The Angels rejoiced that through Christ's birth there was "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men" (Luke 2:14), although this will only be fully done in the Kingdom. Simeon spoke of the baby Jesus as "a light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel" (Luke 2:32), although this will only be fully true after the second coming (Isa. 42:6; 49:6). The remnant "looked for redemption (to appear) in Jerusalem" (Luke 2:38); they could only have figured this out from realizing that the Old Testament 'kingdom' prophecies concerning Jerusalem, which we normally associate with the second coming, had a primary fulfilment in the birth of Christ.

John the Baptist commented that he preached repentance and baptized in Israel, *so that* the Messiah might be manifest to Israel (Jn. 1:31). His work was a pattern for the Elijah ministry of the last days. It could be argued that Messiah was only manifest in the first century because of the success of John's work- for large numbers were baptized of him. Could it be that the timing of the final revelation of Messiah likewise depends upon the success of the Elijah ministry in leading Israel to repentance? And what implications are there in this, if actually *we* are the voice of that ministry...

We can now scan the record for more detailed latter-day typology:-

- The remnant were in or around Jerusalem - as it seems the latter-day faithful will also be. They looked for Messiah to appear in Jerusalem (Luke 2:38). If latter-day Jewry are persecuted to the extent that the only Jews left alive in the land are in Jerusalem (see previous studies, especially Chapter 8), then they, too, will expect Messiah to come to them in that same city. Note that the woman whose intense pleadings represent the prayers of the latter day remnant (Lk.18:2-8) "was in a city" - Jerusalem?
- They eagerly looked for the Lord's birth as a fulfilment of the Abrahamic promises, that through his seed "we being delivered out of the hand of our enemies might serve (God) without fear" (Luke 1:74). Likewise the latter-day remnant will meditate how the Abrahamic promises concerning freedom from their (Arab) enemies are so relevant to them - perhaps due to the Elijah ministry turning their hearts to the Jewish "fathers", a phrase often used about the patriarchs who received the promises (Mal. 4:6).
- Israel in the first century were under the domination of Rome, the fourth beast of Dan. 7:23. In the latter-day application of this, necessitated by the image upon which the beasts are based standing complete in the last days, the fourth beast with its horns corresponds to the Arab coalition which will then dominate Israel.

- Some of the remnant had the Spirit gift of prophecy (Luke 1:41,67; 2:26,36). The latter-day remnant may also experience this - their old men (cp. Zacharias and Simeon) and young people (cp. Mary), may have the gift of prophecy around the time of the Lord's return - "before the great and terrible day of the Lord come" (Joel 2:28-31).
- The shepherds watching at night while the Lord was born (Luke 2:8) echoes the Passover. There is good reason to think that the second coming may be associated with Passover time (see 'Passover and the Exodus' previously). The vision of Angels which they saw may correspond to the remnant in Jerusalem seeing a literal "sign of the (coming of the) son of man in (literal) heaven" (Matt. 24:30), composed of the Angel-cherubim. This "sign of the son of man in heaven" must be alluding back to the literal portent which the shepherds saw in the sky, pointing to the Lord's first coming. Thus there will be no need to say "See here; or see there", because the Lord's return will be so evidently public (Lk. 17:23).
- Zacharias and Elisabeth "were both righteous before God" (Luke 1:6) amidst a corrupt Jewish world that refused to prepare itself for God's manifestation in Christ, despite the availability to them of God's Word, which clearly prophesied it. This recalls the description of Noah as being "righteous before God" (Gen. 7:1) in the context of the flood coming upon the world. We have earlier shown this to be full of reference to the last days.
- There is a triple emphasis on Israel praying to God in the lead up to Christ's birth (Luke 1:10,13; 2:37). We have seen from Joel 2:17 and many other passages that the remnant will likewise devote themselves to prayer in the last days, as will spiritual Israel.
- The appearance of Angels before Christ's birth (Luke 1:12,26) is similar to their visiting Israel under persecution during the times of the Judges, bringing the news of deliverance from their Arab enemies through a 'saviour' ('Jesus').
- The conception of John (the Elijah prophet of the first century) preceded that of Christ - he was Christ's forerunner - there is therefore a necessity for this type to be fulfilled in the literal coming of the latter-day Elijah as a prelude to Christ's manifestation to Israel.
- The "joy and gladness" (Luke 1:14) of the remnant at Christ's birth will be but a dim foretaste of the ecstasy which the embattled remnant of the last days will experience at their Lord's return.

Digression 3: Earth - Land - Eretz

The Land Promised To Abraham: Centre Of Bible Prophecy

Introduction

The Hebrew word *eretz* can mean:

- the dust of the earth
- a region
- the whole earth

- the land of Israel, or that promised to Abraham

Only a few percent of the occurrences of the word relate to the whole earth / planet. It refers most frequently to the land of Israel, or the whole territory from the Nile to the Euphrates that had been promised to Abraham. Statistically, the chances are that whenever we encounter *eretz*, this is what it refers to. We read the Bible not only through the mask of translation, but with a great distance from the minds of those who originally read and spoke the words. *Eretz* would have been understood by the original Bible writers and readers / hearers as a reference to *eretz Israel*, just as it is understood by a Jew today. The English translations aren't helpful. They tend to mix the translations hopelessly between "country", "land" and "earth". Other Hebrew words are translated "world"; these are the words which more commonly refer to the whole planet.

The Creation Record

We must remember that Genesis was written by Moses originally for the purpose of establishing a national identity for Israel in the wilderness. The idea of "heavens and earth" occur in Genesis, and we read of how creation would have appeared to a person located on the earth. Now whilst the Genesis account of creation *does* explain how the whole of existence came about, by acts of Divine creation, the first hearers and readers of the account would have understood "the earth" as referring to their promised land of Israel. "Heavens and earth" is a common enough figure for Israel and the Jewish system (1 Chron. 27:23; Ps. 50:4; Is. 1:2; Jer. 2:12; Hos. 2:21; Joel 2:10,30; Hag. 2:6,21; Is. 51:13,16; Mt. 5:18; 24:29; 2 Pet. 3:7,10). Significantly, the Pentateuch begins with the account of the creation of "heaven and earth" and concludes with Moses appealing to the "heavens and earth" of Israel (Dt. 32:1; 33:28). This is not to say that Genesis 1 and 2 *only* recount the creation of Israel; it describes the creation of the whole universe, but it was probably understood by early readers and hearers as God's account of the creation of the land on which Israel found themselves living. For an observer on the earth / land of Israel, the impression is given that the whole of creation came into existence on account of Israel. The stars etc. came into existence to give light on the earth / land of Israel; just as in the new creation, all things likewise "are" for *our* sakes, even if the rest of the world benefits too. It has been observed that when Is. 21:1 speaks of "the earth" being made empty etc., this is talking about Israel, yet in the language of Gen. 1. It is as if we are to understand the record of creation there as especially relevant to the creation of the land.

The Flood

It has been shown elsewhere that the garden of Eden can refer to the whole land promised to Abraham, seeing that the flood reshaped the topography of the area ⁽¹⁾. Likewise, Ararat (Gen. 8:4) means 'holy hill' and may well refer to Mount Zion. Mist came out of the land, there was no rain on the land [there may have been on the rest of the planet], it was watered by a canopy over the land. Now this would have had tremendous significance for Israel in the wilderness, likewise under a canopy of cloud each day. There is significant evidence for the flood being local;

the list of problems with a universal flood are beyond the scope of this study, but they surely exist. Brother Robert Roberts in *The Visible Hand Of God* considers some of them, and concludes the flood was local. My submission is that the topography of the area was totally different; if there was a local flood, with the highest hills in the area covered, then there must have been a huge basin bounded by mountain ranges which kept the water in. All the animals living in the area were preserved in the ark [thus avoiding the major problems created by supposing that literally all species world-wide entered the ark and somehow spread from the ark afterwards into all the planet]. It would also account for the lack of any means to save fish; if the 'land' / earth which was flooded was land-locked, this explains things.

Ps. 104:5-9 describes "the earth" as being covered with the deep, and "the waters stood above the mountains"- clearly alluding to the flood. Yet these mountains are those which are "a refuge for the wild goats...conies" (Ps. 104:18 RV). These sound like the mountains of Israel / the Middle East rather than any other part of the world.

Babel

After the flood, we come to the record of Babel. This is prefaced by some genealogies. The record speaks as if Shem, Ham and Japheth were the only people living on 'earth'. Once we take this to mean 'the land', things are much easier. These three men were ancestors of the Middle Eastern races [as provable within the pages of the Bible itself], but not of any others. The idea that the black peoples descended from Ham / Canaan and were to be servants is sadly a 19th century piece of racism, that has far too much acceptance in our community. The tension between the children of Shem and Canaan has been worked out between the Jews and Canaanites, not white and black. The Canaanites which we read of in the Bible as dwelling in the land were quite simply the descendants of Canaan / Ham. Interestingly, we read of men like Magog, Gomer, Meshech, Tarshish, Asshur, Elam, Aram...all of which occur in prophecies like Ezekiel 38, as the latter day enemies of Israel. The origin of these peoples is not in Eurasia; they are the 'people of the land', the neighbours and relatives of Israel. The peoples of the land spoke one language in the sense that they all had the same intentions- to build a tower, and live together in one place, in Babylon / Babel. Previously we have been informed that the sons of Noah were divided "in their lands; every one after his tongue, after their families" (Gen. 10:5,31). So when in chapter 11 we are told that they had "one language" this must refer to their unity of intent rather than them all using the same lexical items. They were scattered from Babylon / Babel into all parts of the land [i.e. that promised to Abraham]. The descendants of Shem, Ham and Japheth weren't literally scattered into the whole planet. If the flood was local, then there would have been plenty of other people alive in other parts of the planet.

The Land Promised

This provides the background to the promises to Abraham, which begin in Genesis 12. All nations of the land were to be blessed because of Abraham and his seed, his one special seed [Jesus] and also his natural descendants. His children were intended to be a blessing to the other nations who lived around them, especially in that they were intended to bring them to Abraham's God and Abraham's faith. Now this is not to say that ultimately, Abraham and his seed will not bring blessing on literally the whole planet. Rom. 4:13 interprets the promise of the land of Canaan as meaning 'the whole world'. But this was by later development, and on account of the universal blessing achieved by the sacrifice of Abraham's greatest seed, the Lord Jesus. In the first instance, the blessing was to be upon all the families who lived on the 'earth' / land (12:3). There is a paradox here. For those already living in the land promised to Abraham, their land would be taken from them but they would be blessed. God was telling Abraham: 'You will possess the land and all nations of that land will be blessed'. They were to give up their physical inheritance to receive a spiritual one- this was the ideal. Paul applies this idea to us when he says that if Gentiles have received the spiritual blessings of Abraham's seed, ought they not to give their physical blessings to that same physical seed of Abraham? This is how and why he tells Gentile converts in Rome to send donations to the poor Jewish brethren in Jerusalem: "For if the Gentiles have been made partakers of their spiritual things, their duty is also to minister unto them in carnal things... I shall come in the fullness of the *blessing* of the gospel of Christ" (Rom. 15:27-29).

The way the English Bibles make a difference between the promise of the "land" and the blessing to come on those in the "earth" confuses this- but it is always the same word *eretz* used. Tragically, Israel didn't fulfil the imperatives of this promise. They were not a blessing to the nations living in the land. They went away from their unique and wonderful God- hence the frequent comment that Israel and Zion were a mocking to all the surrounding nations. Israel were intended to be a missionary nation, just as all the spiritual seed of Abraham are intended to bring blessing into their worlds too. Yet the promise will finally be fulfilled, in that a repentant Israel *will be* in the very end, "a blessing in the midst of the land" (Is. 19:24), resulting in Egypt and Assyria turning to the God of Israel. Thus Israel will not be totally destroyed as a nation, for a blessing *is* in them (Is. 65:8). When Israel repent and enter the new covenant, *then* they will be made a blessing to the Gentile world around them (Ez. 34:26). "So I will save you, and ye *shall be* a blessing" (Zech. 8:13).

The Law

But to return to Abraham. His seed developed. They were brought out of Egypt in order to inherit the earth / land promised to them. We read in Ex. 9:16 that the Name was declared in all the earth due to the exodus- i.e. throughout the whole land promised to Abraham. Rahab etc. heard about it, but not the whole planet (Josh. 4:23,24). They were brought into the land, but reminded in Ex. 19:5 that "all the earth is mine". This may refer to the whole planet, but surely it has special reference to the land? In one sense, all nations are Yahweh's, and yet He

has also chosen Israel as His special people. And so it is with the earth / land of Israel. He has given the world to other nations, but His eyes are especially upon His own land. Josh 2:11 [and many other passages] say that God is the God of the earth- and yet many times in the surrounding verses *eretz* is used regarding the land (vv. 1,2,3,9,14,18, 24). He is specifically the God who has His intended colony on earth, in the land He promised to His friend Abraham. The Law explained to Israel how to behave in this land. This in Lev. 11 we have a list of all the beasts that are “upon the earth”- but there are many other animals apart from those mentioned there, if we take the ‘earth’ as meaning the whole planet. It clearly refers here to the land of Israel. There are some passages which we have become accustomed to reading as referring to the whole planet- e.g. Num. 14:21 “all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the Lord”. Yet the surrounding verses are all using *eretz* specifically about the land, not the whole planet (vv. 2,3,6,7,9,14,16,23,24,30,31). God’s foremost intention was to fill His land with His glory, and through this, secondarily, the whole planet.

If Israel were obedient to the Law, their example would be a witness to their neighbours. “And all people of the earth [i.e. land] shall see that thou art called by the name of the LORD; and they shall be afraid of thee” (Dt. 28:10). God would set Israel on high above all nations of the land (28:1). Only those round about Israel would see this, not the whole planet. “The nations” therefore refer to those in the land. In this same context they are warned that if they are *not* obedient, then they would be taken into all kingdoms of the earth (v. 25). And this is what happened- they were taken into captivity in Babylon, Assyria and their empires within the ‘earth’ / land. They were invaded by a nation from the end of the earth (28:49), which Habakkuk defines as Babylon, a nation at the extremity of the land / earth promised to Abraham.

Dt. 28:64-68 describe a latter day scattering of Israel, in that their being taken into Egypt by ships has never yet happened: “And the LORD shall scatter thee among all people, from the one end of the earth even unto the other; and there thou shalt serve other gods, which neither thou nor thy fathers have known, *even* wood and stone. And among these nations shalt thou find no ease, neither shall the sole of thy foot have rest: but the LORD shall give thee there a trembling heart, and failing of eyes, and sorrow of mind: And thy life shall hang in doubt before thee; and thou shalt fear day and night, and shalt have none assurance of thy life: In the morning thou shalt say, Would God it were even! and at even thou shalt say, Would God it were morning! for the fear of thine heart wherewith thou shalt fear, and for the sight of thine eyes which thou shalt see. And the LORD shall bring thee into Egypt again with ships, by the way whereof I spake unto thee, Thou shalt see it no more again: and there ye shall be sold unto your enemies for bondmen and bondwomen, and no man shall buy *you*”. This latter day scattering will be throughout the Arab world / land.

The Other Nations In The Earth

Israel finally entered the land under Joshua, a clear type of the Lord Jesus. “The LORD was with Joshua; and his fame was *noised* throughout all the country” (Josh 6:27), the *eretz*. Clearly the whole planet didn’t know Joshua had invaded

Canaan. Many times in Joshua and Judges we read of the people of the *eretz*: “For the Canaanites and all the inhabitants of the *land* [*eretz*] shall hear of it, and shall environ us round, and cut off our name from the *earth* [*eretz*]” (Jos 7:9). Here the Israelites feared being cut off from their place in the *land*. They perceived the world / earth to them as the land where their enemies lived. In Josh. 12:1,7 we meet “the kings of the earth”, i.e. of the land, and this must surely be the basis of how we are to understand the references to “the kings of the earth” in Revelation. Dt. 13:7 defines “the peoples which are round about you” [Israel] as being “from the one end of the earth even unto the other end of the earth” (RV). Those peoples which bordered with the Israelites were “the earth” / *eretz*.

There were other nations living in the land promised to Abraham, and yet Israel were unique amongst them: “And what one nation in the earth [*eretz*] is like thy people, *even* like Israel, whom God went to redeem for a people to himself, and to make him a name, and to do for you great things and terrible, for thy land [*eretz*], before thy people, which thou redeemedst to thee from Egypt, *from* the nations and their gods?” (2 Sam 7:23). The nations of the earth we read of in Revelation and other prophecies likewise primarily refer to the [now Arab] nations living in the land. Solomon recognized this in 1 Kings 4:10; 8:53: “For thou didst separate them from among all the people of the earth [*eretz*], *to be* thine inheritance, as thou spakest by the hand of Moses thy servant, when thou broughtest our fathers out of Egypt”. The Jewish people have been separated from their Arab neighbours and brothers, not from out of the whole Gentile stock on the planet. It must be remembered that Israel are ethnically linked to the other Arab nations in the ‘land’- Jacob’s 12 sons married wives from there; some of their mothers were Arab slave girls; Jacob’s wives were Arameans, as was his mother (Gen. 28:5); historically there was much intermarriage with surrounding nations, throughout Israel’s history; Ephraim and Manasseh were half Egyptian. Rahab, Ruth etc. are all reminders of the amount of Arab blood in the average Jew. The definition of ‘Israel’ was therefore not so much on ethnic principles but rather on spiritual ones. Anyone who has walked the streets of modern Israel and pondered the question ‘What is a Jew?’ will have come to this conclusion, as they see Russians, Americans, black Africans...all wearing skull caps.

There were a few times in Israel’s history when they began to realize God’s intention for them. Thus “King Solomon exceeded all the kings of the earth for riches and for wisdom. And all the earth sought to Solomon, to hear his wisdom, which God had put in his heart” (1 Kings 10:23,24). The nations of the ‘earth / land’, not all the planet, came to him. This was God’s intention- that the other nations living in land should come to Israel for teaching about their God. “The earth” here can’t mean just the land where the Israelites lived, nor can it mean the whole planet, so it must refer to the land promised to Abraham. Another example is in the time of Hezekiah. The King of Assyria boasted: “Where *are* the gods of Hamath, and of Arpad? where *are* the gods of Sepharvaim, Hena, and Ivah? have they delivered Samaria out of mine hand? Who *are* they among all the gods of the countries [*eretz*], that have delivered their country out of mine hand, that the LORD should deliver Jerusalem out of mine hand?” (2 Kings 18:34,35). These gods of the surrounding Arab nations were the gods of the land. Hezekiah prayed: “Now therefore, O LORD our God, I beseech thee, save thou us out of his hand, that all the kingdoms of the earth may know that thou *art* the LORD God, *even* thou only (

2 Kings 19:9). The Arab nations of the land whose gods hadn't saved them would now know that Yahweh was the *only* real God. The whole planet didn't come to know this. This was exactly God's intention for Israel at that time- that the other Arab Semitic nations of the land should know Him through the witness of Israel. This was also fulfilled at the time of Esther 8:17: "And many of the people of the land became Jews; for the fear of the Jews fell upon them". Yet sadly, Israel were more often like the hopelessly indebted servant in the parable- they were forgiven what they owed God, but would not forgive their neighbouring brother who was in their debt.

Prophetic Perspective

Note how the Medo-Persian empire in Es. 8:17 is called "the land"- this was God's intention, that the other nations living in the land became 'Jews', not ethnically but in spiritual terms. A Jew is therefore understood in the Esther record to mean one separated unto the worship of the God of Israel, rather than being defined by ethnic characteristics alone. Likewise the Persian empire included the kingdoms of the land promised to Abraham: "Thus saith Cyrus king of Persia, All the kingdoms of the earth hath the LORD God of heaven given me" (2 Chron. 36:23). Babylon too was dominant over "the earth" in the sense of the land promised to Abraham, not the planet. Thus Jer. 50:23: "How is the hammer of the whole earth cut asunder and broken! how is Babylon become a desolation among the nations!". "The whole earth" was the area which Babylon oppressed- largely comprised of the nations in the land promised to Abraham. Also in Ez. 31:12 Assyria's dominion is likewise described as being over all the earth / land: "And strangers, the terrible of the nations, have cut him off, and have left him: upon the mountains and in all the valleys his branches are fallen, and his boughs are broken by all the rivers of the land; and all the people of the earth are gone down from his shadow, and have left him". The Assyrian King had "gathered all the earth" beneath him previously (Is. 10:14). Judah were to be judged "in the border of Israel" i.e. in Babylon and Assyria, on the edges of the land promised to Abraham (Ez. 11:11).

This all lays the basis for the prophecy of Daniel 2- where we have a series of powers dominating 'the land', the significance of which is in the way this is programmatic for the interpretation of Daniel 7 and thereby the beats of Revelation. Elsewhere in Daniel the "land" is also Israel- consider 8:5: "And as I was considering, behold, an he goat came from the west on the face of the whole earth, and touched not the ground: and the goat *had* a notable horn between his eyes". The Grecian goat came from the West onto the territory of the "earth". This means that Greece cannot be part of the "whole earth" in this context. So here, the "earth" doesn't refer to the Greek or Roman empires / 'habitable'. The empires of Daniel 2 didn't have dominion over the whole planet; they dominated the land of Israel. This is exactly why they are of significance. The focus, therefore, of the beasts of Daniel 7 and therefore Revelation is not Europe, but Israel and the Arab nations around her, between the Nile and Euphrates.

Revelation speaks of a "beast of the earth". The OT background of this may be in Ez. 34:27-29: "And the tree of the field shall yield her fruit, and the *earth* shall yield her increase, and they shall be safe in their *land*, and shall know that I *am*

the LORD, when I have broken the bands of their yoke, and delivered them out of the hand of those that served themselves of them. And they shall no more be a prey to the heathen, neither shall the beast of the *land* devour them; but they shall dwell safely, and none shall make *them* afraid. And I will raise up for them a plant of renown, and they shall be no more consumed with hunger in the *land*". *Eretz* occurs four times in these verses. Three times it clearly refers to the land promised to Abraham. "The beast of the land" must therefore refer to a beast / power from the land promised to Abraham- nowhere else.

Ps. 2:2 uses the language of Joshua about the "kings of the land": "The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the LORD, and against his anointed". Psalm 2 is applied to those who sat in judgment upon our Lord- those who ruled over the earth / land of Israel (Acts 4:26). But the Psalm is clearly capable of a latter day application too. Which would mean that it is the powers ruling over the land [or so they think] who rise up against the Lord Jesus.

It is God's final purpose to unite all the nations in 'the land' under His rulership; they will all be His people, despite Israel's studied rejection of Him, and the extent of hatred the other nations had for Israel. In this will be exhibited a grace enough to convert the whole world, and bind them too into the gracious Kingdom of Abraham's seed. "In that day shall there be a highway out of Egypt to Assyria, and the Assyrian shall come into Egypt, and the Egyptian into Assyria, and the Egyptians shall serve with the Assyrians. In that day shall Israel be the third with Egypt and with Assyria, *even* a blessing in the midst of the land: Whom the LORD of hosts shall bless, saying, Blessed *be* Egypt my people, and Assyria the work of my hands, and Israel mine inheritance" (Is. 14:23-25). Then God will be the God of the whole land, not just Israel (Is. 54:5). Egypt, Assyria and Israel will all be linked together jointly as God's people, which Israel alone had been previously.

Ps. 102 has many connections with the events during the time of Hezekiah, when after the salvation of Zion, the surrounding nations in the land promised to Abraham came up to worship there: "The nations shall fear the name of the Lord, and all the kings of the earth thy glory" (Ps. 102:15 RV). Here, "the nations" refers specifically to "the kings of the earth / land". And one wonders how many other times the phrase "the nations...of the earth" refers specifically to the powers in the land from the Nile to the Euphrates.

The New Testament

The Greek word *Ge* is likewise used in the NT. We must remember that although the NT is written in Greek, it strongly reflects Hebrew usage of words. Again, the word commonly refers to the land of Israel. Consider some examples:

- "But I say unto you, Swear not at all; neither by heaven; for it is God's throne: Nor by the earth; for it is his footstool: neither by Jerusalem; for it is the city of the great King" (Mt. 5:34,35). This is alluding to the Jewish habit of swearing by their own land.

- “What thinkest thou, Simon? of whom do the kings of the earth take custom or tribute? of their own children, or of strangers?” (Mt. 17:25). The rulers of the earth were those ruling over Israel.

- “That upon you may come all the righteous blood shed upon the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel unto the blood of Zacharias son of Barachias, whom ye slew between the temple and the altar. Verily I say unto you, All these things shall come upon this generation” (Mt. 23:35). The blood shed on the earth means that which was shed in the land.

- Heaven and earth passing away (Mt. 24:35) follows on the Lord speaking of how all tribes of the earth / land would mourn in repentance (:30). He was speaking in the common OT idiom that used ‘heaven and earth’ for Israel. The nation would pass away in AD70, but His words would not.

- The Queen of Sheba came from the utmost parts of the earth to hear Solomon (Lk. 11:31) - not ‘the furthest place on the planet from Israel’, but, from the boundaries of the promised land.

- “But woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck, in those days! for there shall be great distress in the *land*, and wrath upon this 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. And there shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars; and upon the *earth* distress of nations, with perplexity” (Lk. 21:23-25). “Land” and “earth” here are the same words. The distress in the land of v. 23 is amplified in v. 25- all nations *in the land* will be distressed. The primary reference is clearly to the position amongst the Arab nations now living in the land promised to Abraham. If they are all forcibly brought together under ‘Babylon’ this may well be as a result of a brief, chaotic inter-Arab conflict in which Babylon emerges as a strong confederacy united only by a hatred of Israel. This is why in Is. 14 these nations from “all the earth / land” rejoice that they are freed from Babylon’s oppressive “hammer”.

When we come to Revelation, especially bearing in mind its’ constant allusions to the Old Testament, the ‘earth’ can consistently be understood as the land of Israel. All the weight of Biblical evidence is in this direction. There are undeniable similarities between the events of the seals and vials, and what happened in the land in AD66-70. The whole idea of pouring out judgment upon the ‘earth’ refers to the OT images of such judgments being poured out upon the land. Consider too how Rev. 7:1: “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...”. If the earth has corners, it can’t really be the globe, rather, an area such as the land.

“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, 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. 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. 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” (Rev. 14:6-9). This makes more sense if we imagine the nations presently living in the land promised to Abraham, confederated against Israel under Babylon, now having the Gospel preached to them. They are told *not* to confederate under Babylon. The ‘earth dwellers’ in the OT (especially in Joshua) invariably refer to the nations dwelling in the land, not the whole planet. Yet Babylon will reign over “the kings of the earth” (17:18), another phrase so often used in the OT of the nations dwelling in the land. So it would seem that generally they will reject the warning given to them to keep separate from her. Yet Revelation ends with: “the kings of the earth do bring their glory and honour into it”. The kings of the land, once confederate with Babylon, will in the very end come to Zion and accept her rather than Babylon as their capital.

Notes

(1) Duncan Heaster, *The Last Days* ch. 31.

SECTION 2

THE TRIBULATION TO COME

CHAPTER 11: THE TRIBULATION IN THE OLIVET PROPHECY

11-1 The Olivet Prophecy And The Last Days

A fundamental starting point of all Bible study is that we must not be afraid of the conclusions to which our Bible research leads us. This is especially true in the field of prophecy. God's prophetic word has always required faith to believe it and visualize its fulfilment; it invariably predicts things which at the time seem almost impossible to conceive of. Think of Noah proclaiming destruction by flood to a self-satisfied world that had probably never seen rain. Or of Jeremiah pursing his lips and sticking to his grim message of doom for Babylon, the great and invincible power of his day. Brother Thomas nailing his colours to the mast concerning the return of the Jews was of the same ilk.

It is therefore likely that interpretations of prophecy which will later be proved correct, may in the short term appear unlikely in the light of the present world situation. Our faith in the supremacy of God's inspired word should help us accept this. And even on a human level, it is worth reflecting that the course of human history is full of dramatic, unexpected changes. World events seem to change with increasing rapidity. For example, who would have thought in 1929 that within the next 15 years the affluent, powerful, respected Jewry of Europe would be systematically persecuted and coolly exterminated by their thousands- without a whimper of significant protest from the Gentiles living in the region?

Guilty?

We may be guilty of increasingly seeking to interpret prophecy by trying to fit it around current events, to the exclusion of studying the Scriptures and letting them *alone* paint the likely picture of the future. We need to be prepared to accept that they may prophecy things which the contemporary world scene would not appear to countenance. Many times our expositors have had to re-work time periods and prophetic interpretations to show how they have been fulfilled by world events.

This section suggests that as natural Israel will be persecuted in the last days, so spiritual Israel will follow suit. There is a large amount of Biblical information concerning the latter day tribulation of the saints, especially in the Olivet prophecy. This prophecy has many connections with those of Daniel and Revelation, which refer to the same persecution period. Obviously there is ample room for divergence of opinion in this area. The following 'persecution thesis' is put forward only in a spirit of serious suggestion.

The Olivet Prophecy: All About The Last Days

The disciples (in their childish way) showed the Lord the greatness of the temple, and he commented that soon it would be destroyed. They asked the obvious question: When? Usually, the Lord didn't reply directly to questions; he gave answers which branched out into something altogether more comprehensive than the original question (Consider Mt. 13:10,11; 15:2,3; Mk. 10:4,5; Lk. 17:20; Jn. 3:4,5; 4:9,10; 6:28,29; 8:53,54; 11:8,9; 14:22,23). *Nearly every example of the Lord Jesus answering a question includes this feature.* To the disciples, the destruction of the temple meant the end of the age- it was a calamity. They assumed that if the temple was destroyed, it must be replaced immediately by their Jesus coming again with his Messianic Kingdom. Their minds were still not suitably distanced from their Judaist background. They asked *one* question: " When shall these things (the destruction of the temple) be? and what shall be the sign when all these things shall be fulfilled?" (Mk. 13:4). Mt. 24:4 can make it seem that they asked two questions: " When shall these things be? And what shall be the sign of they coming, and of the end of the world?" . But the parallel record in Mk. 13:4 makes it clear that actually these were parts of the same question concerning the temple's destruction. To the disciples, the coming of Christ, the end of the world and the temple's destruction were all the same event. The Lord answered their question by speaking of how there would be the destruction of the temple , but his real coming and the main ending of this world would be at a future date. His answer was therefore fundamentally relevant to his second coming, although built into it was some reference to the destruction of the temple in AD70.

As he so often does, the Lord turned round the terms of the question. They thought his " coming" would be at the temple's destruction, and so they asked for signs of his " coming" . But Christ shows that this wasn't a correct view: his real " coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory" (Mt. 24:30) would not be then, but after all the various signs he described were fulfilled. He was surely saying: 'OK the temple will be destroyed, and many of the signs I'm giving will have some application to that period; but the destruction of the temple isn't the sign of my coming. Note the signs I give you, and watch for their fulfilment: and *then* you'll know when to expect my coming'.

It's a tragedy, a real tragedy, that a school of thought has arisen (based on an expositional blunder of John Thomas) which insists that Christ "coming in the clouds of heaven" refers not to his second coming, but to some mystical, invisible 'coming' of Christ in AD70. This is a perpetuation of the disciples' mistaken perspective.

If we insist that the Olivet prophecy concerns AD70 and not the last days, we *must* answer the following points:

- The prophecy is an answer to the question concerning when Christ would come. The Lord's answer, especially in Mk. 13, reads as if it is a flowing narrative, leading up to the crux: "Then...they shall see the Son of man *coming* in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds" (Mt. 24:30,31). No way can this refer to anything other than the second coming; and the whole prophecy has been leading up to this.

- The flow of the prophecy is indicated by the repetition of words like "then": "*Then* shall they deliver you up...*then* shall many be offended...*then* shall the end come...*then* let them which be in Judea...*then* shall be great tribulation...*then* if any man shall say unto you, Here is Christ...*immediately after the tribulation of those days* ("in *those days*, after that tribulation", Mk. 13:24)...*then* shall appear the sign of the Son of man...*then* shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the son of man coming" (Mt. 24). There is no suggestion here of any break in application, from AD70 to the last days. If the reference to Christ coming in glory with the Angels is accepted as referring to the last days, but the earlier verses of the prophecy to AD70 alone, we have to find the point where Christ breaks from AD70 to the last days. And I would suggest such a point cannot be found.

- Mk. 13 speaks of how "in those days" those in Judaea should flee to the mountains; "for *in those days* shall be affliction, such as was not from the beginning of creation...neither shall be (referring to Dan. 12:1 concerning our last days)...except that the Lord had shortened *those days*...*in those days*, after that tribulation...*then* shall they see the son of man coming". Surely "in those days" shouts for a continuous application to the same "days" - the days of the second coming. At best, "those days" can have a primary reference to the events of AD70, but the *main* fulfilment of the whole prophecy must be in the last days. This point seems impossible to answer by those who disallow any reference to the second coming.

- The Olivet prophecy doesn't finish at the end of Mt. 24; the chapter break with chapter 25 is unfortunate. The context runs straight on. The Lord spoke a number of parables at the end of the prophecy, which teach us the need for watchfulness against his coming. Each of them speak of his "coming" and the state of his ecclesia. They refer back to various parts of the Olivet prophecy. *Without any doubt* their main relevance is to the second coming; whatever minor relevance they may have to AD70, when they speak of the Lord coming and judging us, they speak of his second coming. They are a further elaboration on the things of which

he had been speaking in the prophecy: and therefore the prophecy must basically concern his second coming and the state of the ecclesia at the time of the end.

- Some parts of the Olivet prophecy had a limited application in the first century (e.g. Mt. 24:14 = 10:18), but this doesn't mean that this is the *only* fulfilment of it. It is a feature of prophecy that it often has a short term fulfilment in order to validate the prophet in the eyes of his own generation. It would be strange indeed if the Olivet prophecy had *only* a short term fulfilment.

- When these things begin to come to pass, we can know that the Kingdom of God is at hand. There's no way this applies to AD70. It clearly refers to the last days.

11-2 Does The Olivet Prophecy Have A Break In Fulfillment?

Some have tried to impose a break in the Olivet prophecy between Lk.21:24 and v.25, saying that only after v.24 the prophecy applies to the last days. The following problems have to be tackled if this is done:

- Mt. 24:14 is located in the first half of Lk. 21 (i.e. before v.24, in the so-called AD70 section): " this Gospel of the Kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall *the end* come" . The first century fulfillment of this was only typical of the major, latter day fulfillment. " The end" can hardly refer to AD70!

- The 'gap' between Lk. 21:24 and 25 is matched by Mk. 13:24: " But in those days, after that tribulation" - there is no room here for a gap of 1900 years! The prophecy flows straight on!

- v.24 is quoting Zech.12:3 (LXX) concerning the last days.

- In what sense were " the times of the Gentiles" fulfilled in 1967? Plenty of Gentiles, especially in the developing world, are still being baptized.

- The signs of v.9-11 are obviously being fulfilled now and will be to an increasing extent, given the irreversibly worsening world situation.

- V.22 " These be the days of vengeance that all things that are written may be fulfilled" - language of the last days. " All things" were not fulfilled in AD70.

- V.25,26 were fulfilled prior to AD70, not just in the last days. The description of Heaven and earth passing away is highly applicable to the ending of the Jewish heavens and earth in AD70; 2 Peter 3 uses similar language about this.

- The suggested break in fulfillment between AD70 and the last days runs into particular difficulty at Mk.13:24: " In those days (of v.6-23, which some limit to AD70 alone), after that tribulation, the sun shall be darkened..." - i.e. the tribulation of the first part of the prophecy is in the " days" of the second part of it. Thus the entire prophecy must have reference to both AD70 and the last days.

So it appears that we have to face the uncanny conclusion: if the whole of the Olivet prophecy applies to the last days, then the verses about persecution of the saints must also come true. For many readers approaching the Olivet prophecy seriously for the first time, what has been laboured at such length above may seem painfully obvious. It will seem strange to them that some argue so strongly and even aggressively that the Olivet prophecy has no relevance to our days. I have often wondered *why* there has to be such enthusiasm to disprove this relevance. Is it not something to do with the fact that deep down, far beyond our conscious thought processes, we just can't brook the idea that we could be in for a persecution which will shake our little cosy world inside out?

Valid Interpretation?

We need to examine more carefully how we have used the Olivet prophecy in our preaching to the world. For ease of reference we will stick mainly with Luke 21. As with many Bible prophecies, this had an initial fulfillment in AD70 as well as a latter day one. The clarity of its reference to the last days before Christ's return is frequently hammered home by Christian preachers. Time and again we put the graphs on the Powerpoint, show the ghastly slides from Oxfam- and then read Luke 21:9-11: " Wars and commotions...nation shall rise against nation...great earthquakes, famines and pestilences...fearful sights and great signs" . And yes, we make a convincing case. The lecturer then does a dramatic Biblical leap-frog to v.24: " Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled" - cue to talk about the present position of Israel. Next, v.25,26: " Distress of nations with perplexity, men's hearts failing them for fear" - plenty to talk about there. " And then shall they see the Son of man coming" (v.27)- the real crunch point of the lecture.

Now there is nothing wrong with interpreting Luke 21 this way. Only someone blind to reason could deny that there is a marked correspondence between this chapter and the present world condition. Indeed, what we are now seeing is but a prelude to the real time of trouble and persecution: " Wars...famines...pestilences and earthquakes...all these are the beginning of (the) birth pangs" . These labour pains will result in the glorious birth of the Spirit into the Kingdom (Mt.24:6-8). But we must not overlook Lk.21:12-23, which are all about the persecution of God's people " before all these (things)" , v.12. It seems that the real time of world crisis will only be seen after a period of active persecution, and we are therefore only experiencing a very small fulfillment of these prophecies now. In the same way, we quote Ezekiel's prophecies regarding the fruitfulness of Israel and the return of Israel in the Kingdom as having some fulfillment now, in the present re-establishment of the Jewish state.

The greatest signs

The watchful student will note that the persecution of God's people spoken of in Lk. 21 is hard to slot in as coming before the earthquakes and famines in the parallel records of Mark 13 and Matthew 24. A glance at Strong's concordance will reveal that the Greek for " before" can also mean 'more importantly than'. Now this fits the lock even better. Jesus is saying 'The greatest indication that I will soon be back is when " they shall lay their hands on you and persecute you" - a far more

important and obvious sign to you who suffer it than earthquakes, famines etc...'. So if there is no period of persecution, will there be a second coming? Notice that in v.12-20 Jesus is not talking to the natural Jews but to the believers. They were to be delivered up to the synagogues (i.e. Jewish powers), and the descriptions of being given the right word to speak in courts, and being betrayed and put to death, find ample fulfillment in the record of the early church in Acts. It is at this time that "ye shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies" (v.20), a situation clearly foretold in the prophets as occurring before the second coming. It could be that the latter day witness to Israel that takes place within the land results in the Jewish synagogues brutally persecuting the preachers (Lk. 21:12). Orthodox Jewish response to some Christian preaching makes this not hard to believe.

"Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled" (v.24) is a direct quote from the Septuagint of Zech.12:3. This is a prophecy of the latter day invasion of Jerusalem just prior to Christ's intervention. This treading down of Jerusalem is probably that predicted in Zech.14:1,2 also. "The times of the Gentiles" connects with the 42 months downtreading of Jerusalem in Rev.11:2, thus suggesting a 3.5 year period of Gentile domination of Jerusalem in the last days- and an identical period of persecution of the saints?

We have tended to think that wars, famines, plagues etc. are the clearest signs of the second coming. Yet this view of the Olivet prophecy fails to appreciate the context. The preceding Lk. 20 and Mt. 23 concern the weaknesses of the ecclesia of Israel at the Lord's time. The parables which follow directly on from the Olivet prophecy are *all* concerning the state of the ecclesia *at the time of the Lord's coming*. The prophecy itself has the state of *the ecclesia* as its main focus. Again, notice how the Lord turned the disciples' question round. They were so worried about when the temple would be destroyed. He gave them some relevant signs, but basically said: 'Don't worry so much about the physical temple. Watch for the well being of the ecclesia, the spiritual temple. Weep not for the temple, but for yourselves. Don't get too caught up with the feeling that the world / age has come to an end when the temple's destroyed; look instead for the day of my coming'.

Thus the persecution of God's people was spoken of by the Lord as being one of the clearest signs. And he also emphasized that apostasy within the ecclesia would be the other major sign. When they asked him for the signs, Mk. 13:5 says that Jesus *began* by warning them of deception from false teachers. The way the NT writers allude to this passage indicates that they saw this deception as not coming from the crazy bogus-Messiahs of the world, but from false teachers *within the ecclesia*, sometimes supported by apparent possession of the Holy Spirit (Eph. 5:6; 2 Thess. 2:3; Tit. 1:10; 2 Jn. 7). A state of total ecclesial apostasy was the sign which Jesus *began* with, according to Mk. 13:5.

The reader who pays attention to detail will note a significant use of pronouns in the Olivet prophecy: "ye" seems to refer to the faithful minority, who would (e.g.) understand, be persecuted, perish, lift up their heads, and finally endure to the end. "The many" (Gk. the majority) in the ecclesia would fall away. No fewer than four times does the Lord stress that "the majority" would be deceived by false prophets, be offended, and have their love wax cold (Mt. 24:5,10,11,12). Probably he connected this, at least in his own mind, with his earlier statement that "the

many" would be called to his truth, but not chosen (Mt. 22:14). This difference between "the many / majority" in the ecclesia and the minority of suffering faithful is a theme in the parables which are an appendix to the Olivet prophecy.

11-3 An Exposition Of The Olivet Prophecy

Finer details

We will now have a closer look at the text of Luke 21.

v.8 "Be not deceived" is extensively quoted later in the NT concerning the need not be deceived by false teachers *within the ecclesia* (1 Cor. 6:9,15,33; Gal. 6:17; 2 Tim. 3:13, as Mt. 24:4 = 1 Jn. 3:7). The deceivers Christ spoke of were not just bogus Messiahs out in the world, but apparently Spirit-gifted brethren who will arise within the ecclesia.

v.12 "The synagogues...the prisons" - implying both a religious and civil persecution of the saints?

v.13 "It shall turn to you for a testimony" is hard to interpret. Could it mean that the way we respond to our trials during the tribulation will determine our verdict at the judgment? It will be a testimony in our favour at the day of judgment. In view of this, "Settle it *therefore* in your hearts" to make this witness in God's strength (Lk.21:14). "In the endurance of you (in the tribulation), ye will gain the souls of you" (Lk.21:19 Marshall's Interlinear). The run up to the tribulation will provoke a "praying always, that ye may be accounted worthy...to stand before the Son of man" (Lk.21:36). Peter describes the tribulation of the believers in the run up to AD70 (and therefore the last days too) as judgment taking place on the house of God, in which even the righteous are "scarcely saved" (1 Pet.4:17,18). This suggests that the last generation of believers will only be saved due to their response to the tribulation which comes upon them; but even then, only by the skin of their teeth. Lot in Sodom and the parable of the virgins, among others, are hints that the last generation of believers will be in a weak state.

v.16,18 "Some of you shall they cause to be put to death...but there shall not an hair of your head perish" can only be reconciled by appreciating how miraculously the disciples were preserved in order to inspire and co-ordinate the rest of the body. Perhaps a similar group of elders ("the two witnesses" ? See later) will be preserved in the last days too.

v.15 "I will give you a mouth and wisdom, which all your adversaries shall not be able to gainsay". This is alluding to Ex.4:12, where God tells Moses at the time of the Egyptian persecution of God's people, "I will be with thy mouth and teach thee what thou shalt say". This persecution led to intensified prayer to God, resulting in the deliverance of the suffering saints at Passover time, after a period of especial distress and 'time of trouble' for the surrounding world due to the plagues. After this deliverance, God's people went into the wilderness and were declared God's Kingdom. We have earlier shown how all these events form a remarkable latter day prophecy.

This verse also suggests that the gifts of the Spirit may be given to some in the Elijah ministry in order to enable them to make a more powerful witness (as in Rev.11:6). The fact they are given personally by Christ would indicate that in some way, Christ is already back at this stage. Time and again we will see how the prophecies of events in the last days are

ambiguous as to whether Christ is already back at the time of their fulfilment, or whether they herald his return. Seeing that we will never know the exact time of Christ's return, this is understandable. Similarly Joel 2 prophesies the pouring out of the gifts " before the great and terrible day of the Lord" (v.31). Malachi surely refers to this passage when prophesying the Elijah ministry " before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord" (Mal.4:5). This suggests that the 3.5 year Elijah ministry of the last days (James 5:17) will be accompanied by Spirit gifts, and will coincide with the time of persecution. Note that the gifts were given " before the day of the Lord" in AD70 too. It is possible that because of this possession of the gifts by 'Elijah', false teachers within the ecclesia at the end will also claim to possess them (Mt.24:24), so convincingly that all but the elect within the ecclesia will be duped into following them.

Yet it must be stressed that it is a feature of the gifts that they are unmistakable and obvious to identify (cp. Acts 4:16); it will be evident enough if and when they are poured out in the last days.

v.16 " Ye shall be betrayed both by parents, and brethren, and kinsfolk, and friends and some of you shall they cause to be put to death" .

This indicates that the persecuting power will infiltrate the ecclesias, as the Jews and Romans did to the early church in order to bring about their persecution. This theme is demonstrated in more detail in " The man of sin" later.

v.17 " Ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake" . This hating by all men may imply a world-wide persecution.

v.18 " There shall not an hair of your head perish" - primarily concerning the disciples, seeing that some believers were to die for their faith in the period around AD70 (cp. v.16). The figure of not a hair of the head perishing is used in the Old Testament concerning sudden deliverance from what seemed like certain death, e.g. Jonathan in 1 Sam.14:45. This is fitting, seeing that " except those days should be shortened there should no flesh be saved" (Mt.24:22). It is also the language of the faithful few among an Israel who wouldn't stand up and be counted being miraculously preserved from Babylonian tribulation (Dan. 3:27). There are many instructive parallels here with the latter day tribulation, which the majority of natural and spiritual Israel may try to avoid by some tokenistic acquiescence to the dictates of the King of Babylon.

" Saved" here (" there should no flesh be saved") implies 'delivered'; it will appear that none of us will survive the tribulation, " but for the elects sake those days shall be shortened" and we will be saved by the second coming. Thus 2 Pet.3:12,15 reminds us that by our prayers and spiritual development, the days before the second coming will be shortened. If they were not, even the elect would lose their faith (Mt. 24:22)- showing how those of us who are alive at Christ's coming will *barely* survive the spiritual traumas of the last days. The virgins were sleeping when they should have been watching; and Peter says that the righteous in the last generation (see context) will *scarcely* be saved (1 Pet. 4:18). So it would appear that the days of the final tribulation will be shortened, although in another sense the coming of the Lord is delayed in order to allow our greater spiritual development (Mt. 25:5). This 'delay' is why the harvest will be "over-ripe" for reaping (Rev. 14:15 RV)- or is this a reference to the lack of zeal of preachers to Israel in the last days, not harvesting the ready fruit? The Lord likens the final tribulation to the travail of a woman to bring forth her child. But we read in Is.

66:7,8 in this same context of Israel's latter day suffering: "Before she travailed, she brought forth: before her pain came, she was delivered of a man child. Who hath heard such a thing?... for as soon as Zion travailed she brought forth her children". This seems to imply that the expected period of Zion's travail will be cut short, and she will give spiritual birth far quicker than expected. Perhaps the Lord was alluding to this passage when He spoke of how "the days" [of Zion's labour?] shall be shortened.

A quick survey of the present scene would indicate (even without the Biblical evidence) that only major tribulation will make us take our spiritual responsibilities seriously. Jesus may well have been predicting how the apostles would generally be miraculously delivered from the persecution of the Christians in order to co-ordinate the rest of the flock in this difficult time. Does this point to a similar preservation of a group of Christian elders in the tribulation to come?

v.21 " Then let them which be in Judaea flee to the mountains" means that there will be Jewish believers in Jerusalem in the last days, seeing the whole prophecy has a latter day application. Dan. 12:1 says that in the final tribulation of Israel, those Jews who are " written in the book" , i.e. who are acceptable saints (Ex. 32:32; Rev. 21:27) will be delivered. So there will be a minority in latter day natural Israel who have not bowed the knee to Baal, as in Elijah's time- which is typical of the situation at the latter day Elijah ministry.

" Pray ye that your flight (the time of your flight) be not in winter" , Mk. 13:18 adds. This indicates that the exact timing of events in the tribulation will be changeable in accordance with the fervency of our latter day prayers. An AD70 application for this is hard to find; it may be that the exact timing of the Roman offer of amnesty was dependent on the intensity of prayer by the besieged Jerusalem ecclesia. That ecclesia, rent as they were by schism, false doctrine and materialism (if we accept the evidence that Hebrews was addressed to them) was a type of the faithful remnant of the last days. They were finally sorted out by the events of AD67 - 70, cp. the latter day tribulation.

v. 28 " When these things begin to come to pass, then look up (Gk. un-bend), and lift up your heads" may suggest that the believers will be bowed down in bondage in some sense. Alternatively, we can read it simply as a command to stand up (as NIV), which would connect with the slumbering virgins, *none* of them standing ready to welcome their Lord as they should have been. It is evident from a close reading of the Olivet prophecy that the Lord is using his pronouns carefully. Sometimes he speaks of " ye" , sometimes of " they" . It seems that the " ye" refer to the disciples and the faithful remnant in the latter day ecclesia, and the " they" either to the natural Jews or to " the many" (majority) in the ecclesia who will fall away. " *They* shall see the Son of man coming in a cloud...when these things (leading up to the Son of man coming) begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up *your* heads" (Lk. 21:27,28). This may suggest that the majority, the " they" category, are shocked by the coming of the Lord, but the faithful minority stand up from their slumber and are expecting his coming.

v.34 " And take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and cares of this life, so that day come upon you unawares" . It could fairly be asked 'Why is there this warning, if the believers of the last days are to be actively persecuted?'. This verse implies that the world will be in a materially prosperous state in the last days; it will be possible for us to become so preoccupied with it that we do not prepare for the time of tribulation, so that it comes as a sudden surprise. Of if " that day"

is the day of Christ's coming, then it may be that by opting out of the persecution, we will be able to continue to enjoy the materialism of the world, in which case we will be caught unawares by the second coming. Thus while the saints are persecuted, the world enjoys a time of prosperity as it did in the times of Lot and Noah.

v.36 " Watch ye therefore and pray always that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things...and to stand before the son of man" . " Escape" can mean 'to suddenly flee away from'- the same idea of sudden deliverance from persecution which cropped up in our notes on v.18. Those who do not watch and pray will be unable to flee out of the tribulation, as Lot's wife was unable to. This idea of escaping connects with 1 Thess.5:3 (we will see presently that this is just one of many links between the Olivet prophecy and Thessalonians): " When they shall say (in the ecclesia) Peace and safety, then sudden destruction cometh upon them...and they shall not escape" . The language of " peace and safety" is often used in the Old Testament to describe the calm words of Israel's false teachers, as they confidently asserted that all was spiritually well within Israel (Jer.6:14; 5:12; 14:13; Mic.3:5; Ez.13:10; Dt.29:19). Those who do not think that there is peace and safety in the ecclesia and who face up to the reality of 'watching and praying' to spiritually survive the last days, are those who will 'escape'.

Matthew 24

A number of verses in the other accounts of the Olivet prophecy also call for attention.

- A comparison of Mt.24:11 and 24 suggests that there will be two particular periods of false prophet activity- at the outbreak of the persecution, and then immediately prior to the Lord's return. This latter group reason that Christ's second coming has already occurred in some non-literal form. Thus v.27 speaks as if the clear return of Christ in the clouds will prove them wrong. These men would equate with Peter's description of some within the ecclesia of the last days saying " Where is the promise of his coming?" .

- Christ gives a particular sign which will encourage the persecuted that they really are in the last times: " When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation...stand in the holy place...then shall be great tribulation" (Mt.24:15). This seems to parallel Lk.21:20: " When ye shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies, then know that the desolation thereof is nigh" . The tribulation that is to come upon the land of Israel, with the placing of a particular abomination in Jerusalem, will be the sign that spiritual Israel too must suffer. And at any moment now the oft foretold Arab conquest of Israel in the last days could begin.

- " Immediately after the tribulation...shall all the tribes of the earth (land- of Israel) mourn, and then shall they see the Son of Man coming" (v.29,30). Then follows the fig tree parable. The chronology seems clear- a tribulation, repentance of Israel (note the allusions to the mourning of Zech.12 and 13), and then the second coming, with the fig tree parable about the repentance of Israel added as a footnote to this part of the prophecy.

- Mt.24:19 " Woe unto them that are with child" may well match Paul's warning against marrying in the last days in 1 Cor.7.

- " Great tribulation such as was not since the beginning of the world" (v.21) may refer to the beginning of the Jewish world at Sinai and their persecution in Egypt just prior to that. Our

coming tribulation, and that of natural Israel, must therefore exceed that of Israel in Egypt before we receive the Passover deliverance- in the form of the second coming.

Mark 13

Fellowshipping His Sufferings

The Olivet prophecy as recorded in Mark 13 has many allusions to the sufferings of our Lord, thereby suggesting that our sufferings during the coming tribulation will make us fellowship the cross as never before. The whole idea of darkness, earthquake, open graves, rocks shaking etc, which we read of in the Olivet and other last day prophecies is evidently the language of the crucifixion. The description of suffering before " the end" comes (Mk. 13:7,13; Mt. 24:14) invites connection with Christ's death also being described as " the end" , coming as it did after a period of suffering (Mt. 26:58; Lk. 22:37; Jn. 13:1). This connection is strengthened by the way in which each record of the Olivet prophecy leads straight on into the sufferings of the Lord Jesus. There is to be a "little while" between the death of those persecuted in the last days, and the coming of the Lord; using the very same word which John uses for the "little while" of the three days of the Lord's death (Rev. 6:11; Jn. 16:16-19). Rev. 12 speaks of how the dead bodies of the tribulation victims will rest for three and a half days, just as the Lord's body did. They will fully fellowship His death and therefore His resurrection. Similarly, the idea of all God's word being fulfilled by the Lord's death (Lk. 24:44; Jn. 19:28; Acts 3:18) follows on from the prophecy that all will be fulfilled at the time of suffering which heralds the second coming (Lk. 21:22). Mt. 24:13 commends those who endure to the end- of the great tribulation. The same word occurs in Heb. 12:2,3 about Christ enduring the cross- we fellowship the cross during the last day tribulation. The word in Mt. 24:29 for "the tribulation" is used in Col. 1:24 about the afflictions of Christ. And as the Lord's critics could not find a way to answer Him, so in our tribulation, all our adversaries will not be able to gainsay us (Lk. 21:15). The Lord in Jn. 16:2,4,32 used the term "the hour" to refer both to the 'hour' of His own sufferings, and the 'hour' of tribulation for His people. He clearly saw what He was about to endure as being repeated in the latter day tribulation of those for whom He was about to die.

The other tribulation prophecies, notably in Revelation, are also shot through with allusions to Christ's passion.

" They shall deliver you up to the councils...	As Christ to the Sannhedrin
beaten...	Christ buffeted
rulers and kings for a testimony...	Chief priests, Herod, Pilate
brother shall betray the brother...	Judas; Peter's denial?
turn back to take up his garment...	John Mark's linen garment
false Christs...	Barabbas
the sun shall be darkened...	As at the crucifixion
watch and pray...	" Watch with me" ; Gethsemane

at even...	Last Supper
at midnight...	Gethsemane
at the cock crowing...	Peter's denials
in the morning...	Trial and crucifixion
find you sleeping"	Disciples in Gethsemane

As our exposition proceeds, we will see that such allusions to Christ's sufferings are a constant feature of the tribulation prophecies. The purpose of the tribulations of the last days will be to make us truly fellowship our Lord's agonizing, to make us know for ourselves that "if we suffer with him, we shall also reign with him". It is fair to assume that those who really try to shoulder their Lord's cross now will not need to go through such an experience. The following are some of the many connections between the experiences of the latter day saints, and the sufferings of Christ:

- Peter's letters were written to strengthen the faithful in the problems of the AD70 'last days', as well as our own. They are full of reference to Christ's sufferings (e.g. 1 Pet.1:11,19,21-24; 3:18; 4:1). "The fiery trial which is to try you (is cause for rejoicing because it makes you) partakers of Christ's sufferings" (4:13).
- The idea of enduring to the end and being saved (Mt. 24:13) is the spirit of the Lord's struggle on the cross (Heb. 12:2,3).
- The dead bodies of the latter day witnesses are left in the street of the city "where *also our Lord* was crucified" (Rev.11:8)
- At the end of the saints' latter day tribulation, the Most Holy is opened (Rev.15:2,5), just as it was on Christ's death; as if His hanging on the cross is parallel to the saints' tribulation. The Angels comment "It is done" when the saints are finally delivered (Rev.16:17), as our Lord could say "It is finished" at the end of His sufferings. The great earthquake which is then described (Rev.16:18) matches the earthquakes at Christ's death and resurrection.
- Speaking of the time in the tribulation when "a man's foes shall be they of his own household", Jesus comments: "he that taketh not his cross (then), and followeth after me, is not worthy" (Mt.10:38). Our response to our trials then will effectively be our judgment seat.
- The sufferings of that time are called "birth pangs" (Mt.24:8); exactly the description given to our Lord's painful death (Acts 2:24).
- "The sun shall be darkened" after the tribulation (Mk.13:24), as it was when Jesus died (Lk.23:45).
- Mic. 7:2-9 is a clear prophecy of Christ's sufferings. But embedded in it are words which are quoted in Lk. 21:16 and Mt. 10:36 concerning the latter day tribulation of the believers: "the son dishonoureth the father...a man's enemies are the men of his own house".
- In similar manner, some of the prophecies of Israel's latter day sufferings speak in the same context of those of Christ. Mic. 5:1 is an example: "...he hath laid siege against us: they shall smite the judge of Israel (Christ) with a rod upon the cheek". The whole of Amos 5 can be

scanned for connections with both the future tribulation of Israel, and also the sufferings of Christ.

- As He hung on the cross, our Lord quoted part of His Olivet prophecy to the women who stood by (Lk.23:29=Mt.24:19), concerning the sufferings of the believers in the 'last days'. Here we see His matchless selflessness; going out of His own sufferings, to think, with anguish, how they would be experienced by His followers in the tribulation. " Weep not for me, but weep for yourselves...for if they do these things (to) a green tree (the spiritually healthy Lord Jesus), what shall be done (to) the dry" , the spiritually barren tree of Israel. This is a superb essay in the Lord's selflessness and minimizing of his own sufferings: he felt that what he was going through was less than what the spiritually weak would have to go through in the AD70 tribulation (and that of the last days).

Our sense of unity with the Father and Son during the final tribulation will be considerable. God Himself in that period will be like a travailing woman crying out (Is. 42:14)- and yet that very image is used about the pangs that will come upon both the world and the church as they suffer. God will be with us, sharing our fear, pain and struggle, until the day finally breaks.

Matthew 10:16-39

A careful reading of Mt.10:16-39 reveals many links with the Olivet prophecies concerning the latter day persecution of the saints; verses 17-21 are effectively quoted in Lk.21:12-18. However, Mt.10:16 prefaces all this by saying that these tribulations will attend those who go out preaching the Gospel. It is not unreasonable to conclude that during the 3.5 year tribulation period there will be a zealous outreach world-wide which will no doubt encourage our persecution. At this time, when many believers " shall be offended" (spiritually stumble) and " the love of many (true believers) shall wax cold" for the truth (Mt.24:10,11), the " Gospel of the Kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come" (Mt.24:14)- i.e. the full establishment of the Kingdom. This in itself indicates the broad spiritual diversity there will be in the latter day body of Christ; a mixture of red hot zeal for witnessing and fellowshiping of our Lord's sufferings at one extreme, to cold indifference and doctrinal unsoundness at the other.

" Ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake; but he that endureth to the end shall be saved" (Mt.10:22). The Greek phrase " the end" is normally used in the New Testament, and always in the Olivet Prophecy, regarding the second coming. This verse therefore has a distinctly literal application- he who spiritually survives the tribulation until the second coming will be saved fully, by receiving eternal life at the judgment. " It is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father which speaketh in you" (Mt.10:22) is another indication that the miraculous gifts may be evident around the time of the last day tribulation.

There are many other details in Mt.10:16-39 which fit in with our persecution thesis.

v.23 " When they persecute you in this city, flee ye into another...ye shall not have gone over the cities of Israel till the Son of man be come" . The coming of the Son of man must have reference to the last days as well as to AD70. His coming will be at a time of high speed witnessing, fuelled by persecution. The reference to the cities of Israel may imply that there will be a group of believers within the land, perhaps in the role of the Elijah ministry, witnessing the Gospel to the Jews.

v.27 " What ye hear in the ear (in quiet halls at the moment), that preach ye (then) upon the housetops" . This seems to be giving special encouragement to persevere in preaching during the tribulation. There is a connection here with Mt.24:17, which advises those upon the housetops to go with Christ at the time of his coming. This implies that at the moment of Christ's coming there will be zealous " upon the housetops" preaching by the faithful. It is only persecution that will fire our community with that kind of zeal for evangelism, so that men may say of us that we have turned the world upside down by the power of our preaching, making us " the sect everywhere spoken against" . These descriptions of the early church are yet to become true of its latter day counterpart.

v.28 " Fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul" - some of us will perish in the tribulation. " Some of you shall they cause to be put to death" (Lk.21:16). " He that loseth his life for my sake shall find it" (v.39).

v.31 " Fear ye not" . The faithful will have peace within them as they both consider and experience these things.

v.32,33 " Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men...but whosoever shall deny me" . This may imply that those who do not participate in the world-wide witness will declare themselves unworthy. However, the Greek for 'confess' really means to assent- as if it will only be by an apparently nominal indication of our faith that we fly our colours- cp. 'only' having to burn a pinch of incense to Caesar to avoid death in the first century. In the light of this, there is a need to keep our conscience finely tuned so that we are ready to make or refuse the apparently insignificant action or statement which will result in the world rejecting us. Similarly, a 'mere' confession of belief in the name of Jesus in the first century resulted in being cast out of the synagogue and socially ostracized (Jn.9:22). This idea of denying Jesus is picked up in 2 Tim.2:12, again in a persecution context: " If we be dead with him, we shall also live with him: if we suffer, we shall also reign with him: *if we deny him*, he also will deny us" . This parallels not denying Jesus in the tribulation with dying with him; another example of our tribulations then being described in terms of Christ's sufferings.

v.34-36 " Think not that I am come to send peace on earth (i.e. in this life)...I am come to set a man at variance against his father...a man's foes shall be they of his own household" . This is not really true today to such a degree. It may just be possible that the Greek tenses here mean 'I am coming to set a man at variance...', implying that in the period of Christ's return there will be betrayal within Christian families, as made explicit in Lk.21:16.

v.37 " He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me" - apart from betrayal by family members, the persecutors will also put pressure on the relatives of believers as a blackmail to make them renounce their faith. The consequences of all this, given the close-knit nature of Christian families, are horrendous. But how can we skip over the verses we don't like the sound of?

v.38 " He that taketh not his cross and followeth after me is not worthy of me...he that receiveth a prophet...shall receive a prophet's reward" . This is further proof that during the tribulation there will be an especial fellowship of the Lord's sufferings on the cross. The reference to receiving itinerant preachers fits in to the picture of a major world-wide witness. Those who assist us during the tribulation preaching will be blessed- as those who blessed the persecuted Jews of the 1940s were blessed.

Israel's suffering in Egypt is the prototype for our tribulation. Their sufferings eventually resulted in a "mixed multitude" leaving Egypt with them, presumably as a result of their preaching to them. There appear to be two stages to the coming of Christ. The virgins were told by the cry at midnight that the bridegroom was coming; there is then a delay, before they finally meet Christ (Mt.25:1-10). Song 5:4,7 describes Christ knocking on the door, the bride (the saints) rising to open, but being confused at finding him vanished (cp. the virgins finding the unexpected delay). On account of her preaching about the bride (Christ), the woman (the saints) was then severely persecuted: "The watchmen...found me, they smote me, they wounded me". It is likely that this 'delay' period will be the 3.5 years of persecution. We should therefore not think that because the tribulation has not started, Christ cannot come today. The news that 'He's back!' may be the beginning of the tribulation period.

Such a 3.5 year gap between being told Christ is about to come and his actual return would provide ample opportunity for many to fall away- "Where is the promise of his coming" which had been made a year or two ago? The midnight coming of the Lord to the harassed disciples on the sea of Galilee/ nations may well be typical of his second coming. In a seemingly hopeless position, lashed by the sea of nations, the disciples will suddenly find themselves in their desired haven. The Lord saw their toil and took pity, as God looked down and saw the toil and affliction of Israel under persecution in Egypt, and then 'came down' to deliver them. Careful analysis of this incident provides us with a two stage model: a midnight coming of Christ to his persecuted, spiritually weak brethren, and then the wind (cp. persecution) ceasing a short while later when the Lord actually came into the ship (Mt.14:32). Jn.6:17 implies that Christ's appearing was later than the disciples thought He had promised; which even more exactly fits our position. As they were tempted to doubt Him, so are we in the last days. "O (we) of little faith!"

Preaching in the tribulation

The world-wide preaching activity mentioned earlier will be related to the persecution. "Ye shall be hated of all nations for my name's sake" connects with "this Gospel of the Kingdom shall be preached for a witness unto all nations" (Mt.24:39,14). "My name's sake" and the Gospel of the Kingdom's sake are interchangeable expressions (Mt.19:12,29; Mk.10:29; Lk.18:29). Before every 'coming' of the Lord there has been a period of persecution and zealous preaching: Noah preached righteousness before the flood, as Lot probably tried to before the Lord's coming down in judgment on Sodom (would God have wrought such wholesale destruction without giving the people a chance to repent? Cp. Nineveh and Jonah). The schools of the prophets preached from the street corners and temple steps to warn of the coming of the day of the Lord at the hand of the Babylonians and Assyrians. And of course the dramatic coming of the Lord in judgment upon Israel in AD70, was heralded by Paul and his committed band of zealots staging the greatest preaching campaigns this world has seen.

The word used in Mt. 24:14 for "witness to all nations" occurs in Mt. 10:18 concerning our being brought before judges etc. as a witness. Our behaviour during the final tribulation is the witness- perhaps the implication could be that there will be quiet believers world-wide before the final tribulation begins, and their witness under persecution will be the public proclamation of the Gospel world-wide of which the Lord speaks here? In the spread of the true Gospel recently we perhaps see the way for this being prepared. The word also occurs in the parallel Lk. 21:13- our behaviour during the final tribulation will be the witness we make.

The reluctance of the early church to throw their full weight behind obeying the command to "go into all the world and preach the Gospel" was only ended by the cosy ecclesias of Judea being persecuted, resulting in their increased appreciation of their hope, and preaching it to those previously neglected nations into which they were driven (Acts 11:19-22). Are the Christian heartlands of Australia, North America and the U.K. in for something similar? That the mission fields are so white to the harvest but so chronically short of labourers indicates how nicely such a scenario would work to God's glory.

It needs to be noted, though, that Mt. 24:12 specifically states that the love- *agape* – of the majority will be lost in the latter day community of believers, whilst peoples from all nations hear and accept the Gospel. Could this mean that the established groups of believers lose their *agape* whilst the real fire of the Truth spreads to the new converts made during the great tribulation, as spoken of in Rev. 7. The parables of Mt. 25, as we will later illustrate, seem to refer specifically to the state of the latter day believers.

Not having oil to give light to others in the house [the ecclesia] and to the world is made parallel with not gaining more talents, which matches not ministering to the least [the word often refers to the spiritually least] of Christ's brethren. The word in Mt. 25:17 for "gained" is normally used about gaining others for Christ either within or without the ecclesia- Mt. 18:15; 1 Cor. 9:19-22; 1 Pet. 3:1. This shows the primacy of preaching & pastoral work / effort for others, especially in the last days. Oil burning is giving light to others. Going to sleep / not tending the lamps in the last generation is therefore lacking in love to the household, not keeping ourselves awake to give light to others. Lack of care for others in the last days results in lamps going out and our generation slumbering. Does this imply that in the last days there will not be the care for the least of Christ's needy brethren which there should be? The last generation will be slumbering when shouldn't be, i.e. not giving light to the world and brotherhood as they should. And could it be that the spiritually "least" whom they despise are the new converts made in the last days tribulation, whom they somehow disregard?

We Will Make The Answer Then

The day of judgment will involve the Lord sitting "as a refiner of silver... for he is like a refiner's fire" (Mal. 3:2,3). And yet these very Hebrew words are used about how in the final tribulation, God's people will be "refined as silver is refined" (Zech. 13:9), and "be made white and refined" (Dan. 12:10). So the essence of judgment day will be worked out for us in our response to the tribulation. This makes sense- the generation that are alive and see the Lord's return will effectively experience the judgment seat as they pass through the tribulation. It is to prepare them for being the only mortal generation to be alive at His return, the generation who shall greet Him, and never actually die.

11-4 The Olivet Prophecy And 1 Thessalonians

1 Thess. 4 and 5 are shot through with allusions to the Olivet prophecy. A few of the more obvious are listed:

1 Thess.	Olivet Prophecy
4:15 "This we say unto you by the word of the Lord"	Jesus on Olivet

Jesus

4:16	Mt. 24:30,31
5:1	Lk. 21:24
5:2	Mt. 24:43
5:3	Mt. 24:43,48,51
5:5 "Children of light"	Wise virgins with lamps (Mt. 25)
5:6	Mt. 24:13,25,42,49
5:9	Mt. 24:51

Paul begins chapter 5 by saying that we do not need to know exact times and seasons (i.e. dates) of the second coming, because the most obvious sign is that it would come when some in the ecclesia were unaware- it would come upon them as a thief. Likewise Jesus said that a sign more important than famines etc. was the tribulation of the household. The unworthy saints of the last days who are not watching will find the second coming take them like a thief (Mt.24:43). 1 Thess.5:3 says that those who think there is "peace and safety" within the ecclesia will also find the second coming to be thief-like. Thus a lack of spiritual watching is the equivalent of the "peace and safety" cry. The attitude that all within the house (the ecclesia) is well and there is no real danger of tribulation will result in a lack of watching. What sense can we make of Lk. 21:36 if we deny the possibility of a persecution period: "Watch ye therefore, and pray always that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass" ...? "Pray *always* that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that *shall* come to pass..." . Whilst it is possible that we will be *saved out of* the tribulation, to dogmatically say that we will not experience it, coupled with an attitude which refuses to admit the doctrinal and behavioural problems within the ecclesia, will result in us being lulled into a sense of peace and safety. This "peace and safety" atmosphere within the ecclesia matches that in Israel just prior to the Babylonian invasion: "Them that are at ease (A.V.mg. "secure") in Zion" (Am.6:1, cp. Lk.6:24) trusted in their riches and regular observance of a few religious rituals. But surely we "are all the children of light" (the word), and therefore "are not in darkness that that day should overtake you as a thief" (v.5,4).

DIGRESSION 4: The Relevance of Revelation to AD70

A great theme of Revelation is that "the time is near"- these things were about to happen. This is a major theme (1:1,3; 2:16; 3:10,11; 22:6,7,10,12,20). The relationship between the letters and the rest of Revelation cannot be overlooked; what was to happen to them in judgment was bound up with what was to come upon the land of Palestine in AD70. Mt. 21:40 parallels the coming of the Lord with the destruction of Jerusalem in AD70. This is exactly the sequence of events we expect in the last days, according to Zech. 14. There are many links between the trumpets, seals and the Olivet prophecy; and also many links with Josephus' descriptions of what came upon Palestine in AD66-70- e.g. 9:5 "inwardly tormented" Gk. *ebasanizonto* is used in Josephus (Wars 5.1.5).

Revelation	The Olivet Prophecy
6v1,2	Mt. 24v14
6v14	Mt. 24v35
6v3,4	Mt. v6,7
6v16	Lk. 23v30
6v5,6	Mt. v7
6v17	Lk. 21v36
6v7,8	Mt. v7
7v1	Mt. 24v31
6v9	Mt. v12
7v3	Lk. 21v18,28
6v11	Mt. v14
7v14	Mt. 24v19,21
6v12	Mt. v7
8v3	Lk. 21v36
6v13	Mt. v32
8v5	Mt. 24v27

It is clear enough that the Olivet Prophecy has application both to the "last days" of AD70 and also to our last days. Revelation is the Lord's expansion upon His words on Olivet- and therefore we should use this as a framework for interpreting the book. It applies to both AD70 and also our last days. The following notes trace some leading features of the AD70 interpretation. The most powerful proof is in private reading of Josephus' Wars Of The Jews- it reads like a running commentary on the seal and trumpet judgments upon Israel.

5:1 Note parallels with Ezekiel- the 4 living creatures, a throne scene, a scroll- with judgments against Israel on it, to be fulfilled in a Babylonian invasion. This similarity with Ezekiel would explain the correspondence between the cherubim vision of Ez. 1:22-28 and that of Rev. 4:2-6.

6:2,3 The rider on the white horse "bent on conquest"- the victorious Roman march towards Jerusalem in Spring 67. The rider takes peace from the earth (cp. Mt. 24:6,7)- the disruption of the pax Romana. "Caesar has obtained for us a profound peace. There are neither wars nor battles" (Epictetus, Discourses 3:13:9).

The riders on the black and pale horses = famine and death resulting from the Jewish war.

6:9-11 the martyrs crying for vengeance cp. Lk. 18:6-8.

6:14 every mountain removed = Roman legions flattening the approach roads: "[Vespasian] sent both footmen and horsemen to level the road, which was mountainous and rocky" (Wars 3.7.3). Having outlined the mountainous setting of Jotapata, Josephus says that Vespasian decided "to raise a bank against that part of the wall which was practicable" (Wars 3.7.8).

6:15,16 hiding in caves, wishing the rocks to fall on them - the Jews hid underground in the 67-70 war. "On the following days [the Romans] searched the

hiding places, and fell upon those that were underground and in the caverns" (Wars 3.7.36). The Lord had told the women who watched His death that they would ask the mountains and hills to fall upon them to cover them (Lk. 23:29,30 cp. Mt. 24:1,2,19,34).

9:5 Gk. *ebasanizonto*, used also by Josephus to describe the 'inward torment' of the suffering Jews (Wars 5.1.5).

11:2 The holy city [Jerusalem] to be trampled for 42 months = Lk. 21:24
"Jerusalem will be trampled on by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled". The "times of the Gentiles" are therefore the 42 months. "From Spring of 67 to August of 70, the time of formal imperial engagement against Jerusalem is a period of 42 months".

John "measures" the inner temple, altar and worshippers - for protection (Ez. 22:26; Zech. 2:1-5). Thus the external temple perishes but the spiritual reality- the true worshippers, the new Israel- are preserved. This is what happened in AD70.

11:8 The city called Sodom and Egypt = Jerusalem, in line with OT imagery. Note too how Israel's judgments in Rev. 8 are based on the plagues that came upon Egypt.

13:5-7 The beast wars with the saints for 42 months- Nero's persecution (Nov. 64 - June 68).

14:20 Trampled in the winepress "outside the city", i.e. where Jesus was crucified (Jn. 19:20; Heb. 13:11-13)- as if to show that these judgments on Israel came because of what they had done to Jesus. 1600 stadia is the length of the land. The *Itinerarium* of Antonius of Piacenza says the length of Palestine was 1664 stadia.

16:19 the great city [Jerusalem] divided into 3 parts - an OT image of Jerusalem's judgment. Jerusalem divided into three opposing camps by internal strife- John, Simon and Eleazar (Wars 5.1.1,4).

17:7 The seven heads are seven kings, 5 have been, one is, one is yet to come for a short space: The first seven Caesars of Rome: Julius, Augustus, Tiberius, Gaius, Claudius already dead. The sixth, Nero, was alive when John was given the Revelation; and the seventh was Galba who reigned only 7 months (June 68 - Jan 69). This order of the Caesars is that taken from standard works: Suetonius (*Lives of the twelve Caesars*); Dio Cassius (*Roman History* 5); Josephus (*Antiquities* 19.1.11 cp. 18.2.2; 18.6.10). The beast's war with the saints for 42 months (13:5-7) = the Neronian persecution. Note how 13:12,14 interchanges the head with the whole beast. Mosheim confirms this: "The dreadful persecution which took place by order of this tyrant, commenced at Rome about the middle of November in the year of our Lord 64...this dreadful persecution ceased but with the death of Nero...in the year 68 [June], when he put an end to his own life" L. von Mosheim, *Historical Commentaries* vol. 1, tr. Robert Vidal (NY: Converse, 1854) pp 138,139.

In the same way as the 1st century believers could not have accurately predicted how all this would come about, but would have been wonderfully encouraged as

they saw it all happening, and perceived then the interpretation- so we will see the Revelation come true, rather than be able to predict its precise fulfillment, in our final "last days".

A case can even be made that the compilation of Luke's Gospel record of the Olivet prophecy, as well as sections of Revelation, were released throughout the period of Titus' encirclement of Jerusalem in the lead up to AD70. The encouragement to flee Jerusalem whilst it was still possible (Lk. 21:20,21) would have been urgent commands to be fulfilled immediately upon receipt. And then Rev. 11:1 could imply that by the time of the prophecy's release, the Roman attack on the outer court of the temple had already begun. A lot of work remains to be done in working out how this mass of Scripture could have been received by the faithful within Jerusalem in AD67-70, and read as directly relevant to them, requiring immediate response.

There are so many links between the opening letters to the ecclesias, and the rest of Revelation. The wording is so similar- the themes of persecution, faithfulness, and the promised blessing of the faithful. The letters aren't just 'tacked on' to the prophecy. The dramas which the ecclesias were experiencing on earth are explained by the rest of the book, in its first century, relevant-to-its-hearers level of interpretation. Jerusalem was surrounded by her enemies, the temple was about to be destroyed. They were being persecuted by Jewish and Roman powers, and we see in the rest of the book how this looked from Heaven's perspective- the way the Angels were orchestrating and yet also resisting all this, how God perceived the Jewish and Roman authorities as dragons, whores etc., and how the traumas of AD66-70 were in fact all in His plan and part of a larger picture. It's like the book of Daniel. The book isn't just a life of Daniel with a few prophecies thrown in. It's a life of Daniel, in captivity, awaiting revival, longing for Messiah. And the prophecies give us Heaven's perspective on it.

However, Revelation has more relevance than to just the first century hearers. Just as the events of AD66-70 are typical of the last days, so Revelation likewise has its ultimate fulfilment [regardless of any others it may have had over history] in the crisis of the last days, in the final showdown between Babylon and Jerusalem, between the true Christ and the anti-Christ. The book will speak to us in the final tribulation as no other book can- because it's all about the last days, in its ultimate 'denouement', to use a word beloved of John Thomas.

CHAPTER 12: THE TRIBULATION IN DANIEL AND REVELATION

12-1 The Tribulation In Daniel And Revelation

The metals of the image in Daniel 2 have their counterpart in the vision of the beasts in Daniel 7. The little stone (Christ) hits the image on the feet and then destroys all the metals together. This means that in some sense the image must stand complete in the last days. The various beasts and metals must all be in existence at the time of Christ's return in order for him to destroy them by his coming. The little stone hits the image on its ten toes- corresponding to the ten horns of the fourth beast of Dan.7. For the moment, try to shelve the question of what the beasts represent. It may be that the final beast incorporates elements of all the preceding beasts / metals / horns. The ten horns must in a sense be in existence at the time of Christ's coming. Amongst the horns there develops a "little horn" (Dan.7:8). This little horn is especially blasphemous and persecutes the

saints, but is destroyed by Christ's return (Dan.7:8-11). This horn "made war with the saints and prevailed against them; until the ancient of days came, and judgment was given to the saints of the most High; and the time came that the saints possessed the Kingdom" (Dan.7:21,22). This proves beyond all doubt that the saints will in some way be under persecution when Christ comes. We are accustomed to interpret this passage as meaning that apostate Christianity has given true Christians a hard time and is (somehow) prevailing against us. Yet the language used implies aggression- making war and prevailing against us. This has not yet been seen.

This little horn will have the saints "given into his hand until a time and times and the dividing of time (i.e. 1260 days)...and shall wear out the saints of the Most High". It seems impossible to work out a period of 1260 years ending in our present times during which the true believers have been consistently persecuted. There is no significant starting point about 1260 years ago for our persecuting. And if the horn refers only to the Papacy, it must be remembered that their power has waxed and waned considerably over the years. The 1260 days is 3.5 years literally.

The little horn "cast down the truth to the ground" (Dan.8:9,12). The little horn of Dan.8:9 must be related to the other references to the little horn in Daniel ⁽¹⁾. There must therefore be a specific latter day casting of the truth down to the ground just before the second coming. The standing up of the little horn is "against the prince of princes (Christ); but he shall be broken without hand" (Dan.8:25)- i.e. by the return of Christ, the stone cut out without hands (Dan.2:34). "By peace (prosperity) he shall destroy many" (Dan.8:25)-the language of 1 Thess.5:1-3 regarding peace, safety and materialism destroying the saints of the last days. If this connection is valid, it shows that the little horn will exert its influence within the ecclesia. More about this in Chapter 23.

He "shall destroy the mighty and the holy people" (Dan.8:24) on the eve of the second coming. This horn must therefore refer to a power active in the last days. This is not to say that the little horn was not manifested previously. But the identity of the beast changes over time, and thus we can look for a fresh manifestation of its little horn in the last days. However, its characteristics will have been seen in previous religious and political powers, e.g. Roman Catholicism. All elements of the beast have to revive in some way so that the image and beasts stand complete at the time of Christ's return.

We will now look in more detail at the prophecies concerning the little horn in Daniel 7:

v.20 The horn had "a mouth that spake very great things, whose look was more stout than his fellows". This implies that this persecuting power relies much on propaganda (speaking many things) and is quite brazen in his actions- cp. Nebuchadnezzar, Sennacherib, Rabshakeh and other Arab leaders.

v.21 The horn "prevailed against" the saints. "Prevailed" here can mean 'could prevail' implying that this persecution could be avoided (cp. "Ye may have tribulation", Rev.2:10 R.V.mg.). Likewise the Hebrew for "make war" can mean 'approached to make war'. Thus it may be possible for the saints to avoid the

persecution in some way, e.g. by their " holy conversation" (2 Pet.3:8) shortening the days of tribulation. The fact that the prophecies speak as if there will be persecution may suggest that there will not be sufficient effort in this direction for all the saints to be saved from this. The Lord told the Philadelphians that He had set before them an open door, which elsewhere is a figure for an opportunity to preach (Rev. 3:8 = Acts 14:27; 1 Cor. 16:9; 2 Cor. 2:12; Col. 4:3). He parallels such preaching with keeping His word and not denying His Name. For those who do these two things, i.e. respond to the open door preaching opportunities of the pre-tribulation period, "I will also keep thee from the hour of temptation [tribulation] which is to come" (Rev. 3:10). If we preach now, and the door is open as st1:State>never before, then perhaps we will be saved from the tribulation. For one of its aims, as in the first century, will be to inspire us to witness as we ought to have been doing.

v.24 The horn is described as another king- implying it is epitomized by an individual leader. We will later see that this horn has similarities with the man of sin of 2 Thess.2. Note too that Ezekiel 38 talks of the northern invasion as if it is led by an individual. The historical basis of the Gogian invasion is the Assyrian invasion in Hezekiah's time, when Rabshakeh too spoke blasphemous words against God and His people, as the horn is described as doing. 1 Jn.2:18 warns of a specific antiChrist in the last days. We will later equate the king of the North of Dan.11 and the little horn.

v.25 Wearing out the saints for 1260 days sounds as if this period has a clearly defined starting point. 'Wearing out' is language more applicable to a short sharp few years of testing rather than 1260 years. Wearing out implies that as the tribulation goes on, more believers give way. The big falling away prior to AD70 must have its latter day counterpart. The phrase can also mean to mentally afflict- the sort of psychiatric treatment the Russians and Arabs are expert at inflicting on those whose ideologies oppose theirs?

v.7 The persecution is of the residue or remnant- a phrase used both of the natural and spiritual Jews (Acts 15:17).

Notes

(1) John Thomas saw the appropriacy of the Day of Atonement and Pentecost as the time of the second coming: see *Eureka* Vol. 2 (London: The Dawn Book Supply, 1958 Ed.). Harry Whittaker makes a most convincing case for Passover in *Passover* (Wigan: Biblia, 1988). Alfons Jochim *The Dawn Ecclesial Magazine* ; and almost every exposition of Esther sees in the story an allegory of Israel's latter day deliverance, perhaps literally on the day of Purim.

12-2 The Beast And The Little Horn

The Beast

It is worth noting the tremendous emphasis in Dan.7 that the fourth beast is totally different from all other beasts. The Roman empire was not so completely different from the preceding empires to warrant this description. Dan.7:7,19 imply that the

vision of the fourth beast and little horn was separate from his vision of the four beasts (Dan.7:2). The first vision was of four beasts and therefore included some reference to the fourth beast, in its manifestation as the Roman empire. But "after this" (v.7) there was the more detailed vision of the fourth beast and little horn. This alone implies that they were to have a special manifestation in the last days. The awesome power and strength of this system amazed Daniel, despite what he had already seen (cp. John being spellbound by the vision of the whore of Arab Babylon). In Daniel's first vision of the four beasts he says that they were "diverse one from another" (v.3). But in the second vision he realized that the fourth beast "was diverse from all beasts that were before it" (v.7), as if they were all relatively similar. The Roman empire was not so fundamentally different from the Greek empire to warrant this description.

The persecuting power we are about to see revealed will thus not be a political or religious power of the type we have previously seen in history. It is therefore almost beyond our conception of exactly how large and strong this power will be: a world superpower directing its venom against Jews and true Christians. The Hebrew for 'diverse' means 'to be changed', implying that this super-beast will have certain common characteristics with previous beasts, but will be in a changed form of manifestation.

Dan.7:19 describes this fourth beast as having the iron and brass metals of the image of Dan.2 in it. The fourth beast had feet and teeth, we are specifically told. The lion, representing the head of gold, had feet (Dan.7:4); the bear, representing the breast of silver, had powerful teeth. Thus the fourth beast had all the characteristics of the other beasts. By it being destroyed through its ten horns being smitten by Christ's return, it is as if the image of Dan.2 is standing erect and complete in the last days, being hit on the ten toes (cp. the ten horns of the beast) by Christ's return.

The little horn represents the beast; the persecution of the saints by the horn is therefore also by the beast:

The Little Horn

"Diverse" (Dan.7:24)
from others

"A mouth speaking great things" (Rev.3:5)

"He shall speak great words

against the Most High"
(Dan.7:25)

"The same horn made war

The Beast

"Diverse" (Dan.7:23) from
others

"A mouth speaking great things"
(Dan.7:8)

"He opened his mouth in
blasphemy against God"
(Rev.13:6)

"Make war with the saints,

with the saints, and and to overcome them"
prevailed against them (Rev.13:7)
(Dan.7:21).

Thus Dan. 7:11 speaks as if the beast and the little horn are interchangeable: " I beheld then because of the voice of the great words which the horn spake: I beheld even till the beast was slain" . Rev.13:5 says that the beast makes war with the saints (AVmg.) for 3.5 years- as does the little horn in Dan. 7. The beast was " like a leopard, and his feet were as the feet of a bear, and his mouth as the mouth of a lion" (Rev. 13:2). Again we see the elements of the various beasts of Dan. 7 and therefore the metals of the image of Dan. 2 all incorporated in this beast. It has " seven heads and ten horns" (Rev. 13:1)- which is the total number of heads and horns of the four beasts of Dan. 7. In harmony with this, Hos. 13:7 describes Israel's latter day invader as a lion, bear, leopard and wild beast. All elements of the beasts are brought together in the final latter day invasion.

Indeed, it seems that the beasts of Dan. 7 are only different aspects of the one great beast which finally emerges. Daniel sees them all come up together after the waves of the sea are troubled (Dan. 7:3), connecting with the Lord's description of the last day powers around Israel in the same way (Lk. 21:25). The fact they all come up together shows that he was not seeing a continuous historic vision. The way he sees the beast representing Babylon come up when historical Babylon at the time of the vision had already 'come up' shows it was not a historical description of those powers. Yet the 'traditional' interpretation of the beasts as depicting the various empires which dominated Israel in the past still holds true; the point is, the final beast incorporates elements of all those powers which once dominated Israel. It is in this sense that the whole image of Dan. 2 stands complete in the last days; the latter day Nebuchadnezzar has beneath him all the elements of Israel's previous persecutors.

Rev. 13 stresses the immense power of the final beast: " All the world wondered after the beast...they worshipped the beast, saying...who is able to make war with him?" (Rev. 13:3,4). This kind of power has never really been exercised by any previous manifestation of the beast. " Power was given him over all kindreds, tongues and nations" . To resist his captivity and killing with the sword is " the patience and faith of the saints" (Rev. 13:7,10). The beast leading saints into captivity and death sounds like ghettos and concentration camps- our persecution may well be through our having to suffer along with natural Israel. Those who openly proclaim themselves to be spiritual Israel will be treated the same as the Jews. For this reason, the distinctively Jewish aspect of our hope should be appreciated by us now in this our time of spiritual preparation. The mad intensity of the beast's persecution of the saints in the last days has not yet been seen by us. Hab.2:16 describes how Babylon is punished at the Lord's return because of her drunkenness. Rev.17:6 defines this as being " with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus" , as if to imply that it is the Babylon/ beast's mad, drunken persecution of the saints in the last days that results in the Lord's return in judgment.

Judgment

I have elsewhere suggested that the tribulation will effectively be the judgment process, the sorting out of the wheat from the tares, the sheep from the goats. Those believers who spiritually survive it will be ushered into the Kingdom. Dan. 7:11 RV speaks of how "at that time"- at the time when millions stand before the judgment throne and the books are opened- the horn speaks great words against God's people. Likewise in Dan. 7:8,9, Daniel sees both the uprise of the little horn and the setting up of the thrones of judgment going on as it were simultaneously. Surely the idea is that our response to the final tribulation will effectively be our judgment; or perhaps the living believers in the last days go through the tribulation at the very time that those who have died are being judged?

12-3 The beast and the man of sin

There are some connections between Mt. 24 and 2 Thess. 2 which show that the "man of sin" has specific reference to the last days, as Mt. 24 does:

Matthew 24

" Then shall many be offended" v.10

" The love of many shall wax cold" v.12

Many deceived v.11

2 Thess. 2

" A falling away first" v.3

" They received not the love of the truth" v.10

" Deceivableness of unrighteousness" v.10 cp. Rev. 13:4

" Iniquity shall abound" v.12 The mystery of iniquity" v.7

It seems reasonable to equate this " man" with the specific " antiChrist" of 1 Jn.2:18. The beast/ horn system is also an imitation of Christ- it breaks in pieces the whole earth (Dan.7:23)- the same word used in Dan.2:40,44 to describe Christ's breaking in pieces of the nations at his return. The little horn will " think to change times and laws" . This is clearly alluding to Dan.2:21, where God alone is described as changing the times and seasons. The little horn thus makes himself as God- the man of sin " as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God" (2 Thess.2:4). This man of sin will be destroyed by the brightness of the Lord's second coming (2 Thess.2:8). He will therefore be actively in existence in the last days. This man of sin will be revealed during a falling away from the truth just prior to the return of Christ (2 Thess.2:2,3). Thus whatever fulfilments of this power there may have been over history, it has to be accepted that it will have a particular manifestation in the last days.

The man of sin is " the son of perdition" , clearly alluding to Judas (Jn.17:12). This associates this power with the apostate element within the ecclesia. Through infiltrating the ecclesia, he will sit " in the temple of God" (2 Thess.2:4), i.e. the ecclesia. Judas was a betrayer; we have seen from the Olivet prophecy that there will be betrayers within the ecclesia in the tribulation period. The link with Judas

surely teaches that there will be a 'Fifth column' within the latter day ecclesia, who are connected with the latter day Babylon / beast / man of sin.

However, it is possible that these prophecies refer to a specific individual who claims that he is Christ- a real 'antiChrist', possibly associated with a renegade Christian (after the pattern of Judas being one of the twelve). It may even be that he builds a literal temple, which would then be the abomination which makes desolate standing in the holy place. Remember that the horn/beast blasphemes the temple (Rev.13:6), and in their manifestation as the King of the North, " he shall plant the tabernacle of his palace...in the glorious holy mountain" of Zion (Dan.11:45). 2 Thess.2:8,9 point the contrast between the Lord's coming and that of the man of sin- as if the latter is a replica of the former. This new power will break in pieces opposing nations just like Christ will (Dan.7:23 cp. 2:44); he will institute a new set of laws world-wide as if he has God's authority (Dan.7:25 cp.2:21).

Some may be duped into thinking that Christ has come back, when actually it is the 'antiChrist' of the beast. The beast may have its adherents within the ecclesia who will promulgate this view. The beast has a mouthpiece in another beast that speaks like a dragon- i.e. like the beast- but has horns like a lamb, i.e. a fake Christ. This beast " doeth great wonders, so that he maketh fire come down from heaven on earth in the sight of men (i.e. this is conscious exhibitionism), and deceiveth...by the means of these miracles which he had power to do" (Rev.13:11-14). Bringing fire from Heaven means that this is a conscious imitation of Elijah, implying that the Elijah ministry is active during the tribulation. It will be opposed by the publicity stunts of the beast system.

The idea of an anti-Christ as a replica of the real Christ also occurs in Proverbs, where there is a designed contrast between the woman of wisdom (representing Christ, the seed of the woman, 1 Cor.1:24), and the " foolish woman" who does the same external things as " wisdom" (e.g. Prov.9:1-5 cp. 9:14-17). This prototype antiChrist is a whore, which is a symbol associated with the dragon/ Babylon/ beast of Revelation. Thus the antiChrist and the beast are closely linked. Because of the false miracles, the weak believer will worship the image of the beast and join the 666 system (Rev.13;14-18). This is based on the image on the plain of Dura, which many of God's people were duped into worshipping. Only the three friends seem to have refused to do so. Perhaps the furnaces which were the means of punishment for those who refused to worship the image are related to the furnaces of the Nazi concentration camps, which we may well see repeated in the future.

There is repeated warning by Jesus, Peter and John on the need to refuse the claims of a false Christ in the last days. The few bogus Messiahs who have so far appeared do not pose a real temptation to true believers. But there will be a temptation to think that Christ is back when he is not. Especially poignant is Mt.24:26- 'Don't be tempted to go out into the desert (of Sinai, e.g.) to meet Christ of your own accord, nor to go to the secret (temple) chambers (in Jerusalem); because the coming of Christ will be as obvious as the lightning'. In the same way as eagles are irresistibly drawn to the carcase, so we will be to whatever place Christ appears at (Mt.24:28).

" A time of trouble"

We have suggested that the blasphemous power building his palace on the temple mount in Dan.11:45 is the man of sin of 2 Thess.2, and thus also the little horn power. This is before the second coming and resurrection described in Dan.12:2. It is during this period that " there shall be a time of trouble such as never was" for God's people, natural and spiritual- the time of Jacob's trouble that occurs after Israel's present regathering to the land. " That day is great, so that none is like it" (Jer.30:7). Those who are written in the book experience it, but are saved from it. This group must surely be true believers. Seeing that this will be a time of trouble for God's people such as never was, the previous sufferings of the Jews and the tribulation of the second world war will be nothing compared to this. It will be so bad that it will seem that every one of us will perish- " there should no flesh be saved" . But for those who doggedly hold on to the patience and faith of the saints, the glorious, miraculous deliverance will come. Even an Angel was so amazed by the extraordinary nature of this time of trouble that he asked: " How long shall it be to the end of these wonders?" . The answer was " For a time, time and an half (i.e. three and a half years); and when he shall have accomplished to scatter the power of the holy people, all these things shall be finished" (Dan.12:7,8). The Hebrew for " the holy people" is literally 'the people of the holy ones'- i.e. all those among natural and spiritual Israel who belong to their holy guardian Angels. " All things" being fulfilled in Dan.12:8 is probably alluded to in the fig tree parable- the generation that see the revival of Israel (fruit instead of leaves on the tree, as a result of our preaching) during that three and a half year tribulation will live to see the end of all things. The holy people are to be scattered (Dan.12:7). The Hebrew means 'to break in pieces', and is also used regarding the beast/horn breaking in pieces the whole earth (Dan.7:23). As it treats us, so it will be judged, seeing that the little stone breaks in pieces the beast/ image.

The " he" of Dan.12:7 is the king of the north of 11:45- suggesting that the beast/ horn has something to do with latter day Assyria and Babylon. The faithful will be " tried" (Dan. 12:10) by this invader, as Israel were by the Babylonian invasion of the past (Jer. 9:7). The same word is used in Zech. 13:9 and Mal. 3:2 concerning the faithful remnant in Jerusalem enduring their future sufferings.

There are a number of similarities between Daniel 11 and the prophecies concerning the persecution of the saints by the horn/ beast/ man of sin:

Daniel 11

The Latter Day Tribulation

v.31 " Shall pollute the sanctuary"

The beast's blasphemy against the

temple

v.32 " Such as do wickedly against the covenant shall he corrupt by flatteries"

Some of those in the covenant

will be deceived by the flatteries of the beast (cp.

	8:25)
" Such as do wickedly"	" The wicked shall do wickedly" (12:10)
v.32,33 " The people that do know their God shall be strong, and do exploits...instruct many"	Zealous preaching by the faithful during persecution.
v.33 " They shall fall by the sword"	The beast kills the saints with the sword and leads them into captivity in the tribulation (Rev.13:10). " They shall fall by the sword" is quoted in
	Lk.21:24 concerning the tribulation.
" Many days"	1260 days
v.35 " Some of them of understanding shall fall" (in death)	" Some of you shall they cause to be put to death" (Lk. 21:16)- the faithful remnant are characterized
" To try them, and to purge, and to make them white"	by their " understanding" - of the prophecies?
" Even to the time of the end; because it is yet for a time appointed"	" Many shall be purified, and made white, and tried" (Dan. 12:10)
	The tribulation continues right up to the end- the Lord's coming. The time appointed - 3.5 years of Dan. 12:7?
v.36 " The King...shall exalt himself"	As the horn did over the other horns. If this verse is a continuing description of Antiochus Epiphanes, then it just isn't all true. Rather it seems do we have another gap / jump in chronological fulfilment, as happens elsewhere in daniel, until the latter day antichrist.
" And magnify himself above every god, and shall speak marvellous things against the God of	The man of sin exalts himself above all that is called God (2 Thess.2:4); the horn speaks blasphemy

gods"	against God.
v.38 " He shall sit in the seat of the	Sitting as God in God's temple (2 Thess.2:4)

Almighty God" (A.V.mg.)

There are too many similarities here for this to all be coincidental. The primary fulfilment of Dan.11 appears to be in the persecution of the Maccabees. The effective tribulation which they went through then, preparing as it did a faithful remnant, must be a dim shadow of what we and natural Israel are to undergo in the near future. Note that Dan.11:33 and 12:10 emphasize that only those who understand will spiritually survive the persecution. This should serve as the ultimate inspiration to zealously apply ourselves to the study of prophecy, rather than give up because it seems too difficult. To be forewarned is to be forearmed.

12-4 Latter Day Persecution

Why just Us?

It may well be asked 'Why should we alone be persecuted?'. Our most distinctive doctrine is that of the hope of Israel- i.e. the true Gospel. We should be unique in the amount of attention and support we give to Israel, and our preaching is based around Jewish things. One can envisage a systematic persecution of Israel by the beast, using powerful propaganda to whip up opposition to everything Jewish. Once it is realized that there is one small sect who count themselves to be spiritual Israel, and who base their lives around the hope and consolation of Israel, longing for the time when her redeemer shall come to save her from the beast, the beast is likely to single us out for persecution too. Of course, all this looks unlikely at present. But in this very fact is the essence of this temptation. The prevailing trend amongst us to de-emphasize our preaching of the Jewish promises and associated history of Israel, a shift away from a fundamentalist stance over doctrine, a willingness to believe that those who do not know the hope of Israel may have hope of salvation, all these trends can only serve to weaken our strength to withstand what may well soon be upon us. Remember that gangs of youths throughout Europe are starting to burn down synagogues; the unstable world financial scene is blamed on Jewish bankers; children throughout inner London are taught that Israel is a prime example of a racist state which should be ended if there is to be world peace. The world is even now just not the tolerant place which it appears to be. We have seen that the natural Jews are to undergo the greatest persecution which they have ever experienced. Many Jews are presently living in the U.K. and North America. These countries will persecute those Jews more ferociously than the Nazis in the 1940s. If these countries are capable of such a sudden change of attitude towards the Jews, we can expect their attitude towards us to change just as quickly. Those who think " peace and safety" are in a dangerous position.

It would be tempting at this stage to analyze our community to see whether we are able to take the strain of all this. But given the almost certain breakup of the brotherhood as we know it during the tribulation, we need to look instead at

ourselves personally. We should be able to gain specific guidance for the last days from the prophecies concerning them, notably in Revelation. It is tragic that this book is now neglected by so many of us. There is good reason to think that there will be a great increase in spiritual understanding amongst God's people, especially in the tribulation period itself (see later). "Some of the teachers that be wise shall fall, to refine them [the community that remains], and to purify, and to make them white, even to the time of the end" (Dan. 11:35 RVmg.) suggests that the wise elders of the community may fall away or be killed- for the Lord said that indeed "some" of us will be in the final tribulation- and this will be in order to refine the personal faith of the rest. The 'wise teachers' are those who will have 'instructed many' during the final burst of witness just prior to the Lord's return (Dan. 11:33). For them to fall away or be killed would force their converts to a very personal faith and relationship with their Lord in the final days or months before His return.

We need to ask ourselves whether our consciences are finely tuned so that in the sudden onset of tribulation we are able to instinctively see why we should not assent to the apparently nominal demands of the beast. Is our love of materialism so great that we will find three and a half years of "being destitute, afflicted, tormented" (Heb.11:37) just too much to bear? Will we trade another three and a half years of the easy, laid back life we know at present, for eternity? So great is this temptation of materialism that Christ advises those in the last days to "sell that ye have...provide yourselves...a treasure in the Heavens" so that when Christ comes we "may open unto him immediately" (Lk.12:33-36). Given the generally poor state of the believers throughout history, this can only really apply to the more affluent ecclesia of the last days. Do we love Christ more than our families? Are we *prepared*, even though we may not have to endure it, to see them suffer for our faith? 1 Cor.7:26-31 and Lk.21:23 warn against marriage in the last days for this reason. Is our personal conviction of the truth so great that we can see our close friends in the ecclesia fall away, and we ourselves still cling on to the Truth? Make no mistake. *Many* will fall away. Some of your own family and ecclesia will. Only the spiritually tough, resolute individuals will survive. "Blessed is he that waiteth, and *cometh* (Heb. to reach, stretch unto) the (end of) the 1335 days" (Dan. 12:12) suggests the difficulty in enduring to the end. But those who spiritually endure to the end of the tribulation period will be saved (perhaps the Lord in Mt. 24:13 had Dan. 12:12 in mind).

We need to develop now a burning fire within us of dedication to our Lord, an all consuming love of the appearing of Christ, a fuller appreciation of the fellowship of His cross, an intensely powerful way of praying, a way of life that lives by every word of God, and that counts all things as dung that we might win Christ. It is no good to have just a vague love of Christ and the principles of the Bible. Malachi's words have special relevance to us as to no other generation: "The Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come...even the messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in: behold, he shall come...But who may abide the day of his coming? and who shall stand when he appeareth?" (Mal.3:1,2). Our Lord probably alluded to this when he lovingly warned us: "When the Son of man cometh, shall he find (the) faith on the earth?" .

The following are isolated comments on passages in Revelation which prophecy the latter day tribulation. Space forbids a full exposition of Revelation which ties up these passages in context with each other and the rest of the prophecy. But one day " this will we do, if God permit" .

It will be observed that Revelation frequently hints that it is a message specifically addressed to those under persecution. Phrases like " Jesus Christ the faithful witness" (Rev.1:5) should be read in the context of encouraging the readers to continue *their* witness, even on pain of death, just as Jesus did (see too Rev.13:8). For this reason, an understanding of the book of Revelation is vital for those who will experience the latter day tribulation, in whatever form we feel it will take.

12-5 The Seals

The vital key to interpreting the seals is found in the clear links between them and the Olivet prophecy. The connections are so copious that it must surely be admitted that consideration of them is important in coming to an understanding of the seals. Consider the following summary of the links:

<u>Revelation</u>	<u>Olivet</u> <u>Prophecy</u>		
6:1,2	Mt. 24:14	:14	Mt. 24:35
:3,4	:6,7	:16	Lk. 23:30
:5,6	:7	:17	Lk. 21:36
:7,8	:7	7:1	Mt. 24:31
:9	:12	:3	Lk. 21:18,28
:11	:14	:14	Mt. 24:19,21
:12	:7	8:3	Lk. 21:36
:13	:32	:5	Mt. 24:27

John was told that the events of the seals "must take place"- *dei genesthai*. The Olivet prophecy uses the same phrase (Mt. 24:6; Lk. 21:9). We have seen that the Olivet prophecy describes the events of both AD70 and our present last days, with special reference to the tribulation of God's people, both natural and spiritual. The connections between the Olivet prophecy and the seals would therefore indicate that the seals, and therefore much of Revelation, has reference to these same two time periods. Fairly conclusive evidence for a pre-AD70 date for Revelation has now been published ⁽¹⁾. In any case, the connections with the Olivet prophecy cannot be shrugged off as incidental. The seals, then, can be applied to our latter day tribulation. There seems no reason to insist that they should be interpreted chronologically; they can quite comfortably be seen as describing different aspects of the same period. This is how series of judgments described in the prophets often have their fulfillment (notably in Isaiah), rather than being a chronological prophecy of events. Zech.12:3-11 is a passage which contains seven occurrences of the phrase " In that day..." . The passage does not have to be interpreted chronologically; this is a list of events which will occur around the same time, " in that day" . They are snapshots of the same scene from different angles. The seals and the repeated references to a 3.5 year tribulation period can be understood

likewise; they do not necessarily refer to chronologically different events, but are giving different aspects of information about the same basic scene. The lack of strict chronological sequence in prophecy is a major feature of the Old Testament; thus a consideration of the phrase "in that day..." in Isaiah reveals that the context 'jumps around' all over the place, from the first coming of Christ to the Babylonian invasion to the Kingdom. There is no reason to think that Revelation is any different.

The sixth seal concludes with the great day of the Lamb coming, with the fig tree casting her immature figs (cp. the fig tree parable), and great changes in Heaven and earth. This must have some reference to the second coming. If it does not, then where is the principle of interpreting Scripture by Scripture? This sixth seal appears to be an extension of the fifth seal, where persecuted believers plead for vengeance to be shown against their persecutors. They are assured of their salvation (by being given white robes), and rest "for a little season, until their fellow servants also and their brethren, that should be killed as they were, should be fulfilled" (6:11). Once these brethren were killed, the Lord would take vengeance- by His second coming. It follows that this violent persecution of brethren is going on before the second coming. Perhaps the "little season" refers to the three and a half year period? The persecuted souls under the altar would then describe the early sufferers in the persecution. It should be noted that once a set number of believers have been slain, then the Lord will come (Rev. 6:11 Gk. and modern versions). This must mean that there will be violent slaying of believers going on right up until the Lord's return (so the Greek for "killed" implies); which suggests that we have yet to see violent persecution before the second coming.

A further indication that the fifth seal concerns the last days is in the obvious connection between the altar scene and the parable of the widow crying for vengeance on her persecuting adversary; she would be avenged "when the Son of man cometh" (Lk. 18:8) ⁽²⁾. Thus the intense prayers of the persecuted saints of the last days are what prompt the second coming; at least, this is how God wishes us to see it. If our prayers were that fervent now, perhaps the tribulation could be avoided. Revelation 7 then describes how the 144,000 are sealed to ultimately survive the persecution, and due to the accumulated intense prayer of the persecuted believers, the seventh seal of judgment is poured out on the world (8:3,4), resulting finally in the establishment of the Kingdom.

Footnotes

(2) Several relevant studies could be referenced here. The most conclusive is N. Lunn, *Alpha And Omega* (Sunderland: Willow, 1992).

(3) The many connections between Revelation and the Gospels need to be followed up; the incidents in Christ's earthly experience seem to be woven by him into the fabric of the visions he gives John. The theme of persecution is especially common. The widow crying to God because of persecution represents the prayers of the "elect" remnant of the last days (Lk. 18:7 cp. Mk. 13:20). They will be asking for vengeance against the beast which is persecuting them, and thus this parable is the basis for the souls under the altar crying out for vengeance (Rev.

6:9). Christ's return is therefore the day of vengeance (Lk. 21:22; Is. 34:8; 61:2; 63:4) of his persecuted latter day ecclesia. Despite the power of prayer in bringing about the Lord's return in vengeance, Lk. 18:9-14 continues in this same context to warn that despite this:

- Perhaps the Lord won't find such faith in prayer when he returns
- Many will pray but be so sure of their own righteousness that their prayers are hindered
- The disciples will tend to despise the little ones in the ecclesia.

All these are latter day problems: abuse of "the little ones", self-righteousness and lack of real faith in prayer.

12-6 The Two Witnesses

The context of this vision is set by 10:9, where John eats the little book. This must refer back to Jeremiah's enthusiastic 'eating' of the book of the Law when it was found (2 Chron. 34:18). He later reflected upon this: "Thy words were found, and I did eat them" (Jer. 15:16) by enthusiastically studying and preaching them. The words John ate were the "seven thunders" which he was told not to record in words (Rev. 10:4), presumably because the final tribulation they described was not to be understood by any generation except the very last one. The taste of the word to John was like honey- indicating the joy and exaltation of spirit which comes from receiving an understanding of the word; yet in reality it was bitter (Rev. 11:10), due to his having to "Prophecy (preach) again before many peoples, and nations, and tongues, and kings" (v.11). The reluctance of John, representing us in his last days, to get involved in this world-wide witnessing is hinted at by "Thou *must* prophecy..." . Such language recalls Jeremiah and the prophets (often initially unwilling also) spreading their message to nations and kings, and also the spirit of first century apostolic preaching. Both these groups did so amidst great persecution; as we will too? John's eating of the book also looks back to Ez. 2:8, where Ezekiel had to do this at the beginning of his preaching ministry to an apostate Israel in captivity. This may hint that our latter day preaching to all nations will especially focus upon the Jews among them, and those persecuted Jews within the land itself.

The vision of the two witnesses carries straight on, describing in more detail what 10:8-11 has summarized. The downtreading of the Holy City (literal Jerusalem) will be for 42 months. During that time, the witnesses prophecy for a parallel period of 1,260 days- both periods equivalent to three and a half years (Rev. 11:2,3). The two witnesses may either represent the Jews and the Christians, or two individual leaders of the saints who each concentrate respectively on preaching to Jews or Gentiles. "Fire proceedeth out of their mouth...they have power to shut Heaven...and have power over waters to turn them to blood, and to smite the earth with all plagues" (11:6). These descriptions have clear reference back to Elijah and Moses- both of whom spoke the word of God during time of great persecution of God's true witnesses.

We have seen that other Scriptures describe a three and a half year period of persecution by the beast. This is matched in Rev. 11 by the three and a half year witnessing in sackcloth, with the power to bring plagues on their enemies. This would equate the witnesses with Moses and the faithful Israelites in Egypt undergoing persecution, at a time when Egypt (cp. the latter day world) was very prosperous (treasure cities etc.). The sackcloth suggests fasting and prayer- for their deliverance through the Lord's return. It has been suggested elsewhere that the second coming is dependent on the intensity of our prayers. To allow the Lord's return to happen, it seems we need this tribulation to vitalize our community's prayer life. In the last days, God's faithful people will be given a mouth and wisdom which their persecutors will be unable to gainsay nor resist (Lk. 21:15). This evidently alludes to how Moses before Pharaoh was given such a 'mouth' (Ex. 4:15). Moses at that time was a type of the faithful remnant of their last days, in their witness against the world during the tribulation. Hence Rev. 11 describes their witness in terms of Moses doing miracles before Pharaoh.

" When they shall have finished their (three and a half year) testimony, the beast...shall make war against them, and shall overcome them, and kill them" (11:7)- a final, furious bout of persecution which brings about the destruction of the beast. It is because of this latter day orgy of killing the saints that the woman riding the beast was " drunken with the blood of the saints (the latter day true Christian community?), and (also) with the blood of the martyrs (witnesses- the two particular ones of Rev.11?) of Jesus" (17:6). The witnesses 'testifying' suggests association with their prototype John, who was persecuted for his obedience to and preaching of " the word of God and of the testimony of Jesus Christ" (Rev.1:2,9) in the last days before the Lord's 'coming' in AD70. John was encouraged in his tribulation by being given such a deep understanding of prophecy; and his latter day counterparts may be blessed likewise. The " souls under the altar" which we have previously considered were " slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held" (6:9), which cements the link between them and the apostle John's descriptions of his sufferings.

The dragon/ beast made war with the seed of the woman " which keep the commandments (word) of God, and have the testimony (i.e. preaching) of Jesus" (12:17); it was because of " the word of their testimony (i.e. preaching) (that) they loved not their lives unto the death" (12:11), indicating that Rev.12 also has reference to this last day persecution. Interestingly, the Angel says that he is a fellowservant and brother of them " that have the testimony (preaching) of Jesus" (19:10), i.e. the witnesses- as if the Angels who are with the witnesses in the tribulation are so near us that they almost feel our sufferings.

It would seem that the murder of these two witnesses takes place in Jerusalem, which is spiritual Sodom (Is.1:10; 3:1,9; Jer.23:14; Lam.4:6; Ez.16:46-56; Amos 4:11) and Egypt (Ez.23:19-22). This point is clinched by its description as " where also our Lord was crucified" . " They of the people (of Israel?) and kindreds and tongues and nations (those preached to in 10:11) shall see their dead bodies three days (literal ones?) and an half, and shall not suffer their dead bodies to be put in graves" (11:9). This seems a designed contrast to Stephen, the first martyr for preaching the Christian Gospel, whose body was also stared upon, but who was allowed to be buried. There are a number of similarities in Rev.11 with the events

in Sodom. " The God of the earth" of v.4 clearly connects with " Shall not the judge of all the earth do right?" in Gen.18:25. The two Angels (cp. the two Angel-supported witnesses) were warned not to abide in the street (cp. Rev.11:8) for fear of violence being done to them; the city is spiritually called Sodom (11:8). These references to Sodom and Egypt, both types of the last days, confirm that Rev.11 also has a latter day application.

The persecution period in which the dead bodies lie in the street lasts three and a half days; this may indicate a final persecution at the end of the three and a half years. This is followed by the resurrection of the witnesses, after a brief period of rejoicing by the world that these people whose Spirit gifts had plagued them were now no more (by all means compare this with the rejoicing of the world in the three days in which Christ lay dead). The witnesses then hear a great voice, and ascend to Heaven in a cloud in the sight of their enemies (11:12). This surely connects with the transporting of the saints through the clouds to meet the Lord, as detailed in 1 Thess.4:15-17. There are also links with Rev.1:7- a shout (cp. 1 Thess.4:16), a cloud, being seen by enemies. We know that Rev.1:7 is concerning the second coming. It is tempting to interpret the great earthquake and repentance of a remnant in 11:13 as referring also to the Lord's coming, accompanied as it will be by a literal earthquake which affects Jerusalem (Zech.14:1-4), heralding the repentance of the Jewish remnant as described in Rom.11. The seventh Angel then sounds, declaring that the Kingdom has come (n.b. " are become- now- the Kingdoms of our Lord").

There seem a number of points of contact in Rev.11 with our Lord's sufferings. The great fear that fell upon them who saw the resurrected witnesses recalls the fear of those who saw the risen Lord (Mt.28:4,5,8). Had it not been for Nicodemus' bold request, the Lord's body would have been thrown into Gehenna. Compare this with the bodies being unburied in 11:9, as if to imply they had been crucified. Thus in our sufferings we will really feel crucified with Christ, and therefore have great peace from knowing that if we suffer with Him, we will also reign with Him.

The plaguing of our persecutors as Moses and Aaron plagued Egypt further strengthens the impression that Israel's experience in Egypt is the prototype for the coming tribulation. The world's brief rejoicing at the apparent death of the witnesses corresponds to Egypt's glee that Israel had left and were trapped at the Red Sea. The rejoicing over the slaughtered saints by the nations of the beast in 11:10 is echoed later by the holy apostles and prophets rejoicing over the destruction of Babylon (18:20)- as if the sufferings of the saints are later brought upon their persecutors. This may be the reason why there are such similarities between the seven vials and the seven trumpets, if the vials refer largely to the judgments to come upon the world, and the trumpets to the latter day tribulation of the saints:

<u>Seven Vials</u>	<u>Seven trumpets</u>
16:2	8:7
16:3	8:8

16:4	8:10
16:8	8:12
16:10	9:1
16:12	9:13
16:17-21	11:15

12-7 The Dragon And The Child

The copious links between Rev.12 and Matt.24 have been tabulated elsewhere ⁽⁴⁾. This chapter therefore has reference to the last days as well as AD70, bearing in mind the reference of the Olivet prophecy to these two periods. What proves this beyond doubt is that as soon as the dragon is cast out we are told " Now is come salvation...the Kingdom of our God...for the accuser of our brethren is cast down" (12:10). Neither salvation nor the Kingdom of God can fully come without the second coming. If Scripture interprets Scripture, then the dragon being cast out must refer to the events of the second coming. There is rejoicing because the believers were no longer being accused (Greek 'seized upon' or accused in a law court), implying that this will be going on until the dragon/beast is cast out by Michael, the Angel who acts for God's people in the last days (Dan.12:1). The dragon accusing them before God sounds like Job's satan- as if the supreme intensity of suffering brought upon a materialistic, self-justifying Job to make him fit for God's full fellowship points forward to our tribulation to come. As Job was brought to say that he had heard of God by the hearing of the ear (theoretically), but now, through his sufferings, " mine eye seeth thee" (Job 42:5), so the latter day tribulation will develop us.

The tell-tale three and a half year period occurs again in Rev.12:6, and again there are references to Israel in Egypt; the woman flees away from the dragon (cp. Egypt) into a wilderness, but is pursued by the dragon (12:13), who tries to use water as a means of destroying her (12:15; cp. the Red Sea), but miraculously this is rendered powerless. The woman is carried on eagle's wings, as Israel were out of Egypt (Ex.19:4). The woman is " nourished" during the three and a half years, as Israel were fed with manna in the wilderness. Jesus reasons in John 6 that the manna represents the word of God. It may follow that the nourishing of the seed of the woman in the wilderness of her latter day tribulation will be through some special spiritual feeding programme designed by God. It may well be through an increased level of understanding of the Apocalypse and other prophecies of the tribulations which we will then be experiencing (see later).

The description of a conflict between a serpent and a woman and her seed in 12:14-16 must refer back to Gen.3:15- from which we can conclude that there will be a short term victory for the devil/ dragon over the seed of the woman in the last days. Rev.12 indicates that the dragon is unsuccessful in totally destroying the woman, and therefore turns in a brief period of fury " to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus" (12:17). Here we have the same idea as in 11:7; three and a

half years of witnessing amidst persecution, followed by a brief, intense period of horror, as Christ's three and a half year ministry was terminated by three and a half days of especial suffering. Notice that the dragon goes into the wilderness to persecute the woman's seed; 17:3,8 describes a beast from the wilderness, full of the blood of the saints. Thus the beast of Rev.17 is also to be read in a latter day context.

The persecuted believers overcome the persecution by "the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death" (12:11). Only by preaching and being fully prepared to give our lives for doing so during this period will we truly overcome and survive. In passing, the emphasis on the preaching that will take place by the persecuted saints at this time means that those being persecuted cannot just refer to natural Israel. Because the true believers have the attitude of loving not their lives unto death, their guardian Angels are told "Therefore rejoice, ye Heavens, and ye (Angels) that dwell in them". But by the same token, "Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and of the sea! For the devil (dragon- v.7) is come down...when the dragon (devil) saw that he was cast unto the earth, he persecuted the woman" (12:12,13). This equates the believers with those dwelling on the earth ('land'- of Israel?) and sea (of nations world-wide). Perhaps these two groups in earth and sea have a link with the two witnesses of Rev.11, i.e. persecuted Jews and Gentiles respectively. Other similarities are:

Rev. 11

" They finished their testimony" (cp.6:9)

Then " the beast that *ascendeth* out of the bottomless pit shall make war against them... and kill them"

The final furious persecution at the end of the tribulation (v.7)

Rev. 12

" The word of their testimony"

" The dragon *went* to make war with the remnant of her seed"

" They loved not their lives unto the death"

" The devil is come down unto you, having great wrath, because he knoweth that he hath but a short time" .

Revelation 13

Again, the three and a half year period (v.5 " forty and two months") of blaspheming and making war with the saints is mentioned, and again they are overcome, due to the beast having power " over all kindreds, and tongues and nations. And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him" (13:7,8). The method of persecution will be by leading into captivity and killing with the sword (13:10)- ecclesias herded into cattle trucks and hauled away to mini prison camps, sharing the sufferings of natural Israel? Once again, the account of the beast here is underpinned with hints of our Lord's sufferings (13:10=Mt.26:52; he that leadeth into captivity recalls Jesus being led away by Judas and the soldiers; 13:7 cp. the

disciples being 'overcome' in Gethsemane). The beast acquires a puppet beast (or "publicity agent" in the words of another brother) who does "great wonders" (miracles) which deceive many (13:13,14; 19:20). These miracles must be impressive, seeing that they result in *all* that dwell on the earth, except the faithful, receiving the mark, of the beast. It is hard to make this prophecy of such impressive false miracles have a significant fulfilment in the past. Miracles of the credibility described here have not been seen since the first century. Again, remember that the Olivet prophecy describes false miracles being done in the last days, which almost convince the very elect. They must therefore really be something very impressive.

The beast system will insist that all people receive the mark in their foreheads (Rev. 13:15,16; 14:11). This was an allusion to the way slaves were branded with a mark of ownership. And so in the very last days it will intensely cost to have the stigmata, the marks / brand, of being true servants of Jesus. It will cost and hurt to really believe His words, that we cannot serve two masters. 1 Tim. 4:2 RV speaks of how some will depart from the faith in the last days, having their consciences branded "as with a hot iron". Presumably this is to be connected with the fact that the beast system will brand people in the last days; and it seems that some in the latter day ecclesia will fall for this. And, interestingly enough, it seems it will not just be the liberals who fall to this temptation: those who will thus fall away are those who 'forbid to marry and command to abstain from meats' (1 Tim. 4:3).

Revelation 14

The 144,000 who remain faithful during the tribulation are called "they which follow the lamb whithersoever he goeth" (14:4). This connects with the description of the believers at the cross following Jesus always, even from the calm days of Galilee, right through to the bitter end (Mk. 15:41)- again indicating that our experiences then will be a co-crucifying with Christ. Let us make maximum use of the calm Galilee days in which we are now, building up our reserves of strength from the Lord's words.

Those who do not worship the beast or have his mark will be killed (13:15,16; 14:11 cp. Dan. 3:6); in this context we are told by a special announcement from Heaven "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth" (14:13)- as if there will be a special blessing for those who die in the tribulation. "Them that had gotten the victory over the beast...his image...his mark...sing the song of Moses" (15:2,3)- implying that their persecution by the beast was like being in Egypt, and their deliverance therefore gave rise to a new song of Moses.

Revelation 20

The chaining of the devil/ dragon/ serpent in 20:2 probably refers more to the binding of the manifestation of sin in the political devil/ dragon/ beast/ serpent of 12:7 than to abstract sin. Seeing that they will still be nations in the Millennium, it may even be that the beast revives in a similar political form to which it existed in our last days; i.e. a collection of Arab nations, confederate with the forces of sin latent within all other peoples. The beast is returned to the pit from which he

emerged (20:3). The souls of those beheaded for being witnesses to the word in the tribulation are made rulers with Christ, and live with him (20:4). Does this speak specifically of some special honour for the two witnesses during the Millennium?

DIGRESSION 5: DO WE KNOW THE DAY AND THE HOUR...?

The idea that we can't know the day or hour of the Lord's return can somehow militate against our enthusiasm to understand prophecies of the last days; at best, it can make us cynical of any interpretation that points to the Lord's imminent return. There are a long list of passages which we have simply misunderstood for many years, due to our *assumption* that we know exactly what they mean, and therefore we've not bothered to analyze the implications of our views. I'd suggest that the Lord's words to his disciples about not knowing the day or hour are an example of this.

If we can never know the time of the Lord's return, it seems to me we must find a way round the following difficulties:

- All major events in God's purpose have occurred within the approximate period when true students of the word expected them to - the Flood, the desolation of Jerusalem and its rebuilding, the Lord's first coming, the events of A.D. 70 etc. are all good examples. How much more then with the time of the second coming and the consummation of God's purpose? "The Lord God will do nothing, but he revealeth his secret unto his...prophets" (Amos 3:7), and the purpose of their writing was so that we might understand. The Lord rebuked the Jews because they couldn't discern the signs that Messiah's first advent was with them (Mt. 16:3; Lk. 19:44); and his first advent was a type of his second. The coming of judgment through the Babylonians was another type of the last days; and Israel were criticized for not perceiving the approach of that day, whereas "the stork in the heaven knoweth her appointed time; and the turtle and the crane and the swallow observe the time of their coming" (Jer. 8:7). This means that as the natural creation have an inherent knowledge of the seasons, so God's people should have a sense of the time of the Lord's coming. The Lord said the same when he spoke of how our internal awareness of the approach of Summer should correspond to our certain knowledge of the Kingdom's approach.

- David seems to have foreseen the joy of the natural and spiritual creation of the last days as they sense the approach of the Lord: "Let the heavens rejoice, and let the earth be glad (Heavens and earth usually refer to God's people)...let the field be joyful, and all that is therein (cp. Mt. 13:38)...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. 96:11-13).

- The bride is likewise full of joy at the knowledge that she knows her beloved is really about to come (Song 2:8).

- Such knowledge can really be arrived at through a *personal* study. The Lord introduces his Olivet prophecy by saying that it was no use listening to those who said "The time draweth near"- instead, he went on to say, 'You must personally

match the spiritual and physical situation you find yourself in with what I'm describing'. And at the end of the prophecy, he hammered this home again: "When (the trees) now shoot forth, ye see it, and know of your own selves that Summer is now nigh at hand. So likewise ye, when ye see these things...know ye" (Lk. 21:30,31 RV). The very personal feeling within us that Summer is near is likened to our knowledge of the imminence of the Lord's coming; you can't be told by anyone else that Summer's coming, you see the signs, and you know within your own self.

- If the caretaker *knows* when the thief will come, he will watch (Mt. 24:43). This parable is alluded to in 1 Thess. 5, where we are told that the faithful will be awake and watching for the Master, his coming will not be a thief-like surprise for them as it will be for the unworthy.

- Not watching is equated by the Lord with not knowing the time (Rev. 3:3). The evident allusion to the disciples not watching (Mk. 14:37) suggests that if we don't know the time, we will be like them- unprepared when we ought to be on the tiptoe of expectancy. The connection with the disciples also hints that when the Lord told them that they didn't know the time, he was in some sense rebuking them rather than making a general statement about the impossibility of *ever* knowing the time of his return.

- If none of us can know the time of the Lord's return, the whole spirit of the Olivet Prophecy is hard to come to terms with. When the disciples asked "When shall these things be, and what sign will there be when these things shall come to pass?" (Lk. 21:7), the Lord didn't cut short the conversation by saying 'Well actually you can't know, so your question isn't appropriate'. He gave them just what they asked for: signs whereby the faithful would know "when these things shall come to pass". The primary application of all this was that the faithful knew exactly the approaching end of the Jewish age in AD70- everything went according to plan, for those who correctly understood the prophecies. Therefore James, Peter and Paul could assuredly teach that "the judge standeth before the door" (James 5:9) etc. And it is apparent that the situation in the run up to AD70 was typical of that in our last days. Likewise, the position of the faithful remnant in Babylon at the time of the restoration is another type of latter day events. And they too had an opening of their eyes to the prophetic word, resulting in an ability to clearly see where they were, and that the time of restoration of Israel's Kingdom was imminent.

- The language of the Olivet prophecy brims with certainty as to the faithful *knowing* the time: "When ye shall see these things come to pass, *know* that it is nigh...ye *know* that Summer is near...*when* ye shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies, then *know* that the desolation thereof is nigh...when ye therefore shall *see* (same Greek translated "know") the abomination of desolation...when ye *see* (Gk. know, understand, perceive) all these things come to pass, *know* ye that the Kingdom of God is near". The idea is that we will understand clearly certain signs, and know *therefore* that the Lord is imminent.

The Context Of The Disciples

This all seems in marked contrast to the Lord's conclusion to the prophecy: "of that day and that hour *knoweth* no man". There is a marked connection here with the fact that he has just been saying that it will be possible to know once the signs are seen and understood. Surely he must be talking specifically to the twelve; *they* didn't *then* know the time, neither could they; but those who saw the signs by implication *would* know. In the context of these words about not them not *then* knowing the day and hour, the Lord said that the believer *at the time of his return* who didn't know the day and hour of his coming would be found unprepared (Mt. 24:50). This is surely proof enough that the last generation *will* in some way know the day and hour, i.e. the appointed time (cp. Rev. 9:15), of the Lord's return. This point is a very powerful one.

It is commonly thought that even the Lord Jesus doesn't know the time of his return, only the Father does. During his mortality, the Lord said exactly this (Mk. 13:32)- at the time he was speaking to the disciples, he himself didn't know. But after his resurrection and glorification, the Lord made two statements to the disciples which he surely intended to be connected: "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth... it is not for you (the inquisitive eleven standing on Olivet) to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power" (Mt. 28:18; Acts 1:7,8). But *all* the Father's power has been given to His glorified Son, and this therefore includes knowledge of the "times and seasons" of the second coming. In the exalted Lord "are hid all the riches of wisdom and knowledge" (Col. 2:3); it is thereby inconceivable that the Father would still keep back some knowledge from the Son. The point of all this is that when the Lord Jesus said that "of that day and that hour knoweth (present tense) no man, no, not the angels...neither the Son" he was not laying down a general principle for all time. He was speaking of the situation at that time: 'You can't know now, indeed at the moment even I don't know; but these are the signs which will tell the believers when I'll come'. By implication he was saying 'You can't understand them, although I'm giving them to you, but in the future some will understand them, because these signs will accurately pinpoint my return'. This was exactly the spirit of what the Angel told Daniel when he too wished to know when Messiah would come in glory; he was basically told 'It's not for you to understand, but in the last days understanding of these things will be increased among God's people; they will know the time, but you can't'. There are so many connections between the Olivet prophecy and Daniel that perhaps it is legitimate to think that the Lord was alluding to the Angel's refusal to tell Daniel the time of Messiah's coming.

That the Lord was primarily referring to the twelve when he spoke of them not knowing "when the time is" (Mk. 13:33) is confirmed if we appreciate that the Lord Jesus sometimes uses "the time" as a reference to the appointed time for his own death (Mt. 26:18; Mk. 14:35; Jn. 7:6,8). The disciples were fascinated with the time of his return, and the Lord was giving them the signs. But knowing his death was only days away, inevitably he had in mind "the time" of his passion. And he knew that as they didn't know the time of his return, so they didn't understand the time of his death. Having pointed out that they knew not "the time", in words surely reminiscent of his criticism of Jewry generally for not knowing "the time" of his coming and death (Mt. 16:3; Lk. 19:44), the Lord went on to tell the story of the man (himself) who left his household (the disciples) and told them to watch, with warnings as to what would happen if they didn't. Every one of those warnings,

and some other language in the Olivet prophecy, came true of the disciples in the next few days, in the context of "the time" being the time of Christ's death:

They shall deliver you up to the	As Christ to the Sannhedrin
councils	
beaten	Christ buffeted
rulers and kings for a testimony	Chief priests, Herod, Pilate
...brother shall betray the brother	Judas; Peter's denial?
...turn back to take up his garment	John Mark's linen garment
...false Christs...	An echo of 'Barabbas'?
the sun shall be darkened...	As at the crucifixion
watch	and "Watch with me"; Gethsemane
pray...	
at even...	Last Supper
at midnight...	Gethsemane
at the cock crowing	Peter's denials
in the morning	trials and crucifixion
find you sleeping	disciples in Gethsemane

Uncomfortable Conclusions

The point is, the words of Jesus about watching because they did not know the time seem to have been specifically relevant to the twelve. The evidence presented above that the latter day believers *will* know the time of the Lord's return forces us to some uncomfortable conclusions:

- All our confident proclamations of the past 150 years that 'the coming of Christ is imminent' were wrong. We will know for sure when the return is imminent. We won't get it wrong. We thought we knew in the past, on the basis of our understanding of Bible prophecy. Therefore our understanding wasn't correct. We just must have the humility to accept this.

- Are we in the situation where we *know* that all prophecy has been fulfilled, and the Lord's coming is indeed imminent? It's no good *saying* we believe this. Our attitude to careers, bank balance, material possessions, human relationships, pensions etc. will show what we believe. The attitude that 'well we may be wrong so we better plan for the future anyway' is irreconcilable with the sure knowledge of the imminence of the second advent which the word speaks of.

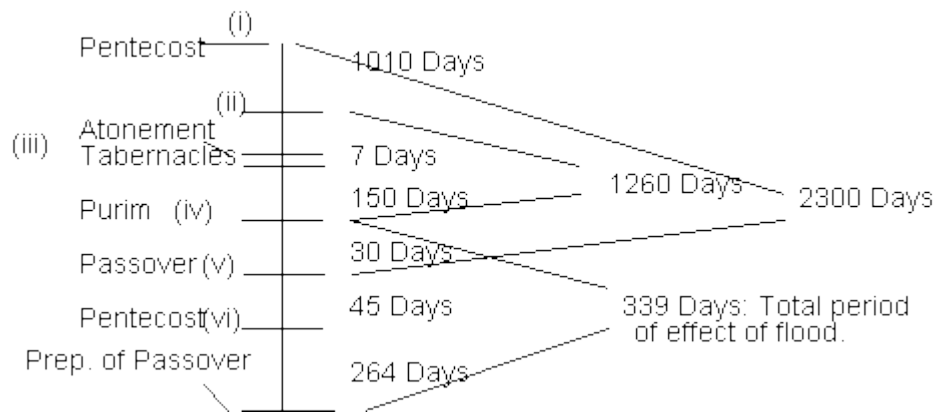
- So we come to the nitty gritty question. Are we in that state of total and firm knowledge of the imminence of the second coming which Scriptures like the Olivet prophecy teach? I suspect we aren't. Of course, we must live *as if* we expect the Lord at any moment; but that's different from saying that all the prophecies are fulfilled and therefore we know the Lord's advent is imminent. Paul was an enthusiast for living as if we know the Lord's return is imminent; but he told the Thessalonians that that blessed day wouldn't come immediately, because some prophecy still had to be fulfilled (2 Thess. 2:3). This, I suspect, is the situation we are in now: living *as if* we expect the Lord imminently, but recognizing that we

don't *know* whether his return is imminent, and still looking for some prophecy to be fulfilled.

- The idea that the believers who live on the brink of the second coming *will* know the day and hour fits in with at least two other themes in latter day prophecy: firstly, that there will be a sudden upsurge in Biblical and prophetic understanding within the true ecclesia in the very last days; and secondly, the repeated teaching that the second coming will occur after a defined, specific number of days of persecution (literal days, it seems, seeing that no figurative interpretation makes any real sense). The believers who are alive in this period and correctly perceive their position in prophecy will then be in exactly the situation we spoke of at the beginning of this study: they will *know* with absolute certainty that the Lord's coming is imminent. This is why the days leading up to Christ's return are called "the days of the son of man" (Lk. 17:24,26)- the signs will be so clear that it will be *as if* he's back. And doubtless in the depths of their (our?) tribulation, we'll dearly cling on to that glorious assurance.

DIGRESSION 6: A Possible Chronology Of The Tribulation

We have seen that there is a repeated mention of a three and a half year period of tribulation for natural and spiritual Israel in the last days. This is described as a period of 1260 literal days. A period of 2300 days is also mentioned (Dan. 8:14). Periods of 1290 and 1335 days are mentioned in Dan. 12:11,12. Additionally, the events of the flood are clearly typical of the latter day judgments. Noah entered the ark for 7 days, and the duration of the flood was 5 months, connecting with the five months final tribulation spoken of in Rev. 9:5,10. Significantly, John the Baptist (type of the Elijah prophet) was five months older than Jesus (Lk. 1:24)- hinting that something significant will be happening in the Elijah ministry during this same period? The *total* period which the flood affected the earth was 339 days- from the rain coming down to the earth being dry, i.e. having totally recovered from the effects of God's judgments. Putting all these things together leads us to an uncanny result: nearly all these time periods will start or finish on a Mosaic feast day. It is not without relevance that the period of the last days is described often as "the day of the Lord"- but "the day of the Lord" is a phrase very commonly used to describe the Jewish feast days. Good cases can be constructed for thinking that the Lord will return on Jewish feast days ⁽¹⁾ ; but the whole period of the last days may well be based around significant events which occur on each of the feast days. If this proves nothing else, it shows that it is quite legitimate to view the time periods as literal days. We have shown that in the last days, knowledge of the prophetic word will be greatly increased. We have also shown that in the very last days, the faithful will know for absolute certain when the Lord will come. It seems to me that they will understand from the prophecies a chronology similar in outline terms at least to the kind of thing I offer below. I'm quite aware that what I offer is hopelessly flawed, but I offer it as an example of the sort of thing that may be revealed to the faithful remnant in the very last days.



(i) The total period of downtreading of the "host" of Israel is given as 2300 days in Dan. 8:13. Yet the far more common period is 1260 days, 42 months, time times and a half (three and a half years) etc. It seems that the 2300 is the period from the beginning of the holocaust until the time when the abomination is ended. Perhaps the days of the elect's tribulation are shortened from 2300 to 1260 (Mt. 24:22).

(ii) This point seems to be the start of the abomination that will be in place for 1290 days. 1290 days back from a Passover brings us to half way through Elul, the end (significantly) of the Jewish year, the time when the Jews under Nehemiah were being sorely persecuted by the Arabs (cp. Neh. 6:15).

(iii) Noah entering the ark may be the basis of Is. 26:20: "Come, my people, enter thou into thy chambers, and *shut thy doors* (cp. the ark) about thee: hide thyself as it were for a little moment, until the indignation be overpast". Not only is this verse in a latter day context; "the indignation" frequently describes the Babylonian and Assyrian invasions of Israel, typical as they are of those of the last days (Is. 10:5,25; 13:5; Lam. 2:6; Ez. 22:31; Dan. 8:13; Zech. 1:12). As the faithful remnant were kept safe within Jerusalem at the time of Sennacherib's invasion, so in the last days it seems that the faithful will somehow be taken away. Is. 57:1 in the same Sennacherib context speaks of how the righteous are gathered (Heb.) from the evil that is to come, so that they can lay in peace upon their beds (surely an idiom) in the midst of the tribulation of invasion. According to our suggested chronology, this will happen towards the end of the three and a half year tribulation. This would fit the type of Israel in Egypt: suffering some of the plagues, and then miraculously separated from them.

Tabernacles is very much associated with the idea of "ingathering" and the gathering together of God's people. It may be that some of the faithful are ingathered at this time.

(iv) The end of the 1260 days of tribulation at Purim. Jerusalem no longer trodden down (Rev. 11:2).

(v) The abomination ends after 1290 days. Passover was associated in Jewish thought with the latter rains. James 5:7 speaks of being patient "unto the coming of the Lord", i.e. until the early and latter rains have come. It may be that this is one of those passages which will open up in the very last days; it may be teaching that the Lord's coming will be after that last Passover at the end of the 1290 days, when the abomination ends. Only 45 days later, according to our chronology, Daniel will stand in his lot. And yet James has to warn that last generation not to grumble and be bitter against each other (AV "grudge") within the ecclesia in these final few days. All the significant events happening but *still* no second coming may

lead some to give up their hope of the Lord's return, at least in their heart, and become bitter with each other. Such is the strength of our tendency towards friction within the ecclesia: even in the very very last few days before the Lord comes, this sort of thing will not only be likely to be going on, but will even be *increasing*. The parable of the servant beating the fellow-servant on the eve of the Lord's return (and many other such indications) fit in with this all too well.

(vi) Daniel stands in his (priestly) lot- he inherits the priestly "lot" in Israel which was his, but which he never received in his mortal life. The exact timing of Pentecost depends on the state of the harvest- it wasn't therefore exactly 50 days after Passover. There are two feasts of Pentecost or harvest in our chronology- one just before the tribulation begins in earnest and one at the very end. There may be a connection here with the two latter day harvests described in Rev. 14:14-20. It may be that those who don't need to go through the tribulation are taken away, or 'harvested' and somehow the intervening time gap is collapsed for them (see *God and time*), so that finally all the faithful are judged and immortalized together, at the same moment. Should this happen, it would be a sure sign that the understanding of the remnant was absolutely on the right track.

Once the effects of the latter day judgments will have finally cleared up, the Passover will be kept which will signal the beginning of the Kingdom and the celebration of the complete victory of God over His enemies.

The Chronology And Structure Of Revelation

I suggest that the key to the interpretation of Revelation is in understanding how its structure is linked to its interpretation. This doesn't mean that interpretations which ignore the structure are wrong; the book is open to multiple fulfilments, as most Bible prophecies are. The New Testament often quotes the Old Testament out of context- phrases and verses are taken up and given an interpretation which can't be extended to the surrounding context of the Old Testament passage. And so it's surely legitimate to likewise interpret Bible prophecy in a similar piecemeal manner. However, this doesn't preclude a hermeneutic [scheme of interpretation] which takes an entire book and seeks to make sense of it from start to finish.

Throughout latter day Bible prophecy, there is mention of a 1260 day / 42 month / three and a half year period of final tribulation. The Jews had a three and a half year reading cycle, similar in principle to the annual *Bible Companion*, whereby there were specific readings from the Pentateuch and prophets, with a Psalm read every Sabbath. This system was based around the feasts. The book of Revelation is likewise based around the feasts. It should be noted that the Gospel of John, which appears so similar in style to Revelation, was likewise based around the Jewish feasts; and a case can be made that it was intended to be read over a three and a half year cycle along with the Jewish lectionary readings (2). Hence John's account of events seeks to place them all within the period of the various feasts; and his material can be seen as a kind of exposition of the Old Testament 'readings for the day' according to the Jewish triennial reading cycle.

Paul Wynn in an extraordinary article, published online at <http://www.biblaridion-online.net/zine-online/zine08q1/bibzine08q1.html>, has demonstrated at length the connections between the various sections of Revelation and the Jewish feasts. Here's a summary:

Revelation	Feast	Allusions
5	Passover	Rev. 5:6,9 = Ex. 12:13
7	Tabernacles	Rev. 7:9,15,16 RV = Ex. 23:16; 34:22; Zech. 14:16-20
8,9	Day Of Atonement	Lev. 16:31; more detailed links in Harry Whittaker, <i>Revelation: A Biblical Approach</i> pp. 104,105.
11	Dedication & Purim	The Torah readings for these feasts were Num. 7 and Zech. 2- 4 about the dedication of the temple; Rev. 11:10 = Esther 9:19,22. The period from Tabernacles to Purim is exactly 5 months- as mentioned in Rev. 9:5
12	Pentecost & Passover	The Jews traditionally ask: "On this Sabbath, shall I reap?"
14	Tabernacles	
15 + 16	Atonement & Passover	Lev. 16; Ps. 118 the Hallel Psalm
19	Passover	Ps. 113,114 Passover Psalms
21,22	Tabernacles	

Laying out the material chronologically, we have:

Chapter 5: Passover
6 months

Chapter 7: Tabernacles
Chapters 8& 9: Atonement and Tabernacles

1 year
Chapter 11: Dedication 5 months (Rev 9:5)
Chapter 11: Purim
Chapter 12: Passover and Pentecost
Chapter 14: Tabernacles

1 year
Chapter 15: Atonement
Chapter 16 & 19: Passover
Chapter 21 & 22: Tabernacles

1 year

The conclusion would therefore be that we have in the book of Revelation a literal account of the three and a half years tribulation, with the Jewish feasts being the key marker points. And it would appear there will be an especial period of five months tribulation as described between chapters 9 and 11.

Not all prophecy has to be predictive. The Lord Jesus spoke of His future sufferings and commented that once those things happened, the disciples would be able to make sense of them *at that time* because of His previously spoken words about them (Jn. 8:28; 13:19; 14:29; Acts 11:16). And so it may be futile to try to work out precisely how things will be before

they actually happen; but as we pass through the final three and a half years, those who understand will be amazingly encouraged as they see everything falling into place. It will be the most amazing, detailed and practically encouraging fulfilling of prophecy that anyone has ever lived through. And given the whole nature of the tribulation, it will be encouragement that the faithful will sorely need.

Notes

(1) John Thomas saw the appropriacy of the Day of Atonement and Pentecost as the time of the second coming: see *Eureka* Vol. 2 (London: The Dawn Book Supply, 1958 Ed.). Harry Whittaker makes a most convincing case for Passover in *Passover* (Wigan: Biblia, 1988). Many expositions of Esther see in the story an allegory of Israel's latter day deliverance, perhaps literally on the day of Purim.

(2) Aileen Guilding, *The Fourth Gospel And Jewish Worship* (Oxford: O.U.P., 1960).

DIGRESSION 7: Hamas And The Palestinian Movement In Bible Prophecy

I am aware that there are various views in our community as to the identity of Israel's invader of the last days. Whoever it is, it surely cannot be that the Arab world surrounding Israel will not eagerly join in or be a major part of the attack. The real aims and intentions of Hamas / the P.L.O. are perhaps not so widely known because much of their literature remains in Arabic only. I have taken some time to analyze original sources of Arab rhetoric, and the similarity of wording and intention between them and Bible prophecy is astounding. I am left with no doubt that what is happening in the Middle East right now, especially relating to the P.L.O., is a most definite sign that the Lord's coming is near. I am grateful to newly baptized converts in Jordan and Lebanon for opening my eyes to many of the following observations. The Hebrew word *hamas* [basically meaning 'physical violence arising from wicked plans'] is quite common in Scripture, and the usages speak of how God is provoked by *hamas* to bring judgment upon the enemies of His people (Gen. 6:11-13; Mic. 6:12; Zeph. 1:9) and also to intervene in order to save His people (Ps. 18:49; Ps. 72:14). How amazingly appropriate that an organization actually called *hamas* has arisen in these last days to do violence to Israel! If Biblical history means anything to us, clearly enough God's intervention in appropriate judgment and salvation cannot be far off. Note how Hagar's persecution of Sarah- typical of the Arab-Jew conflict- is described as her *hamas* (Gen. 16:5).

Psalm 83

“For, lo, thine enemies make a tumult: and they that hate thee have lifted up the head”

The revival of Arab nationalism and its organization in the P.L.O. They lift up / exalt the *rosh*, the head- they set up an individual leader over them. This could be “Gog...the chief prince” of Ezek. 38, “the king of the north” of Daniel, “the man of

sin” of 2 Thess. 2, and all the other references to a latter day Nebuchadnezzar / antiChrist figure.

They have taken crafty counsel against thy people, and consulted against thy hidden ones.

The intentions of the P.L.O. are “crafty” in that there is the impression given that they seek co-existence with Israel; they are plotting the destruction of Israel and the Jews under the guise of humanism and peaceful intentions. But the Arab Confederacy seeks to destroy Israel, as is evident:

“The Palestinian Covenant declares as its central themes a total repudiation of the existence of Israel...the claim that Israel should not exist is implied in almost half of its 33 articles...the demand for the demise of Israel becomes a matter of inevitable necessity” ⁽¹⁾

“Israelis are barely human creatures who may be tolerated in the Palestinian state as individuals, with their numbers reduced” ⁽²⁾

“The question of how to reduce the number of Jews in a Palestinian state...is highlighted by the use of murderous terms against the Israelis” ⁽³⁾

Article 8 of the Palestinian Covenant: “The conflicts among the Palestinian national forces are secondary, and should be ended for the sake of the basic conflict that exists between Zionism...and the Arab people.”

Article 9: “Armed struggle is the only way to liberate Palestine. It is the overall strategy.”

Yet a willfully naïve world overlooks these statements because they prefer to believe the “crafty counsel” of the Arabs- that they seek for peaceful co-existence with the Jews in Israel.

They have said, Come, and let us cut them off from being a nation; that the name of Israel may be no more in remembrance.

The Arabs argue that Israel / the Jews are not a people:

“Israeli Jews...can only be nationals of (other) states, where nationality is not Jewish. The demand for the liquidation of Israel thus also stems directly as a necessary conclusion from the definition that the Jews are (already) not a nation...since the state of Israel is not based on true nationalism, it is often described in Arabic as an ‘artificial entity’...the theory that the Jews do not constitute a nation is also recited for the claim of exclusive Arab nationality of the Palestinian state” ⁽⁴⁾

“Victory for the Arabs is possible only in the liquidation of Israel; anything else is capitulation.”

“The Jews are not a nation and thus on principle do not deserve to have a state of their own...there is no atrocity that cannot be justified in order to bring about the liquidation of Israel” ⁽⁵⁾

The desire to “cut them off from being a nation” runs counter to God’s clear statement in Gen. 25:23: “Two nations are in thy womb, and two manner of people...”. Note that they were not to be of a different ethnicity, as both Jews and Arabs often claim [for they were from the same parents], but different types of people.

For they have consulted together with one consent: they are confederate against thee:

The Arabs will unite themselves against Israel. The ‘Palestinian National Covenant’ uses the Arab word *Qawmi* for ‘National’ - i.e. pan-Arab. Note the RV of Ps. 83:5: “Against thee do they make a covenant”.

“The Palestinian National Authority will strive to achieve a union of the confrontation countries [i.e. “all nations around about” Israel- D.H.]...or a step along the road to comprehensive Arab unity” - Political Programs of the P.L.O., Article 8.

“The Palestinian National Council calls upon the Arab nation [singular!] to shoulder its pan-Arab responsibilities and to pool all its energies to confront ...Zionism” - Political Resolution of the 13th Palestinian National Council, Article 4.

The Palestinian Liberation Army is under an “inter-Arab High Command” ⁽⁶⁾

“The Palestinians will have three mottoes: national unity, pan-Arab mobilization, and liberation” (Are these the three unclean spirits of Rev. 16 that gather the nations around Israel to battle?) - Political Resolution of the 13th Palestinian National Council, Article 11.

“Nasser used to argue that Arab unity is a pre-requisite for ...enabling the initiation of an all-out war against Israel” ⁽⁷⁾

“The Arab ‘nation’ is made up of ‘peoples’ and the (one) Arab homeland comprises the national homeland of these peoples...the relationship of the people and the individual to the overall Arab homeland and nation is called in modern Arabic *Qamwiyya* (nationalism)...like the trunk of a tree that branches off into offshoots of local patriotism...the splitting up of the Arab region into separate states carved out by the colonial powers. However, once Arab unity is achieved and the frontiers wiped out...” ⁽⁸⁾

“As for the Egyptians, the Iraqis...they are nothing but the peoples & branches of one nation, the Arab nation” ⁽⁹⁾

“Colonialism shattered the unity of our Arab nation and the unity of our Arab homeland...but this has not prevented the masses...from feeling they are one people” -Resolution of Palestinian National Council, 1971 ⁽¹⁰⁾

The intention is to create a single nation which is home for all the Arab peoples. This may include not only Palestine but all of the land promised to Abraham. “Palestine is inseparable from the Arab homeland” ⁽¹¹⁾ .

“King Hussein’s plan for the establishment of a so-called United Arab Kingdom” ⁽¹²⁾

“This crisis has captivated the whole Arab nation throughout the greater Arab homeland” ⁽¹³⁾ - i.e. the earth/land promised to Abraham. It could well be that the entire area promised to Abraham is briefly confederated into one Arab super state once Israel is over-run. In this sense all the prophecies about the *eretz* (the land / earth) being dominated by Israel’s enemies would then come true.

Not only will the Arabs unite amongst themselves but they will unite many other world forces in their anti-semitism. This must be, for if there is to be a time of trouble for Jacob such as never was, the millions of Jews living in North America are going to have to be persecuted even worse than they were by Nazi Germany. Things are going to have to change- dramatically, and in a very short time. The god of this world is humanism, and it seems that all the world will be united by the Arabs against Israel under this guise.

“The enemy of humanity’ is a phrase found in Arab writing to designate Israel... Such a description is designed to mobilize support from all peoples, because Zionism is portrayed as an imperialist base that threatens them too” ⁽¹⁴⁾.

Article 16 of the P.L.O. National Covenant: “The liberation of Palestine, from a spiritual point of view, will provide the Holy Land with an atmosphere of safety and tranquility, which in turn will safeguard the country’s religious sanctuaries.... accordingly, the people of Palestine look to all spiritual forces in the world for support.”

Do unto them as unto the Midianites; as to Sisera, as to Jabin, at the brook of Kison:

In these incidents, the Arab invaders destroyed themselves. There is plenty of evidence that the Arab solidarity against Israel is very shallow; they are deeply fractured, and a victory against the Jews could well bring out those differences immediately, in a very bitter and self-destructive way. This final destruction is likely that spoken of in Revelation, where after a brief period of unity against God’s people, “The horns hate the whore”- Babylon / Iraq? The final phase of domination of the land of Israel foretold in Daniel 2 was by a confederacy of “iron and clay”, nations that don’t mix together well; although in the context of dominating Israel, they are united. Particularly the Palestinians and other Arabs are mutually suspicious of each other; and there is ample tension between Iraq [latter day Babylon] and its Arab neighbours.

“Expressions of suspicion toward the Arab states abound in Palestinian writings. They contain sharp criticism of discrimination against the Palestinians in the form of restrictive decrees in employment and travel. Expressions of hatred can even be found against the Arab states” ⁽¹⁵⁾.

“The P.L.O. will retaliate against the Arab states...if they take a line of policy which the P.L.O. regards as inimical to it’s cause” ⁽¹⁶⁾.

“Arab governments (are) suspicious of the plan to organize the Palestinians into the Palestinian entity” ⁽¹⁷⁾.

Let us take to ourselves the houses of God in possession.

Clearly enough, the specific focus of the P.L.O. has been on taking control of Jerusalem’s holy places. This is evident in all of Arafat’s speeches. The P.L.O. refuses to cease hostilities against God’s people until they are in possession of Jerusalem.

It seems that the ideal of the P.L.O. is to establish a fake Kingdom of God in the land promised to Abraham, with Jerusalem as the capital, a new ‘temple’ built there, and some antiChrist figure such as Arafat or Saddam ruling there. Their dream is of a land of plenty and true tolerance and equality, glorifying all the principles of humanism- and yet excluding God’s people. All Arabs world-wide would be encouraged to return and live in this Arab superstate, mimicing how the *true* seed of Abraham will be gathered home in the last days. The P.L.O. plan to send the Jews out of the land into captivity- Saddam Hussein once said just the same. The Babylonian captivity will be re-enacted, and then in a ‘second exodus’ the Jews will return and perhaps build the temple which they were instructed to build in Ez. 40-48. This expulsion of the Jews from the land is foretold in Dt. 28- where disobedient Israel are to be taken into Egypt again by ships, something which has never yet occurred; and also in Zech. 14, where in the last days Jerusalem is to be captured by her enemies and half the city go off into captivity. And then, the Lord returns to the Mount of Olives from which He left.

“Only Jews who undertake to be loyal to the Palestinian state shall be recognized...the recurring motif in Palestinian literature which insists that the Jews who would be allowed (to remain) should relinquish Zionism” ⁽¹⁸⁾

“Peace in the land of Palestine and the neighboring countries is our heart’s desire. Above all, a precondition for this is the liberation of Palestine” ⁽¹⁹⁾.

“The right to return includes the right to get back all former Arab property, the return of which will cause the mass eviction of Israelis from Jaffa, Nazareth, etc.” ⁽²⁰⁾

“The establishment of the Palestinian state is bound up with a mass evacuation of Jews from their homes, and they will be thus forced to emigrate” ⁽²¹⁾

Shuqairy, founder of the P.L.O., often made the proposal to send the Jews back to their countries of origin. Naji Alush repeats the proposal and asks, “Why not ask

the U.N. to finance this plan?" ⁽²²⁾ . If accepted, this would unite "all nations" against Israel and her Messiah.

Article 11 of the Constitution of Saddam Hussein's Ba'ath Party read: "Whoever emigrated to the Arab homeland (Palestine) with a colonialist aim shall be expelled".

Naji Alush defines "the stand of the Arab national movement on Palestine concerning the Jews" as being that the same number of Jews that were in Palestine before 1914 (i.e. 20,000) should be allowed to remain, and own the 1% of the land they then owned - and the rest be extradited ⁽²³⁾.

"Permission to stay in Palestine should be granted to the Jews who shall declare that they are giving up the idea of the Jewish state" ⁽²⁴⁾ .

It is significant that the Arabs demand that the minority of Jews who they would let remain become 'Arabs'. "Such a state...should be explicitly & emphatically an Arab state with a minority of Jews, who from a national viewpoint, would become Arabs" ⁽²⁵⁾. It could be that this meant they accepted Islam. In this case we would have an analogous situation to that in countless historical types of the last days: Israel accept the idols of the surrounding Arab world and are judged because of it.

Notes

(1) Y. Harkabi, *The Palestinian Covenant And It's Meaning* (Totowa, N.J: Valentine, Mitchell & Co., 1979) p.11

(2) Harkabi *op cit.* p. 13

(3) Harkabi *op cit.* p. 48

(4) Naji Alush, *The Road To Palestine* p.141

(5) Harkabi *op cit.* p. 12

(6) Harkabi *op cit.* p. 62

(7) Harkabi *op cit.* p. 70

(8) Harkabi *op cit.* p. 31

(9) Sati Al-Husri, *Arabism First*, (Beirut Lebanon: P.L.O. Research Centre) p. 13.

(10) As recorded in Anne Zahlan, *International Documents on Palestine* (Beirut, Lebanon: Institute for Palestine Studies, 1974) p. 398.

(11) Harkabi *op cit.* p. 99

- (12) Harkabi *op cit.* p. 135
- (13) Harkabi *op cit.* p. 136
- (14) Harkabi *op cit.* p. 90
- (15) Harkabi *op cit.* p. 72
- (16) Harkabi *op cit.* p. 96
- (17) Harkabi *op cit.* p. 10
- (18) Harkabi *op cit.* p. 46
- (19) Fayeze Sayegh, *A Handful of Mist* (Beirut, Lebanon: P.L.O. Research Centre) p.19.
- (20) Harkabi *op cit.* p. 157
- (21) Harkabi *op cit.* p. 56
- (22) Naji Alush *op cit.* p. 219
- (23) Naji Alush, *The Palestinian National Movement* (Beirut, Lebanon, 1969) p. 170
- (24) Niquila Al-Dor (one time member of the P.L.O. Executive), *Thus Lost and Thus to be Returned* (Beirut, Lebanon: Al-Hawadith Press).
- (25) Harkabi *op cit.* p.52

Iran wants to unite Hamas, Hizbullah in anti-Israel war

Top sources in Hizbullah and Hamas told Time magazine that Hizbullah's backers in the Iranian government have called the the two organizations together to focus them on 'jihad' against Israel.

When Khaled Masha'al of Hamas and Sheik Hassan Nasrallah of Hizbullah meet in Teheran this week it will signal a truce in what has been the struggle to be the leading terror arm of the Palestinian uprising, reported Time. Competition between the two had generated an increase in attacks on Israeli territory and coordination will likely make those strikes more effective. A source in the Hamas military wing, Izzadin Kassam, told Time that his organization has already commenced joint operations with Hizbullah and Islamic Jihad.

GPL News, May 2001

SECTION 3: THE REPENTANCE OF ISRAEL

Introduction

By now the point should have been established that Israel's repentance and acceptance of Christ will come about as a result of their sufferings during an Arab holocaust that is yet to come upon the land. It has been shown elsewhere by a number of writers that Israel's repentance is a pre-requisite for the full establishment of the Kingdom (consider the implication of Acts 3:19,20; Rom. 11:15, not to mention the power of many of the types considered in Section 1). What follows in this section tries not to unduly repeat what has been presented elsewhere, but to present some further insight into Israel's repentance.

CHAPTER 13: THE MARRIAGE SUPPER PARABLE

Much of Scripture is capable of far more than one interpretation; our Lord's parables are surely supreme in this. A number of them appear to have some reference specifically to the last days, although this should not be allowed to obscure the powerful simplicity of their more basic messages. The parable of the marriage supper appears to have an application to the events of both A.D. 70 and our last days - a feature of much New Testament prophecy.

A.D. 70 Application

God's servants (the Old and New Testament prophets - Rev. 2:20; Acts 2:18; 4:29; Am. 3:7; Zech. 1:6) were sent by God " to call them that were bidden to the wedding: but they would not come" (Matt. 22:3). The Greek word for " call" being the same translated " bidden" , we have here an example of the interplay between predestination and the calling of God through the Gospel - the word of the prophets/apostles 'called them who were (already) called' in God's purpose. This class must primarily refer to the Jews. The refusal to attend the wedding obviously equates with the Jewish rejection of Christ's work. God pleaded, " I have prepared my dinner" , i.e. the Kingdom (Matt. 22:2). This corresponds with the Kingdom 'coming nigh' to Israel through the first century preaching of the Gospel (Luke 10:9,11) and the primary fulfilment of the Olivet prophecy in the run up to A.D. 70 (Mark 13:29).

" My oxen and my fattlings are killed, and all things are ready" (Matt. 22:4) relates nicely to our Lord's work ending the animal sacrifices.

" They made light of it, and went their ways, one to his farm, another to his merchandise" (Matt. 22:5) would imply that there was a period of crazy addiction to materialism among Jewry between the crucifixion and A.D. 70. This is confirmed by the epistles to the Jewish believers, notably James and Peter; it also finds a counterpart in our present 'last days'.

" The remnant" , i.e. 'the others', not involved in this materialism, " took his servants, and entreated them spitefully, and slew them" (Matt. 22:6). This found

ample fulfilment in the Jewish-led persecution of the Christian preachers in the period A.D. 33-70. Note that it was the religious leaders of Jewry who inspired this, i.e. "the remnant" who rejected the Gospel for religious rather than material reasons.

The king therefore "sent forth his armies, and destroyed those murderers, and burned up their city" (Matt. 22:7). The Roman burning of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 must inevitably be seen as a fulfilment of this. Stephen used the same word when accusing the Jews of being Christ's "betrayers and murderers" (Acts 7:52). The Romans being described as "his armies" connects with Dan. 9:26, where they are spoken of as "the people of the prince" - Jesus.

The reader who pays attention to detail will note that there is a difference in the parable between the king, whose armies are "sent forth", and the Son (Jesus) for whom the wedding was prepared. Dan. 9:26 teaches that the armies belong to Christ. This shows how that after Christ's ascension, all power over "the kings of the earth" (Rev. 1:5) has been delegated to Him by God, although ultimately God still holds that power. After the destruction of Jerusalem, the persecuted servants were sent out on a new preaching mission (Matt. 22:8-10), which presumably refers to the increased verve and sense of urgency in the believers (or just the apostles?) preaching to the Gentiles.

The last days

However, there are ample hints that this parable should be given some reference to the burning up of Jerusalem in the last days. The prophetic "servants" of Matt. 22:4 who call Israel to repentance are matched by a singular "servant" in the parallel parable in Luke 14:17. There can be no doubt that such differences are designed. We have earlier mentioned that 'Elijah' and his latter-day school of prophets will minister the word to Israel, which would explain the use in the parables of "servant" and "servants" - the group of prophets being led by one particular prophet.

As we would expect from the fact that Jerusalem is finally captured and burnt, the work of 'Elijah' will initially be unsuccessful - only a minority of Israel will respond. "They all with one consent (s.w. 'agreement') began to make excuse" (s.w. 'reject') sounds like a conscious, national rejection of the message (Luke 14:18).

The servants going forth "at supper time" (Luke 14:17) fits more naturally into the context of a preaching appeal just prior to the second coming than to the first century. The "supper", i.e. the Kingdom (Luke 14:15; Matt. 22:2), is prepared, and at "supper time" - 'Kingdom time' - the appeal is made. "All things are now ready" (Luke 14:17) explains the unmistakeable sense of urgency in the commissions given to the servants to preach. This again indicates reference to an eleventh hour preaching campaign just prior to the second coming. The 'decorum of the symbol' suggests that the animals being killed for the meal would necessitate a brief period of invitation immediately prior to the feast, rather than them being on the table for 2,000 years.

Persecuted prophets

The persecution of the prophets connects with the same thing happening in Rev. 11, where the two witnesses make a similar last-minute appeal amidst great opposition. We have commented earlier how the true prophets within Jerusalem at the time of the Babylonian invasion represented the Elijah ministry - and they too were persecuted. The servants were "entreated spitefully" (Matt. 22:6), as was our Lord on the cross (Luke 18:32). The righteous fellowshiping Christ's sufferings during the tribulation period is something we spotted as a major theme in Section 2. The idea of persecuted servants occurs again in Rev. 11:18; 19:2, both of which passages have an application to latter-day persecution.

"When the king heard thereof" (Matt. 22:7) implies that as soon as Israel's rejection of Christ came to God's notice, "he sent forth his armies...and burned up their city". This is similar language to Gen. 6:12; 11:5 and 18:21 concerning God 'noticing' man's wickedness at the time of the flood, Babel and Sodom. The judgments with which He reacted on those occasions were typical of the second coming. As Babylon burnt Jerusalem with fire, so it seems certain from many other prophetic references that literal fire will be used by Israel's enemies to inflict her final punishment. The Arab armies will therefore be those of God and Christ, as were those of Israel's earlier Arab invaders. They are called 'sanctified' in Joel 3:9 (A.V. mg.), i.e. 'separated unto' God's specific purpose in punishing Israel.

At the time of Jerusalem's burning, there will then be a vigorous preaching campaign by the "servants", seeing that "they which were bidden were not worthy" (Matt. 22:8) - the Greek implying not enough numerically. As a result of this preaching, "the wedding was furnished ('filled' - numerically) with guests" (Matt. 22:10). This indicates that in some ways, God does work to a number. Whilst there may be reference here to an appeal to Gentiles, the implication is that it will be to Jews in particular. The servants go "into the streets and lanes of the city" (Luke 14:21), i.e. Jerusalem. Their appeal being to "the poor...maimed...halt and...blind" is right in line with our previous studies - the righteous remnant will be left in Jerusalem after her capture and burning (Zech. 14:2), although they will probably be literally maimed and blinded (cp. Zech. 14:12?) as a result of the fighting. It also connects with the righteous remnant being poor at the time of the Lord's first coming.

The Greek word for "lanes" is from a root meaning 'to deliver' - as if these handicapped people are cowering from the Arabs in 'places of deliverance', absolutely helpless, yet eagerly responding to the Gospel preached by the Elijah ministry. It may be that as the original Elijah preached without realizing the existence of a righteous remnant within Israel, so his latter-day ministry may be unaware of the remnant's existence until the very end (1 Kings 19:14,18).

The servants are sent "into the highways" (Matt. 22:9), the Greek meaning 'a market square'. This must be designed to recall the parable of the labourers standing idle in the market place at the 11th. hour (Matt. 20:6,7). The very short probation of those 11th.-hour workers will match that of the latter-day Jewish

remnant. They were called shortly before the close of work at sunset (the 12th hour), corresponding with banquets beginning at sunset.

Despite the tremendous encouragement which will be given for the Jews to wholeheartedly respond (Luke 14:23), there will be a category among them who act on the servants' appeal, but ultimately are found lacking the wedding garment of Christ's righteousness (Matt. 22:11). This may teach that some Jews will show interest in the message, but fail to respond in baptism - the only way to have access to the garment. It would seem likely that as John, the Elijah prophet of the first century, baptized with water, so the latter-day Elijah will do the same. Indeed, this being such a hallmark of his work (even during his life he was called "the baptist", Mark 6:24), it must surely be a major feature of the future Elijah prophet. It is doubtful if God will change His prerequisites for salvation due to the circumstances of the holocaust.

"In that day (of Israel's repentance) there shall be a fountain opened...to the inhabitants of Jerusalem for sin" (Zech. 13:1), may hint at mass Jewish baptisms in Jerusalem as there were in the first century fulfilment of Joel 2:28-31 and other latter-day prophecies. The remnant "shall call on my name" (Zech. 13:9) - by baptism into it?

The lack of wedding garments may also refer to Jews being baptized from a blinding fear of impending Arab destruction, but failing to have a complete faith in the sin-covering work of Christ. We each need to seriously take this warning to ourselves.

CHAPTER 14: THE FIG TREE PARABLE

The fact that this parable is tacked on to the end of the Olivet prophecy in the way it is, suggests that it refers to a very special indication of the Lord's coming. Surely every thinking Christian should be working overtime to crack this one - if we can sort out what the budding of the fig tree is, then once we see it, we will have proof positive that we are at 11:59 in the prophetic timetable.

The fig tree was to "shoot forth" (Lk. 21:30) or 'germinate' (Young), witnessed by its putting forth of leaves (Mk. 13:28) and tender branches (Mt. 24:32). When the fig tree puts forth leaves there are often immature, unripe figs amongst them. Thus Jesus inspected the fig tree outside Jerusalem to see if it had any fruit, and cursed it because it did not. "The time of *figs* was not yet", i.e. it was not reasonable to find fully developed fruit on it. The fig tree referred to the nation of Israel; Jesus expected to find at least the beginnings of some spiritual fruit, but due to the chronic dearth of response to his message, Jesus cursed the nation and dried it up (Mk. 11:13,14,20). This would lead us to interpret the putting forth of leaves on the fig tree as the signs of an initial repentance and indication that real spiritual fruit is developing. It may well be that the whole of the Olivet prophecy has reference to a final three and a half year tribulation of the believers just prior to the second coming, and that during this time there will be a period of zealous witnessing to both Jews and Gentiles. This fits into place with the fig tree parable; this preaching starts to produce some degree of response from Israel, and then "all (is) fulfilled" in the full manifestation of Christ's Kingdom. The parable says that as

surely as Summer follows Spring, so those who see the blossoming of the fig tree in the parable, will see the Kingdom. Maybe this is to be taken literally; there may be a literal gap of a few weeks/months (as between Spring and Summer) between the first signs of Jewish repentance, and all being fulfilled. It may well be that the "all" which will be fulfilled in Lk. 21:32 is to be equated with "the times of the Gentiles" being fulfilled (Lk. 21:24). "Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles" for three and a half years, until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled. 'Jebus', the old name for Jerusalem, means 'downtrodden'. This hints that the liberation of Jebus at the beginning of David's reign was seen by Christ as typical of the time when He would liberate Jerusalem from downtreading, at his return. This suggests that the times of Gentile domination of Jerusalem are to be ended by the establishment of the Kingdom at Christ's second coming; we are yet to see, therefore, a Gentile domination of Jerusalem before Christ's coming.

"The times of the Gentiles" are often taken to have finished in 1967. But at least three major problems arise with this:

- 1) The temple site, Biblical 'Zion', is still not totally under Jewish control due to the presence of the Mosque there.
- 2) "Trodden down" has clear links with Dan. 8:13 and Rev. 11:2, which describe the temple being blasphemously desecrated for certain periods of time. How can they have ended in 1967, seeing the 'Dome of the Rock' still stands there? And 1967 minus 2300 day/years (Dan. 8:13) or 1260 day/years (Rev. 11:2) do not appear to yield any significant starting points.
- 3) The times of Gentile opportunity, as some read it, are still with us now as much as they were in 1967. If anything, numbers of baptisms have mushroomed *since* 1967, notably in distant Gentile lands.

The Blossoming Of The Fig Tree

More attention now needs to be paid to the other references to the blossoming of the fig tree. Between them they build up a strong case for the suggestion made earlier- that the fig tree parable refers to the beginnings of Jewish repentance in the last days, which will herald the establishment of the Kingdom at Christ's return.

- Lk. 13:6-9 records another parable of the fig tree, upon which that in Lk. 21 is based. Jesus, the dresser of God's vineyard of Israel, came seeking spiritual fruit on the fig tree, for the three years of his ministry. Because of the lack of it, the tree was cut down. Christ said "Now (i.e. towards the end of the tribulation period?) learn a parable of the fig tree" (Mt. 24:32). It is tempting to read this as 'Now learn *the* parable of the fig tree', seeing that the parable of the Olivet prophecy is so similar to the previous fig tree parable.

- "Ye shall know them (primarily referring to the Jewish false prophets who dressed up as lambs/Christians) by their fruits. Do men gather...figs of thistles?" (Mt. 7:15,16). Thus the fruit of the fig tree is associated with signs of true spiritual

development among the Jews. For confirmation of this, see comment on Mic.7:1 later.

- The prophecy of Habakkuk is concerning the coming judgment upon Israel unless they repented. In the last few verses the prophet reflects that even though Israel would not repent as a result of his preaching, he personally would rejoice in the Lord and maintain his own spirituality. He describes this in the language of the fig tree: "Although the fig tree shall not blossom (i.e. put forth leaves), neither shall fruit be in the vines (notice the equation of fruit and just blossoming)... yet will I rejoice in the Lord" (Hab. 3:17,18).

- Jer. 24:2-5 describes the Jews who repented during their 70 year captivity in Babylon as "good figs... that are first ripe". In the same way, good figs will start to be developed on the Jewish fig tree as a result of their passing through the tribulation of the last days, which will lead to their repentance. The arrogant Jews who were taken into captivity by Babylon learnt humility and repentance, thanks to the words of the prophets who underwent the same tribulation as they did. This points forward to the Jews of today undergoing a similar captivity and conversion as a result of the preaching campaign during the tribulation. Thus Lk. 21:25,26 describes the Jewish sun, moon and stars being shaken, (Jewish) men's hearts failing them for fear because of the tribulation that is breaking over the land (A.V. "earth") of Israel. *Then* there is the fig tree parable; the repentance of Israel comes about as a result of the traumas in the land described in the previous verses.

- Micah laments the lack of spiritual fruit amongst the Jews: "My soul desired the firstripe fruit (fig)...(but) there is none upright among men: they all lie in wait for blood...the most upright is sharper than a thorn hedge" (Mic. 7:1,2,4). This is probably the basis for Christ's parable about the Jews being thorns instead of figs (Mt. 7:15,16).

- God recalls how originally the Jews had borne spiritual fruit, especially amongst the generation that entered the land (the most spiritually fruitful of all the generations of Israel?): "I found Israel like grapes in the wilderness; I saw your fathers as the firstripe in the fig tree at her first time: but they went to Baal-peor" (Hos. 9:10).

- The fig tree was to shoot forth tender branches. Is. 30:17 implies that the fig tree being without branches symbolizes Israel under domination by the Gentiles: "One thousand (Jews) shall flee at the rebuke of one (invader)... till ye be left as a tree bereft of branches" (A.V.mg.). The repentance of Israel- the tender growth of the branches- will therefore come at a time when they have no branches, i.e. at a time of Gentile domination of Israel.

Both vine and fig trees are used as symbols of Israel. It seems likely that the Lord had in mind the figure of Is. 18:5 in mind when constructing this parable. Here we are told that the vine must be pruned and some branches "cut down" (RV)- exactly the language of trial and tribulation which Jesus uses in Jn. 15. The result of this will be that "the flower becometh a ripening grape"(RV)- i.e. spiritual fruit is brought forth by tribulation (the same figure is found in Is. 17:6-8). And out of all

this, “a present shall be brought unto the Lord of Hosts of a people scattered and peeled... whose land the rivers [Babylon, Assyria, in Isaiah’s symbology] have spoiled, to the place of the Name of the Lord of hosts, the mount Zion” (Is. 18:7). The fruit on the vine corresponds with the repentant latter day remnant of Israel; and the pruning of that vine to their sufferings during the final tribulation. Is. 65:8-11 speaks of how the vine of Israel is not finally cut down because someone [Jesus, Lk. 13:8] says “Destroy it not, for a blessing is in it”- i.e. there is at least some promise of fruit on the otherwise unfruitful tree. This then leads into the “seed” being brought forth to inherit the promised land, God’s people inheriting that land, and the establishment of God’s Kingdom on earth. This chronology would fit in with the other Biblical evidences adduced earlier in this chapter.

Hastening The Return

Joel 2:18-20 describes how the northern invader of Israel in the last days will be driven away, and the rest of the prophecy describes the conflicts associated with this and the setting up of the Kingdom. Verses 18 reads “*Then* will the Lord be jealous for His land, and pity His people”, etc. This implies that the previous words of Joel also have a latter day reference; and they describe a massive invasion and domination of Israel because of the Jews’ wickedness, which will only be lifted by their repentance. This all describes the latter day holocaust of the Jews, and our calling upon them to repent. There are several links in this part of Joel with the last days- “the day of the Lord cometh” (Joel 2:1); “there hath not been ever the like, neither shall be any more after it” (Joel 2:2). This is the final, unsurpassed “time of trouble such as never was” for Israel. The invasion will be upon the mountains (Joel 2:2,5), which is where Gog will invade. “The earth shall quake before them; the hearers shall tremble: the sun and the moon shall be dark, and the stars shall withdraw their shining” (Joel 2:10) is quite clearly Luke 21 language of the last days. During this time of tribulation, “the vine is dried up, the fig tree languisheth” (Joel 1:12)- i.e. Israel were spiritually unfruitful (Mk. 11:20). But on their repentance, “the tree beareth her fruit, the fig tree and the vine do yield their strength” (Joel 2:22). The generation who see the beginnings of this spiritual revival among the Jews will see the establishment of the Kingdom. As the tribulation gets progressively worse, we will strain our eyes for every sign of Jewish repentance. Those who understand these things will therefore have a verve and fire in their preaching to the Jews because they know that the sooner they are successful, the sooner their Lord will appear in His glory. For the elects’ sake the days- i.e. the 42 months, the 1260 days, the three and a half years- of our tribulation, may be shortened. Our present apathy in witnessing to the Jews may need a tribulation to shake off.

When the watchman of Is. 21:11 calls out “What hour of the night [will it come]?” (RVmg.) the answer is “Turn ye” (RV). This is when it will come- when Israel turn again in repentance. This is alluded to in Acts 1:7,8; Mk. 13:28-33, where the answer to the question ‘When will Jesus return?’ is basically: ‘Preach to Israel; lead them to repentance. That’s when the Lord Jesus will return’. When Israel are finally broken in pieces, both literally and spiritually, then “all these things shall be finished” and her invaders will likewise be broken in pieces by the Lord’s return (Dan. 12:7 = Dan. 2:44).

CHAPTER 15: THE REPENTANCE OF ISRAEL

Is. 12:2 speaks of how a latter day Israel will declare that Yahweh has become their salvation [i.e. they accept Jesus, Yah-who-saves], and on this basis they will witness of this to the Gentile world and bring the Gentiles to Zion (Is. 12:4,5). This sequence of thought shows how seamlessly the repentance of Israel and the associated acceptance of Jesus leads on into the establishment of the Kingdom of God on earth. Our study of latter-day typology in Section 1 revealed a consistent pattern of Israel being dominated by their Arab enemies in order to bring about their repentance. There are a number of passages which speak specifically of Israel's complete turning back to God - which is an event that can only have reference to the last days repentance of Israel. An examination of these passages reveal many links with the events which typify the last days, and confirms the general pattern which they suggest. The rising of the sun of righteousness (i.e. Christ's full revelation) will be "unto you (repentant Jews) that fear my name" (Mal. 4:2); the apocalypse of Christ must be preceded by at least some Jews coming to fear God's Name again. God's anger will be against Israel's Arab invaders for attacking the land "whereas the Lord was there" (Ez. 35:10). The presence of the Lord in His land will be through His presence among His true children who will then be living in it. This agrees with Joel's constant theme, that the final Arab invasion will only be destroyed when Israel have made some sign of repentance. This repentance of Israel will be associated with an opening of their eyes to God's word. "The Lord hath poured out upon (Israel) the spirit of deep sleep, and hath closed your eyes (quoted in Rom.11:8 concerning Israel's blindness to Christ)...the vision of all (God's word) is become unto you as the words of a book that is sealed...(but) in that day (of the Kingdom) shall the deaf hear the words of the book" (Is. 29:10,11,17,18). This will be when the book is *unsealed* at "The time of the end" (Dan. 12:4). It will be in our last days that Israel's blindness starts to be cured, thanks to a Word-based revival, led by the Elijah ministry. Solomon's prayer stated that when Israel properly repented, God would then "render unto every man according unto all his ways" (2 Chron. 6:30). Our Lord definitely applied these words to the work of His second coming, when "I shall give every man according as his work shall be" (Rev. 22:12). His allusion to Solomon's prayer should be proof enough that the time of His full apocalypse is related to the time of Israel's repentance. It may be that the revealing of the Lord at his first coming was only brought about by the repentance of Israel on account of John's work (cp. Elijah's). According to Acts 3:21,24, *all* the prophets speak of Israel's latter day repentance and the subsequent return of Messiah.

Thus the final three and a half year holocaust will be what brings about Israel's repentance. Hos. 6:1,2 seem to prophecy Israel's attitude: "Come, and let us return unto the Lord: for he hath torn (at the hand of the Arab beast), and he will heal

us... after two days will he revive us: in the third day he will raise us up, and we shall live" (cp. resurrection, and the vision of the dry bones coming to spiritual life in the last days, Ez. 37). We could paraphrase this: 'Let's repent, in 2 days we'll revive, and in the third day come to full life'. The Lord likewise rose up on the third day- as if they will come to fellowship his sufferings during their holocaust, and thereby his resurrection too. Gen. 49:10 then comes into play, speaking of how Messiah "will come to Shiloh, having the obedience of the peoples" (RVmg.).

However, although we speak at length in this Section about the repentance of Israel, we should not think that the majority of Israel will repent: only a tiny minority will (Is. 6:13). The plagues on the earth / land prophesied in Revelation suggest that despite so much horrendous tribulation, "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... sorceries... fornication... thefts" (Rev. 9:20,21). There are at least 10 references here back to the sins of Israel in Old Testament times. The suggestion therefore is that as Israel failed to heed God's pleading with them in the past, both through prophets and judgments, neither will they (generally) in Jacob's final time of trouble.

There is, however, the definite Biblical teaching that a remnant will repent. The tragic, awful implication appears to be that all of natural Israel will die during the final tribulation, apart from those who repent. Just prior to the Lord's return, Jerusalem will be taken, half the city going into captivity, but "the remnant [i.e. the faithful who repent] shall not be cut off from the city" (Zech. 14:2). And yet the "city shall be taken, and the houses rifled, and the women ravished". The implication surely is that the repentant remnant will somehow barricade themselves in within the fallen city, and then at their utmost extremity, Christ will come to save them.

The Curses On Israel (Lev. 26; Deut. 28)

These chapters are instructive as to how latter-day prophecy should be interpreted. Their prophecies of the curses to come upon Israel for their disobedience can be seen to have a continuous historic fulfilment over time, whilst also having reference to specific periods of Israel's punishment, e.g. at the hands of Babylon, Assyria, Rome and in the last days. The huge amount of controversy over *which* interpretation of Revelation and other prophecies is correct would have been stillborn had this principle been truly understood. Thus believers of the Truth throughout history have been able to find strength and encouragement from the study of Revelation by having had reason to believe that they were living the last days before the second coming. Each group of believers at different points in history has therefore held different interpretations, all of which to some extent were correct. As with Lev. 26 and Deut. 28, prophecy can have multiple initial applications, all of which point toward the latter-day complete fulfilment. However, there are prophecies of some latter day curses on Israel which have never been so far fulfilled. The last days will be the time when *every* prophecy has its ultimate fulfilment (Lk. 21:22; Rev. 17:17). Therefore we are justified in seeing

every prophecy concerning Israel and her Arab neighbours as having at least some latter day application.

We will now look at the various initial applications of the curses upon Israel, several of which we have previously shown to be typical of the last days.

The Assyrian Invasion

"The staff of your bread" being broken (Lev. 26:26) is quoted in Is. 3:1 concerning Judah's deprivation at the hands of the Assyrians. The "rebuke" which God would send upon them (Dt. 28:20) uses the same word as Is. 30:17 concerning the collapse of Jewish resistance to Sennacherib's invasion: "One thousand shall flee at the rebuke of one". Israel's withdrawal into fenced cities which would then be taken (Lev. 26:25), was what happened in this invasion (2 Kings 18:13).

Having spoken of conditions during the prolonged period of Arab domination, Dt. 28:49 moves on to describe a final invasion by "a nation... as swift as the eagle flieth"- which Hos. 8:1 picks up with reference to Assyria. This idea of a final invasion after a desolation period is in tune with much of our previous study of events typical of the last days. This eagle coming "from the end of the earth" or 'land' confirms our definition of the 'earth/land' as that promised to Abraham, right up to the Euphrates. Assyria was from the extremity of this 'land'.

In the context of the Assyrian invasion, Is. 10:20-23 prophesied that "the remnant of Israel", those who survive it, will trust in the Lord alone and "in truth", i.e. in covenant relationship with Him. It seems that all others of natural Israel will perish (as in Is. 4:2-4). This language of the remnant 'returning' unto the Lord is quoted in Rom. 9:23 about the repentance of the Jewish people and their turning to Christ. Israel were intended to repent because of Sennacherib's invasion (Is. 37:31,32), and then "the consumption" of God's plan could have happened. But the prophecy has been reinterpreted with reference to Israel in the last days, repenting finally as the result of the latter day Assyrian invasion. Isaiah 10 speaks of how Israel's affliction by Assyria leads them to repentance; a "remnant shall return... unto the mighty God" (Is. 10:21)- and the "mighty God" has just been defined in Is. 9:6 as a title for the Lord Jesus. This will be a result of God using the Assyrian invader to "make a consumption... in the midst of all the land" of Israel (Is. 10:23). The "yoke" of Assyria "shall be destroyed because of the anointing" (Is. 10:27)- i.e. the coming of Christ, the anointed one, in response to the remnant returning unto Him.

Ben-hadad's Syrian Invasion

In the account of the great famine in Samaria which this invasion brought about, there is the extraordinary record of the two women arguing about the eating of their children (2 Kings 6:29). The inclusion of this incident in the record must be to recall Lev. 26:29, where it is prophesied that this is exactly what would occur. Ben-hadad's invasion is typical of the Arab onslaught of the last days - causing acute famine; the leadership of Israel being revealed as useless (2 Kings 6:27) and the presence of Elijah as God's prophet in the midst of the crisis (cp. the latter-day

Elijah).

The Babylonian Invasion

" Thy sons and thy daughters shall be given unto another people, and thine eyes shall look, and fail with longing for them all the day long" (Dt. 28:32), points forward to the tragic picture of the old and helpless being left in the land after the Babylonian invasion - that is those not worth taking into captivity. The reference to Israel's " king which thou shalt set over thee" being taken into captivity (Dt. 28:36) can only be applicable to the Babylonian invasion. " I will break the pride of your power" (Lev. 26:19) is hard to make sense of apart from in a Babylon context; the same word is used in 2 Kings 25:13 concerning the breaking of the temple pillars by the Babylonians. That invasion truly " marred the pride of Judah, and the great pride of Jerusalem" (Jer. 13:9) through desecrating the temple, their pride and joy.

The great emphasis on how famine and plague would lead to Israel's capture by their enemies rather than straight military defeat (Lev. 26:25), is especially relevant to Nebuchadnezzar's taking of Jerusalem (cp. Jer. 14:12). " The pestilence" would consume them from the face of Israel (Dt. 28:21) - perhaps implying that latter-day Israel chose Arab captivity because of the extent of this problem. Ezekiel's prophecies of the coming Babylonian tribulation have several references in Lev. 26:-

Ezekiel

" They shall eat bread by weight" (Ez. 4:16)

" The fathers shall eat the sons in the midst of (Zion), and the sons shall eat their fathers" (Ez. 5:10).

" I will make thee waste" (Ez. 5:14)

" ...draw out a sword after (you)" (Ez. 5:12)

Lev. 26

" They shall deliver you your bread by weight" (Lev. 26:26)

" Ye shall eat the flesh of your sons" (v. 29). This situation will be remedied by the latter-day Elijah (Mal. 4:6).

" I will make your cities waste (v. 31, same word).

" I will scatter you among the heathen, and draw out a sword after you" (v.33).

This latter connection is based upon Ezekiel being told to shave his hair and split it three ways - to be burnt with fire, cut by the knife, and scattered to the winds. This represents the three ways in which latter-day Israel will be punished (Ez. 5:1-4). A very small amount of hair was to be hidden in Ezekiel's skirts, and then cast into a fire. Ezekiel may well represent the latter-day Elijah, with whom the

future remnant will be associated, although even they will be purified by the effect of the (literal) fire which will come upon Jerusalem (Zech. 13:9).

The Time of the Judges

We have frequently observed that the Arab incursions of this period are typical of the period of extended Arab domination which is yet to come upon Israel. There is reason to think that this was the first time in which the curses of Lev. 26 and Dt. 28 began to be realized upon Israel. "Your highways shall be desolate" (Lev. 26:22) is definitely picked up in Jud. 5:6, concerning the result of the Arab reign of terror in Israel. The curses upon the land physically also found fulfilment in this period.

There is a most interesting connection between the curses for disobedience and the time of the judges in the words of Azariah to Asa. He reminded Asa of the problems of weak leadership in that period, and encouraged Asa to learn the lesson from it, as a ruler of Israel. He describes Israel at that time as being "for a long season...without the true God, and without a teaching priest (cp. 1 Sam. 3:1, Hebrew), and without law" (2 Chron. 15:3). This is quoted in Hos. 3:4,5 concerning Israel's state before their final repentance. Azariah continued: "In those times there was no peace to him that went out, nor to him that came in (an idiom for the rulers), but great vexations were upon all the inhabitants" (2 Chron. 15:5). This is definitely alluding to Dt. 28:19,20: "Cursed shalt thou be when thou comest in...and goest out. The Lord shall send upon thee...vexation" (same word in 2 Chron. 15:5). "Nation was destroyed of nation" (2 Chron. 15:6) must be alluded to in Luke 21:10 concerning the situation in latter-day Israel. And - for the enthusiast - 2 Chron. 15:7 = 1 Cor. 15:58 - a certain latter-day application.

The Roman Invasion

That this was a detailed fulfilment of some parts of these prophecies is well known and chronicled. Our Lord's quotation of Dt. 28:26 in Mt. 24:28 ("thy carcasses shall be meat unto the fowls of the air") is confirmation of this.

We have laboured the previous fulfilments of the curses at some length because each of the invasions referred to clearly points forward to those of the last days. We can therefore reasonably look for a specific latter-day fulfilment of Lev. 26 and Dt. 28. This would appear necessary anyway, seeing that the sufferings outlined there lead to Israel's repentance - which has not yet happened. Further, there are certain elements of the curses which cry out for a latter-day interpretation rather than to anything which has gone before.

"The land of your enemies shall eat you up" (Lev. 26:38) implies that Israel's enemies are to be seen as a beast. This sort of language is quite common in the prophecies which speak of a latter-day Arab beast (e.g. Is. 49:19; Joel 1:6). Joel's likening of this invader to locusts (Joel 1:4) is perhaps based upon the prophecy that "locusts shall consume (the land)...the fruit of thy land shall the locust possess" (Dt. 28:38,42 A.V. mg.). 'Possess' invites us to see the locusts as representative of a group of invaders. Following straight on from this, we read

that " The stranger that is within thee shall get up above thee very high" (Dt. 28:43). This surely begs for an application to the Arab inhabitants of the [so called] Occupied Territories, who will no doubt join in with the 'locust' invasions, dominating the Jews as the Philistines did.

" Ye shall be left few in number, whereas ye were as the stars of heaven for multitude" (Dt. 28:62) is hard to convincingly apply to any previous persecution - these have tended to be specific to one geographical area in the past. From what we can ascertain, the population of world Jewry has not fluctuated previously in the dramatic fashion which this verse implies. There must therefore be a world-wide persecution of Jews for this to come about; this opens up the prospect of America and Britain systematically exterminating them, or, alternatively, deporting them to Israel or their Arab enemies. This could easily come about by the Arabs tugging at the oil noose which they have around the West - perhaps by enforcing them to accept a nominal form of Islam if they want regular oil supplies?

The material prosperity of Israel, particularly the fertility of the land, was to be cursed if they disobeyed God (Dt. 28:16-18). If this has a latter-day application, it follows that Israel must first have returned to their land in the last days and become prosperous before it can happen. This is exactly the position today. Their trust in " thy high and fenced walls" (Dt. 28:52) would have its latter-day equivalent in Israel's trust in its superior (nuclear?) military deterrent.

Nuclear war?

The curses to come upon Israel as a result of the Arab invasions are described in terms which are extremely apposite to modern warfare. The plagues to come upon Israel as a result of the invasions are almost impossible to identify with anything presently known: " a consumption... a fever... an inflammation... an extreme burning... blasting... the burning ague that shall consume the eyes" (Dt. 28:22; Lev. 26:16) all seems to echo the language of nuclear fall-out. " They shall be burnt...and devoured with burning heat, and with bitter destruction" (Dt. 32:24) is similar.

The release of complex chemical weapons, as well as nuclear detonation, would explain why rainfall patterns will be interrupted during this holocaust (Dt. 28:23). The fall-out from such weapons would create the murderous rain of dust upon the land which Dt. 28:24 speaks of: " The Lord shall make the rain of thy land powder and dust: from heaven shall it come down upon thee, until thou be destroyed" .

It is twice emphasized that those in the land would suffer blindness (Dt. 28:28,29). This has not yet happened; the context invites us to read this as literal rather than figurative. We know that the Arabs who attack Jerusalem will both fight each other and have their eyes rot in their sockets (Zech. 14:12), the implication being that they use their nuclear missiles against each other as well as against Israel. Their earlier use of these weapons would account for this blindness coming upon Israel, and again we see the principle that what the Arabs do to Israel will be inflicted upon them. As Israel were punished with the curse of infighting (Is. 9:19), so the Arabs will be. As Israel will experience a great earthquake (Ez.

38:19), so will their enemy Babylon (Rev. 16:18,19); indicating that 'Babylon' will then be present in Israel? For other instances of the punishments upon Israel coming upon her latter day enemies, see Joel 3:6,8; Ez. 6:5 cp. 39:15.

The present development of nuclear weaponry which inflicts highly local damage (as opposed to the bombing of Japan in 1945) indicates the likelihood of these suggestions. Israel having "emerods", i.e. cancerous growths (Dt. 28:27), would then also be due to such weapons being used. Previous fulfilments of this are hard to see. It must also be significant that "I will make your cities waste" (Lev. 26:31), uses a Hebrew word which means 'wasted by intense heat' - i.e. nuclear fission?

There are a number of other hints at nuclear activity in other latter day prophecies which we will present at this point:

- "The towers shall fall, and every wall shall fall to the ground" (Ez. 38:20 A.V.mg.)- exactly as happens in the wake of a nuclear explosion. These words correspond almost exactly with eye-witness accounts of Hiroshima's destruction in 1945. Compare Is. 25:4 "The heat, the blast...as a storm against the wall".
- "Pillars of smoke" (Joel 2:30) is literally 'palm trees' of smoke (Hebrew)- an allusion to the mushroom cloud?
- The invading "northern army" will be driven "into a land barren and desolate" (Joel 2:20). The Hebrew root for "desolate" means to be stunned or numbed. A nuclear wilderness somewhere in the Middle East could certainly be called a numbed and stunned land.
- The latter day Assyrian will be destroyed with "fire (that) shall eat thee up like the cankerworm" (Nah. 3:15). Apart from nuclear, which other form of weaponry kills people by a mixture of intense fire and also cancer? This may speak of the Arabs using their weapons on each other. Likewise the destruction of Moab by Babylon in the last days is described in language which has nuclear hints: "They (of Moab) that fled stood under the shadow of Heshbon because of *the force*: but a *fire* shall come forth out of Heshbon, and a *flame*" (Jer. 48:45).
- The massive scale of destruction spoken of as occurring in the last days will be hard to achieve by the use of conventional weapons. The damage to the natural world which is prophesied rather precludes this: "I will consume man and beast; I will consume the fowls of the heaven, and the fishes of the sea...and I will bring distress upon men, that they shall walk like blind men" (Zeph. 1:3,17; cp. men's eyes melting away in their sockets in Zech. 14:12).
- "The Lord shall make the rain of thy land powder and dust: from heaven (the sky) shall it come down upon thee" (Dt. 28:24) has never yet been fulfilled. Nuclear fallout would exactly fit the bill. Likewise Is. 29:6, describing the invasion of latter day Babylon / Assyria, has yet to be accurately fulfilled: "Thou shalt be visited of the Lord of Hosts with...great noise, with storm and tempest, and the

flame of devouring fire" .

- The prophecies of Israel's latter day holocaust in Is. 24 and 25 are full of connections with Revelation and the Olivet prophecy. They have many references to a desolating of the land of Israel which may have more than a figurative application: " The Lord maketh the land empty, and maketh it waste (a reversal of creation)...the land shall be... utterly spoiled... the land mourneth and fadeth away...the land is defiled...therefore hath the curse devoured the land...the inhabitants of the land are burned...as the heat in a dry place; even the heat with the shadow of a (mushroom) cloud" . There are several references in the prophets to the land of Israel being defiled by God's judgments; it would be appropriate, in the light of this, if the land was physically contaminated in the last days. There is a strong Biblical connection between the land and people of Israel (e.g. " the land rested from war" , Josh. 11:23, means the people did). The utter moral defilement of the people may therefore be physically expressed in the state of the land. Thus Ezekiel's descriptions of a fertile and prosperous land are in the context of this being the outcome of a *spiritual* revival of Israel. The 'blossoming' of Israel's land since 1948 is not, therefore, a fulfilment of such prophecies (unless there has been an unperceived repentance of a minority).

- The latter day invasion from the Euphrates (i.e. geographical Babylon) will result in men being killed by fire, smoke and brimstone (Rev. 9:14,18)- nuclear language?

- " Who is like unto the beast? Who is able to make war with him?" (Rev. 13:4) will be the world's reaction to the Arab beast of the last days. Seeing that the West has nuclear weapons, this could imply that the Arab beast either deprives them of their weapons (an Arab dominated and more politically powerful UN could achieve this), or that a new paradigm of weapons, worse than nuclear, are possessed by the beast and used to hold the rest of the world to ransom.

Final solution?

In Chapter 8 we mentioned the possibility of Israel's latter-day persecutors using similar techniques to those of the Nazis during the second World War. There are certainly a number of word pictures among the curses which recall the scenes of Nazi death camps. " They shall fall one upon another...when none pursueth" (Lev. 26:37 [i.e. not in military conflict]), creates the picture of mass extermination. Their enemy " shall put a yoke of iron upon thy neck, until he have destroyed thee" (Dt. 28:48) is surely the language of slave labour camps, working the Jews until they drop dead. The words of Dt. 28:66,67 were clearly true of the Nazi persecution: " Thou shalt fear day and night...in the morning thou shalt say, Would God it were even! and at even thou shalt say, Would God it were morning! for the fear of thine heart wherewith thou shalt fear, and for the sight of thine eyes which thou shalt see" .

Yet Israel's final holocaust will be greater than that of the 1940s; therefore there must be a similar system of death camps and mass extermination in the Arab countries around Israel, where they will be led captive.

It should be noted that the record of the curses in Lev. 26 splits them up into six sections, each introduced by a phrase like, "If ye will not for this hearken unto me...then..." more curses would come (Lev. 26:14,18,21,23,27,36). It is tempting to associate this with the series of six judgments to be poured upon Israel and the Arabs as outlined in the six seals (Rev. 6) and six vials (Rev. 16), leading up to the seventh period, of Israel's repentance and Christ's Kingdom. There are many other points of contact between the curses and the language of the seals and vials.

The implication of this is that there are at least six periods of God's appeal to Israel to repent through their trials, which they will refuse to accept. "If ye will not for all this *hearken* unto me" (Lev. 26:18) may suggest that God's word will be spoken to Israel along with the trials. This again indicates that the Elijah ministry will operate within Israel during their period of Arab downtreading. "If ye will not be *reformed* by me" (Lev. 26:23) uses a Hebrew word elsewhere translated 'to teach', defined by Strong as 'to chastise by words'. This provides further confirmation of the idea.

Mental trauma

There is a tremendous emphasis upon the mental torment which will come upon Israel due to their persecution. This is necessary to appreciate because it will be an important precondition for Israel's repentance.

During their holocaust, Israel will experience intense "terror" (Lev. 26:16), which would be enough to kill them (Dt. 32:24). This extraordinary level of paranoia will be modelled upon that of Jacob as he faced Esau - representing Israel's confrontation with the Arabs in the last days (Jer. 30:5,7). This state of fear will result in many Jews going to live in Jerusalem, as happened during the Babylonian and Assyrian invasions (Jer. 35:11). Ezekiel had prophesied of this time: "Terrors (an intensive plural - i.e. 'the one great terror') by reason of the sword shall be upon my people" (Ez. 21:12). Likewise our Lord spoke of "fearful sights" being seen in latter-day Israel (Luke 21:11).

This fear will be true medical paranoia: "I will make thee a terror to thyself" (Jer. 20:4) because of Babylon's invasion; "ye shall flee when none pursueth you...I will send a faintness into their hearts...the sound of a shaken leaf shall chase them" (Lev. 26:17,36). "I will bring the land into *desolation*" (Lev. 26:32) uses a Hebrew word which implies stupefaction by fear. This paranoia will be associated with a manic depression which will have its roots in a chronically bad conscience towards God, going back thousands of years to their national childhood: "I will...cause sorrow of heart...they that are left of you shall pine away in their iniquity...and also in the iniquity of their fathers shall they pine away" (Lev. 26:16,39). Note how the *land* will be brought into this mental desolation. Frequently the land of Israel is paralleled with the people (e.g. Jer.19:14 cp. 26:17). The intense desolation of Jewry will be reflected physically in the state of their land.

The connections between the record of Job's experience of depression and those curses upon Israel ⁽¹⁾ gives us a cameo of latter-day Jewry's position. This 'confusion of mind' (Deut. 28:20, Hebrew), "madness...and astonishment of heart"

(Dt. 28:28) will, not surprisingly, result in a complete collapse of leadership within Israel (Dt. 28:19), resulting in them fleeing a disorganized seven ways before their enemies (Dt. 28:25). There is a sharp contrast between this and Israel's present nonchalance.

That such an intensely confused and paranoiac state of mind will come upon Israel, is reflected by the emphasis upon how a similar mental condition will afflict their Arab enemies, who will experience what they brought upon Israel. Such fear and terror will come upon the Philistines (Zech. 9:5), the allies of latter-day Babylon (Rev. 18:10,15; 11:11), Babylon herself (Is. 21:4), and Israel's other Arab enemies (Isa. 19:17; 33:18, Hebrew).

The following verse-by-verse notes bring out a few more details:-

- Lev. 26:16: "I will even *appoint* over you terror" uses a Hebrew word which appears elsewhere concerning appointing officers over a land (Gen. 41:34), implying some form of Arab rulership over Israel during the desolation period. Likewise Dt. 28:45 warns that "these curses shall *come upon* thee... *pursue* thee and *overtake* thee", as if the curses are to be equated with the invaders.
- "Ye shall sow your seed in vain...your strength shall be spent in vain: for your land shall not yield her increase" (Lev. 26:16,20), not only confirms the many other hints that Israel's physical fertility will be ruined during this period, but also suggests that Israel will make a major effort to be agriculturally self-sufficient in the holocaust. This may indicate a world-wide trade embargo against her, or an Arab blockade which the West refuses to challenge.
- "I will also send wild beasts among you, which shall rob you of your children, and destroy your cattle" (Lev. 26:22 cp. Dt. 28:31) speaks of the Arab raiding of Israel rather than direct occupation during the desolation period. These "beasts of the earth/land" (Dt. 28:26) must refer to the Arab nations within the earth/land promised to Abraham. If these are the nations involved in the desolation period, then the mention of North African Arabs in Ez. 38:5 would suggest that the invasion there spoken of has an application to the final Arab onslaught against Jerusalem.

The use of cattle-raiding language in Ez. 38:12 would then show that these other nations think that they will grab some of the spoil which the nations around Israel have helped themselves to.

- The reference to Israel serving the gods of the nations to whom they are carried captive (Dt. 28:36), gods which their ancestors abhorred, may refer to some accepting Islam. Indeed, Dt. 31:29 suggests that in the latter (Heb. end) times, Israel will specifically "do evil in the sight of the Lord, to provoke him to anger through the work of your hands". This is the language commonly used concerning Israel's worship of the idols of the surrounding lands; if they are to specifically do this in the time of the end, it would seem reasonable to guess that this may refer to an acceptance of Islam.

- " I will not smell the savour of your sweet odours" (Lev. 26:31) refers to the incense of prayer not being responded to. As can be imagined, there will be much Jewish prayer in the last days, but the majority of Israel will fail to accept that it is faith in Christ's mediation of prayer, rather than the mental intensity of supplication, which brings a response. Spiritual Israel may have to re-learn this lesson at the same time.

This terrible catalogue of curses now leads on to its glorious climax: " them that are left alive of you...shall fall when none pursueth...fall one upon another (in death camps? or is this the language of Gehenna?)...and they that are left of you...shall confess their iniquity" (Lev. 26:36-40). This clearly demonstrates how the whole of Jewry will be destroyed apart from this righteous remnant - and that even they will be a remnant of a remnant. This accords with our previous conclusions, that there will be a group within latter-day Israel who associate themselves with the remnant, but who do not fully repent. They may well meet their final curse in the (temporary) fires of Gehenna, outside the city of their refuge.

The repentance of the diaspora

Lev. 26 and Dt. 28 speak largely, although not solely, of the position within the land of Israel. There is ample indication that there will also be a repentant remnant amongst the present diaspora, and also those who will be taken from Israel into neighbouring Arab lands.

Solomon's prayer at the dedication of the temple is shot through with allusions to the curses upon Israel just considered:-

1 Kings 8	Curses Upon Israel
:33	Lev. 26:17; Dt. 28:25
:33	Lev. 26:40
:35	Lev. 26:19
:37	Lev. 26:16; Dt. 28:21
:37 " cities"	Dt. 28:52 (same word)
:46	Lev. 26:34,44; Dt. 28:36,64
:47	Lev. 26:40; Dt. 30:1

This evident modelling of Solomon's prayer upon Lev. 26 and Dt. 28, indicates that it must be given some application to the last days. Its constant appeal for Israel to look back to the temple during their dispersion on account of sin, and to seek forgiveness through praying to God with it in mind, points forward to how latter-day Israel must look to Jesus, the true Temple in whom God's Name fully dwells. Solomon stresses the need for Israel to pray for forgiveness during their dispersion (1 Kings 8:28,38,45,49), again showing how the repentant remnant of the last days will be characterized by intense prayer.

In response to this, God will " forgive, and do, and give to every man according to

his ways" (1 Kings 8:39). This is quoted in Rev. 22:12: "I come quickly...to give every man according as his works shall be", having reference to the Lord's 'return' in both A.D. 70 and the second coming. It is therefore fitting that the source of this quotation is also in a last days context. The implication of these two passages is that the Lord's second coming will be in response to Israel's repentance.

The prophecy of the diaspora's final repentance is further evidence that Israel must be taken captive into the neighbouring Arab states in the last days, and that due to this experience a remnant will repent. "They shall bethink themselves in the land whither they were carried captives (language irrelevant to the present diaspora), and repent, and make supplication unto thee in the land of them that carried them captives, saying, We have sinned, and have done perversely" (1 Kings 8:47). This verse is one of those in Solomon's prayer which Nehemiah alludes to in his prayer of repentance, spoken from Babylon:-

Nehemiah's prayer	Passages alluded to
" Let thine ear now be attentive, and thine eyes open, that thou mayest hear the prayer of thy servant, which I pray...and confess the sins of... Israel, which we have sinned...remember, I beseech thee, the word that thou commandest thy servant Moses... If ye transgress, I will scatter you abroad... but if ye turn unto me... yet will I gather (you) from thence, and will bring them unto the place that I have chosen"	2 Chron. 6:40 1 Kings 8:29 Lev. 26:33 Lev. 26:39-42

These allusions to Solomon's prayer and the records of Lev. 26, indicate that Nehemiah's prayer has a latter-day application. The Jewish captivity in Babylon therefore typified their future imprisonment in 'Babylon', the surrounding Arab states. True to type, there will be a spiritual revival there, based upon the inspired words of God's servants, as the writings of Jeremiah and Daniel were the inspiration behind Nehemiah's revival.

Ezekiel 20

Ezekiel 20:33-43 provides more detail concerning the diaspora's repentance. This passage is prefaced by Ez. 20:32: "That which cometh into your mind shall not be at all, that ye say, We will be as the heathen, as the families of the (surrounding) countries, to serve wood and stone". The next verses show that through their regathering to Israel, this attitude will be ended - either by death or repentance. It can therefore be taken as certain that just prior to Israel's latter-day regathering

and repentance, there will be a period during which they try to assimilate into the nations around them, not least by worshipping their gods. It is easy to imagine how the Jews will try to mix themselves with their Arab neighbours, accepting Islam to do so, in order to escape the rigours which will come upon them in the period of extended Arab dominance over Israel.

"I will gather you out of the countries wherein ye are *scattered*" (Ez. 20:34) uses a Hebrew word also translated 'to break to pieces', recalling how the Arab feet and toes of the image are broken to pieces (Dan. 2:40). The principle that the Arabs will receive what they do to Israel, indicates that these "countries" where Israel are "scattered" refer to the Arab states around Israel where the Jews will be taken captive in the last days. Joel 3:2-4 prophecies a latter-day Arab 'scattering' of Israel.

The language of Ez. 20:34,35 recalls that of Eze. 20:10: "I caused them to go forth out of the land of Egypt, and brought them into the wilderness...I will bring you out from the people...and I will bring you into the wilderness of the people". Thus Israel's leaving the physical persecution of Egypt and being brought into the spiritual testing of the wilderness, will have its counterpart in the Jews being led out of the lands of their Arab captors, to be spiritually refined in "the wilderness of the people".

"*There* will I plead with you", suggests that this "wilderness" is a specific country. There is good reason to think that this will be literal Egypt:-

- Dt. 28:68 speaks of the final curses to come upon latter-day Israel: "The Lord shall bring thee into Egypt again".

- Isa. 19:18-25 indicates that there will be repentant Jews in latter-day Egypt.

- At the time of Israel's repentance, God will "break the bands of your yoke" (Ez. 34:27), using the language of their suffering in Egypt (Lev. 26:13). If they are literally delivered from Egypt, this would fit nicely.

- "The wilderness of the people...the wilderness of the land of Egypt" (Ez. 20:35,35) will be the place of Israel's final latter-day refining.

- "The wilderness of the land of Egypt" (Ez. 20:36) rather than 'and' shows that we are to associate Egypt and this "wilderness" of testing.

Thus Israel are brought out from their captivity in Arab lands, figurative 'Egypt', into *literal* Egypt, which will be the figurative 'wilderness' of spiritual testing.

Pleading with Israel

God will "plead" with Israel in this figurative wilderness, "face to face...as I pleaded with your fathers" (Ez. 20:35,36). God pleading "face to face" with Israel recalls how He did this in the literal wilderness through the person of Moses (Dt. 5:4,5; 34:10). This suggests that there will be a great prophet with Israel during

their time in Egypt. Whether this is 'Elijah' or Jesus seems purposefully unclear, doubtless because it is impossible for us to exactly fit the return of Christ into the sequence of latter-day events.

The Hebrew for 'plead' does not necessarily imply an attempt to change someone's mind, but more a pronouncement of judgment. Speaking of the same time we read, "I will plead with thee because thou sayest, I have not sinned" (Jer. 2:35). Thus the 'pleading' is in order to highlight the extent of Israel's sins. Is. 43:26 implies that such pleading is unnecessary if there is true repentance. God's pleading with Israel mentioned in Ez. 20:35 is set in the context of Ez. 17:20, which speaks of people being taken captive to Babylon and being 'pleaded' with there by God, through the deprivations of captivity, to recognize their sin. This would suggest that Israel's removal into Egypt will still be under Arab control, although manipulated by God.

During this period, the unworthy amongst the diaspora will be eliminated, probably at the same time in which the unworthy amongst the remnant left in the land will be destroyed: "I will purge out from among you the rebels, and them that transgress against me: I will bring them forth out of the country where they sojourn, and they shall not enter into the land of Israel" (Ez. 20:38). The singular "country" must be Egypt; it stands in contrast to "the countries" (plural) of v. 34, where Israel are initially scattered. Thus as the unworthy of natural Israel left Egypt but failed to reach Canaan, so this will be literally true in the last days. Some among spiritual Israel may have a like experience, according to the typology of Lot's wife leaving Sodom but failing to reach salvation.

"I will cause you to pass under the rod, and I will bring you into the bond of the covenant" (Ez. 20:37) is shepherd language, hinting that Jesus may be back on earth at this point. The picture of the good shepherd counting the sheep under the rod shows the importance of the exact number of the remnant. As it comprised 7,000 in Elijah's time, so we can expect the existence of a certain specific number of truly righteous Jews to be the prerequisite for Israel's final deliverance. Further evidence for this was given in our comments on the marriage supper parable.

Passing under the rod may be intended to connect with Lev. 27:32, which speaks of the tithe of the flock as being whatever passed under the rod. This could mean that only a tenth of the diaspora, or those who go to Egypt, will finally enter the covenant. The following points are worth pondering in this connection:-

- "The virgin of Israel is fallen...the city that went out by a thousand shall leave an hundred, and that which went forth (into captivity?) by an hundred shall leave ten" (Amos. 5:2,3) shows that only a tenth will survive the judgments spoken of.

- "The cities (shall) be wasted without inhabitant (due to the captivity)...but yet in (the land) shall be a tenth, when it is returned, and hath been bruised" (Is. 6:11-13 A.V. mg.). This indicates that a tenth of those carried captive by the latter-day Arab invaders will return after having temporarily suffered ("bruised")

). These are the remnant - " the holy seed" (Is. 6:13).

- It is significant that a ten-man remnant would have saved Sodom (Gen. 18:32), representative of Jerusalem in the last days? (Is. 1:10).

Intensity of repentance

One of the greatest and most intense examples of human repentance presented in Scripture is that of David. There are a number of connections between the records of his anguish of soul and fulness of restored fellowship with God, and the prophecies of Israel's latter day repentance. This must be so that we can have some more precise picture of the extent of their repentance.

David	Israel
Killed a lamb (2 Sam. 12:3)	Ditto for Israel
Ps. 65:2	Is. 40:5
2 Sam. 12:11	The language of Dt. 28 about Israel's punishment in the last days
2 Sam. 12:13	Mic. 7:18
Ps. 38:7	Is. 1:6
Ps. 51:1	Acts 3:19
Ps. 51:10	Ez. 36:26
Ps. 51:10-16: David's	Ditto for Israel

realization that the Law
could

not save him, and
subsequent

preaching of God's

righteousness to the world.

Notes

(1) See *James and other studies* (London: Pioneer, 1992).

CHAPTER 16-1: The Coming Of Elijah

We have frequently commented in the earlier studies upon the major role of the latter-day Elijah. There is every reason to think from the typology studied so far, that we are intended to connect Elijah's 3.5-year ministry (James 5:17) with the

1260 days/42 months (i.e. 3.5 years) of the tribulation of God's people spoken of in Daniel and Revelation. The description of the whore of Babylon in Revelation is based upon Jezebel as a prototype. As she ruled over Israel through her puppet Ahab during Elijah's ministry, so latter day Babylon (through a puppet Israeli leader?) will dominate Israel during Elijah's future ministry. Whilst it is quite possible that Israel's holocaust will last for a literal 3.5 years, during which time 'Elijah' will be among them, it may be that the similarity of the time periods is just to indicate that the work of the latter-day Elijah will coincide with the holocaust period.

There can be no doubt that 'Elijah' will come in some form: "I will send you Elijah the prophet before the *coming* of the great and dreadful day of the Lord...lest I *come* and smite the earth" (Malachi 4:5,6). The coming of the Lord must therefore be preceded by Elijah's work. His mission will be to direct Israel's attention to God's Word, "lest I come and smite the earth with a curse" (Malachi 4:4,6). This was evidently not fulfilled by John the baptist, seeing that the land was smitten after A.D. 70 due to Israel's failure to repent. "Lest I come..." is clearly referring to God's manifestation in Christ's second coming - it is associated with the arising of "the sun of righteousness" (Malachi 4:2,6). Whilst John fulfilled the role of the Elijah prophet to those who truly repented (Matt. 11:14), he emphatically denied that he was 'Elijah' (John 1:21,23). This can only mean that the Elijah prophet is yet to come. Our Lord silences all doubt about this: "Elias truly shall first come, and restore all things" (Matt. 17:11). Elijah's work will be to turn the hearts of Israel back to the patriarchs in repentance (Malachi 4:6 cp. 1 Kings 18:37), so that Christ comes to an Israel who have turned away from unGodliness (Isa. 59:20).

The prophecy of Israel's latter day repentance in Zech. 13:8,9 is based around the events in Elijah's time. As he destroyed two thirds of the apostate Israelites sent to take him by fire (2 Kings 1:10), so "in all the land" there will be a similar proportion of destruction. The third who come through the fire will say "Yahweh is my God" - i.e. they will exclaim the name 'Elijah', as they did after Elijah had induced their rejection of Baal in 1 Kings 18:39. Yet the destruction of two thirds of Israel in Zech. 13 sounds as if this is the result of their latter day invasion. It may be that the latter day Elijah works through this in order to bring about their repentance.

John being a mini-Elijah prophet, it is to be expected that the broad features of his ministry will be repeated in the work of the final Elijah prophet. John was called "the baptist", so evident was his emphasis on water baptism. Indeed, the name 'John' and the image of water baptism are hard to separate. There is fair reason to think that 'Elijah' will also literally baptize.

For Israel to call upon themselves the Name of the Lord when they repent, it is fitting that Elijah baptizes them into His Name. Zech. 13:1 may hint at latter day baptisms among repentant Jewry: "In that day there shall be a fountain opened to the house of David...for sin and for uncleanness". Israel will call upon themselves the Name of Yahweh our righteousness by being baptized into the Name of the Father and Son (Jer. 33:16). "That (Christ) should be made manifest to Israel, therefore am I come baptizing with water" (Jn. 1:31) seems to make baptism a pre-requisite for accepting Christ. Indeed, Jewish theology expects baptism to be

associated with the coming of Messiah and the Elijah prophet. Therefore the Jews asked John: " Why baptizest thou then, if thou be not that Christ, nor Elias?" (Jn.1:25).

Literal Elijah?

If literal Elijah is to fulfil Malachi's prophecy, then presumably he must be resurrected before the second coming. Whilst one exception to the doctrine of resurrection after Christ's return can be countenanced, it seems likely that an Elijah-like prophet is a more reasonable possibility. John the baptist was 'Elijah' in some ways (Matt. 11:14), although his was only a primary fulfilment of the prophecy (John 1:21; Matt. 17:11). He was also an initial fulfilment of Malachi 3:1: " I will send my messenger (John/Elijah), and he shall prepare the way before me: and the Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple" . This had an even earlier fulfilment in Malachi as the messenger ('Malachi' = 'messenger'), preparing the way for Nehemiah's coming to the temple. In similar manner, Isa. 40:3-5 is applied to the Elijah prophet in the form of John, although it has an initial application to Isaiah speaking words of comfort to Jerusalem in his time. Mk.1:3 implies that the *message* of the Elijah prophet was the coming of Elijah; it does not therefore have to be delivered by Elijah himself. Previous 'Elijah' prophets have had his characteristics but not been him personally. The ultimate fulfilment of the 'Elijah' prophecy may therefore be along similar lines.

No dew, no rain

An examination of the record of Elijah can now be undertaken with the conviction that there must be many details which have relevance to the latter-day Elijah.

The dramatic entrance of Elijah upon the scene with his decree that " there shall not be dew nor rain these years, but according to my word" (1 Kings 17:1), may suggest a similar sudden revelation of the Elijah prophet in the last days. As Jeremiah typified the Elijah prophet's relationship with the Jewish leadership of the last days, represented by flexi-minded Zedekiah, so Elijah appealed to an equally vacillating Ahab.

Elijah's withholding of dew and rain resulted in a chronic lack of pasture for the cattle, so that they desperately sought some in vain (1 Kings 18:5). This must connect with the identical scene prophesied in Joel 1:18,20, concerning the dire physical state of the land and animals during the final Arab holocaust. We have previously shown how the climatic and agricultural problems within latter-day Israel will bring the country to its knees. Presumably this will be ultimately due to the words of the Elijah prophet. " There shall not be dew...but according to my word" hints that if Israel repented, Elijah would pray for rain and be heard, which is what eventually happened. It would therefore appear that 'Elijah' will make an appeal to Israel at the beginning of the tribulation period, to which they will refuse to respond. Due to this, the dew and rain will be withheld. Lev. 26:19 and 1 Kings 8:35, both previously considered, mention this as a curse which will come upon latter-day Israel.

Remnant of a remnant

We have earlier demonstrated that the Jews who returned from Babylon are typical of those under Arab persecution in the last days. To encourage this group to more completely dedicate themselves to God, Haggai called for the dew and rain to be stopped, clearly alluding to Elijah having done this earlier (Hag. 1:10,11). As a result, "the remnant of the people obeyed the voice of the Lord their God, and the words of Haggai the prophet...the Lord's messenger" (Hag. 1:12,13). We see in this another hint that only a remnant of the remnant who returned from Babylon were truly pleasing to God, as only a remnant of the latter-day Jewish "remnant" will be. Haggai being "the Lord's messenger" connects him with the Elijah prophet, who fills the same role (Malachi 3:1; 4:5). It should be noted that David connects a lack of dew with apostate Israel being slain by their Arab enemies (2 Sam. 1:21). As Haggai achieved only limited success, only achieving anything with a tiny remnant, so it may be with the latter day Elijah prophet. Ultimately, "he shall smite the earth (land) with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked" (Is. 11:4)- although Elijah will plead with Israel to repent lest this happen (Malachi 4:6). Presumably, the majority will not respond, and therefore the threatened judgment will not be averted.

Jeremiah and his school of prophets witnessed to Israel before and during the Babylonian invasion (2 Chron.36:15), as Elijah and his helpers will do at the time of the invasion by latter-day Babylon. Joel prophesies how Israel will be exhorted to howl in their prayers, clothing themselves with sackcloth (Joel 1:13); exactly as Jeremiah had pleaded with Israel in the last moments before the Babylonian onslaught: "Gird you with sackcloth, lament and howl" (Jer.4:8).

Rain and repentance

The giving of dew being a sign of God's blessing (Gen. 27:28; Deut. 33:13), this can only occur upon Israel's repentance. Thus after the time of the Arab holocaust, when there was no "peace to him that went out or came in because of the affliction", God "will not be unto the residue (remnant) of this people as in the former days...the heavens shall (now) give their dew; and I will cause the remnant of this people to possess all these things" (Zech. 8:10-12). The dew will come upon the whole land, because only this righteous remnant of Israel will be left alive.

Deut. 33:26-29 speaks of God's dramatic intervention to permanently save Israel from their enemies in the last days, and associates this with the heavens dropping dew upon the land. Seeing this is a normal thing to happen, the implication must be that during the time of their enemies' domination the dew had not come. This may be one of the reasons why the Arabs will be content to plunder the land rather than settle in it.

Hos. 14:4-8 speaks of the latter-day repentance of Jewry, resulting in God being "as the dew unto Israel". There follows an eloquent description of how this will enable Israel to grow and blossom in spiritual beauty. This spiritual growth of Israel during the early years of the Millennium will truly be a wondrous sight. Dew being symbolic of doctrine (Deut. 33:2), this may be a direct result of our teaching

them. Israel will then be as the dew to other nations (Mic. 5:7), insofar as they spread this doctrine to them.

Miraculous gifts

Several times during his ministry Elijah did spectacular miracles to confirm the validity of his message. The fact that "John did no miracle" (John 10:41) is perhaps recorded in order to show that he was not the supreme fulfilment of the prophet who would come "in the spirit and power of Elias" (Luke 1:17), i.e. doing similar miracles to those of Elijah. Elijah's miracles resulted in the poor widow woman (perhaps typical of the latter-day remnant) accepting him and his message (1 Kings 17:24).

Elijah being sent "before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord" (Mat. 4:5) seems to consciously connect with Joel's prophecy that some among latter-day Israel will possess the Spirit gifts "before the great and terrible day of the Lord come" (Joel 2:31). It would therefore appear certain that Elijah and his group of prophets will possess the Spirit gifts in the last days. The two witnesses of Rev. 11:5,6 have power to shut heaven and bring fire upon their enemies - clearly alluding to Elijah. His bringing down fire was against people of his own Jewish race who were persecuting him (2 Kings 1:9-12), confirming our previous suggestion that the Elijah ministry will be bitterly opposed by many Jews, after the pattern of Jeremiah's persecution during the Babylonian invasion. The beast "maketh fire come down from heaven" (Rev.13:13), just as Elijah did. The inference is that the latter day miracles of the Elijah ministry will be matched, to some degree, by the false claims of the beast. The miracles performed at Israel's deliverance from Egypt were likewise mimicked by the persecutors of God's people. Our Lord ascended to Heaven *so that* opportunity of repentance might be given to Israel (Acts 5:31), and *so that* He might give the Holy Spirit gifts to men (Eph.4:8-13 cp. John 14-16 explaining how Jesus departed *in order* to receive the Comforter). It follows that the gifts of the Holy Spirit were given largely in order to convince Israel of the Gospel; and so too around the period of the second coming?

Ahab's denunciation of Elijah as "he that troubleth Israel" (1 Kings 18:17) effectively accuses Elijah of being like Achan, the troubler of Israel (Josh. 6:18). As Achan brought about Israel's defeat at the hand of her Arab enemies, so latter-day Israel will blame their similar defeats and the strange drought which will afflict them, upon Elijah. Elijah's response to Ahab's accusation is typical of his theme of the need to throw off the worship of Baal and the other local gods, for that of Yahweh: "I have not troubled Israel, but thou...in that ye have...followed Baalim" (1 Kings 18:18). The stress upon this may indicate that the latter-day Elijah will seek to turn Israel away from a devotion to Islam - the idol of the surrounding nations.

16-2 Malachi's 'Elijah' Prophecy

The first three chapters of Malachi are set in the context of the restoration from Babylon. We have earlier shown that this period typifies the experience of the Jewish "remnant" of the last days. This section concludes with a description of the Bible-based revival of enthusiasm for the Law which occurred amongst some of

this group: " They that feared the Lord spake often one to another: and the Lord hearkened" (Malachi 3:16). The prophecy then goes on to speak directly of the last days: " They shall be mine...in that day when I make up my jewels" (Malachi 3:17). The rest of the prophecy then speaks of the final day of the Lord, at which time there would be a similar spiritual revival due to the work of 'Elijah', as there had been due to that of Malachi (the 'messenger' of Malachi 3:1) and his contemporary prophets.

Back to the Bible

The writing of " a book of remembrance" of those who allowed this revival to affect them (Malachi 3:16) has a latter-day application through its connection with Dan. 12:2, which speaks of the salvation of the Jewish remnant of the last days due to their names being written in a book. " They...spake often one to another" is the language of Deut. 6:6 concerning how Israel were to avidly discuss the Law among themselves. It will be Elijah's mission to redirect Israel's attention to " the law of Moses...the statutes and judgments" (Malachi 4:4,5). Malachi 3:18 comments upon the remnant's repentance: " Then shall ye return..." . This is in the context of Malachi 3:7, which pleads with them to return to the ordinances of Moses, again showing that the end result of Elijah's work in the last days is to bring them back to a meaningful understanding of the Mosaic Law. This will be necessary in view of the fact that there are good reasons to believe that Israel will keep large parts of the Law during the Millennium.

Seeing that the Law is a schoolmaster which leads to Christ (Gal. 3:24), it is understandable that the Elijah ministry will direct Israel's attention to it, so that they will thereby come to accept the Messiahship of Jesus. Paul's technique, as recorded in the Acts and epistles of the New Testament, was similar. The latter-day curses which will come upon Israel, as outlined in Lev. 26 and Deut. 28, are a result of Israel's disobedience to repeated appeals to return to the Law; this fact slips into place nicely once it is appreciated that 'Elijah' will be asking Israel to return to the true spirit of the Mosaic Law. He will be leading Israel into a new covenant with God, as did John. The prophet Azariah likewise; at a time when Israel " for a long season...hath been without the true God, and without a teaching priest, and without law" (2 Chron.15:3, cp. Hos.3:4,5, also about the last days), Azariah persuaded Israel to enter " into a covenant to seek the Lord God of their fathers" (2 Chron.15:12). Note that there are other connections between this record and latter day prophecies elsewhere (e.g. 2 Chron.15:5= Dt.28:19,20; 2 Chron.15:6= Lk.21:10).

As a man spares his son...

The remnant who respond will be spared by God, 'as a man spares his only son who is his servant' (Malachi 3:17 Heb.). This is evidently applicable to God sparing His only son/servant, Jesus, through the resurrection. The fact is therefore underlined that the remnant will come to fellowship the sufferings of Christ, and thus will also share in the deliverance which God gave Him.

Having been given this deliverance, the remnant will then be able to " discern between the righteous and the wicked...for (because) the day cometh that shall

burn as an oven...and all that do *wickedly* shall be stubble" (Malachi 3:18: 4:1). The final time (" day") of suffering during the Arab holocaust will result in the destruction of the unspiritual element of the remnant. There is ample reason to think that this fire will have a literal aspect to it. This 'day' of final destruction is that spoken of in Joel 2:31, after which the righteous remnant within Jerusalem are saved completely (Joel 2:32). The " oven" in which " the wicked" amongst the remnant are destroyed is therefore Jerusalem. Isa. 31:8,9 now comes into play: " Then shall the Assyrian (cp. the future Arab desolator) fall with the sword...his princes shall be afraid of the ensign ('the pole' - i.e. Christ), saith the Lord, whose fire is in Zion, and his furnace (s.w. " oven") in Jerusalem" . Three things are connected here:-

- The destruction of Israel's Arab enemies
- The presence of Christ in Zion
- Jerusalem being as an oven, which Malachi 4:1 says is for the purpose of destroying the unspiritual Jews among the " remnant" .

Judgment day

This is in line with our previous conclusions that the destruction of the remaining wicked Jews will be at the same time and in the same place as that of the participants in the final Arab onslaught. The 'fire' will burn up the faithless Jews as " stubble" (Malachi 4:1). Jer. 13:24 speaks of Israel being as stubble due to the Babylonian campaign, typifying the future Arab invasion. Joel 2:5 speaks of the latter-day invaders burning up Israel as " stubble" , indicating that they are the 'fire' which heats the 'oven'. Significantly, Israel's latter-day Arab enemies are repeatedly classified as " stubble" (Oba. v. 18; Nah. 1:10; Ps. 83:13; Isa. 47:14), showing how faithless Israel and their Arab invaders will receive a like judgment. Indeed, that punishment will also be shared by the rejected responsible. Thus the judgment of Babylon is likened to a heavy stone being cast into the waters (Jer.51:63; Rev.18:21); the same figure which is used to describe the condemnation of those who refuse to develop the spirit of Christ (Mt.18:6).

The truly righteous among the remnant " shall tread down the wicked...(as) ashes under the soles of your feet" (Malachi 4:3). " The wicked" are those of Malachi 3:18 and 4:1 - the unspiritual element amongst the latter-day Jewish 'remnant' in Jerusalem. This implies that in some way the spiritual Jews acceptable to Jesus will mete out judgment on the rejected ones. Perhaps in similar fashion the men of Nineveh will condemn the first century Jews at the judgment (Luke 11:32), and we will judge Angels (1 Cor. 6:3). In this way the righteous remnant shall " discern (judge) between the righteous and the wicked" (Malachi 3:18).

" But unto you that fear my name shall the sun of righteousness arise with healing" rather than destruction (Malachi 4:2). This confirms that the day that burns the wicked as an oven will be associated with Christ's return - the implication is '...but the return of Jesus will bring *blessing* for you who are truly righteous, as opposed to the fire of destruction for the faithless amongst Israel'. The 'healing' may well have a literal aspect, seeing that the remnant still hanging on within Jerusalem

will have been the victims of all manner of Arab efforts to destroy them. However, the full healing of Israel is through the cross of Christ (Isa. 53:5), showing that, due to this final phase of the holocaust, Israel truly come to accept Christ and Him crucified.

By contrast, the faithless amongst the remnant will be burnt up so that they will be left "neither root nor branch" (Malachi 4:1), both of which are clear symbols of Christ; for them the opportunity of Christ will be taken away eternally.

We are now in a position to present an approximate chronology of the events related to Israel's repentance:-

- Period of Arab domination during which the Elijah ministry calls for repentance and a return to the true spirit of the Mosaic law.
- Natural Israel persecute 'Elijah' and his school of prophets, blaming Israel's plight upon them.
- Jews, both from the land and the present diaspora, go into captivity in 'Babylon' and the neighbouring Arab lands.

Many are killed there.

- A remnant of these captives are taken to Egypt.
- All the Jews in the land are killed except for a remnant in Jerusalem.
- The unspiritual Jews in Egypt are destroyed at the same time as the faithless among the 'remnant' in Jerusalem.
- This will be at the hands of the Arab armies, who will destroy themselves at the same time. This will occur after Christ's return.
- Only truly righteous Jews will then be left alive.

SECTION 4:

THE COMING OF THE LORD AND JUDGMENT

CHAPTER 17: THE COMING OF THE LORD

17-1 The Parousia

There is a lamentable amount of unclarity in our thinking concerning the coming of Christ. There seems to be the idea that He will come to take us away, invisible to the world, and then reveal Himself to them after judgment. Associated with this problem is considerable confusion concerning the Greek word 'parousia', translated "coming" in Mt. 24. This study

aims to show that there is only one coming of Christ, and that this 'parousia' (" coming") refers to His literal, visible return. " The day of Christ" refers both to the time of the believers' judgment seat in Phil. 2:16, and to the lightning-like appearing of Christ to the world in judgment in Lk. 17:23,29,30. The coming of Christ in judgment will be at the same 'day' for both believer and unbeliever. But what evidence is there that the " day of Christ" is a period of 24 hours? We *must* understand that the meaning of time as we know it will be collapsed around the time of the second coming ⁽¹⁾. It is for this reason that we can only suggest *possible* chronological scenarios, of which there are as many versions as there are Bible students.

1. PAROUSIA

Jehovah's pseudo- witnesses have spread the idea that 'parousia' refers to an invisible presence of Christ. Some hold that the Olivet prophecy only has reference to the events of A.D. 70, and in no way to the second coming. Yet in that prophecy Jesus speaks of His 'parousia'. To say that this refers solely to His 'coming' in judgment on Israel in A.D. 70 is to say that the 'parousia' of Christ does not refer to His literal, visible presence.

In addition to the overwhelming evidence that the Olivet prophecy *does* refer to our last days, the point must be driven home that 'parousia' *always* refers to the physical presence of a person. There is another Greek word frequently translated 'coming' which is more flexible in meaning, but 'parousia' means 'a literal being alongside', and is always used in that way:-

- " As the lightning cometh out of the east...so shall also the *coming* ('parousia') of the son of man be (Mt. 24:27).
- " The day that Noe entered into the ark...the flood came...so shall also the coming of the son of man be" (Matt. 24:38,39).
- " Afterward they that are Christ's at his coming" (1 Cor. 15:23).
- " We which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord" (1 Thess. 4:15).

The other uses of 'parousia' are also concerning the Lord's second coming, often in the context of judgment: 1 Thess. 2:19; 3:13; 5:23; 2 Thess. 2:1,8; James 5:7,8; 2 Peter 1:16; 3:4,12; 1 John 2:28.

The moment of the second coming ('parousia') is likened to a flash of lightning and the beginning of rain at the time of Noah's flood. This makes any application of 'parousia' to the prolonged series of events in A.D. 69/70 at least tenuous when compared to the obvious application to the moment of the second coming. There are many links between Mt. 24,25 and 1 Thess. 4,5 which have been tabulated by several expositors. According to these connections, the Lord's 'parousia' mentioned in Mt. 24 is interpreted by Paul as referring to the literal second coming (Mt. 24: 30,31 = 1 Thess. 4:15,16).

In view of all this, it is desirable to interpret the 'coming' of the Lord in Mt. 24 as referring to the literal presence of Christ at His return, although this is not to rule out any primary reference to the events of A.D. 70.

17-2. Christ's Coming As A Thief

There has been much confusion over the 'thief-like coming of Christ' mentioned in 1 Thess. 5:2. The context is concerning the state of the ecclesia in the last days, and is shot through with allusions to the parable of the virgins. The sleeping virgins represent the unworthy amongst the believers who will live just prior to the second coming. Paul's allusion to this fills out the details: the coming of Christ to this category of 'believers' will be like a thief in the sense that their privacy and spiritual house will be invaded by the reality of the second coming. This will be due to their attitude of 'peace and safety', which they will actively promulgate - 'Everything's great within the household, we're going from strength to strength spiritually, there's no need to fear failure in any form!' That " they shall say, Peace and safety" (1 Thess. 5:3) suggests that this is an attitude which they publicly disseminate amongst the brotherhood. Bearing in mind the many prophecies and indications that there will be a massive spiritual collapse within the latter-day ecclesia, it is reasonable to assume that the faithful minority will speak out against this - to be met by a barrage of 'peace and safety' reasoning.

Those who will stand ready for their Lord will be in the light, in the day, self-aware, spiritually sensitive and realistic, and therefore *not* saying " Peace and safety" (1 Thess. 5:3-8). Christ's coming as a thief to the unworthy is therefore in the sense of His coming being unexpected by them, rather than being as a thief to the world. The frequent application of the 'peace and safety cry' to the world of the last days never ceases to amaze the present writer. Prophecy after prophecy describes a time of global cataclysm around the time of the second coming, even though this may be mixed with a fair degree of material prosperity. In no way will it be a time of " peace and safety" for the world; and their ever-increasing escapism shows that they don't exactly see it like that either. Biblically speaking, their hearts are failing them for fear, apprehensive concerning whatever is going to happen to their planet earth (Lk. 21:26, see modern versions).

GATHERING TO JUDGMENT

The point has been made that when the Angels first come to call us to judgment at the second coming (Mt. 13:39), there will be an element of choice as to whether we immediately accept the call to go and meet Christ. Noah and Lot were invited, not forced, to leave the world. Those who respond to Christ's return " immediately" will be accepted, implying that the unworthy delay. This means that the response is optional in the first instance (Lk. 12:36). There are other indications of this. The most obvious is in the parable of the virgins, where the wise go out to meet their Lord immediately, whilst the foolish delay in order to spiritually prepare themselves.

The connections between this parable and 1 Thess. 4 are strengthened by the same Greek word being translated " meet" in Mt. 25:6 concerning the wise virgins going out to " meet" Christ and also in 1 Thess. 4:17: " We which are alive and remain shall be caught up...in the clouds to *meet* the Lord in the air" . The picture is therefore presented of the righteous obeying the call of their own volition, and then being confirmed in this by being 'snatched away' to meet Christ in the (literal) air. We will then travel with Christ " in the clouds" (literally) to judgment in Jerusalem. In no way, of course, does this suggestion give countenance to the preposterous Pentecostal doctrine of being 'raptured' into heaven itself.

Every alternative interpretation of 1 Thess. 4:17 seems to run into trouble with the phrase "meet the Lord *in the air*". 1 Thessalonians is not a letter given to figurative language, but rather to the literal facts of the second coming. Further, the 1 Thess. 4:16-18 passage is described by Paul as him speaking "by the word of the Lord" Jesus (1 Thess. 4:15). If 1 Cor. 7 is any guide to how Paul uses this phrase, he would appear to be saying that in this passage he is merely repeating what the Lord Himself said during His ministry. This deals a death blow to some Pentecostal fantasies about the passage.

It is necessary to side-track in order to show that Paul is speaking of the faithful believers in 1 Thess. 4 and 5 rather than all the responsible:-

- He comforts them that the dead believers really will be rewarded with immortality, and that they can take comfort from the fact that they would live for ever (1 Thess. 4:13,14,18). Paul is therefore assuming their acceptability at judgment.
- "Ye are all the children of light" (1 Thess. 5:5) as opposed to the unworthy within the ecclesia, who were in darkness. This suggests that Paul wrote as though his readership were all faithful and assured of eternal life.

" Caught up"

Those wise virgins who go forth to meet Christ immediately are therefore those who will be "caught up together" with the faithful believers who will have been resurrected. This will be when the Angels "gather together *his elect*" (Mt.24:31). They then "meet the Lord in the air" literally, perhaps connecting with Rev. 11:12: "They (the faithful, persecuted saints of the last days) heard a great voice from heaven (cp. "the voice" of 1 Thess. 4:16) saying unto them, Come up (cp. "caught up...") hither. And they ascended up to heaven in a cloud (cp. "caught up...in clouds"); and their enemies beheld them". It may well be that Rev. 11:12 is speaking of the faithful Jewish remnant of the last days, who will be snatched away along with us.

" So great a cloud..."

This cloud of witnesses (Heb. 12:1) will then go with Jesus to judgment, which must be located on earth for the glimpses of the judgment seat which we are given to be realistically fulfilled. It is reasonable to guess that this assembly of faithful believers will visibly reflect God's glory, giving the impression of a 'shekinah' cloud. This may be due to the physical presence of the Angel with us during our time in this cloud. Such a picture is presented in Dan. 7:9-14; Jesus comes with the faithful, symbolized as clouds, along with the Angels, to the judgment seat. It is at this stage that the responsible from all nations come to the judgment (Matt. 25:32) so that there can be a separation of sheep and goats. The 'coming down' of the righteous responsible to Jerusalem will be at the same time as the judgment of the wicked nations in that same place: "Thither cause thy mighty ones to come down" (Joel 3:11) occurs in the context of Armageddon. "Saviours shall come up on mount Zion to judge the mount of Esau" (Obad. v 21), i.e. Israel's Arab enemies. The sequence of events here suggested chimes in with the thought so often expressed by generations of believers - that our initial reaction to the knowledge that our Lord is back will effectively be our judgment, although this will be formally confirmed at the judgment seat before which all the responsible must appear (2 Cor. 5:10).

With Jesus to judgment

The key passage in our reasoning, 1 Thess. 4:15-18, begins with "For..." . This is explaining 1 Thess. 4:14, which states that "them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring (up) with him" . This will thus be true both spiritually, in that they will share His victory over death, and, literally, in that they will come with their judge to judgment. John 14:3 may also become easier to handle with this understanding: "I will come again, and take you to be with me" (N.I.V.). Initially, this will mean a literal ascent into the sky, followed by a return to earth to be with Christ eternally in the Kingdom. "That where I am, there ye may be also" may be the spirit's basis for 1 Thess. 4:17, "And so shall we ever be with the Lord" .

The idea of literally travelling through the sky to the judgment seat was plainly taught by our Lord in His explanation of how "one shall be taken (literally disappear) and the other left" at His coming; "Whosoever the body is, thither will the eagles be gathered together" (Luke 17:36,37). The point of this allusion is to show that as the eagle travels through the air with a natural homing instinct, without fear or worry as to correct direction, so there should be no apprehension in the mind of the believer concerning the mechanics of how he will be taken away to meet his Lord ⁽²⁾.

The chronology we have suggested can now be summarized:-

- Persecution of believers.
- The Lord is revealed; the resurrection.
- An Angel invites each of the responsible to go and meet Christ.
- The unworthy delay, whilst the worthy go immediately.
- The worthy are snatched away into the air, forming a cloud of glory which is visible to all. They are physically with Jesus.
- Along with Him they come to Jerusalem.
- The unworthy are then gathered there.
- There is a tribunal-style judgment. The sheep and goats are together before the judgment seat. They are then finally separated by Christ's judgment, and receive their rewards.
- The wicked are destroyed along with the nations then surrounding Jerusalem.

The time scale for all this is unimportant - it could well be just a few seconds, if the meaning of time is to be collapsed, although there presumably must be a period of time for the cloud of witnesses to be beheld, and for the unworthy to desperately try to slap themselves into spiritual shape. The tremendous encouragement offered by the scenario here presented should not be missed: we will come with our judge, possibly already reflecting His glory, to the judgment. This in itself should give us a sense of humble certainty as we come before His tribunal. So much will depend on our reaction to the Angel's coming - our faith in

acceptance, our degree of concern for the things of this life - all will be revealed in that instant.

Notes

(1) See *Bible Basics* Digression 14 for more on this (Nottingham: The Dawn Book Supply, 1992).

(2) The objection that a carcase is an unseemly figure for the Lord Jesus surely becomes insignificant once it is recognized that the Bible often speaks of God and the things of His Truth in what we would consider inappropriate language (e.g. Mt. 13:33; Ps. 78:65).

SECTION 5:

THE ECCLESIA IN THE LAST DAYS

CHAPTER 20: " THE PROMISE OF HIS COMING" -A Study Of 2 Peter 3

20-1 2 Peter Chapter 3: An Exposition

This study is based on the understanding that 2 Peter 3 concerns the coming of the 'day of the Lord' both in AD70 and more importantly in our last days. The allusions to the Olivet prophecy, which is similar in this respect, and the use of the word 'parousia' to describe this 'coming' of the Lord confirm this approach (see studies on these topics elsewhere). This chapter contains warnings of a major apostasy that would arise within the latter day ecclesia, and urgent exhortations as to how we should live in the last days. It is not an exaggeration to say, in the light of this, that these words were fundamentally written for our generation, living just prior to the second coming, notwithstanding any other application to earlier generations.

The purpose of this chapter, in common with the whole second epistle, was to " stir up (the Greek implies suddenly, with force) your pure minds...that ye may be mindful of the words which were spoken before by the holy (Christian?) prophets (e.g. Paul, v.15), and of the commandment of us the apostles" (v.1,2). " Pure minds" clearly indicates that Peter's intended audience were those strong in the faith (cp. 2 Tim.3:8), the faithful remnant of the 'last days' of first and twentieth centuries, whose understanding (A.V. " minds" is the Greek for the deep intellectual element of the mind) needed to be enlarged and stirred up through the word. This would make them appreciate the reality of the responsibilities they faced in the last days. Hopefully the readers of this exposition are in exactly that category.

The " first" or most important (Greek) thing they were to understand when it came to Bible teaching about the last days was " that there shall come in the last days scoffers" (v.3). The presence of false teachers within the ecclesia would be one of the clearest signs of the second coming. The Lord " began" his Olivet prophecy with

a warning about false teachers, as if this would be the first main sign (Mk. 13:5). Likewise Paul says that it was needless for him to write to the Thessalonians about the "times and seasons" of Christ's return. "For yourselves know perfectly (clearly) that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night" (1 Thess.5:1,2); i.e. it would be when there were unready elements within the ecclesia, to whom Christ's return would be thief-like. In similar vein, John taught that the believers could be certain they were in the 'last days' of AD70 because of the presence of false teaching (1 Jn.2:18). Connecting this with our comment on 1 Thess.5:1,2, it may well be that the 'false teaching' is not so much in terms of basic abstract doctrine, but in the encouragement of a way of life that is not alert for the second coming. As we progress through 2 Peter 3, and indeed the entire New Testament, it becomes painfully obvious that this class of people were to arise *within* the ecclesia. As there were false teachers among natural Israel, so there must be within the New Israel (2 Pet.2:1). Peter implies that this fact is a major theme in the teaching of all the apostles and Spirit-guided brethren. There are a number of connections between the descriptions of these people in 2 Pet.2, and the language of 2 Pet.3.

These "scoffers" (Gk. 'those who poke fun at') would "walk after their own lusts...saying, Where is the promise of His coming?" (2 Pet.3:3,4). This links up with the false teachers of 2 Pet.2 being styled "them that walk after the flesh in...lust" (2:10). Thus, as always, the motivation for the questioning of true doctrine, in this case that of the second coming, was in order to justify a fleshly way of life. There seems a connection of thought here with the Lord's reflection that the servant who felt the Lord's coming was extensively delayed would start to "eat and drink with the drunken" and beat the fellow-servants. Peter's later reference to the Lord's thief-like coming for such brethren (v.10) indicates that there is a connection here. This would show that Peter is interpreting the Lord's description of the man who thought that the Master was delaying His coming, as meaning that in reality he was questioning whether his Master would ever come. This must surely be where a disinterest in prophecy ultimately leads- in a man's heart, anyway. Note how the false teaching was expressed in the form of a question. This common characteristic of false teachers dates right back to the serpent in Eden, showing that they have the family likeness of the beast (see Appendix 1).

But then came the thrust of their argument: "For since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation" (v.4). If "the fathers" here refers to the ecclesial elders who had known Christ in the flesh (as the phrase is used in 1 Cor.4:15; 1 Jn.2:13,14), it would appear that these dishonest doubters of the first century were middle aged believers who had themselves been waiting some time for the Lord's return. Christ's parable of the wicked servant getting tired of waiting would indicate the same. In any case, a group of high-folluting youngsters would be unlikely to have the impact on the ecclesia which 2 Pet.2 and 3:17 indicate that these false teachers would have.

This idea that Christ would not literally return was doubtless wrapped up in very respectable terms. We cannot overemphasize that the motivation for this false doctrine was in order to justify a fleshly lifestyle. Apostasy from the truth always has this motive. Conversely, true enthusiasm for the Lord's return is invariably

associated with a spiritual way of life (cp. Rom. 13:12). 2 Thess.2:2 says that the deceiving brethren taught that "the day of Christ is here" (R.V.)- presumably through the idea that the believers now are fully the Kingdom of God, that Christ's mystical presence amongst us is in fact His real and only form of existence and 'coming' to be with us, and that therefore there was no need for a doctrine of a second coming. In such an hour as the unworthy "think not", Christ will return (Mt.24:44). The Greek translated "think not" implies a very strong level of conviction that he will not return; it doesn't just imply that they will be expecting him but not very eagerly. Yet doubtless all latter day believers will claim some belief in a second coming- but in God's eyes, in their hearts they are absolutely persuaded he will never come. In like manner the Lord saw the half-committed believer as a person who actively *hates* God- although that isn't how that weak believer sees it all (Mt. 6:24). In reality, they will have convinced themselves that he will not return- either by their way of life, or their specific doctrinal beliefs. It may be in this way that there is a claim of "peace and safety" within the latter day ecclesia, seeing that "peace and safety" is very much the Old Testament language of the Kingdom (1 Chron. 22:10; Ez. 28:26; 34:25,28; 39:26; Zech.14:11). It is very difficult to achieve a balance between appreciating our high spiritual status now, and realizing that we are not yet the fullness of God's Kingdom. A true appreciation of our position should lead us to value the second coming more, to personally yearn for it, and see its vital necessity. Never will that be a dry doctrine which we just assent to.

"Where is the promise of his coming" (v. 4) has an extraordinary number of allusions to other Scriptures, which all confirm a uniform interpretation.

Ezekiel 12

The desolation of Israel by the Assyrian invasion was repeatedly foretold by the prophets. The message was continually mocked by the false prophets, who claimed inspiration from God to claim that the day of judgment had been endlessly delayed. They also belittled the predictions made by the true prophets, spreading their ideas until it became a common joke that Yahweh's prophets kept speaking of a coming day of the Lord that never came. But God's reply was clear: "What is that proverb that ye have in the land of Israel, saying, The days are prolonged, and every vision faileth?...I will make this proverb to cease...say unto them, The days are at hand, and the effect (fulfilment) of every vision...I will speak, and the word that I shall speak shall come to pass; it shall no more be prolonged" (Ez.12:22-25). The similarities with the last days leading up to AD70 are clear. The true word of God regarding the coming day of the Lord was mocked; a belief that "the days are prolonged" led to the conclusion that "every vision faileth", as the thought that "my Lord delayeth his coming" resulted in a lack of faith in the word of promise. Our Lord's statement that "all shall be fulfilled" at His coming (Lk.21:32) matches the assurance given here that "every vision" *would* be fulfilled when the day came. Those within the ecclesia of Israel at Ezekiel's time who were expressing such doubt, were matched by those within the ecclesia of spiritual Israel (perhaps also Jews?) in the first century. Clearly they must have their latter day counterparts.

Isaiah 5

Set against the background of the imminent Assyrian invasion, this denunciation of Israel also has marked similarities with the words of 2 Pet.3. " My people...have no knowledge...that say, Let Him make speed, and hasten His work, that we may see it...therefore as the fire devoureth the stubble, and the flame consumeth the stubble...(so) is the anger of the Lord kindled against His people" (Is.5:13,19,24,25). Peter implies that the false teachers he is referring to should have " grown in knowledge" (3:18), and that because of their mocking request for God to speed up His purpose they also would have a fiery destruction. The irony was, of course, that the apparent delay was due to God's mercy in providing them time to repent (vv.9-12).

As our study proceeds we will see that there are several allusions in 2 Peter 3 to the Olivet prophecy. The attitude Peter is speaking of here in v.4 is related to that of the elder servant who decides that his Lord is delaying his return, and therefore he can act in a fleshly way as if the Lord will never come (Mt.24:48). The person Jesus describes did not throw off the external trappings of his faith. " *My Lord* delayeth his coming" indicates that he still spoke of Jesus as his lord, and we are therefore left to conclude that he did not say these things in a spirit of public, gross abandon to the ways of the flesh, but rather deep in his heart, or perhaps as a new form of doctrine. Our Lord spoke of the man thinking this " in his heart" ; but because our thoughts always find reflection in our words (Mt.12:34), it is inevitable that Peter should speak of these people now actually saying those words. Thus the words of these false teachers had long been gestating.

The following verses speak of how God's word was present in the initial creation and His subsequent re-ordering of it. In just the same way, the word of God would have a part to play in the judgment of these false teachers. This would suggest that their claim that " all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation" refers back to that of Gen.1. However, we can expect to see in the reasoning of these men a fair degree of complexity. It is just possible that the concept of a new creation in Christ was so common in the thinking of the early believers (Rev.3:14; 2 Cor.5:17; Col.1:15,16; 3:10; Rom.8; Eph.2:10; 3:9; 4:24 etc.), that they were saying 'Since the apostles (" fathers") died, everything is going on fine since the new creation began on the cross. The spiritual graces we experience now as part of the new creation are such that there doesn't seem any need for this second coming doctrine'. Erroneous notions of the Holy Spirit have led apostate Christianity to question the true doctrine of a future Kingdom, and thereby the Biblical concept of the second coming. Emphasis is placed upon 'Christian service' in this life, rather than the hope of the future Kingdom. And yet the bottom line is that the latter day brotherhood will shy away from the second coming *in their hearts*, and doubtless each will articulate this in different ways: doctrinally, practically or simply in the attitude of their hearts.

20-2 The Judgment Of AD70

Such false teaching was something which Peter was prophesying: " There *shall* come...scoffers...saying..." (v.3). But now the tenses change to the present: " for (because) this they willingly *are* ignorant of..." . Even then these brethren had shut their mind to Bible based reasoning, refusing to consider the power of God's word as exhibited in the Old Testament. It was therefore only a matter of time before

they started speaking forth false ideas. They had willingly forgotten (R.V.) that it was through God's word of command that the earth arose out of the water at the creation, and by this same word of God the water was commanded to overflow the earth again at Noah's time, taking the world back to how it was before creation- a sphere covered in water. " *Whereby* the world.. was overflowed with water" (v.6) thus refers to the word of God by which (" whereby") the present world was created, by commanding the waters to recede to let the dry land appear (Gen.1:9). Peter had previously made the point that the promised judgment of God in Noah's time was delayed in order to allow the maximum scope for repentance by that wicked world (1 Pet.3:20). The false teachers were ignorant of this fact through having forgotten what they once knew- i.e. that a similar delay was being experienced by their generation in the coming of the Lord's day. Because of this, they were now squarely matching those who mocked Noah.

We have shown earlier that the times of Noah are a definite type of the 'last days' of the Jewish system leading up to AD70. " The *world* that then was...perished...the *Heaven and the earth* which are now, by the same word (of God) are...reserved unto fire" (cp. water; v.6,7). Thus Peter equates the " world" with the present " Heavens and earth" , implying that a " Heavens and earth" were destroyed in Noah's time. It was " all flesh" that perished (Gen.6:11-13). This indicates a clearly figurative interpretation of " Heavens and earth" as meaning an order of things. This line of argument has yet to be answered by Pentecostals, Catholics and others, over-enthusiastic to see in these verses a destruction of God's own perfect dwelling place as well as this beautiful planet. The quotation of Is.65:17 in v.13 should also be brought into play with such people- the new " heavens and earth" is a new system of things to come upon this (already) beautiful earth. The literal heavens and earth were hardly destroyed in Noah's time.

Elements of this prophecy refer to the ending of the Jewish system in AD70; the world of Noah " perished" (v.6) as the Jewish world would. The same Greek word occurs in Heb.1:11 concerning the 'perishing' of the Jewish heavens and earth due to the unchanging ministry of Christ. This would indicate that the Law itself was in some way ended in AD70, although of course it was 'taken out of the way' on the cross (Col.2:14-17). The same word for " perish" occurs in 2 Pet.3:9 in the context of God's punishment of the wicked within the ecclesia- He is unwilling that " any (of them) should perish" . Jude 11 matches this by warning the same class of how their prototypes " perished in the gainsaying of Core" . It appears that the judgments which were to bring the Jewish system to a close would therefore be the same as those which would punish the false teachers. We can conclude from this that many of the first century false teachers were Jews or Judaist-influenced. It is to be expected, therefore, that the punishment of the Gentile world at the second coming will also be the means of judgment inflicted on the false teachers of the last days. Several times in '*Eureka*', Bro. John Thomas gives reason for believing that the rejected saints will be punished by literal fire (of limited duration, of course) along with the nations which comprise the latter day beast. If the location of this punishment is shifted away from Europe (as Bro. Thomas suggests) to Israel, then this fits in with the general thesis we have been developing in this study.

" By the same word"

" By the same word" of God that had caused the earth to rise from the waters and later called the waters over the earth, " the heavens and the earth which are now...are reserved unto fire against the day of judgment" (v.7). That there must be some reference here to the passing away of the Law and the Jewish system associated with it is shown by the allusion here to Mt.5:18: " Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the Law, till all be fulfilled" . Our Lord's fulfilment of the Law was primarily on the cross, but the fact that 2 Pet.3 speaks of the Jewish heavens and earth passing away in AD70 indicates that the finishing of the Law did not come into full effect until the destruction of the temple. This explains the many hints throughout the New Testament that the believers kept some parts of the Law prior to AD70.

2 Thess.1:8 speaks of the Lord Jesus coming " from Heaven with his mighty Angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance" on those who had rejected the knowledge of God, and had consciously disobeyed the Gospel of Christ. This connection not only underlines the fact that both AD70 and our last days are spoken of in 2 Pet.3, but also proves that the " heavens and earth" which suffer fire are representative of individuals. Hence Peter's description of the day of " fire" as being " the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men" . 2 Pet.2:9 uses the same Greek word for " ungodly" as in 2 Thess.1:8 to describe the false teachers; and it occurs an impressive six times in Jude's letter concerning the same people. The warning that judgment would no longer be delayed shows that " the day of judgment" which came on the Judaizers must refer to AD70. But there can be no doubt that " The day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men" must refer ultimately to the second coming.

The idea of punishment being " reserved" is continuing a theme of the preceding chapter. " The angels that sinned" were " *reserved*" unto judgment" (2:4), the responsible people to whom Lot preached are " *reserved*...unto the day of judgment" (2:9), and thus for the false teachers of the first century too, " the mist of darkness is *reserved* for ever" (2:17). As the first two examples received judgment in this life and also a 'reservation' of future punishment, so the sinners within the first century ecclesias would receive a punishment at the manifestation of the Lord in AD70, and also at his second coming. This explains the dual reference of 2 Pet.3 to both these periods. The theme of judgment being " reserved" adds weight to Peter's plea for his readers to realize that God was not suspending judgment indefinitely, but that despite an apparent delay in meting it out, judgment was without doubt reserved for revelation at a future date. The continued emphasis on God using the agent of His word to do this must be connected with Peter's request for us to give more careful attention to Bible study (3:12,15,16). It will be by the Word and our attitude to it that we will be judged at the last day. As the word of God would be the agent of destruction for the unworthy, so it could bring salvation to the righteous. We have earlier suggested that the language of creation used here may echo the idea of the new creation in Christ. " By the word of God the heavens were of old" suggests the account of the new creation in Col.1:17- and " the word of God" is a title of Christ. Thus as Christ had brought about the new creation, so He was capable of punishing (in AD 70) and destroying (at the second coming) those parts of it which failed to reflect His glory.

Willing ignorance

The attitude of willing ignorance by the unworthy can quite easily be adopted by us. " Beloved, be *not* ignorant (as those of v.5 were) of this one (Greek 'other') thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day" (v.8). In addition to being acutely aware of the fact that through the power of His word, God would certainly bring about " the day of judgment" at some time (i.e. the reasoning of v.5-7), Peter bids us be aware of one other thing- that God can collapse and expand periods of time as He wishes. Not only can one of God's " days" be a vast expanse of time to us in human terms, but also one of our brief days can be turned into a thousand years by God if He wishes.

This principle is illuminated by appreciating that Peter is here quoting Ps.90:4. This prayer of Moses was bringing before God the miseries of the condemned generation in the wilderness, and pleading that God would repent of His decision to bar them from entering the land (Ps.90:12-17).

After all, Moses had previously changed God's declared purpose of destroying Israel and making of him a nation; and had not God declared to him that He was willing to show Moses the fact that His purpose could be changed in accordance with human behaviour (Num.14:34 A.V.mg.)? Thus Moses had every reason to try to change God's plan again through prayer. Against this background Peter is reasoning that if Moses could try to pray for the days of punishment for Israel to be shortened and for their sin to be overlooked, then we too can find reason to pray for the shortening of the days until the Kingdom, and for God's mercy upon the sinners of the new Israel. There are a number of significant parallels between Peter's argument and Ps.90:

Psalm 90	2 Peter 3
:2	:5
:5	:8
:6	The language of 1 Pet. 1:24; Is. 40:6-8 re. the first century Jews
:7	:7,10,12
:12	:2,15,18
:13,14	:12

And for the enthusiast: Ps.90:16,17= Hab.3:2 (re. the second coming)= 2 Pet.3:12,13.

It is quite possible to translate 2 Pet.3:8 as " One day with the Lord is as a thousand" , which would suggest another Psalm allusion- this time to Ps.84:18: " A day in thy courts is better than a thousand" . In this case Peter would be saying 'By all means be aware that a day of judgment and condemnation will surely come, as outlined in v.5-7; but beloved, do be mindful too of the wonderful reward. Just 24 (12?) hours of perfect fellowship with the Lord, unmarred by our sinful nature, is

worth a thousand years of this life!'. Truly an inspiring thought, and a motivation to come to appreciate the righteousness of God.

20-3 Is There A Delay In Christ's Return?

And so Peter presses home the point: " The Lord (Jesus- v.15,18) is not slack concerning his promise (to return- of Jn.14:3,18,28), as some men (in the ecclesia) count slackness" , but is longsuffering (v.9). The Greek for " slack" here means 'delay'; this is assurance that God is not 'delaying' as men dilly-dally in the execution of their plans, but is rather postponing this for a good reason. Because this was a major feature of God's dealings with natural Israel previously, it is not surprising that there are a number of instructive Old Testament allusions here.

Is.30:17-19 records how Israel would suffer for their sins, but then God would wait for a certain time until they cried to Him in repentance, before bringing about a time of blessing on the earth based around the Lord's presence in Jerusalem. " One thousand shall flee at the rebuke of one (Deut.28 language)...till ye be left as a tree bereft of branches (how Paul describes what happened to Israel in the first century, Rom.11)...and therefore (i.e. because you are such sinners) will the Lord wait, that He may be gracious unto you, and therefore will He be exalted (through your repentance), that He may have mercy upon you: for the Lord is a God of judgment: blessed are all they that wait for Him. For the people shall dwell in Zion at Jerusalem: thou shalt weep no more (the language of Is.65:17-25, quoted in 2 Pet.3:13): He will be very gracious unto thee at the voice of thy cry (of repentance): *when* He shall hear it, He will answer thee" . Not only is God delaying the Kingdom until there is repentance in Israel, but such is His *mercy* that He will not bring it about until such repentance. His purpose should not be seen, therefore, just in terms of the cold equation 'Repentance in Israel= second coming', but the supreme *mercy* and *love* which this arrangement shows should be appreciated. " And *therefore* will He be exalted" Isaiah comments- by those who understand these things. Rom.11:32-36 is a marvellous example of this.

Wait and watch

Peter's stress on how the word of God would bring about the day of the Lord shows his realization of how the false teachers were really trying to say that the word of God was untrue, and that *it* was delaying. Perhaps he had Hab.2:3 in mind: " The vision (of the word) is yet for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak, and not lie: though it tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry" . The context is a prophecy concerning the coming Babylonian desolation of Jerusalem. Evidently there were some in Israel who felt that the fulfilment of these words of God was 'tarrying' so long that it would never come. The next verse continues " But the just shall live by his faith" , i.e. in the eventual fulfilment of the word of God. This is twice quoted in the New Testament concerning the first century believers (Rom.1:17; Heb.10:38). It is therefore in order that verse 3 concerning the coming 'day of the Lord' in the Babylonian invasion should have relevance to the same period. If 2 Peter 3 refers here, then this is indeed the case. It is noteworthy that prophecies like Jer.17:27 speak of this Babylonian invasion as a " fire" in both literal and spiritual terms- as 2 Peter 3 also employs " fire" . Reading between the lines of the New Testament epistles, it is evident that Paul

often phrased things in such a way as to warn against what was presumably a common temptation- in this case, to think that the day of the Lord had been delayed so long that effectively the brethren felt that it would never come. Thus Heb.10:37 quotes Hab.2:3 which we have been considering with reference to the second coming: " He that shall come *will* come (cp. 'I am that I am'), and will *not* tarry" . Rom.13:11,12 makes the same point- " *knowing* the time...now is our salvation nearer than when we first believed" .

The key to overcoming this temptation was to remember that the delay in the Lord's coming was a sign of God's mercy in granting sinners time to repent. Rather than leading to slackness of service, the delay should lead to greater diligence. " The Lord...is longsuffering to us-ward" . This longsuffering of Jesus suggests the parable of the persistent widow, whose continued requests should match our prayers for the second coming (the vengeance of our adversaries which she requested will only come then). " Though he bear long" (s.w. 'longsuffering') with us, " God shall avenge His own elect, which cry day and night unto Him" (Lk.18:7). The " us" whom Peter refers to as experiencing the Lord's longsuffering ('bearing long') are therefore to be equated with " the elect" in their fervent prayers for the second coming. The days being shortened- a strong idea in 2 Peter 3- for the elect's sake therefore refers to the hastening of the second coming on account of the elect's prayers (Mt.24:22). In view of the later references to Matt.24, it is not unreasonable to think that Peter is consciously alluding to Mt.24:22 concerning the shortening of the days for the sake of the elect's prayers, through his allusion to the parable of the persistent widow of Lk.18:7.

A Patient Father

This " longsuffering" is because God is " not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance" (v.9). The " any" and " all" here evidently refer to those whom God has called- the responsible. The fact that millions of people throughout history have lived and died with no chance of repenting or avoiding 'perishing' through response to the Gospel, is proof enough that God is perfectly willing that many should perish and not come to repentance, as far as the world in general is concerned. But such is His desire for the *responsible* to live up to their spiritual potential, that He has delayed the coming of the Lord. Doubtless Israel deserved immediate punishment for their crucifixion of Christ- a human 'God' would certainly have reacted straight away- but judgment was deferred until AD70 in order to give them every opportunity to repent. God's judgments in the OT were often deferred because people repented (e.g. Is. 48:9; Nineveh); yet such is His supreme grace to Israel that when they unrepentantly crucified His Son, He *still* deferred judgment. The same is true in our days. What pain it must give our Father to see this time which has been allowed as extra opportunity being used irresponsibly! The bridegroom of the parable " tarried" , the same Greek word translated " delay" in " my Lord *delayeth* his coming" . Tragically, this resulted in the spiritual slumbering of all of the virgins rather than their greater eagerness and expectancy.

That this passage is indeed concerning the responsible is confirmed by the allusion it makes to Ez.18:23: " Have I any pleasure (Heb. " will") at all that the wicked should die...and not that He should return from His ways, and live?" . The context

is concerning a Jew (i.e. responsible) who had been wicked but now had repented. The 'perishing' of 2 Peter 3:9 must refer to destruction at the judgment, God is not willing that any of us ("longsuffering to usward") should be condemned then, therefore that day is delayed. Perhaps we can infer that it is because of God's particular love for our very last generation of believers that the day is delayed- perhaps by 40 years, as in the case of Israel in AD70? It is possible that there may be a "generation" of 40 years after the blossoming of the fig tree- i.e. the first signs of Jewish repentance (cp. the Jews for Jesus movement?).

Space To Repent

The way this worked out in the first century is demonstrated by the judgment of the false teachers in the Thyatira ecclesia. "I gave her space to repent of her fornication; and she repented not. Behold...I will cast her into great tribulation...I will give unto every one of you according to your works" (Rev.2:21-23). This latter phrase clearly refers to the second coming (Mt.16:27; Rev.20:12; 22:12); but in addition to their judgment then, they were also punished in the "great tribulation" of AD70 referred to in Mt.24:21,29. As explained in 2 Pet.3, these people were 'given space to repent', but did not. Therefore judgment came. Sadly, there must be similarities with the last days. But it must ever be appreciated that God is doing all things possible to bring about that repentance; and we should likewise help these people to repent, so that the Lord's coming will be hastened. The idea of God being unwilling that any should perish but that all should repent must have some connection with the parable of the lost sheep. The efforts of the good shepherd should be replicated, so the context of the parable indicates, by the believers. Thus the parable is summarized: "It is not the will of your Father which is in heaven, that one of these little ones should perish" (Mt.18:17 cp. 2 Pet.3:9). The fact that there is/ will be a delay in the second coming indicates that there will be a distinct stubbornness by some to repent in the last days- perhaps the last Christian generation is the lost sheep generation, whose repentance will bring the Lord's return? "When the fruit is brought forth, immediately he putteth in the sickle, because the harvest is come" (Mk.4:29).

Coming To Repentance

But what exactly does 'coming to repentance' imply? "Longsuffering" on the Lord's part takes us back to 1 Pet.3:20, where we learn that God's longsuffering resulted in a delay in the flood coming, so that people had the maximum opportunity to repent and enter the ark, representing entry into Christ by baptism. The Greek for "come to" repentance has the idea of entering into a country- a one off act. A glance down a concordance under "repentance" shows that this word is associated with only two things- baptism, or a major repentance by a completely apostate believer. The delay in the second coming is for these two reasons- so that a seriously apostate group within the ecclesia can repent, and so that there can be the maximum possible allowance of time for the encouragement of people to be baptized. In addition to our prayers being able to speed the Lord's return, these two reasons for the delay involve our own effort speeding it. By repentance and encouragement of our weak brethren to repent, this really will happen; and the quicker we spread the Gospel world-wide, "baptizing all nations", the quicker the delay will end and the Lord will come (Mt.24:14). The latter day Elijah ministry

will presumably be after the pattern of John the Baptist- with an emphasis, therefore, on the baptism of Jesus as a means of preparing them for Christ's coming.

Our argument that God being unwilling "that any should perish" only applies to the responsible, may seem to contradict 1 Tim.2:4: "God...will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth". The same argument applies as used above- that this is just not true of "all men" literally. Note that in repentance *after* baptism, we can come to "the knowledge of the truth" - i.e. a real appreciation of the wonder of Christ. 1 Tim.2:5 continues: "For there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus". Our Lord only mediates between God and the believers- called here "men". Most conclusively, the preceding verses speak of praying for rulers, "that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all Godliness...for this is good...in the sight of God, who will have all men to be saved". "We" and "all men" are paralleled as if to say 'We know God wants us to be saved, but we must live a spiritual life in response to this. So pray that we will be given rulers that enable us to do this without excessive temptation, which may result in our falling from God's great salvation'.

Thief-like Coming

Having explained the reason for the delay, v.10 continues the description of the judgment to come: "The day of the Lord *will* come as a thief in the night". This is an evident reference to another part of the Olivet prophecy, which has reference to both AD70 and the second coming. The Jewish "house" was "broken up" by the thief-like coming of the Lord. 1 Thess.5 refers to this same passage, interpreting it as a description of how Christ will come unexpectedly to the spiritually weak within the ecclesia. It will be a time when they think they are in "peace and safety" spiritually, and will publicly teach this ("When they shall say peace and safety"). This is exactly the theme of 2 Peter 3- the false teachers within the ecclesia of the last days will preach that the second coming is far off; that in fact all is in peace and spiritual safety within the household. But as the thief would break the house up, so 2 Peter 3 graphically describes the total dissolution of the Jewish system ("heavens and earth"). Mt.24:43 indicates that the Lord comes as a thief to those who would be watching over the house- i.e. to the leaders of the ecclesia. The false teachers will therefore be in the leadership of the body- otherwise it would be hard for their ideas to gain the following which these prophecies indicate they did and will.

"The heavens shall pass away with a great noise" (v.10) may therefore refer to the destruction of this class of leaders, the 'heavens' of the ecclesia. "A great noise" in Greek implies a whirring- perhaps referring to there being a manifestation of the cherubim at the second coming ("the sign of the son of man in Heaven"?). Jer. 30:23,24, in a decidedly latter day context, speaks of God's judgments coming as a mighty whirlwind, associated as it is with the cherubim (Ez. 1:4). "The elements shall melt with fervent heat" provides impressive evidence for the AD70 application of this chapter when it is realized that most of the occurrences of the Greek word for "elements" are concerning the Mosaic ordinances (Gal.4:3; 5:21; Col.2:8,20). "Melt" can mean 'to unloose', conjuring up the idea of the law as a burden which was now being unstrapped. The relevance of v.10 to both AD70 and the last days is

evidence that just as there were false teachers then, so there must also be in the last days. " The earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up" (v.10) may refer specifically to the judgments coming on the land (" earth") of Israel, and the ending of the works of the Law through the destruction of the temple in AD70. As Noah's world was destroyed with literal water, so it is not unreasonable to expect a literal aspect to the " fire" here mentioned, although this is not to question the symbolic reference of fire to the anger of God. The temple was destroyed with fire, although interestingly Dan.9:26 speaks of its end coming with a flood; fitting in perfectly with Peter's connection of the AD70 judgments on Israel with the flood.

Olivet Allusions

The passing away of heaven and earth suggests another link with the Olivet prophecy: " Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away" (Mt.24:34). The physical heavens and earth being permanent (Ecc.1:4; Is.45:18; Ps.78:69), our Lord must have been referring to the order of things which would end in both AD70 and the last days. The faithful who came through the figurative 'fire' of those times would do so through their clinging to the Lord's words. We have earlier commented that this is a theme in 2 Peter 3- by God's word the natural and spiritual creation came about, and by it too sinners can be destroyed if they fail to let it act upon them.

The detailed description of all the elements of heaven and earth being destroyed is embedded, as we have seen, in allusions to the Olivet prophecy. It is therefore to be expected that our Lord's talking there about the sun and moon being darkened, the stars falling etc. (Mt.24:29) should also have some connection with 2 Pet.3. The Olivet prophecy speaks of these things being obscured and affected- but 2 Peter 3 describes their complete and fundamental destruction. Sun, moon and stars have several associations with Israel (e.g. in Joseph's dream), and 'Heavens and earth' have also been symbolic of the Jews (e.g. Dt.32:1). Mt.24:29,30 describe how there will be signs in these things, and then the Lord would come with the clouds of heaven. 2 Peter 3 shows how this refers to the lead up to AD70, and that then the Jewish system was totally destroyed. This means that the son of man coming with the clouds of heaven to replace the previous sun, moon etc. would have a limited reference to the system of things based around Christ and his word (Mt.24:34) which was firmly established in AD70. But most importantly, the dissolution of these 'heavens' refers to the second coming, with the destruction it will bring upon both the Jewish and Gentile worlds, and also upon the unworthy in the ecclesia. This shows that the signs in the heavens which warn of the second coming are not just in the Jewish and Gentile world- but (even clearer) in the state of the wicked within the " heavens" of the ecclesia, who will meet their judgment in this horrendous destruction of all that is evil.

Slow To Anger

A number of images found in 2 Pet.3 also occur together in Nahum 1:4-8: " He (God) rebuketh the sea, and maketh it dry (cp. the earth standing out of the water in 2 Pet.3)...the hills melt, and the earth is burned at his presence (" the elements shall melt...the earth shall be burned up" , 2 Pet.3:10), yea, the world, and all

that dwell therein (" the earth and the works that are therein")...His fury is poured out like fire...with an overrunning flood (cp. 2 Pet.3:6) He will make an utter end" . But all this is prefaced by Nah.1:3: " The Lord is slow to anger" . As God always gave ample time for repentance in His dealings with both Israel and the nations in the Old Testament, so He would with spiritual Israel (and even more so?). All God's past dealings with men, as at the flood, with Israel at the Babylonian and Assyrian invasions, in His judgments of the nations, all these will find their summation in how God will deal with us in the last days. In this fact lies the value of following up the Old Testament allusions which Peter makes. That an appreciation of all this must have a fundamentally practical effect upon our lives is something which cannot be over-emphasized. " Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and Godliness" (v.11). The logic is irresistible; all things of the world as we know it are to be dissolved; only our Godly character will survive the fire; the word which develops this will also last beyond the destruction of the heavens and earth, seeing that it is through the word that they will be destroyed (cp. Mt.24:34). By developing such a word-formed character, we are " looking for and hasting the coming of the day of God" (v.12)- a fair summary of what we have read between the lines of this chapter.

The earth being dissolved connects with Is.24:19: " The earth is utterly broken down, the earth is clean dissolved" . The previous verse alludes to the flood, as 2 Pet.3 does: " The windows from on high are open (cp. Gen.7:11) and the foundations of the earth do shake" (Is.24:18). Other writers have made the point that Is.24, especially in the Septuagint, appears to have been very much in our Lord's mind during his Olivet prophecy. 2 Pet.3 being based on the Olivet prophecy, it is to be expected that it will have connections with the same source passages. " The earth" in Is.24 meaning 'the land' (of Israel) indicates that 2 Pet.3 is also primarily concerning the troubles that came upon the land in AD70.

Loving His Appearing

The fact that " holy conversation and Godliness" is " looking for" the second coming drives home the point that all true spirituality is associated with and leads to an enthusiasm for the Lord's return. Unless we have a fervent desire for that day, a longing for the presence of our Lord, a burning eagerness to behold him in his beauty, then our spirituality is but moral nicety, similar to that shown by Orthodox 'Christians'. So all consuming is a true love of the second coming that any who really " love his appearing" - something shown by both doctrine and practice- are assured of acceptance then (2 Tim.4:8). We can only love Christ's return in this sense if we have a truly dynamic *relationship* with him now, rather than a cold, legalistic obedience to the 'Commandments of Christ', in our hearts only hoping for the best as far as judgment day goes, coldly indifferent to the real spirit of Christ, carefully covering over the child of faith which is deep within us.

Exactly what the Lord's return means to us personally, and the degree to which our spirituality stands directly related to it, must surely give rise to self-examination. Frequently the Greek word translated " look for" here is used in the context of the second coming, often translated " waiting" (Jude 21; 1 Cor.1:7; Rom.8:19; Phil.3:20; Heb.9:28; Tit.2:13; 1 Thess. 1:10). Our 'waiting' for the Lord is not

therefore a passive thing- it is shown by our " holy conversation" , something which needs our constant active attention. All too often the impression is given that our 'waiting' is a grim, passive clinging on to a set of doctrines received at baptism. This is certainly part of it- but the quicker we take a dynamic approach to considering " what manner of persons" we ought to be, the sooner the Lord's coming will be hastened. That our spiritual effort, especially in prayer, preaching and pastoral work mentioned earlier, should hasten the coming of that great day should never cease to be a source of wonder and inspiration to us. But do we really want to see the day of Christ? Pleasures of family life, the challenge of careers, personal ambition in preaching work, a desire for a few more years to work on our character- these and many other factors lead us away from an all consuming desire to see the day of the Lord. And if we lack that, then there will be little true motivation for developing a spiritual character and doing the preaching and pastoral work, which we know between them will hasten the day.

The End Of All Things

As if to provide motivation in all this, verse 12 repeats verbatim the language of v.10 and 11 concerning the totality of destruction which awaits the present world order: " The day of God , wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved (= v.11)...and the elements shall melt with fervent heat (= v.10)" . This repetition underlines the fact that every element of the present system will be destroyed- the only common link between this life and the future world order is the spirituality which we now develop. We came into this world with nothing, a naked baby; and all we can leave it with is God's record of our spiritual character. Thus it will be by our real spiritual character that we recognize and relate to each other in the Kingdom, rather than by our present physical characteristics. For this reason even the rejected will be able to recognize (in this sense) giants of faith such as Abraham entering into the Kingdom.

Appreciating this, " We according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth *wherein* dwelleth righteousness" (v.13), as opposed to the present earth, where " the works that are *therein* shall be burnt up" (v.10). For Peter, therefore, the vision of the Kingdom was centred around the fact that goodness and righteous principles would so evidently abound, being almost physically manifested in this planet; it will be a " new earth *wherein* dwelleth righteousness" . Psalm 72 stresses the abundance of righteousness in that time, showing that David's picture of that time was similar. Likewise if we truly *love* righteousness, this is how we will perceive the Kingdom- rather than as a glorified tropical holiday.

" According to His promise" shows that Peter is referring to a specific Scripture- surely Is.65:17, where a picture of the Millenium is titled " the new heavens and earth" . " We, according to His promise, look for new heavens..." contrasts with the words of the mockers: " Where is the promise of his coming?" (v.4). This indicates that " the promise of his coming" was not just the simple statement of Jesus that he would return (Jn.14:3), but it included the details of the Kingdom which he would establish, as outlined in the promise of Is.65:17-25. Thus the doctrines of the literal second coming and the future Kingdom on earth are inseparable. Thus the slippery slope ran: The Lord is delaying longer than I thought; maybe it isn't

important that he comes: therefore the Kingdom on earth is a pipe dream. So " the faith" was lost.

There is also a connection with Is.66:22-24: " The new heavens and the new earth which I will make...it shall come to pass that...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" . These last phrases are quoted in Mk.9:44 concerning the punishment of the wicked at the judgment seat. The reference to fire fits the 2 Pet.3 context, again showing that the 'heavens and earth' which are to be destroyed with fire include the wicked believers who will be punished in Gehenna. Note that the idea of the ecclesia being ultimately purged of false teachers is presented by Peter as a *comfort* to the faithful remnant.

" Be diligent"

" Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless" (v.14)- i.e. with sins covered through the blood of Christ. Such a condition, even for these " pure minds" (v.1), can only be achieved and maintained through much diligence. If it is our desire to be found acceptable by our bridegroom, our awareness of how near we are to meeting him will motivate us to constant self-examination so that we can be presented to him spotless.

The " things" which the beloved look for are those spoken of in v.17: " Beloved, seeing ye know *these things* before, beware lest ye also, being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own steadfastness" . " These things" are therefore not just concerning the coming Kingdom, but also the warnings of the uprise of false teaching, the prophecies of their success, and the fact that the apparent delay of the Lord's return was to give the opportunity for repentance. Peter's double warning is because he knew how prone we are to forget such warnings, and to lose the reality of our love for the Lord's coming. It is as if Peter is speaking to us personally, as the last (?) generation before the full " day of the Lord" . " Seeing ye know these things *before*" (v.17) is yet another Olivet allusion- " False prophets shall rise...take ye heed: behold, I have *foretold* you all things" (Mk.13:22,23) about this apostacy. " Take ye heed" is matched by " beware lest ye also, being led away with the error of the wicked" (2 Pet.3:17). " The wicked" are the false teachers within the ecclesia, referred to in 2:14,18 as " beguiling unstable souls" (= 3:16) and 'alluring'. It follows therefore that the false Christs and prophets which our Lord warned of, would come, in whatever form, from within the ecclesia. The bizarre claims of the few bogus Messiahs that have appeared are hardly much temptation to us- but how different if they are to come from within the ecclesia?

The fact that we are living through a period of delay should never slip our minds- " account that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation (i.e. the opportunity for our last generation to gain salvation) : as our beloved brother Paul...hath written unto you; as also in *all* his epistles, speaking in them of these things" (v.15,16). This sounds as if Peter had in mind a particular passage of Paul, the tenor of which is repeated in all his letters. It may well be that he is referring to the idea of there being a delay in the second coming to allow repentance; however, if " these things"

is the repeated warning against the false teachers of the last days, and advice on how to live in those times, then this is quite easily discernible. Moreover, there is a connection back to v.2,3 where Peter reminds us how warnings against false teachers were a major theme of all the inspired writings of the New Testament. Surely there can be no excuse, in the light of all this emphasis, to disregard such warnings?

However, Peter writes as if he is referring to a particular passage in Paul's writings. A likely candidate is Rom.2:3-5, which addresses the weak (Jewish) members of the Rome ecclesia, warning them that there will be a day of judgment, and that they should not despise God's love in delaying that day so that they could repent. "Thinkest thou...that thou shalt escape the judgment of God? Or despisest thou the riches of His goodness and forbearance and longsuffering (cp. 2 Pet.3:15): not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance (2 Pet.3:9)? But after thy...impenitent heart treasurest up unto thyself (cp. "kept in store" , 2 Pet.3:7) wrath against the day of wrath (cp. fire) and...righteous judgment of God" (cp. 2 Pet. 3:7).

Another possibility is Eph.5:15,16: "Walk circumspectly...redeeming the time, because the days are evil" . By 'buying up' the opportunities for spiritual development in the daily round of life, we are effectively "redeeming the time" in the sense of hastening the Lord's return. Paul pleads with us to see the urgency of this principle: "Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is" (v.17). *Seeing that* they could redeem the time to the second coming in this way, the exhortation is driven home: "Awake! Thou that sleepest!...and Christ shall give thee light" by His early return.

Slippery Slope

We have shown how an underlying theme of Peter's argument is the supremacy of the word of God, and how through understanding of and obedience to it, a character can be developed which will pass through the judgments which that word will bring upon the world. Those who are to be destroyed at that time, such as the false teachers, will have failed to understand these things of which Peter and Paul spoke- they found them "things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest" (v.16). The Greek for "unlearned" means those 'not understanding' or 'ignorant'. But they were not unaware of Paul's epistles- they 'wrested' them through their wilful misunderstanding of them (v.5). The beginnings of this sad situation are found in Heb.5:11, where the Jewish believers are called "dull of hearing" God's word, and therefore found the exposition of Melchizedek "hard" to understand. It is to these same Jewish believers that Peter's letters are addressed. Thus a lack of sensitivity in Bible study, a laziness to work out typology and derive lessons from it, resulted eventually in a wilful misunderstanding of basic teaching concerning fundamental doctrine, e.g. the second coming. It takes real faith in the teaching of God's word here to accept that this really can happen, and has done so. The example of the first century is there for our learning.

Such wresting of the Scripture was done "unto their own destruction" (v.16), using the same word translated as "perdition" in v.7, as if their judgment was already working itself out in this life. That verse speaks of how the "ungodly" would meet

their perdition in the day when the heavens and earth were destroyed by fire. thus those within the ecclesia who were so wresting the Scriptures are the same group as those of v.3-7 who would be destroyed at " the day of judgment and perdition (s.w. " destruction") of ungodly men" . Jude likewise talks of " ungodly men" who had crept into the ecclesia (v.4). The evident similarities between 2 Pet.2 and Jude are for a reason. 2 Pet.2 and 3 are a prophecy of what *would* happen in the ecclesia, whilst Jude is the record of their fulfilment; hence his use of the present tense " there *are* crept in...ungodly men" . It is not difficult to imagine Peter's letter and his verbal expression of these ideas being branded 'unloving', trouble mongering, divisive etc. But within a few years Jude's letter proved the truth of his words. A glance around the latter day ecclesias indicates that there are many " pure minds" (v.2) of the type Peter wrote to; it may therefore seem out of order to suggest that soon the ecclesial situation of just before AD70 will be seen among us. But time and again in this study we have seen the dual application of 2 Pet.3 to both AD70 and our last days. Many other New Testament prophecies could be expounded likewise.

The corrective is hinted at throughout all these prophecies: " Remember...be mindful of the words which were spoken before" (v.1,2), meditating on the power of God's word in the past, in creation and at the flood, correctly understanding the teachings of Paul and Peter about the last days (v.15,16), bringing our way of life into conformity with our great hope of the second coming (v.11,12), and so by all this growing " in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ" (v.18).

As an appendix to this study, it ought to be instructive to list the characteristics of the false teachers which arose in the 'last days' of AD70, and which we have suggested must be seen in our last days too:

- Poking fun at those who had a fundamentalist approach to the teaching of God's word
- Enjoying the good life of the world, which led them to be cold in their hearts to the Lord's return
- Showing aggression to some within the ecclesia
- A disinterest in prophecy
- Initially expressing their false ideas in the form of questions about basic principles
- Senior brethren, leaders of the ecclesia, who had been waiting for Christ for some time
- They had failed to grow in Biblical knowledge and appreciation, having for some time been lazy to work out Bible typology
- Retained the external trappings of the faith

- Their false teaching was expressing ideas which they had held quietly for some time
- Complex arguments were used, but not appreciating the real power of God's word
- Questioning whether the word of prophecy will be fulfilled, implying that the 'spiritual graces' of the life in Christ are so wonderful that the idea of a future Kingdom is irrelevant
- Teaching that there is peace and spiritual safety within the ecclesia- that there is nothing to be alarmed about concerning the state of the ecclesia
- Influencing many brethren and sisters

This list is yielded from 2 Peter 3 alone. Only the "willingly ignorant" would deny that there are far too many of these characteristics developing in the ecclesia today. A witch hunt will be pointless; indeed, each of us may have some of the above tendencies. "Beware, lest ye also..." (v.17). The Greek for "beware" means 'to be isolated'; indicating that this general trend will take some standing up to. However, it cannot be stressed too highly that our duty is not to physically isolate ourselves from the problems, seeking some kind of splendid spiritual isolation, but rather through the power of the word to encourage others within the ecclesia to develop with us that "holy conversation and Godliness" which hasten "the coming of the day of God" (v.11,12).

CHAPTER 21: WHEAT AND TARES

This parable describes how the true believers, living in the Jewish world of the first century, had to contend with the "tares" of false brethren who were sown by the "enemy" of Christ (the good sower, Matt. 13:24-28). "The enemy that sowed them is the devil" (Matt. 13:39) must be seen in the context of many other passages which speak of the Jewish system as the devil or satan ⁽¹⁾.

The devil's clandestine sowing of tares among the good seed of the ecclesia must primarily refer to the "false (Judaist) brethren unawares brought in", which the New Testament frequently warns against (Gal. 2:4). By "the end of the (Jewish) world", in A.D. 70, this problem appears to have been ended (Matt. 13:39). The burning of the tares along with the "world" connects with other prophecies concerning the end of the Jewish age in figurative fire (e.g. 2 Peter 3). Seeing that false doctrine and teachers continued to spread within the ecclesia after A.D. 70, this parable must be understood as having a highly specific application to the concentrated Jewish campaign of infiltrating the ecclesias.

Latter-day application

However, there is much language in this parable which shouts for reference to the events of the second coming and judgment:-

- "The harvest" (Matt. 13:39) - a figure used concerning the Lord's return in Isa. 18:4,5; Joel 3:13; Mark 4:29; Rev. 14:15.

- " The end of the world" (Matt. 13:39).
- The Angels gathering the responsible (Matt. 13:39,40) - an idea repeated in Matt. 25:31-33 concerning the second coming.
- " A furnace of fire" (Matt. 13:42) - 'Gehenna'.
- " Wailing and gnashing of teeth" (Matt. 13:42) - used elsewhere concerning the rejected at the judgment seat (Matt. 8:12; 22:13; 24:51; 25:30).
- " Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their father" (Matt. 13:43) is hard to apply to A.D. 70; it more sensibly fits the second coming.

Whilst there have always been weak elements within the true ecclesia, one of the parable's main purposes is to highlight the problem of the 'devil' consciously infiltrating the ecclesia. It is the view of the present writer that this parable is often misapplied to teach that there is no need to disfellowship members of the community which are blatantly in error. Yet this flatly contradicts many commands to the contrary in Paul's later epistles.

The parable appears to teach that there was nothing that the " wheat" could do about the Judaist infiltration of the ecclesias, until that problem was taken out of the way in A.D. 70. This does not mean that the commands to separate from false teachers can be quietly forgotten - after A.D. 70 the main threat to the ecclesias was (and is) the influence of Greek and Roman philosophy, expressed albeit indirectly. From those who openly teach this, there was and is a clear command to separate. Why our Lord counselled against positive action to expel the Judaizers before A.D. 70 was for several reasons:-

- He knew that this particular problem would be solved in A.D. 70 anyway.
- Seeing that many of the early Christians were Jews, pushing out the Judaizers would have meant certain damage to the " wheat" , seeing that they were too immature to judge between true Christianity based on " the hope of st1:country-region>Israel" and the specious doctrines of the Judaizers.
- The Law did not come to a complete end until A.D. 70. Expelling those who advocated a return to the Law before A.D. 70 was therefore difficult.
- By the deliberate hypocrisy of the Judaizers it was impossible for human judgment to accurately discern who should be 'gathered up'.

Pseudadelphians

We have shown that this parable, along with most other prophecies of A.D. 70, must have a latter-day application too. Since the first century there has never been such a systematic infiltration of the true ecclesias as that practiced then by the Judaizers. The extent of their campaign is chronicled elsewhere (2). Since that time, the loss of true doctrine has been due to persecution, materialism, individual false teachers, over-familiarity over an extended period etc., but never

due to a large scale, organized infiltration of the ecclesias with men who consciously pretended to hold true doctrine, whilst subtly spreading their false ideas at the same time.

If this parable has a latter-day application - and our earlier analysis of the language used makes this hard to deny - then we have to expect a similar organized infiltration in the last days. Whilst it would appear that we have not yet reached this crisis, the stage is well set for it. Previous heresies that arose were publicly stated, and therefore relatively easy to deal with. Yet now the complaint is often made that there appear to be people within the community who, when cornered, claim to agree with our basic doctrines, yet vigorously spread fundamentally false teaching when the spotlight is taken off them.

Judas, with his apparent spirituality, is the prototype false teacher, and exemplifies the attitude (1 John 2:19 cp. John 13:30; 2 Thess. 2:3); as does the description of wolves "in sheep's clothing" (Matt. 7:15). Any foolhardy attempt to "gather them up" (Matt. 13:28) must result in some "wheat" being pulled up too; i.e. those who cannot perceive the 'tares' for what they are, whilst holding true doctrine themselves, will be damaged. Our only hope is the second coming.

The devil

The system which sowed the tares is called "the enemy...the devil" (Matt. 13:39), primarily referring to the Jewish system. The Jews are consistently portrayed as "enemies": Matt. 22:44; Ps. 42:9; 43:2; 69:4; Luke 19:14 cp. 27; 10:19. The latter-day beast is "the devil" (Rev. 12:9; 20:2), and we have suggested that this refers to the confederacy of largely Arab nations which will oppress Israel in the last days (see Appendix 2).

Time and again the Arab powers are called the "enemies" of God's true people: Jud. 2:14; Eze. 36:2; Lev. 26:25; Deut. 28:57; Ex. 15:6,9; Ps. 78:42 (= Egypt). Ps. 110:1,2, primarily based on Abraham's victory over his Arab enemies, connects these peoples with the enemies of Christ who will become his footstool at the second coming (this is not to deny the Psalm's many other applications). Most especially is Babylon called "the enemy": Ps. 78:61; Jer. 6:25; 15:11; 18:17; 31:16 and an impressive 11 times in Lamentations. We have shown 'Babylon' to have a latter-day application to the Arab enemies of Israel.

Church in crisis

"The devil" in the sense of sin's political manifestation has previously referred to the Jewish and Roman systems. Both of these were connected with the 'devil' of false teachers within the ecclesia. There is ample extra-Biblical proof that false Roman and Jewish philosophy was the ammunition of the early false teachers within the ecclesias.

The man of sin who will be in the temple (ecclesia?) of the last days is a Judas-like character (2 Thess. 2:3 cp. Jn. 17:12)- hidden away in the ecclesia, appearing to be righteous. The latter-day beast/devil will also be associated in some way with the infiltration of the ecclesias which the parable of wheat and tares prophesies.

How exactly this will occur can only be speculation - the Arabs may hold the world to ransom with the threat of cutting oil supplies, and insist that Jewish-based religions be eliminated. False teaching might then arise concerning the Jewish basis of our faith. The present de-emphasis of the promises in our preaching and the lack of appreciation of them by many of our younger members will ease the way for this. It is significant that one of the pictures of the beast is of it having horns like a lamb but speaking like a dragon (Rev. 13:11). This is alluding to Matt. 7:15 describing false teachers as wolves which appear like sheep - showing the association between the beast's political manifestation and false teachers within the ecclesia.

Watch!

This organized infiltration of the ecclesias will probably occur in earnest during the tribulation period of natural Israel. As the presence of the first century tares provoked confusion, turmoil and a landslide of true spirituality in the early church, so this prophesied programme of infiltration helps explain the frequent indications that the latter-day ecclesias will be in a desperately disjointed state at the time of the second coming. The sowing of the tares was "while men slept" (Matt. 13:25), perhaps connecting with the slumbering virgins / ecclesial shepherds of Matt. 25:5, also the sleepy latter-day saints of 1 Thess. 5:6 and the disciples who failed to watch as they should have done (Mk. 13:36; 14:37).

These four connections surely suggest that the havoc caused by the tares will be proportionate to the lack of spiritual watchfulness among the individual ecclesias and believers. Again, the command to "Watch" in the last days is shown to have reference not only to observing the political 'signs of the times', but watching for the spiritual safety of the ecclesia.

Footnotes

(1) See 'The Jewish Satan' in *In Search of Satan* .

Chapter 22: LATTER DAY APOSTACY?

The idea has frequently been expressed that any revival of the Truth has given way to apostacy within two or three generations. This study aims to Biblically analyze this theory. The following, then, is the evidence available:

- A fresh start was made after the flood; three generations later brings us to the time of Nimrod (Gen.10:6-10), who is highlighted both in Genesis and in later Biblical allusion as an epitome of apostacy.

- Similarly Gen.11:11-16 shows that from Shem (living after the flood) to Peleg was another three generations. "In his days was the earth divided" (1 Chron.1:19), i.e. at Babel. Three generations from the flood to Babel must be significant to our present enquiry. It appears that Nimrod was contemporary with Babel; was this one of the cities which he tried to build?

- Babel provided opportunity for another Genesis. But from Peleg (i.e. the time of Babel, 1 Chron.1:19) to Nahor, Abraham's father, were three generations (Gen.11:18-22); and we know Nahor was an idolator (Josh.24:14).

- After this, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob provide one of the finest examples in Scripture of a family committed to the Truth over three generations. The sons of Jacob clearly had many elements of apostasy among them, both in their personal relationships and their idol worship (Gen.35:4). The holocaust that came on Israel in Egypt must have been a punishment for serious apostasy; God does not willingly afflict His people. The persecution starting in the generation after Joseph therefore suggests that the fourth generation from Abraham started a spiritual slide which led the fifth generation into the deep idolatry which is hinted at in Ezekiel 20 and other passages referring to Israel's spiritual state in Egypt.

- The spiritual revival led by Moses certainly gained some followers in Egypt, coming to fruition in the generation of youngsters (under 20) who left Egypt and entered Canaan. These appear to have been one of the most faithful of all generations. But after their passing and the "elders that outlived Joshua" (i.e. the next generation?), Israel slumped into the apostasy of the Judges period.

- Jud.18:30 (see R.S.V., N.E.B.) shows that Moses' grandson was involved in apostasy. We know that Moses' parents were faithful; and thus again we see the real knowledge of God lost after three or four generations.

- Jeremiah's parable of the figs (Jer.24) describes those who were carried captive to Babylon as being the "good figs" who brought forth spiritual fruit in their captivity- doubtless due to the influence of Daniel and the prophecies of Jeremiah which we know they studied there. This group developed in faith throughout the 70 years captivity, culminating in their return to the land over another 70 year period, spanning the times of Ezra and Nehemiah. After this combined 140 year period, the idealism slacked, political in-fighting arose within the ecclesia, materialism took its toll- as detailed in Haggai and Malachi.

- There was precious little true Christianity by AD170, 140 years after the start of the Lord's ministry.

- Studies of communities holding the Truth in Europe shows the same miserable story repeated time and again.

- During the Millennium a child will die at 100 years old (Is.65:20), suggesting a tenfold increase in life-spans. Taking a generation presently as 40 years, on this reckoning a generation then will be about 400 years. Thus the rebellion at the end of the Millennium will be after two or three generations from the Lord's return. Repentant Israel will dwell in the land for ever once the Kingdom is established: "They, and their children, and their children's children" (Ez. 37:25)- suggesting the Millennium spans three generations?

- It is a Divine principle that certain people can spiritually influence their progeny for three or four generations, so that during this period God will either bless (2

Kings 10:30) or curse (Num.14:8; Dt.5:9) the people in those generations in accordance with the spiritual status of their ancestors.

It could be noted that a fair number of these cases were influenced in their apostasy by a corrupt eldership; leaders whose idealism slacked, and then led to their hold on the faith crumbling completely, in real terms. However, it is also observable that the elders allowed themselves to be influenced by the low standards of their flock. "Because iniquity shall abound (within the ecclesia?), the love of many ("the many", R.V. - the majority) shall wax cold" (Mt.24:12). Bad spiritual standards will spread like cancer in the last days. Thus the ecclesial leaders of the last days must beware of the temptation to be overharsh on the faithful remnant, whilst eating and drinking with "the drunken", i.e. those elements in the ecclesia who will be unprepared for the Lord's coming. Matt.24:49 is alluded to in 1 Thess.5:3-7, where the picture is graphically created of a man who has been hard drinking for a whole evening, now at home stupefied, late at night. It is then that the thief comes; whilst dimly aware of his coming, the man is quite unprepared to meet him and keep his (spiritual) house intact. This will be the tragic position of those who through belief and practice are unready for their Lord. It seems that a materialistic eldership, uncommitted to the real needs of the household, indifferent to guarding the house, will contribute to our latter day apostasy as a community. And note the correspondence between those who are harsh on their brethren being those who are also caught up in the things of the world. The drunken servant starts to beat the fellow servants, using a Greek word which means to punish (Lk. 12:45). This creates the picture of a worldly ecclesial elder over-disciplining others. No wonder there will be so much friction and disunity amongst spiritual Israel of the last days.

The disturbing thing is that those living in the third and fourth generations in the examples detailed above would have admitted that things in the ecclesia were not how they had been years ago, but they rarely appreciated how God really saw them- as a corrupted community. Please note that I am not saying that we *are* corrupted; only God truly knows that. But in view of the evidence presented, are we going to be the only generation to prove all these Biblical precedents wrong? "When the Son of Man cometh, *shall* he find (the) faith on the earth?" . The fact that there is a question mark over it should inspire us with zeal and sober enthusiasm to prepare ourselves against that day.

Lk. 17:22 warns that in the last days, the Lord's disciples will "desire to see one of the days of the Son of man, and ye shall not see it". Yet Jn. 8:56 implies it is always possible to see one of the days of the Son of man through faith in Him. Is the Lord not hinting here that there will be a clouded spiritual vision amongst His latter day followers, even though they will "desire" this not to be the case? And can we not see uncomfortable similarities with our position and feelings today, realizing our vision is somewhat clouded, desiring for things to be different, but still not seeing...?

A big theme

2 Thess. 2:3 RV speaks of "the falling away" which must come as the final, crystal clear sign that the Lord's return is imminent. It sounds as if Paul treated this as an

obvious, well known thing amongst the believers. In the context, he's saying: 'How ever can you believe this idea that the day of Christ is here now (RV)? As you know thoroughly well, the great apostacy from the truth in the ecclesia must come, and only *then* will the Lord come, to save the elect within his corrupted ecclesia'. The idea of latter day weakness in the ecclesia is taught explicitly and implicitly throughout the Scriptures. Both natural and spiritual Israel have to be almost pleaded with to come out from among the beast system of the last days (Rev. 18:4), implying that somehow they become part of it- although ideally they should never have become involved with it. Israel being tempted by Balaam and the Moabite women at the very end of the wilderness journey looks forward to the tendency of latter day spiritual Israel to mess up on the eve of the Kingdom. A fair case can be made for thinking that Adam sinned at the end of the sixth day, on the eve of the sabbath of rest (cp. the Millennium).

1 Tim. 4:1 indicates what a big theme latter day apostacy was in the first century ecclesia: "The Spirit speaketh *expressly* that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith", due to giving heed to false teachers purposefully trying to seduce the faithful. "Some" (in the Greek) doesn't imply 'not many, just a few'. The link with Mt. 24:12 teaches that "many" (Gk. the majority) will depart- because, 1 Tim. 4:1 tells us, of 'giving heed' to false teachers. Tit. 1:14 warns the first century believers not to 'give heed' to the false doctrines of Judaism which were being pedalled *within the ecclesia*. Yet the spirit of the day generally is to be more and more tolerant of doctrinal deviants, rather than 'giving heed', 'watching' against them. There is a telling play on words here. The Greek for "giving heed" is normally used concerned taking heed, being ware, of false teachers (Mt. 7:15; 16:6; Acts 20:28; 1 Tim. 1:4; Tit. 1:14). Paul's implication is: 'Instead of giving heed to the *danger* of these people within the ecclesia, you gave heed to them in the sense of listening to them'.

Worse than we think

If we accept the Bible teaching that there will be false teaching and apostacy within the latter day ecclesia, we simply can't trust someone's doctrinal and spiritual integrity *just because they call themselves a Christian*. At the time of Christ's coming, there will be tares actively growing in the ecclesia. Those tares are the "thorns and briars" of Heb. 6:8, who are "rejected...nigh unto cursing; whose end is to be burned"; the 'thorns' who crucify Christ again (2 Sam. 23:6,7; Heb. 6:6-8). Yet we will, in some sense, rub shoulders with this category if we are in the latter day ecclesia (Mt. 13:27-30). In the last days, the true Christian community simply won't be (isn't?) the spiritually safe place, where error is impossible, which we may have felt it to be in the past. The man of sin, the wicked one, will sit in the very *temple of God*, the ecclesia (see Chapter 23).

Ezekiel (8:8-15; 9:8; 11:3), Jeremiah, Micah and perhaps even the Lord Jesus (Is. 59:16; Lk. 13:8) over-estimated the spirituality of God's people in the run up to the 'day' of Divine judgment in their time. The "peace and safety" cry within the latter day ecclesia (1 Thess. 5:3) is part of an extended set of allusions back to the parables of Mt. 24 and 25, concerning the apostate, drunken servant who thinks everything is fine being suddenly destroyed by his Lord's coming. This kind of believer had been foreseen by Moses in Dt. 29:19; the type who hears the curses for

disobedience, but blesses (forgives) himself in his heart, " saying, I shall have peace, though I walk in the imagination of mine heart, to add drunkenness to thirst" . As natural Israel will be awoken from their drunkenness by the final Arab invasion (Joel 1:1,2), so spiritual Israel will be awakened by the holocaust to come. The false prophets who lived on the eve of the Babylonian and Assyrian invasions told Israel that everything was " peace and safety" within the ecclesia of their time (Jer. 5:12; 6:14; 14:13; Ez. 13:10; Mic. 3:5). It seems that the latter day ecclesia will likewise have a faithful remnant who clearly perceive the apostacy, although they are surprised at it, seeing in it the clearest sign of their Lord's return; and an apostate majority, backed up by the elders of the ecclesia, who will claim with some aggression that this is all utter nonsense, and there is peace and spiritual safety within the ecclesia. The embryo (or further) of this situation is evidently with us already.

Chapter 23: THE MAN OF SIN

Like the majority of New Testament prophecy, 2 Thess. 2 has application to both AD70 and the last days, although this does not preclude a reference to the Papacy down through the years between those times. It was inspired at a time when apostacy had already set in within the ecclesia, largely due to the inroads of the Judaizers. We can be sure that the Jewish opposition which attended Paul's first visit to Thessalonica would have continued well after he left. They were under pressure from "them that trouble you" (2 Thess. 1:6), who are defined in Gal. 5:11-13 as the Judaizers ("they... which trouble you"). The Thessalonians are comforted that these troublemakers would be destroyed by the Lord's second coming in fire, " taking vengeance on them...that obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ (preferring that of Moses): who shall be punished with everlasting destruction (cp. Gehenna) from the presence of the Lord" (1:9). This sounds very much like the punishment of the responsible at judgment day (Jude 24)- and the Judaizers fit that category. Significantly, the only occurrences of the Greek idea of a "man of sin" in the LXX describe Jewish apostates (Prov. 24:22; Is. 57:4).

The Historical Background of the "Man of sin"

Acts 17:6-8 records how the Gospel began at Thessalonica with major conflict with the Roman authorities. The letters (especially 1 Thess. 4:13-5:11) are full of parody of terminology associated with the cult of emperor worship, contrasting it with the ultimate Emperor, the Lord Jesus, and His Kingdom as opposed to the Roman empire. The play on the word *parousia* is typical of this- it's a word classically associated with the 'coming' of the Emperor, but Paul uses it about the coming of the Lord Jesus. It's not surprising, therefore, that the passage about the "man of sin" is full of allusion to the Romans. The background to the letter would have been Caligula's attempt to desecrate the temple in AD40. He was assassinated in AD41 before he could do so, but his plans appear exactly what Paul speaks of as actually predicted to come true.

Jewish apocalyptic literature spoke of Belial, Judaism's equivalent of a personal "man of sin", setting up his image (Asc. Isa. 4:11). Caligula planned to have his image erected in the Jerusalem temple in order to demonstrate his claims to Divinity (Philo, Leg. 203-346; Josephus, AJ 18.261-301; BJ 2:184-

203). It could be that the man of sin is a prophecy which had a potential fulfilment, in that Claudius appears to have played the role of the 'restrainer', until evil burst forth in the time of Nero. Nero could have been the "man of sin" who was destroyed by the Lord's second coming- hence the mark of the beast, 666, being the numeric value of his name. The exact Greek term for "the lawless one" / "man of sin" is used only in the Psalms of Solomon 17:11-15 about Pompey's capture of Jerusalem and desecration of the temple in 63 BC. Clearly Paul is saying that the future situation he was prophesying would be a repetition of what had historically happened, but on a far greater scale. He clearly had in view the desecration of the literal temple by Gentile powers, just as the Lord Jesus had in view when predicting the "abomination of desolation". Similar language is used in Judaism's literature of how apostate Jews would be responsible for this, and thus the profanation of the temple by Gentiles was effectively because the Jews had themselves profaned the temple beforehand. Thus IqHab 12.7-9 speaks of Jerusalem "where the Wicked Priest did wicked things and defiled God's sanctuary". This is very much the language of the "man of sin", and explains how it therefore refers to both apostates amongst God's people and also Gentile desecration of the temple.

Caligula planned to erect his image in the temple and inscribe it with an assertion of his Divinity: "Gaius, the new Zeus made manifest [cp. "sitting as God"], the ruler's numen (the divine nature of his power and authority) and the ruler as praesens deus (the ruler as a manifest god)". Caligula's claim to be God is well documented in A.A. Barrett, *Caligula* pp. 140-153. Caligula had already set up a temple and image to his own Divinity on the Palatine at Rome, and wanted to do the same in Jerusalem. Suetonius (*Calig.* 22.3) describes it as follows: "He also set up a special temple to his own godhead (*suo numin proprium*), with priests and victims of the choicest kinds. In this temple was a life-sized statue of the Emperor in gold, which was dressed each day in clothing such as he wore himself". His reign was characterized by "lawlessness". Clearly the similarities are such that Paul is saying that this planned desecration by Caligula, which never actually happened in AD40, was actually going to happen in the near future. It could potentially have brought the Lord's second coming to destroy it, but other factors were not right, in that the conditions for the second coming were not all fulfilled, and therefore the Lord Jesus did not return in AD70.

The First Century Fulfilment

This prophecy speaks of a specific "man of sin" who would arise within the ecclesia as an epitome of the spirit of rebellion against the truth. It seems that there may have been such an individual in the first century:

- "Ye have heard that antichrist shall come" (1 Jn. 2:18)
- "who [singular] did hinder you...a little leaven [that] leaveneth the whole lump...he that troubleth you..." (Gal. 5:8-10)
- "he that is of the contrary part" (Tit. 2:8)
- "Who (which individual) hindered you?... (Paul's) letters, saith he, are weighty and powerful; but his bodily presence is weak, and his speech contemptible" (2 Cor. 10:7, 10 A.V.mg.).

- The world- the Jewish world, in John's usage of the term- was under the power of a 'satan', a Prince or leader (Jn. 12:31; 14:30; 1 Jn. 5:19), in the first century- perhaps the High Priest?

- A "stranger" to the flock and a "thief" would come to harm the flock of the Lord Jesus (Jn. 10:5,10).

- The existence of such an individual would make special sense of the Lord's request for the Father to keep the disciples safe from "the evil one" (Jn. 17:15). 1 Jn. 2:13,14 alludes to this prayer and shows it to have been fulfilled in the first century- the believers had been kept safe from "the evil one". And there appears some connection with the promise of Rev. 3:10, given just prior to the cataclysm of AD70, to keep the brethren safe from "the hour of trial".

- John may also refer to this individual. He seems to speak, at least in the Greek text, of one specific individual- e.g. "The one [singular] saying he is in the light" (1 Jn. 1:9). "Who, then, is the liar?" (1 Jn. 2:22) has evident connection with the lying antichrist figure of 2 Thess. 2:8,9; and "the deceiver" (2 Jn. 7) connects with that same figure who will follow "deceit" (2 Thess. 2:11). John saw the singular antichrist as being heralded by many antichrists who had, he felt, already arisen in the first century. They belonged to the [Jewish] world (1 Jn. 4:5)- an indication that the antichrist is somehow semitic, at least in its first century application. John's reference to "many false prophets" (1 Jn. 4:1) connects with Mt. 24:11, which in an AD70 context predicts that "many false prophets shall arise". This indicates to me that the singular antichrist had some fulfillment in the first century. And the same will be [is?] true in our last days. The likes of Saddam Hussein and Hitler are perhaps such antichrists who presage the coming of the specific person who will be the latter day antichrist. They had some similarities to him, but were not the actual person. Significantly, John seems to have understood this person as someone who would nominally accept Jesus, but deny that Jesus is the Christ, the anointed Messiah (1 Jn. 2:22). This would fit a Moslem position far better than it would a Catholic- for Catholics believe that Jesus is the Christ. Likewise in the first century, the Jewish antichrists believed Jesus had existed, but denied He was the Christ.

It is noteworthy that this individual is not named. Martin Hengel comments, correctly: "One of the riddles of Jewish and early Christian polemic is that it hardly ever really names its opponents, but tends to use derogatory paraphrases. This is [also] true of Essence polemic, which conceals its opponents in ciphers" ⁽¹⁾. In this context we recall the references to Babylon and Egypt in the Old Testament as, e.g., "Rahab". Paul likewise doesn't seem to refer to his enemies by their names but rather hides behind almost taunt phrases (2 Cor. 11:5,13; 12:11; Gal. 5:12; Phil. 3:2; and see too Gal. 1:7; 3:1,10; 4:17; 2 cor. 2:17; 4:2; Rom. 3:8; 15:31). The reference to the prophetess "Jezebel" in Rev. 2:20 and "the teaching of Balaam" (Rev. 2:14) likewise don't actually name the individuals concerned, but rather give them a kind of code name.

It is just possible, although in no way certain, that such an individual could arise in the latter day apostacy; although if he does, it will be evident to all. There is no

need of witch hunting to reveal him. We have shown in Chapter 12 that the man of sin has connections with the power that will dominate Israel, both natural and spiritual, in the last days. The man of sin prophecy therefore shows that the latter day pressure on the ecclesia will come from two sources: from the oppressive power in the world outside us, and secondly from that power exerting an influence within the community. This was exactly the situation which the ecclesia faced in the AD70 last days. The believers had to wrestle against the civil "principalities and powers" as well as against wicked spiritually gifted elders in heavenly places in the ecclesia; this was all part of the "evil day" of tribulation (Eph. 6:12,13), the same "day" of 2 Thess. 2:3. As "nation shall rise against nation", so "many false prophets shall rise" (same Greek word) in the ecclesia (Mt. 24:7,11). Thus the same kind of forces will be operating both in the world and within the ecclesia (perhaps the similarity in phrasing is because there is Angelic activity allowing both?).

It is against this background that 2 Thess. 2 warns them not to be "soon shaken in mind, or be troubled (cp.1:6; Gal. 5:12), neither by Spirit, nor by word (from those claiming the Spirit gift of prophecy), nor by letter as (if it were) from us, as that the day of Christ is at hand" (R.V. "here"; 2:2). This all indicates Judaist activity; they had elsewhere used the tactic of forging letters in Paul's name (Gal. 6:11; Heb. 13:22; 1 Cor. 16:2; 2 Cor. 3:1). Thus Paul concludes this second letter to the Thessalonians with "the salutation of me Paul with mine own hand which is the token in every epistle, so I write" (2 Thess. 3:17). Their reasoning was that the day of Christ, i.e. the Kingdom, was already present. This was and still is a basically Jewish argument- hence the Judaist cancer at Ephesus had lead to Hymenaeus and Philetus "saying that the resurrection (and therefore the Lord's return) is passed already; and overthrown the faith of some" (2 Tim. 2:18).

The Jewish nature of the man of sin which Paul warns the Thessalonians of is also suggested by a careful reflection upon 1 Jn. 2:11,19: "He that hateth his brother...walketh in darkness, and knoweth not whither he goeth...they went out from us, but they were not of us". This is all alluding back to the example of Cain going out from God's presence and wandering in the land of Nod with no direction to his life. Cain is a type of the Judaizers and the Jewish system (Jn. 8:44); the primary reference of John's letters was probably to the Judaizers. These people are described in 1 Jn. 2:18 as "antichrists" whose presence heralded the full manifestation of "the antichrist". This is why the New Testament repeatedly stresses that the appearance of false teachers and fake Christs will be a sign of the end. If these antichrists of the first century were Jewish, then "the antichrist" probably also was. There is ample evidence that John's letters were primarily intended for ecclesias facing this Judaizer problem. The copious links with his Jewish-based Gospel should make this evident. Note too that the Qumran Essenes described the apostate High Priest as "the man of lies". Tertullian's interpretations of John's letters clearly understood the "antichrists" to be referring to contemporary false teachers.

Paul warns that the Lord's coming will not be until there has come a marked further apostacy, and the full public revelation of the man of sin, whose "mystery of iniquity" was already quietly at work. It would be fully revealed once God's withholding patience had ended. At this stage the man of sin would show "lying wonders" which would deceive many; but he would soon be destroyed by "the brightness of (the Lord's) coming". We hope to show how this "mystery of iniquity"

was the Judaist false doctrine undermining the ecclesia, resulting in many believers being influenced by them, until in the immediate prelude to Christ's 'coming' in AD70 the Jewish system seemed to have the upper hand over the true believers. We know from Heb.6 and elsewhere that the Judaist elders were able to do miracles. Such a bout of impressive miracles to be done by false teachers in the last days is predicted in the Olivet prophecy and parts of Revelation. The events of AD70 then totally destroyed the Jewish system. It is feasible that there will be a similar process operating in the last days. An apostate element within the ecclesia will associate itself with the beast (note the similarities between the beast and the man of sin noted previously), resulting in the deception of many weak believers, until for a brief period the beast/ man of sin appears totally powerful- but is then smashed by Christ's return. It is certain that the revealing of the man of sin in the temple (either a rebuilt temple, or the ecclesia) will be a sure sign that Christ is about to return; he will be destroyed by the Lord's coming in glory (2 Thess. 2:3,8). The Lord likewise spoke of false teaching in the ecclesia as the first sign of his imminent return (Mk. 13:5). When Mk. 13:14 records the Lord speaking of the desolating abomination, he uses a neuter modified by a masculine participle- indicating that an individual is being referred to. Thus whatever application 2 Thess. 2 may have to the first century, it definitely has its major application to the last days. This means that the infiltration of the ecclesia by the 'beast' of Rome and the Judaists (Gal. 2:4) has its latter day equivalent. But will we take this warning seriously?

The following verse by verse commentary seeks to interpret 2 Thess. 2 from these two perspectives- of AD70 and the last days. The fact that " the man of sin" appeared in the first century in the form of Judaist false teaching within the ecclesia means that " the wicked one" sitting in the temple is to be read on a figurative level- as referring to the temple of the ecclesia. Indeed, most NT usage of " temple" is with reference to the ecclesia. The Lord's mysterious reference to an idolatrous abomination sitting in the holy place in the last days (to which Paul is alluding) must therefore also have at least some reference to a gross evil within the latter day ecclesia.

The idea of a "man of sin" within the temple of God surely has its source in the Ezekiel passages (e.g. Ez. 8:8-16) which describe the idolatry ("abomination") which occurred within the temple in the days just prior to the invasion of Israel by the Babylonians. These passages lead up to the vision of the purged, perfected temple of the Millennium in Ez. 40 - 48. The 'men of sin' which Ezekiel saw within the temple were the "elders of the house of Israel" , the corrupted priesthood. The connection with 2 Thess. 2 suggests that in the last days, before the final neo-Babylonian holocaust, the elders of the new Israel will practice corruption in the temple / ecclesia of God.

There is an incident in the experience of Nehemiah, Governor of Jerusalem (a type of Christ, Mt. 2:6) which points forward to all this. Nehemiah (cp. Jesus) returned to the Emperor to have his authority over Jerusalem confirmed (cp. Christ to God, Mt. 25:19; Lk. 19:12,13). He then returned, to find Israel indifferent to the state of God's house, taken up with the petty materialism of daily life, with the result that the Arab Tobiah had been permitted by the elders of Israel to live in the chambers

of the house of God (Neh. 13:6-9). Nehemiah in fury expels him and "cleansed the chambers" , throwing out all his things, after the pattern of Christ cleansing the temple (Mt. 21:12). Along with the type of Moses returning from the mount to a corrupted Israel, this points forward to the state of affairs at Christ's return.

Is. 8:5 speaks of an "image of jealousy" being placed in the temple by the Jews just prior to the Babylonian invasion. This was the original image behind the Lord's prophecy of the abomination of desolation being placed in the temple by the Romans. And yet His prophecy has a distinct latter day reference. All this points to a similar literal fulfilment in some way, in a literal latter day temple.

V.3" That day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition" .

" The son of perdition" was Judas (Jn. 17:12), the epitomy of sin and the Jewish devil (Jn. 6:70,71 cp. 8:44). We will see that throughout 2 Thess. 2 there is frequent reference to the events surrounding our Lord's suffering and death; as we also noted in the Revelation passages concerning the saint's final sufferings. Judas was concealed among the disciples until he finally flew his true colours at his betrayal of Christ, which marked the beginning of his passion. The Judaizers were only revealed for what they really were in the traumas of AD69/70. And if the man of sin has a latter day equivalent, this group of false teachers will only show their hand immediately prior to the second coming, at the beginning of the holocaust, which matches the beginning of Christ's final sufferings which began after Judas' betrayal. This indicates that any witch hunt for this group is doomed to failure. The disciples tried to expose " the man of sin" before his proper time to be manifested; and ended up accusing each other of fitting the role. Such is the inability of human nature to make accurate judgment in this respect. As the disciples must have gawped incredulously when they realized what Judas was really up to, so there may be some surprises among the latter day disciples.

There were three and a half days from the time of Judas being openly revealed for what he was to the end of Christ's sufferings, marked by the resurrection. It may be that there will be a three and a half year tribulation period for the latter day believers, beginning with the open revealing of the " man of sin" .

The N.I.V. (correctly) translated " man of sin" as " man of lawlessness" , highlighting the contradiction in the fact that the law-crazy Judaists were actually lawless. Because lawlessness abounds in the last days, the majority of the ecclesia will lose their love (Mt. 24:12). It may be that the man of lawlessness introduces the lawlessness of the world into the ecclesia, leading the majority astray. The beast is epitomized by a man- " the number of the beast...is the number of a man" (Rev. 13:18), in the same way as the system described in 2 Thess. 2 is personified as a man of sin. The figure of Rev. 13:5,6 is clearly based around an Old Testament 'man of sin', Goliath- a real, historical person. Rev. 11:4,13 draw a contrast between a God of the earth / land of Israel, and the God of Heaven. The "god of the earth" has two olive trees and two candlesticks standing before him, with evident allusion back to Zech. 4:14; 6:5, where the Lord / King of the earth / land appears to refer to the King of Babylon. When we read of the beast personified as

a person, we must remember that most personifications in Scripture are not mere literary devices; they revolve around the fact that the thing or system personified is epitomized in a real, actual person. Take the personification of sin / temptation as 'the devil'; sin can't exist in an abstract sense but only in persons; hence the personification has a basis for reality in actual human persons. Or take wisdom, personified as a person in Proverbs. Wisdom in its real and Biblical sense only exists in persons, not as abstract theory; and thus it can be personified. The personification of the beast system is likely because it will be epitomized in a real person. Hence "the number of the beast...is the number of a man" (Rev. 13:8)⁽³⁾.

These passages all imply that there may well be one specific "man of sin" in the last days. Judas, the prototype "son of perdition", influenced the other disciples, as shown by the complaint concerning Mary's 'waste' of ointment being described as made by Judas in Jn. 12:4, but by the whole group in Mt. 26:8. Jude's letter is a warning against the Jewish-influenced apostasy of the first century. He cites "the gainsaying of Korah" as typical of the false teaching that was infiltrating the ecclesias. He could have spoken of "Korah, Dathan and Abiram", but instead he focuses on Korah, as if he was the outstanding influence. By doing so, was Jude suggesting that there was one specific individual in the "last days" who was to be resisted?

The connection with Judas would suggest that the man of sin being in the temple may refer to the presence of this individual or system within the ecclesia. But there is a clear link with Mt. 24:15, concerning the abomination of desolation standing in the temple as a clear sign that Christ's return is imminent, just as Paul says the man of sin in the temple is the clear sign of the second coming (2 Thess. 2:3). The Lord's words are looking back to Daniel's prophesy that a desolator (RV) is to appear in the temple, and also to the description of Nebuchadnezzar as a 'desolator' of God's people and His cities, who achieves his 'desolation' by a fake theophany, coming with clouds and chariots just as the Lord Jesus will (Jer. 4:7,13). The language used by Jeremiah in that section is very similar to that used in Ezekiel 38 about the individual named as 'Gog'. The abomination that desolates is at the hands of a desolator- the man of sin of 2 Thess. 2. The likely application to an abomination within the ecclesia notwithstanding, one is tempted to look for a physical temple to be built in Jerusalem in order to ease the fulfilment of this prophecy. It cannot be insignificant that the right wing Rabbis are enthusiastic for this, *and have already drawn up the plans for one!* It could be that Rev. 13:14,15 predict that the man of sin will set up a literal image of himself there in the temple.

v.4 "Who opposeth and exalteth" is used in 2 Tim.2:25 concerning the Judaizers and Jews, and it is translated "adversary" in the same Judaist context in Lk. 13:17; 21:15; 1 Cor. 16:9; Phil. 1:28 and 1 Tim. 5:14. Their arrogance is well described as exalting themselves above anything that is 'worshipped', whether Christian or otherwise. This is the same word as "devotions" in Acts 17:23 concerning pagan idols. They made themselves "as God", perhaps by imitating Moses, "the god of this (Jewish) world" (2 Cor. 4:4 and context); James 4:11,12 is just one example of the Judaist-influenced eldership making themselves equal to Moses. There are two

Greek words translated " temple" , one referring more to the physical building and the other to the spiritual dwelling place of God, i.e. the ecclesia (1 Tim. 3:15). It is this latter one which is used here- the man of sin sits down (Gk. 'takes his place') in the ecclesia, shewing himself (Greek 'demonstrating') that he is God. This word is translated " approved" in Acts 2:22 concerning Christ's approval as God's representative by His miracles. This indicates that the man of sin is an imitation of Christ- a true antiChrist. The shewing that he is God would be through the pseudo miracles of v.9- in the same way as Moses was made as God to Pharaoh through the miracles he did (Ex. 7:1). The Judaist-influenced elders of the Jewish ecclesias seem to have retained the power of the miraculous gifts for a short time after their apostacy (Heb. 6:4-6); the Jews also had their false miracle workers (Acts 13:6; 19:14). The beast of Revelation also works impressive miracles. Thus as the man of sin did false miracles in the first century through the Jewish miracle workers and their Judaist friends within the ecclesia, so both in the beast system of the last days as well as in the ecclesia, the latter day " man of sin" will work false miracles. Remember that even possession of the genuine Spirit gifts did not necessarily indicate that the possessor was acceptable to God (cp. Saul, Corinth ecclesia, Simon Magus).

The language of the man of sin "who vaunts himself above and against every so-called god or object of worship, actually seating himself in the temple of God" (2 Thess. 2:3,4) shouts for application to the plans of Gaius Caligula to make and erect a colossus of himself with the attributes of Jupiter in the Most Holy place of the Jerusalem temple; and this in turn recalls the Lord's words an abominable thing was to be placed in the temple in the last days (Mt. 24:15). But Gaius was suddenly assassinated, and his plans never came to term. One can speculate that his widely publicized decree stimulated prayer throughout the Jewish-Christian community, that such an abomination would not be allowed to happen. And so it didn't. The point is, that things can be changed within God's end times program as a result of our prayers. This may speed up the Lord's return, or at least mean that another possible sequence of events kicks in.

v.5,6 " Remember ye not, that when I was with you, I told you these things? And now ye know (appreciate) what withholdeth, that he might be revealed in his time" .

There is a definite allusion here to Lk. 24:6: " He is...risen; remember *how* (with what earnestness, the Greek implies) he spake unto you when he was yet in Galilee" , concerning his sufferings and resurrection. " These things" of 2 Thess.2:5,6 may therefore refer to our sufferings in fellowship with Christ, and subsequent salvation in the last day holocaust. The connection runs deeper; as the Angel spoke those words in Lk. 24, the disciples were about to turn back, to capitulate to the reasoning of the Jewish satan, due to their failure to truly appreciate earlier prophecy. The believers of AD70 and the last days have parallels with the position of those men. They had frequently heard about the coming sufferings of their Lord, but somehow turned a deaf ear to them. We too can let the reality of these warnings about our future suffering just pass us by.

" Remember ye not" also recalls Mk.8:18: " Having eyes, see ye not? and having ears

(the potential to understand) hear ye not? and do ye not remember?" . It is interesting that Lk. 24:6,7 date Christ's sufferings from the point when he was " delivered into the hands of sinful men" , ending with him rising again " the third day" - exactly a three and a half day period, seeing the arrest was twelve hours before his death. Compare this with the saints fellowshiping Christ's sufferings in the last days for three and a half years. The disciples who were rebuked in Lk. 24:6 expected the Kingdom without suffering, and switched off to any talk about suffering or agonizing in order to enter the Kingdom. In principle, this same attitude is far too evident in our community today.

As Christ told the disciples that he had already told them about his sufferings, so Paul is reminding those of AD70 and the last days that he has earlier explained to them about the sufferings they were and are to face in the latter day holocaust. It seems that the Thessalonians had the blessing of a great appreciation of the prophecies concerning their own last days. There is reason to think that we may be blessed likewise (cp. Dan. 12:10). We have seen that the revealing of the man of sin and the persecution of the saints are both associated with the crucifixion of Christ. Therefore what withheld the time of Christ's final sufferings must also delay the start of the full revelation of the man of sin in the last days. It was by the determinate will of God that Christ was handed over to be crucified (Acts 2:23), and he was not taken earlier because his time had not yet come (Mt.26:18; Jn.7:6; Lk.9:51). This delay was to give Israel a chance to repent, as explained in the parable of the fig tree being left a little bit longer to give it every chance to bring forth fruit. This apparent 'delay' in Christ's crucifixion was matched by the 'delay' in the Lord's coming in judgment upon Israel in AD70. Similarly the longsuffering of God waited (delayed) in the days of Noah until the flood finally came (1 Pet.3:20); those days and the flood are used elsewhere as symbols of the events of AD70 and the Lord's 'coming' then. Note that " withholdeth" can mean 'Is still in memory', showing that it refers to God's patience. It is God's patient desire for repentance which withheld the manifestation of the man of sin in the first century, and which withholds it now too.

Paul says that these things had previously been explained to the Thessalonians, perhaps in 1 Thess. 5:3-5; there they were told that the pre-eminent sign of the Lord's coming is the " peace and safety" cry within the ecclesia. Now in 2 Thess.2 Paul puts it in another way: " that day shall not come, except there come a falling away *first*" , or most importantly, as the most obvious sign. " Withholdeth" is also translated " stand fast" and " keep hold" , often in the context of resisting Judaist infiltration by retaining true doctrine. This would imply that the spiritually strong within the ecclesias were withholding the revealing of the man of sin and the Lord's return (" that he might be revealed in his time" can neatly refer to either, cp. 1 Tim.6:15). However, it was only a matter of time before the falling away was so widespread that they would be " taken out of the way" ; " for the mystery of iniquity (literally 'law-breaking', another pun on the Judaizers' position) doth already work" (v.7). This is the opposite to " the mystery of Godliness" (1 Tim. 3:16), and refers to the Judaizers claiming to be so spiritually deep that the Truth was a " mystery" known only to them (cp. Jude 19; Rev.2:24). That which hindered the revealing or coming (cp. 1:7; a false second coming) of the man of sin would be taken out of the way. " Out of the way" here is normally translated " from

among them" - the spiritually minded members of the ecclesia were to be taken away, so that God's punishments could come upon the rest of them. In the first century this was shown in the command for the faithful to flee the Jerusalem ecclesia (Lk. 21:21), to come out of Babylon (Rev.18:4), which is a common symbol of Israel and apostate Jewry in the prophets. The word for "mystery" is also used in a negative sense in Rev.17:5,7 concerning the woman of sin riding the beast - hinting at a specific individual who will be the figurehead of the beast?

v.8 " And then shall that wicked (one) be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the Spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming" .

It was the Jewish system which was destroyed by the 'coming' of AD70; there is a close connection between 'the evil one', i.e. the devil, and the Jewish system ⁽²⁾. The Spirit and brightness of his coming parallels the description of judgment on the Judaizers in 1:6-9: "...mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance...punished...from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power" . This judgment is against "them that trouble you" (1:6), i.e. the false Judaist 'brethren' who were leading the early church astray (Gal. 1:7). The link with 2:8 shows that it is such false brethren *within the ecclesia* (temple) who are "the wicked one" which will be destroyed by the second coming. 2 Thess. 1:6-9 also recalls the description of coming judgment on the apostate Jews in Rom.1:18: "The wrath of God is revealed from Heaven against all unGodliness, and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness" . Paul's words in Thessalonians can also be traced back to Is.11:4: "He (Christ) shall smite the earth (Heb. 'eretz'- land, of Israel) with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked" in Israel, primarily. The Greek for "wicked" is translated "without law" in Romans, again making a play on the Judaizers who were claiming to keep the Law. There is a parallel between "the mystery of iniquity" in v.7 and the wicked one of v.8- the revealing of "that wicked" is therefore the revealing of a mystery, which mimics the 'revealed mystery' of the true Gospel (Rom. 16:25; Eph. 3:3; 6:19; Col. 1:26). The wicked one was to be "destroyed" , the Greek for which is also translated "abolish" , "do away" , "make of no effect" , "vanish away" , "make void" etc., all in the context of the doing away of the Jewish Law and the system which supported it. This was only fully done in AD70.

"The spirit of his mouth" looks forward to Rev. 19:15,21 concerning Christ's destruction of the beast, whom we have seen to have close links with the man of sin. The emphasis on the destruction of the man of sin by Angels and fire recalls Dan.7:10,11 concerning the beast's destruction by the Lord's return. Again, we must make the point: the man of sin will appear in the latter day ecclesia, but he will be linked with the political 'beast' which will then be in control of the world. The way the Christian community is lowering its barriers, allowing any to join who wish to and being increasingly reluctant to expel false teachers, is a sure sign that we are fast arriving at a condition where all this could easily happen.

v.9 " Him whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders" .

'Satan' in the New Testament frequently refers to the Jewish system. "Coming" can be translated 'coming in', referring to the subtle entry of Judaist agents and ideas into the ecclesia (Gal. 2:4 etc.). The coming of Christ with its associated miracles as a result of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, being matched by 'Satan's' miracles at *his* 'coming'. The Greek for "working" is often used concerning the working of the Holy Spirit. "Power, signs and wonders" is a phrase always used concerning the preaching of the Gospel (Acts 2:22,43; 4:30; Rom.15:19; Heb.2:4); and in 2 Cor.12:12 concerning the qualifications of an apostle. This would imply that the man of sin is a false apostle (cp. 2 Cor.11:13-15) doing false miracles to accompany a false Gospel; he is "the son of perdition" after the pattern of Judas. The Greek for "lying" is used about the apostate Jews in Jn.8:44; Rom.1:25; 1 Jn.2:21.

Jannes and Jambres were another prototype of these Judaizers (2 Tim.3:8). Perhaps these magicians who replicated Moses' miracles were apostate Jews. We have seen that Israel's experience in Egypt points forward to ours at the time of the second coming. Perhaps the beast, symbolic 'Egypt' of the last days, will also have a group of renegade Jews in tow, who match the miracles performed by the latter day Moses. Showing "signs and lying wonders" is an evident allusion back to Mt.24:24, concerning this happening in the last days of AD70 and our own times. If the miraculous gifts are possessed by some of the faithful in the last days, e.g. in connection with the Elijah ministry, the ability of the apostate believers to do miracles will seem the more credible. There are many links between 2 Thess. 2 and the Olivet prophecy.

Matthew 24

Lawlessness will abound
(v.12)

Men saying "Lo, here is
Christ" (v.23)

"Believe it not" (v.23)

"For there shall arise false
Christs, and false prophets,
and shall shew great signs
and wonders" (v.24).

"Insomuch that, if it were
possible, they shall deceive
the very elect" (v.24);
implying the non-elect will
be deceived.

"Behold, I have told you
before" (v.25), as Christ

2 Thessalonians 2

The man of lawlessness

"Be not soon shaken...by
word...that the day of
Christ is here" (v.2 R.V.);
the man of sin represents a
false coming of Christ.

"Let no man (of sin)
deceive you" (v.3).

"With all power and signs
and lying wonders" (v.9)

"All deceivableness...they
(shall) believe a lie...but
you, brethren beloved of
the Lord, hath from the
beginning (been) chosen to
salvation" (v.10,13)- i.e. it
was impossible for *them* to
be deceived.

"When I was yet with you,
I told you these things"

prophesied his sufferings.	(v.5)
" As the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be" (v.27)	" The brightness of his coming" (v.8)
" The Son of man coming in the clouds of Heaven (Angels) with power and great glory" (v.30)	With his mighty Angels...the glory of his power" (2 Thess. 1:8,9 cp. 2:8)
" Shall gather together his elect" (v.31)	" Our gathering together unto him" (v.1)
" I am Christ...shall deceive many" (v.5)	" Strong delusion, that they should believe a lie...all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish" (v.11,10).
" Iniquity shall abound" (Greek: 'multiply', i.e. convert more people to it)	" The mystery of iniquity doth...work" (v.7)
" The love of many shall wax cold" (v.12)	" They received not the love of the truth" (v.9)

The description of those deceived in 2 Thess.2 is amplifying that of the judgment seat in 1:6-9, which we have seen is concerning the responsible. We therefore conclude that the many who are deceived by false claims of miracles are actually within the ecclesia. Only the elect will not be deceived. This was what happened in the run up to AD70, and must presumably be seen in our last days too. The establishment of the beast's power in Jerusalem, accompanied by powerful miracles and the support of some Judas-like brethren within the ecclesia for it, will persuade some of our community to think that Christ is back. At present we are scarcely tempted by the pathetic 'miracles' of the evangelists and the ludicrous claims of those who claim to be Christ. Neither are " many" in the world deceived by such people; but the connections between Matt.24 and 2 Thess.2 indicate that many (Gk. the majority, Mt. 24:12) within the ecclesia will be deceived, egged on by a subtle group of false Christians who will be the counterpart of the first century Judaizers. Is it *really* true in our present community that " the mystery of iniquity doth already work" ?

Thus there is an equation between the beast, the man of sin and the holocaust of AD70. We know that the events of AD70 have their latter day equivalent. It seems a certainty that we have yet to experience the large scale falling away indicated here (cp. 1 Tim.4:1), concerning the " latter times" of AD70 and today.

v.10 " With all deceivableness (used concerning the Judaizers in 2 Pet. 2:13) of unrighteousness (used about the Jews in Rom. 1:18,29; 2:8; Heb. 8:12; 2 Pet. 2:13) in them that perish (cp. 1 Cor. 1:18- about the Jews?); because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved" .

This implies that they received the truth, but not the love of it. Is this true of the latter day saints? Many of the present generation of believers have received the truth dished up on a plate; but the love, the real fire of the Truth seems sadly lacking amongst us.

v.11 " For his cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie"

.

This same word for " lie" is used in v.9 about " lying wonders" . This implies that the beast/ false prophet/ man of sin is somehow allowed by God to do the lying wonders; they will be sent by God to test us. God deluded the first century ecclesia into false doctrine and alienation from Him; and it seems, if we are interpreting correctly, that He will do the same in these last days. The warning from reading 2 Thess. 2 in a last day context is clear: there *must* be a fine appreciation of the importance of doctrine, of the likelihood of false teaching arising, the need to keep our doors shut against pseudo-Christians and false teaching.

Who Will He Be?

We have seen that the latter day man of sin will have some association with the people of God, after the pattern of Judas. He may be partly Jewish. He may even have Christian connections. Or it may be that he is an Arab, a half Jew, who will enthrone himself as the head of the Arab beast and make his capital and temple in Jerusalem. Nah. 1:15 RV describes the leader of the Assyrian invasion as "the wicked one", the "wicked counsellor" (1:11), "*he* that dasheth [Israel] in pieces" (Nah. 2:1). Further evidence for a charismatic Arab antichrist is provided in the study of the revival of Babylon. Of particular significance is the way that the man of sin exalts himself "against all that is called God or that is an object of worship" (2 Thess. 2:4 RVmg.). This is exactly relevant to Islam, whose insistent belief in one God leads them to be aggressively against any icon, idol or object of worship. This is the very opposite to the Catholic way of venerating objects of worship.

Notes

(1) Martin Hengel, *The Johannine Question* (London: S.C.M., 1996 ed.), p. 41.

(2) This is explored in detail in my 'The Jewish Satan', in *In Search of Satan*.

(3) The following table shows the evident links between the personal "man of sin" spoken of in 2 Thess. 2, and the beast systems of Revelation. I am grateful to Phil Edmonds for tabulating these connections:

2 Thessalonians 1& 2	Revelation
2 v 3 - son of perdition (see also John 17 v 12)	17 v 8 - beast goes into perdition
2 v 7 - mystery of iniquity (gk <i>anomia</i>)	17 v 7 -

<i>(a reference to the son of perdition)</i>	Babylon associated with mystery
2 v 8 - wicked (lit lawless - gk <i>anomos</i>) one revealed (see also v 7 where " iniquity" = gk <i>anomia</i>)	1 v 1 - The revelation of Jesus Christ
2 v 8 - Lord consumes him with the spirit of his mouth (ref to Isaiah 11 v 4) <i>(a reference to the wicked one of 2 v 8)</i>	19 v 11, 15 - Christ destroys the beast (ref to Isaiah 11 v 4)
1 v 8 - Lord Jesus in flaming fire	19 v 12 - Christ's eyes " as a flame of fire"
2 v 11 - those who perish believe a lie <i>(a reference to the wicked one of 2 v 8)</i>	19 v 20 - " false (or lying) prophet"
2 v 11 - strong delusion (or working of deceit) <i>(a reference to the wicked one of 2 v 8)</i>	13 v 14 - deceive 19 v 20 - deceive <i>(references to the second beast and the false prophet)</i>
2 v 9 - signs (gk <i>semeion</i>) <i>(a reference to the wicked one of 2 v 8)</i>	13 v 13 - wonders (gk <i>semeion</i>) 19 v 20 miracles <i>(gk semeion) (references to the second beast and the false prophet)</i>
2 v 4 - temple	11 v 2 - temple

23.1 The Antichrist In Daniel

Without doubt, Daniel's prophecies repeatedly refer to a specific, evil individual of the last days. These prophecies have largely, in my view, been misinterpreted through seeking to limit their fulfilment to Antiochus or some other person who persecuted the Jews *before* the time of Christ.

Daniel 7:25 speaks of an individual who will persecute the Lord's people for three and a half years, and change "times and law"- as if he is a fake Jesus Christ, who likewise changed the Law. This person arises in *the time of the end* (Daniel 8:23)- and this phrase in Daniel always has some reference to the time of the Lord's return. He is to arise out of the Syrian Kingdom, i.e. part of the divided empire of Alexander the Great. The time when he will arise will be the time when "iniquity is come to the full"- which fits most comfortably with the very last days. Daniel 8:17, 19 make it clear: "The vision pertains to *the time of the end*...the final period of indignation...the appointed *time of the end*." Note that Antiochus Epiphanes didn't reign at the end of the Syrian dynasty [as sometimes claimed].

Daniel 9

Daniel 9 gives more detail about this person. Keil translates Daniel 9:26,27: “The city, together with the sanctuary, shall be destroyed by the people of the prince who shall come, who shall find his end in the flood; but war shall continue to the end, since destruction is irrevocably decreed. That prince shall force a strong covenant for one week on the mass of the people, and during half a week he shall take away the service of sacrifice, and borne on the wings of idol abominations [cp. Ps. 18:10, where the true God is also borne on wings] shall carry on a desolating rule, till the firmly decreed judgment shall pour itself upon him as one desolated” (*Commentary* p. 373). Antichrist’s destruction with *the* flood [note the definite article] comfortably connects with the Lord’s usage of the flood as a symbol of the latter day judgment upon His enemies (Mt. 24:39). The person spoken about will be involved in war until the end of his days; he will die at the end of his military campaign against God’s people. This was certainly not true of Titus in AD70.

Very similar language to Daniel 9:26 occurs in Is. 10:23: “For a complete destruction, one that is decreed, shall the Lord of Hosts execute in the midst of the land”. The context is speaking of “the Assyrian”. The same language of the last days is found in Is. 28:22: “a decisive destruction on all the earth.” The latter day antichrist is therefore modelled upon the “Assyrian” of the Old Testament. Note that “the man of sin” of 2 Thess. 2:8 alludes to “the wicked one” of Is. 11:4 LXX, who is, again, “the Assyrian”! So it would appear very likely that the antichrist figure comes from ‘Assyria’. And what’s going on in Iraq and the territory of ‘Assyria’ right now is gripping the whole world’s attention. Note how the Assyrian is described in Is. 30:31-33 as being thrown into a lake of fire- just as the future beast will be (Rev. 19:20).

Daniel 11,12

But Daniel 11 and 12 [which are one vision, chapter 12 explaining the details of chapter 11] provide yet more insight. The antichrist rages against God’s people for 1290 days after he sets up the abomination that makes desolate- until he is destroyed by the Lord’s coming (Daniel 11:31, cp. 12:11). The Lord Jesus specifically interprets the “abomination that makes desolate” as occurring in the last days. Therefore Daniel 11:31- the first reference to it- must refer to a time *after* the time of Jesus in the first century. The whole section Daniel 11:31 – Daniel 12:11 gives more detail about this “abomination” and the person and power who places it. That whole passage therefore speaks of the final tribulation- defined as three and a half year years in Daniel 12. Yet it’s clear enough that the events in Daniel 11 *prior* to verse 21 speak of things in Old Testament history. There’s therefore, I suggest, a sudden jump in fulfilment at Daniel 11:21, reaching ahead to the last days. This is the section which starts speaking of the “vile person” who places the “abomination that makes desolate”, and finally meets his end in the final conflict of Daniel 11:45. But this kind of ‘sudden jump’ is not at all uncommon in Old Testament prophecy; in fact, it’s a fairly common feature of Daniel’s prophecies in particular! Daniel 2 presents an outline of the powers that would dominate Israel, and then jumps to the very last days. And the later prophecies in Daniel which expand upon that opening vision do just the same.

The evil man who places the desolating abomination meets his end in war (Daniel 11:45)- just as the same individual does in Daniel 8:23. And this leads in to the resurrection and judgment at the Lord’s return (Daniel 12:1,2). Likewise the Lord predicted that the final tribulation- which He says is that prophesied in Daniel- would be followed “immediately” by

His return (Mt. 24:29). So the Lord's own interpretation of Daniel 11 leaves us with no doubt that the whole section about the abomination and the individual responsible for it applies to our last days. Any partial fulfilment it may have had in Antiochus Epiphanes, Nero or Titus only makes those men prototypes of the final abuser yet to come.

So Who Is He?

As with so many prophecies, the intention of this prophecy is surely so that when the prophecy is fulfilled, then we will know. It's not intended to pinpoint the individual far ahead of time. What we do know from Daniel 11 is that the "vile person" is also called "the king of the north", and this is a common title for the ruler of Assyria- present day Iran / Iraq / Kurdistan / Syria. And we've shown above that Old Testament passages about the ruler of Assyria are the basis for other 'antichrist' prophecies of the New Testament. The phrase "vile person" is interesting in itself. If the first usage of a word in Scripture is significant, then Gen. 25:34 is indeed helpful here- because it is used of Esau, father of many of the Arab tribes. And it recurs in describing Edom in Obadiah 2, Goliath the Philistine / Palestinian (1 Sam. 17:42), "Tobiah the Ammonite and Geshem the Arabian" (Neh. 2:19), and Haman the persecutor of the Jews (Esther 3:6). All these men were Arab prototypes of the "vile person", the ruler of Assyria, who is to again persecute God's people.

This latter day "king of the north" will be troubled by "ships from the West", will have a conflict over the land of Israel with his opposite number, "the king of the south"; will sit at a conference table and be deceitful; and will persecute God's people, and receive assistance from those of them who deny the faith. He will rise to power in the name of "peace" (Daniel 11:21); connecting with the 'peace and safety' cry which there will be just prior to the Lord's return, according to 1 Thess. 5. He will rise to power suddenly from a weak and broken people [Iraq?] (Daniel 11:23). During all this, there will be energetic preaching of the truth (Daniel 11:33; 12:3). Quite how all this will work out is impossible and futile to speculate upon. But when it happens, those who understand Daniel, as the Lord bids us to, will understand. And this is the purpose of this study- "let him that readeth understand" was the Lord's comment about studying these very prophecies!

Chapter 24: LETTERS FOR THE LAST DAYS

It is commonly understood amongst us that the prophecies concerning the 'last days' of AD70 have relevance to our last days, and we have pointed out earlier that this means that there may be a tribulation period for the saints, as there was then. Hebrews and the letters of Peter abound in reference to this time, and highlight a number of problems among the believers of those last days which must also be relevant to us. The following are but a few of the relevant passages:

2 Tim. 3:1-3 " In the last days, fierce (Gk.) times shall come. For men (in an ecclesial context) shall be lovers of their own selves...proud...without natural affection...despisers of those that are good, traitors (cp. Mt. 24:10)...highminded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God (implying they *do* love God); having a form of Godliness, but denying the power thereof" . The spirit of fierce aggressiveness which is increasingly seen in the world will enter the ecclesias; brethren will become proud, argumentative, materialistic, despising the truly righteous, disregarding the needs of the household. And there are other NT passages which suggest that this was indeed the ecclesial situation in the prelude

to AD70. The increasing bitterness and subdivision amongst us indicates this will all be seen in the latter day body. Ultimately, human relationships within the ecclesia will go crazy; brethren will hate and betray each other. There will be little real spiritual mindedness; the power of Godliness, the spirit / mind of Christ, will be denied, and only the outward form of Godliness remain (cp. Eph. 3:20; 6:10; Col. 1:11). The abounding wickedness of the world will so permeate the ecclesia that true agape-love will grow cold amongst us (Mt. 24:12). The antidote to this is offered in 2 Tim. 3:14 - 4:3: Love the word, hold on to the doctrine you were taught by faithful brethren, study the word, make it your life, challenge the apostate majority of the ecclesia with no fear of the result, preach to the world, look to the blessed day of Christ's coming.

Heb.10:25 " Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another...the more, as ye see the day approaching" - both of AD70 and the second coming. A laid back attitude to attending meetings designed for spiritual upbuilding was a problem then- and why is it that such events seem to have a decreasing attraction today? The immediate context of Heb.10:25 in the first century would be of the believers being ashamed to publicly associate themselves with their persecuted brethren for fear of reprisals. Paul went through the same, just a few months before AD70 (2 Tim. 4:16). Will this also be the position in the very last days?

Heb.10:32,33 " Call to remembrance the [persecutions of the] former days..." because these were to recur in the period around AD70. The subsequent list of the faithful in Heb.11 focuses on those who were persecuted for their faith but endured- to prepare the readers for the last days of tribulation. This recalls the oft repeated theme of Peter's letters: " Stir up your minds...remember" (e.g. 2 Pet.1:12-15; 3:11).

Heb. 12:29; 13:1 " Our God is a consuming fire [as manifested in the AD70 burning of Jerusalem]. Let brotherly love continue" . This would imply that there was a marked lack of brotherly love in the lead up to AD70- also mentioned in Rev.2:4; Lk.12:45. And with the need to fight the inevitable apostasy in the body in these last days it is so easy for an unloving, bitter attitude to develop. Sadly this prophecy is proving far too true.

Heb.13:5 " Marriage is honourable in all...but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge" - i.e. they were within the ecclesia and responsible. This is matched by 1 Pet.3:1-5 warning that the sisters were increasingly rebelling against their great prototypes of Eve and Sarah, unwittingly egged on by their unspiritual husbands. So many other New Testament passages imply a surge of marriage and sex related problems in the run up to AD70. The ecclesia of Israel was an adulterous generation; this was their main characteristic (Mt. 16:4). Looking around our sisterhood and brotherhood today there can be no doubt about the reference of all this to our last days. Add to this the parallels with Sodom and the times of Noah in this respect too. No wonder Paul advocated the single life for the last days.

Heb. 13:7 " Remember them that have the rule over you" implies there was a tendency to despise ecclesial elders- also mentioned as a last days problem in 1

Pet.5:5; 2 Pet.2:10 etc. The world's spirit of independence and self-determination seems to have affected the latter day ecclesias too.

1 Pet.4:12 " Think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you" - i.e. some thought that Peter's warning of a coming holocaust, based as it was on Old Testament precedent, was " strange" [Greek: 'foreign, an intrusion']. And how many will react to similar warnings made in our last days in just the same way? The Greek word translated " strange" here often refers to the Gentiles- as if Peter is correcting any feeling they may have had that the tribulation predicted would only affect the Gentiles. 'Think it not *strange*, a Gentile thing only- it will affect both you believers and the Gentile world at large'. This is a highly relevant warning to those today who state with such dogmatism that believers will not experience any of the tribulations which are to come upon the surrounding world. A suggestion worth testing is that the sufferings of natural Israel have always been matched simultaneously by difficulties for Israel after the spirit.

1 Pet.4:13 " 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" . We have shown that our sufferings in the holocaust will associate us with Christ's sufferings- so that the joy on his return will be " exceeding" ! " The time [AD70] is come that judgment must begin at the house of God" [4:17]. Going through the holocaust will effectively be our judgment seat. " The righteous [will] scarcely be saved" [4:18]- spiritual survival during this time will be by the skin of our teeth; as was our Lord's spiritual survival on the cross which we will then fellowship.

2 Pet.1:5Add " to virtue knowledge" . There is a great emphasis by Peter on the need for " knowledge" to overcome the coming tribulation: 1 Pet.3:7; 2 Pet.1:2-6,8,16; 2:20; 3:18; an impressive list. By all means compare this with Dan. 12:10, which prophesies a sudden jump forward in understanding God's word by the faithful of the last days. The increasing branding of Bible classes, study articles etc. as 'academic' seems to indicate that we are in the same position as those weak believers whom Peter encouraged in the first century. It seems that we are willing to stop at 'Christian service' (" virtue") rather than *adding* knowledge.

False teachers

It should be evident by now that the warnings of the New Testament letters concerning the state of the ecclesia just prior to AD70 also have reference to our own times, living as we do on the brink of the second coming. The final part of this study is written unwillingly. But in all spiritual, expository and intellectual honesty, it is impossible to overlook the fact that just prior to AD70, there were groups of false teachers within the ecclesia, nibbling away at the basic tenets of the true faith, whilst appearing to be respectable believers. 1 Pet.4:4 and Heb.13:4 indicate that some of these people advocated that any form of behaviour was acceptable, especially in a sexual context. It should be noted that the man of sin is associated with those within the ecclesia; he is framed as a Judas-like character. We have seen earlier that there are connections between the image of Daniel 2, Goliath, and the man of sin. All of these are to be destroyed by Christ's return. The tribulation of the first century ecclesia was both from the Jewish/ Roman beast outside it, as well as from the supporters of those systems inside it

(see Eph.6). It is therefore to be expected that there will be elements within the latter day ecclesia affiliated to the persecuting beast also.

The 'last days' letters are full of warning not to follow the false teachers who will be within the ecclesia. " There were false prophets also among the people (of Israel) even as there shall be...among you" , the new Israel [2 Pet.2:1]. And dare we continue: " Many shall follow their pernicious ways" . This has to be connected with the Lord's teaching that " many" (Gk. the majority) would fall away just before his coming (Mt. 24:12); Peter is perhaps picking this up, and shewing that this will be due to a tolerance of false teachers. The failures of natural Israel are likewise traceable to false teaching from the priesthood, rather than purely personal apostasy. All the examples of rejected false teachers mentioned in 2 Pet.2 were responsible, and in the ecclesia of their times. These false teachers had once known the Truth [2 Pet.2:12] and would therefore be reserved to judgment [2:9]; they attended the memorial meeting [2:13], they had the gift of prophecy as Balaam did [2:15 cp. Heb.6:4-6], and had once left the world, although now they were returning to it [v.20-22]. In other words, they had all the external trappings of good Christians. We must expect something similar in the latter day ecclesia.

The Letters Of Rev. 2 and 3

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?

Any student of the New Testament epistles cannot fail to notice these repeated warnings against false teachers. Peter reminded his readers of " the words...spoken by the holy prophets [New Testament ones?] and the apostles...knowing this first [i.e. most importantly], that there shall come [false

teachers and mass apostasy] in the last days" [2 Pet.2:3]. Unless we say that " the last days" is a phrase which has no reference to our own times, we have to accept that there will be major false teaching and apostasy within the brotherhood just before Christ's return. Personally, I can't see that we have completely reached the position described in the letters for the last days- yet (although it is quite possible that we take a more positive view of ourselves and our community than God does). But the holocaust to come will no doubt crystallize the attitudes which are now developing, to create the horrendous situation prophesied. " Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new Heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness. Wherefore, *beloved*, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of Him in peace, without spot and blameless" .

CHAPTER 25: Christ's Letters To The Churches

Our Lord's letters of Rev. 2 and 3 can be read with the same kind of latter-day reference as many other New Testament letters. The date of Revelation's writing is therefore important; if it was written before A.D. 70, the letters of Revelation 2 and 3 can be seen as being descriptions of, and warnings to, the ecclesias in the run up to the Lord's 'coming' in A.D. 70. As the Olivet prophecy has reference to the events of both A.D. 70 and the last days, so likewise our Lord's letters must have an application to the ecclesial world of the last days.

The many connections between Revelation and the Olivet prophecy would suggest that the Apocalypse is our Lord's detailed enlargement upon that prophecy. Ample evidence for a pre-A.D. 70 date for Revelation has been presented in recent times. Some of the allusions of Revelation to the Olivet prophecy were outlined in Chapter 12. If Revelation was given after A.D. 70 and does not concern itself with the Lord's manifestation then, such allusions are merely incidental. Their number and detail surely makes this conclusion difficult.

The second coming

There is a significant amount of language used in the letters of Rev. 2 and 3 which has unmistakable reference to the 'coming' of the Lord. It must at least be conceded by all students that this must have some application to the second coming, and/or A.D. 70. This means that the letters must also be indicative of the state of the latter-day ecclesias. No less than eight times in the letters do we read of Christ 'coming' to the believers (Rev. 2:5,16,25; 3:3 (twice), 10,11,20). " I will come unto thee quickly...I will give unto every one of you according to your works" (2:5,23) is language found in Matt. 16:27 and Rev. 22:12, unquestionably concerning the second coming: " I come quickly...to give every man according as his work shall be" . Christ's coming " unto *thee* quickly" (Rev. 2:5,16 cp. Isa. 11:4) has particular aptness when this is understood as being addressed to believers living on the brink of the second coming.

Likewise Rev. 2:26 has a specifically last days relevance: " He that overcometh, and keepeth my works unto *the end*, to him will I give power over the nations" - " the end" being the second coming. Surely the Lord is referring back to his comment that in the final tribulation period, he who endures to " the end" of the period will be saved (Mt. 10:22)- as the one who comes to the end of the days in Dan. 12 is

blessed. Enduring to the end therefore means keeping (guarding, doctrinally) the works of Christ- holding on to the One Faith until the end. This evidently won't be as simple as it sounds.

The Lord knocking on the door and 'coming' when the believer opens, hints at His second coming once the ecclesia shows a suitable level of spiritual response (Rev. 3:20). In the same letter to Laodicea, the ecclesia being "rich and increased with goods" (3:17) recalls the days of Lot and Noah, both typical of the second coming, and the unworthy walking naked is a figure picked up in ch. 16:15 concerning judgment day.

A study of the letters from this angle reveals many other reasons for thinking that they have particular application to the believers living just prior to the Lord's return. We will also try to highlight links between them and other passages concerning the latter-day ecclesias which we have considered.

" I know thy works"

" I know thy works, and thy labour" (2:2) indicates that there will be a lot of genuine hard effort for the Lord in the last days. The spreading of the Gospel world-wide before the second coming (Matt. 24:14) will need plenty of this. However, there will be a tendency (already beginning to be seen?) to push ahead with these " works" to the neglect of keeping purity of doctrine, and not taking adequate action against false teachers: " I know thy works, and charity, and service, and faith...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...to teach and to seduce my servants" (Rev. 2:19,20). This group will maintain the commendable attributes of love, faith and patience in the last days, and yet the implication is that they will misapply them, with the result that false teaching is tolerated, and the flock ravaged. The R.V. mg. speaks of " Thy wife Jezebel" , likening this element of the ecclesia to weak-willed Ahab.

Fine balance

At the other extreme, the letters suggest that there will be another element of the believers whose struggle to maintain purity leads them into such bitterness that they, too, will be displeasing to Christ. The spirit of Judaism and legalism which plagued the ecclesias just prior to AD70 will be seen in the last days too. Thus Ephesus could not bear " them which are evil" and " tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars...and for my name's sake hast laboured (i.e. for the defence of doctrine)...nevertheless, I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love" (Rev. 2:2-4). The commendable works and doctrinal zeal of Ephesus indicates that leaving their " first love" does not refer to any cooling off of enthusiasm in those ways. Rather there is a rebuke that they had lost the spirit of agape-love which first characterized them.

The balance between such un-loving legalism and the 'anything goes' attitude, will be rarely seen in the ecclesias during the tribulation period - as it seems well nigh impossible for us to manifest that balance now. It should be noted that the Lord was pleased with their 'trying' the false apostles and open pronouncement that such

people were 'liars', despite their repeated protestations that they held true doctrine. These men stated their acceptance of the doctrines, whilst simultaneously holding and teaching ideas which flatly contradicted it. There will therefore be some in the last days who will 'try' the false teachers, and perhaps openly pronounce their opinion of them. However, it is the view of the present writer that it is debateable whether we have yet reached this stage of false teaching within the community.

The problem of false teaching in the latter day ecclesia and how to deal with it will lead spiritual Israel to be bitterly disunited in the last days, as natural Israel will be. We have seen this situation foreshadowed in many types of the last days, considered in Section 1. The friction in the ecclesias in the lead up to AD70 is the clearest type of this situation. Thus James 5:9 *pleads* with believers not to grudge / groan / sigh (Gk.) against each other *on the very eve of the Lord's coming*.

Hypocrites

There is a marked warning throughout the letters that there will be a spirit of self-deception and hypocrisy amongst the latter-day ecclesias. Jezebel " *calleth* herself a prophetess" (2:20), some " *say* they are Jews and are not" (2:9), others " *say* they are apostles, and are not" (2:2), Sardis had " a name that thou livest" but was dead (3:1). This must be seen in the context of other NT warnings that deceivers would enter the ecclesia, appearing to have the Apostolic gifts of the Spirit.

The Laodiceans reasoned, " I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing" (3:17). There are grounds for thinking that the wealth and sufficiency which they felt was in spiritual terms; they were unaware that spiritually they were poverty-stricken and naked, needing to develop the riches of faith and clothing of righteousness. It seems to follow that their feeling of being spiritually rich and needing nothing was fuelled by being " increased with goods" - as if the material prosperity of the very last days will lead some to interpret this as God's blessing upon them, and a sure sign of their acceptability. Such presumption upon God's mercy is not absent from our community today. " I am rich..." is alluding to Hos. 12:8, where Israel's wealth was associated with a feeling that they were therefore without sin: " Ephraim said, I am rich...in all my labours they shall find none iniquity in me that were sin" .

Knowing the time

This spiritual self-confidence is the equivalent of the " peace and safety" cry within the latter-day ecclesias (1 Thess. 5:3). " I will come on thee as a thief" (Rev. 3:3) is an evident allusion to 1 Thess. 5:2 concerning the thief-like coming of Christ to the unworthy in the latter-day ecclesia. " Thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee" (Rev. 3:3) implies that they *should* have 'known the hour'. This probably continues the allusions to 1 Thess. 5 - this time to v. 1: " Of the times and the seasons, brethren, ye have no need that I write unto you (faithful ones). For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night" .

Their knowledge of "the times and the seasons" does not necessarily refer to the ability to pinpoint the date of the second coming. The first century brethren did not "know perfectly" about this. Rather does it speak of their awareness of what the run up to the Lord's return would be like, appreciating that it would be "as a thief" to the spiritually self-confident and unaware among their fellow brethren.

1 Thess. 5:1,2 also alludes to Matt. 24:43 (R.V.): "But this ye know" that "the goodman of the house" would have watched if he knew when the thief would come. The wise at Thessalonica 'knowing' the times and seasons of the thief's coming therefore implies that their 'knowledge' was in terms of appreciating what the spiritual trials of the last days would be like. Rev. 3:3 brings all these strands together in warning the apostate members of the latter-day ecclesias: "If thou wilt not watch, I will come on thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know (appreciate) what hour I will come".

Watch! Watch!

The Olivet prophecy, like the Lord's letters, gives a huge emphasis on the need to watch (e.g. Mk. 13:5,9,23,33,35,37). The watching is for the safety of the house against the 'thieves' of false teachers; we are each the porter, with the responsibility for the rest of the household on our shoulders (Mk. 13:34,35). Throughout the Lord's letters there is this same pointed emphasis upon the need to watch. "Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die" spiritually (3:2 cp. 3:1), immediately suggests the parable of the virgins, whom we have portrayed as struggling to keep the flame of real faith from dying away. Seeing that the majority of Sardis are pronounced as "dead" (3:1), this encouragement to keep alive what was about to die can be read as a call to each of the faithful in the last days to not only keep their own faith alive, but to make every effort to keep alive those who appear fatally ill. This command presumes that it will be evident to the faithful what constitutes spiritual life and death. As our experience of the last days goes on, the difference between wheat and tares becomes increasingly marked - without having to anticipate the separation that will come at harvest. "Be watchful" is in the context of strengthening what remains (Rev. 3:2), providing further proof that the command to watch in the last days fundamentally concerns watching over the state of the ecclesia and one's own faith, rather than 'watching' the political state of the world.

It seems that for generations, we have thought that 'watching' meant reading 'Signs of the times' articles which were actually no more than a running commentary on the state of the world. The Hebrew word translated "watch" is also rendered "to take heed to oneself". Thus David spoke of his *soul* watching (Ps. 130:5,6). Habbakuk 'watched' for what God's word really said (Hab. 2:1); God watches over things in the sense of being sensitive to them (Jer. 31:28 Heb.). This Old Testament background to the idea of watching carries through to the NT. It's because we *don't* know the time that we are commanded to watch- not 'signs of the times', because we don't know the time; but rather, to watch ourselves. Thus Acts 20:31 speaks of watching in the sense of being aware of the possibility of personal and collective apostasy. In 1 Cor. 16:31, watching means to stand fast in the One Faith; in Eph. 6:18 and 1 Thess. 5:6,11 it refers to praying for each other spiritually. In the last days, many brethren will turn away, Paul warned Timothy,

but by contrast " watch *thou*" (2 Tim. 4:5). If we watch, both ourselves and others, the Lord's return will not be like a thief for us (Rev. 3:3). Thus watching is a sign of our acceptance by the Lord (Lk. 12:37). Yet *watching* our doctrine and way of life, realizing the real danger of mass latter day apostacy, is increasingly unpopular.

The elders, represented by " the goodman of the house" , have a special responsibility in this watching, so that the Lord's return is not thief-like to the 'house' of their ecclesia (Matt. 24:43). They " watch for your souls" (Heb. 13:17). In a sense, the duty of watching falls to each of us: we're all elders (Lk. 12:41-46). The connection with 1 Thess. 5:2,6 therefore suggests that one of the reasons for the unworthy experiencing the second coming " as a thief" will be the lack of awareness by their ecclesial elders concerning the spiritual trials of the last days. The reverse is also true. A good latter-day elder will have to give his very soul to the work of watching over the flock, fully aware of the many dangers they face in the last days. It is difficult to see how this vital role can be filled by those who have sold their souls to demanding employers. The successful ecclesia of the last days needs capable Arranging Brethren who have consciously avoided the entanglements of challenging careers, and whilst providing for their basic family requirements have energy and vitality left to throw into this work of 'watching' the flock. Dedicated wives, who have shrugged off the usual female desire to keep the family 'up' with the neighbours (in the ecclesia as well as along the street), will play a vital part, too.

Hold on - tight

To properly keep the faith in the very last days will indeed be difficult. It is easy to assume that we will continue to believe and practice the doctrines which we know now. This is perhaps a special temptation for those with a long family tradition of generations 'in the truth', or of those who have recently found the pearl of great price and cannot conceive of the possibility that they could ever let it go, or allow its beauty to be corrupted.

The faithful element at Thyatira were told that they had " none other burden" than to keep themselves separate from " the depths of satan" taught by the false teachers among them (Rev. 2:24). The absence of any command to immediately withdraw fellowship from these people in the run up to AD70, but rather to concentrate upon one's own continuing to hold true doctrine, fits in with our earlier interpretation of the parable of the tares. " The *depths* of satan" indicates that the pressure on the faithful will be subtle; there will be a distinctly academic and sophisticated edge to the wrong teachings that will circulate within the ecclesia. The apostate brethren will fail to realize that " *Thou* art the wretched one" (Rev. 3:17 R.V.), implying that they will accuse those faithful ones who refuse their ideas of being spiritually weak. This sort of spiritual and intellectual elitism can already be seen developing amongst us. The description of them as wealthy but naked is taken straight out of Ez. 16:7 about natural Israel. The implication is that both natural and spiritual Israel will be purged together in the tribulation.

Winds of doctrine

There are a number of hints throughout the letters of some of the specific doctrines and bad practices which will be tolerated in the latter-day ecclesia. It has to be conceded that some of the pictures presented must certainly become reality if present trends continue. It is also possible that if we are in the very last days already, what we read in the letters is a true picture of our community as our Lord sees us. We should not be surprised if his judgment differs from our superficial, flesh-justifying vision, which may have led us to an over-positive view of our community. Let's not forget that one major characteristic of the judgment will be *surprise*- for both rejected and accepted (Mt. 25:37,44).

Twice it is emphasized that the false teachers will lead spiritual Israel into the worship of idols, after the pattern of Balaam and Jezebel (Rev. 2:14,20). Both of these advocated the use of the idols of the surrounding Arab nations for political purposes, whilst apparently supporting the true worship of Yahweh at the same time. We have given several reasons in previous studies for thinking that the Arab powers will impose the worship of Islam upon natural Israel, and may use their oil stranglehold to make the rest of the world persecute any pro-Jewish religions who will not offer a nominal acceptance of Islam. A few statements from the Pope in support of this would certainly ease the way; the on-going Roman Catholic endeavour to down-play the difference between Islam and Christianity may well enjoy dramatic success within the next few years.

We suggested in Chapter 23 and elsewhere that elements of the political satan/beast which will persecute natural Israel will also be found at work in spiritual Israel. It is therefore realistic to imagine fake brethren within the ecclesias teaching that a nominal allegiance to the (literal?) idols of Islam is acceptable. The same scenario will then be repeated as in the first century, when the command to 'just' offer a pinch of incense to the Roman satan/beast sorted out the wheat from the tares. Rev. 2:20 speaks of "that woman Jezebel" being within the latter day ecclesia, teaching brethren to commit fornication. Later in Revelation, this is the language used concerning Babylon: a prostitute encouraging fornication. This connection suggests that the false teachers within the latter day ecclesia will be connected with political 'Babylon' and the beast. The similarities between the "man of sin" within the ecclesia and the beast / little horn teach the same thing (see Chapter 23).

A pseudo-seed

There is another double emphasis on the fact that the fake teachers "say they are Jews, and are not" (Rev. 2:9; 3:9). The specific doctrines which will show their real colours will be those associated with the idea of our being spiritual Israel, joined to Christ "the hope of Israel" by our acceptance of the Abrahamic promises. These men will appear to be spiritual Jews whilst intensely denying these things which constitute the Gospel. The fact that we are spiritual Israel and a community "wholly dedicated to the hope of Israel" needs to be drummed home in our preaching and interviewing of candidates for baptism. Is the observation true that the Jewish basis of our hope appears to have been much more to the fore amongst previous generations than it is at present?

These pseudo-seed of Abraham will be " the synagogue of satan" (Rev. 2:9; 3:9). " Synagogue" carrying a similar idea as 'ecclesia' (see James 2:2 A.V. mg.) could suggest that these people emanate from whole fake ecclesias which the 'satan' have planted amongst Christianity- or from ecclesias which have become completely corrupted by the new wave of tolerance. The faithful group who existed " even where satan's seat is" (Rev. 2:13) may indicate the existence of an ecclesia at the very headquarters of the Arab satan/beast. Our earlier suggestion that some faithful natural Jews would be taken to such a place, e.g. a rebuilt 'Babylon', would make this possible.

Balaam's doctrine

As Balaam and Jezebel taught Israel idolatry, so the false teachers in the latter day ecclesia will also teach fornication (Rev. 2:14,20). Israel were on the very borders of entering the land when they succumbed to Balaam's false teaching, and the new Israel of the last days, on the brink of the Kingdom, will face and may fail a like temptation. As Balaam well understood, the way to break the strength of a fundamentalist religious movement is to morally corrupt them. The spirit of sexual permissiveness which is in this Sodom-like world of the last days, is evidently affecting the brotherhood. A few false teachers refusing to oppose this, and suggesting that personal relationships are not a spiritual indicator, would vastly speed up this infiltration.

Already many ecclesial elders, notably in the third world, have recognized that fornication and other sexual malpractices are amongst the greatest problems found among the flock. Those guilty will be given " space to repent of...fornication" , but they will not take up the offer (Rev. 2:21). This " space" is interpreted by Dr. Thomas as the 1260-day period, which would appear reasonable (1). We have earlier applied this to the holocaust period. The inference is that the state of fornication exists within the ecclesias *before* the holocaust begins, and that the tribulation of that period is designed to bring about repentance.

The holocaust to come

Any prophecy of the last days as extensive as the Lord's letters is bound to make some reference to the great physical trials which are to come upon the ecclesias. The letters are a call for deep-seated repentance, which we have earlier shown to be the purpose of the holocaust. " The devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried" (Rev. 2:10) is alluding to Luke 21:12 concerning the latter-day tribulation. " Some of you" may correspond to " some of you shall they cause to be put to death" (Luke 21:16), seeing that Rev. 2:10 exhorts them to be " faithful unto death" . The prison tribulation would be for " ten days...and I will give unto thee a crown" . This points back to Daniel's 'trial' of ten days (Dan. 1:12), and his later going into prison and emerging to receive a crown. Daniel's 'devil' was Arab Babylon, and the 'devil' of Rev. 2:10 refers to a like power in the last days. The idea of ten days of affliction suggests the 10 days of self-examination and affliction of souls before the day of Atonement- as if the purpose of the holocaust is to evoke self-examination and repentance in preparation for the High Priest's appearing on the Day of Atonement.

- optional?

We have shown above how some of the faithful will suffer the holocaust and die during it. There are others who, due to their spirituality, will not need to go through the tribulation. The holocaust will be because we need to be spiritually improved. Thus Lk. 21:16-18 describe our sufferings then in language shot through with allusion to spiritually weak Samson. Those latter-day saints represented by Philadelphia were assured: "Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from temptation". It may be that this just applies to the faithful natural Jews in the land, seeing that this "temptation" is designed "to try them that dwell upon the earth" /land - of Israel (Rev. 3:10).

Particular tribulation will come upon the most deeply apostate believers in order to encourage their repentance: "I gave her space to repent of her fornication; and she repented not...I will cast her into...great tribulation, except they repent" (Rev. 2:21,22). Thus they will be given a period to repent, the beginning of which will be at the time when the saints first realize that the Lord is about to return (cp. the virgins starting to go forth, Matt. 25:1).

Because of their refusal to repent, they will then have a final tribulation at the end of the holocaust period. There is the suggestion that this group may choose not to suffer the initial stages of the holocaust, in that Rev. 3:18 implies that they are only *counselled* to buy the golden faith that is produced by the fiery trial of the holocaust. Thus as with offering the pinch of incense to Caesar, there will be opportunity to avoid the holocaust by some apparently tokenistic obedience to the beast. By doing this they will waste "the space" given "to repent of her fornication", and will experience a final tribulation.

It is easy to imagine - given our knowledge of modern politics and weapons - what the holocaust will be like, and the Biblical details concerning it should make the picture even more real. Yet our motivation for keeping "the word of my patience" (Rev. 3:10) should not just be to escape personal suffering. It must be an all-consuming desire to see the glorification of God in our lives through His Word, and to encourage our brethren to have a similar vision. The Lord's letters therefore seem to present a picture of the holocaust along these lines:-

The brotherhood will be able to avoid suffering and persecution by not standing up for the one faith in its entirety, particularly concerning the Jewish aspect of our Hope. Those who fall to this temptation will remain prosperous materially (Rev. 3:17,18) and will mock their suffering and impoverished brethren. These apostates will receive a final tribulation and judgment at the end of the holocaust period.

For the others, there is the possibility that some may be preserved from the holocaust: "Ye *may* have tribulation ten days" (Rev. 2:10, R.V. mg.). This will be "because thou hast kept the word of my patience" (Rev. 3:10). Others will suffer, and even die, but are assured of salvation if they respond to the trials properly. There may be a similar meaning behind Is.26:20: "Come, my people, enter thou into thy chambers, and shut thy doors about thee (i.e. pray intensely- 2 Kings 4:33): hide thyself as it were for a little moment, until the indignation be

overpast" . However, this primarily refers to the deliverance of Israel from Assyria in Hezekiah's time; and the hiding in chambers in Jerusalem while surrounded by the terrifying Assyrian army was hardly the quiet get out we might imagine this verse offers. However, it seems from the Olivet prophecy that the household *will* go through this time of trouble. The fact it is in some sense not required if we are spiritual enough indicates that the household will be weak in the last days- and therefore we will need it. There is a general, outline theme throughout Revelation that the righteous are gathered *after* they go through the judgments, implying we will experience them, although it would be possible, were we more spiritual, that we could be spared them (Rev. 7:9-17; 11:11,12; 14:13-16; 19:1-10). Thus although the types of Israel in Egypt, the faithful in Hezekiah's Jerusalem, Noah shut in the ark etc. suggest that the faithful will be spared the judgments, the fact is they will *need* the experience of the judgments to make them more spiritual, and therefore ultimately these types may not come true: they will only speak of what was possible. Evidently the latter day ecclesia will not be as strong as God would wish it to be. Likewise the coming of Christ is spoken of as being delayed (Mt. 25:5); and yet it is our spirituality which hastens the day of Christ's coming (2 Pet. 3:12). Putting these facts together shows that the day of Christ will not come when planned because the ecclesia are not as spiritual as they were 'expected' to be- or at least, that's how God wants us to see it.

This understanding of the holocaust clarifies the confusion which can be caused by some passages clearly indicating a tribulation for God's people in the last days, whilst others speak of their deliverance from this. However, the great stress which so many prophecies lay upon a latter-day tribulation, shows that only a minority of us will totally avoid it. Now is obviously the preferable time to put our house in order.

25-2 The Financial Crisis / Credit Crunch In Bible Prophecy

There's a lot of talk about the present financial / liquidity crisis fulfilling Bible prophecy and heralding the soon return of the Lord Jesus Christ. But searching website after website, I couldn't find anyone quoting any actual Bible prophecies that indicate any kind of financial crisis before the Lord's return. Of course the Lord Jesus predicted that one sign of His return would be that people would "hear" all sorts of things that will make their "hearts fail them for fear in apprehension of those things which are coming on the earth" (Lk. 21:9,26). Now that we do see fulfilled, thanks to the unprecedented media explosion and updates on things like global warming, financial problems etc. being beamed onto our screens 24/7. If one only heard the news once a week or even once a month, our hearts would 'fail us' far less. But those days are gone; for even if I don't look at the media, someone else does and in our global village, their reaction ends up affecting me.

So I turned to the Bible, to see whether the financial crisis is predicted; and what the Bible says about wealth in the last days. I found the very opposite to what's being peddled around by the doomsday boys and prophecy hacks. Passage after Bible passage makes it clear that there'll be a time of unprecedented wealth and prosperity just before the Lord's return. I may stand with my back to the world about this, but so what. If that's what Scripture says, let's hear it out and give God's words their true weight:

- Mt. 24:37: "As the days of Noah were, so shall also the coming of the son of man be". And as Jesus points out, the period before the flood was characterized by prosperity and materialism. There was a sharp increase in population, in arts and technology (Gen. 4:21,22) and urbanization (Gen. 4:17). Job 22:15-18 comments on the people living just before the flood that they cast off all commitment to God and yet God "filled their houses with good things" -exactly the scene today. Note how Jesus observes that Noah's world were totally self-obsessed with their hedonism right up "until the day that Noah entered the ark, and the flood came and destroyed them all" (Lk. 17:27). The picture is of the Lord's coming abruptly interrupting a pleasure-drunk world.

- The situation in Sodom just before its overthrow was likewise quoted by the Lord as a foretaste of how things would be before His return. "*They* (as well as our present world) did eat, *they* drank, *they* bought, *they* sold, *they* planted, *they* builded" (Lk.17:28). Their materialism had the same abrupt interruption as in Noah's time- "But the same day that Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven and destroyed them all. Even thus shall it be in the day when the son of man is revealed" (Lk. 17:29,30). The suggestion seems to be that the people of Sodom were mindlessly doing their thing right up to the point of Divine intervention. Their obsession with daily activities without an awareness of God was as bad as their other sins; a point we would do well to be aware of. However, their eating and drinking must have been to gross excess- Ez.16:49 defines " the iniquity of Sodom" as being " fullness of bread" among other things. "They bought, they sold" suggests that Sodom was a major trading centre, rapidly increasing in wealth; " they planted, they builded" (Lk.17:28) implies a real boom town. Such success resulted in the people being proud, arrogant and of course sexually perverted (Ez.16:49,50). It is these aspects of Sodom which are so precisely matched by our self-centred, money mad world.

- The "last days" of Jerusalem just before her invasion by the Babylonians are likewise a prototype of the situation in the final "last days" when latter day "Babylon" will again overthrow Jerusalem, as a prelude to Christ's

return. Jer. 20:5 speaks of how God destroyed "all the riches of this city and all the gains thereof... the precious things... the treasures" (RV). The talk of "gains" suggests that Jerusalem was prosperous and had increased in wealth dramatically just before the Babylonian invasion. And this will be the situation in the very last days.

- The descriptions of 'Babylon' in Revelation 18 are replete with reference to Sodom (1). This latter day world system is likewise characterized by fantastic wealth and opulence. Rev. 18:11-19 prophesies a heartfelt lament from the unbelievers at how such great prosperity and industry had been brought to nothing in a moment by Christ's return. Some Bible prophecies (e.g. Ez. 38:12) speak of how the wealth of the latter day world will be given over to God's people at Christ's return- the wealth is there in the world at the time of His coming!

- James 5:3 warns the last generation of believers against the absurdity of heaping together treasure in "the last days". If Christ is about to return, why give your life to getting rich just before He comes? The suggestion seems to be that there will be the opportunity for believers to amass wealth immediately prior to the Lord's return.

- Laodicea, the last church addressed by the Lord Jesus in His letters, has been seen as symbolic of the latter day church. And they were characterized by being "rich and *increased* with goods" (Rev. 3:17). "Increased" suggests an increase in wealth for them in the last days.

- There are at least four predictions that in the final "day of the Lord", ultimately revealed when Christ returns, people will finally realize that their wealth has not been able to save them (Is. 2:20; 31:7; Ez. 7:19; Zeph. 1:18). They are pictured as throwing their silver and gold to the animals in the face of the awesome revelation of God's glory upon this earth. They obviously have that wealth prior to His coming to be able to do that with.

How Will It All Work Out?

If the Bible predicts a scenario of hedonism and general wealth before the Lord's return, that's it. Crystal ball gazing isn't necessary in terms of trying to work out how concretely it will come about. But there are a number of trends which encourage us that the Biblical scenario is

developing fast. The amount of wealth in the world has soared upwards. Look back to your youth- the amount of ridiculous luxury goods available and evidently widely purchased today is far greater than what it was back then. Specifications of goods have increased by trillions of percent; every taste bud in the mouth can now be tickled. Whilst "the poor you will always [for whatever reason] have with you", the bird's eye historical picture is clear over the last half century. Wealth has increased. The woman who loses her savings and the man whose apartment is repossessed may take hard comfort from this, but... that wealth they have lost doesn't go into thin air. The funds are moved off elsewhere, but the wealth remains in the broader economy- it's "just" a question of it being redistributed over time. The basic wealth is 'there' and is growing. Now that wealth is no longer measured in gold or banknotes but rather in how many zeroes you have to your account number on a computer screen, wealth is becoming rather like matter- it can't easily be destroyed, it can just change form. If you lose it, someone else gets it; but wealth, unlike matter, can be created. The burgeoning middle classes of India and China are a huge phenomena on the global scale, although the West may yet have to perceive the true significance of it. And remember that the decisions on the highest levels of the financial system are made by remarkably few people. Hank Paulson, George W and the rest all have their personal self-interest; self-preservation is written into our genetic code from the first struggling breaths of babyhood. They don't want to see their personal wealth diminished. There's therefore a high level of motivation to 'get it right'.

Of course, any system progresses through a series of backward steps which are overtaken by larger forward steps. And individuals, of course, may not benefit from the overall growth in wealth. It could be through bad luck (humanly speaking), poor personal decision making, or (for believers) God's hand in giving them poverty as something they must work with to prepare them for His Kingdom. But there's a growing sense of Government control over society on every level- security cameras at every corner, no internet privacy on one hand, and on the other a (much needed) tighter control of individual capitalism so that stock market crashes don't happen and major banks don't fold. A few years ago my spam email was full of guys trying to sell me money (now it's only Viagra and Cialis). That sort of irresponsible lending is being curbed, Big Brother is getting more controlling; and as so often happens in history, a triumphant power (Capitalism) ends up reincarnating the essence of all it fought against- in this case, the state control of cold war Communism. I'm no fan of capitalism, don't get me wrong for a moment. But the simple reality is that personal wealth creation is humanly appealing, overpoweringly so, and in the bigger picture is rolling ahead successfully- to the extent that all creeds and ideologies and nice ideas crumple

beneath it, be they the Judeo-Christian ethic or radical Islam or Stalin-style Communism.

But of course, the old Marxist criticisms of the Capitalist utopia still stand timelessly true. It can't go on for ever, the bubble in some form must burst, the need to find ever new markets and cheaper labour eventually meets its crisis when the global system has been fully exploited.. and perhaps unconsciously more than consciously, we all have that very human 'fear of endings' when it comes to this. About everyone with even a tiny amount of interest in financial matters senses- probably at levels well beneath the conscious and articulated- that we're living in a flimsy house of cards that must fall. And remember the accurate predictions of the Lord, that at this time of prosperity, men's hearts will also be failing for fear about the future. Which all makes for a "spend it while you've got it", "enjoy yourself while you can" mentality. So I don't see the bubble ultimately bursting until the return of Christ to earth. That's the pricking of the bubble- not Lehman Brothers collapsing. Jesus Christ personally on earth again is the pin that will pop the balloon- and only then (recall what we earlier observed about the prosperous times of Noah and Sodom continuing right up to the moment of Divine intervention). Christ's return and the day of His judgment is the ultimate crunch- not any temporary "credit crunch" on today's markets. Those sorts of things may be two steps backwards, but the three steps forward will come too, leading to a spirit of spending, hedonism and personal indulgence which are precisely the things the Lord so solemnly, earnestly warned us against. The secret fears of every unbeliever are death (Heb. 2:15) and loss of wealth. For those secured in Christ, our immediate concern should be quite the opposite- what if I get rich, or richer than I currently am.... given all the Bible says about how this will distract my focus from serving and waiting for the Lord from Heaven?

Note

(1) More detail at www.aletheiacollege.net/ld/3.htm

DIGRESSION 8: Knowledge Shall Be Increased

Natural Israel

The repentance of Israel must be associated with an opening of their eyes to God's word. There is no other way men can come to repentance. Jer. 30:24 prophecies Jacob's final homecoming, and then comments: "In the latter days (not now) ye shall consider (understand) it". *Then* Israel will consider and understand the words of their prophets. "The Lord hath poured out upon (Israel) the spirit of deep sleep, and hath closed your eyes (quoted in Rom. 11:8 concerning Israel's blindness to

Christ)...the vision of all (God's word) is become unto you as the words of a book that is sealed...(but) in that day shall the (spiritually) deaf hear the words of the book" (Is. 29:10,11,17,18). This will be when the book is *unsealed* at "The time of the end" (Dan. 12:4). We have shown elsewhere that Israel's repentance must occur prior to the Lord's return. Therefore there must be an upsurge in Biblical activity amongst those who will become the faithful remnant in latter day Israel. This will be brought about by the Elijah prophet- remembering that the Elijah prophet is framed in Malachi as a teacher of God's word, not just an imparter of it. Likewise John, in the spirit of Elijah, *taught* the people about the Lord's advent.

The first three chapters of Malachi are set in the context of the restoration from Babylon. We have shown that this period typifies the experience of the Jewish "remnant" of the last days. This section concludes with a description of the Bible-based revival of enthusiasm for the Law which occurred amongst some of this group: "They that feared the Lord spake often one to another: and the Lord hearkened" (Mal. 3:16). The prophecy then goes on to speak directly of the last days: "They shall be mine...in that day when I make up my jewels" (Mal. 3:17). The rest of the prophecy then speaks of the final day of the Lord, at which time there would be a similar spiritual revival due to the work of 'Elijah', as there had been due to that of Malachi (the 'messenger' of Mal. 3:1) and his contemporary prophets.

The writing of "a book of remembrance" of those who allowed this revival to affect them (Mal. 3:16) has a latter-day application through its connection with Dan. 12:2, which speaks of the salvation of the Jewish remnant of the last days due to their names being written in a book. "They...spake often one to another" is the language of Deut. 6:6 concerning how Israel were to avidly discuss the Law among themselves. It will be Elijah's mission to redirect Israel's attention to "the law of Moses...the statutes and judgments" (Mal. 4:4,5). Mal. 3:18 comments upon the remnant's repentance: "Then shall ye return...". This is in the context of Mal. 3:7, which pleads with them to return to the ordinances of Moses, again showing that the end result of Elijah's work in the last days is to bring them back to a meaningful understanding of the Mosaic Law. This will be necessary in view of the fact that there are good reasons to believe that Israel will keep large parts of the Law during the Millennium.

Spiritual Israel

As both natural and spiritual Israel will suffer persecution in the last days, so it seems an upsurge in Biblical understanding and appreciation will be another feature shared by both communities. Malachi's prophecy of the faithful remnant earnestly speaking to each other about the word in preparation for the Lord's coming can be equally applicable to spiritual Israel.

"The wise shall understand"

The flagship verse concerning the opening of our eyes to latter day prophecy must be Dan. 12:4,10: "Shut up the words, and seal the book, even to the time of the end: many shall run to and fro (an idiom often used concerning response to God's word: Ps. 119:32,60; 147:15; Amos 8:11,12; Hab. 2:2; 2 Thess. 3:1 Gk.), and

knowledge (of Daniel's prophecies) shall be increased...many shall be purified, and made white, and tried (in the tribulation); but the wicked shall do wickedly: and none of the wicked shall understand; but the wise shall understand". This is all in the context of the Angel rejecting Daniel's plea for insight into his own prophecies. All he was told was that they would be fulfilled in the far distant future, but he was comforted with the thought that the faithful at that time would understand. That the fulfilment of all the latter day prophecies will be understood fully in the very last days is implied in Jer. 23:20: "In the latter days ye shall understand it perfectly". The "it" refers to "the intents of [God's] heart" revealed in His prophetic word.

It is no accident that the Apocalypse ends with words which clearly allude to the closing words of Daniel. John falls at the Angel's feet, as Daniel did. The Angel then says: "Seal not the sayings of the prophecy of *this* book (unlike Daniel's, which was sealed): for the time is at hand. He that is unjust, let him be unjust still: and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still (cp. "the wicked shall do wickedly") ". The implication is that the book is sealed for those who are a long way from the time of fulfillment; hence John must not seal the prophecy *because* its fulfillment is near. Thus Dan. 12:4 LXX reads: "Seal the book until the time of its accomplishment"- *then* it will be unsealed and the meaning become apparent. The primary application of Revelation is to the events of AD70; the implication is that the righteous understood the pattern of events then because of this book. There is a repeated stress throughout the NT epistles on the need to understand and get true knowledge (1 Pet. 3:7; 2 Pet. 1:2-6,8,16; 2:20; 3:18), perhaps with special reference to Scripture like the Olivet prophecy and Revelation; likewise 1 Tim. 3:1,16; 4:1,2 encourage Bible study in the 'last days' leading up to AD70. The need for understanding and study at that time is reflected in our last days. Paul told the Thessalonians (in the context of AD70) that he didn't need to tell them about the times and seasons because they already understood the prophecies so well- but they needed rather to make sure that their lifestyle was appropriate to their understanding (1 Thess. 5:1-5). The situation in AD70 is a type of the true "last days". Therefore the understanding of Revelation will not be sealed just before its second and major fulfillment in the second coming of Christ. In the same way as Daniel's prophecies will be opened to us in the last days, so must the book of Revelation, because the understanding of Revelation is so bound up with the meaning of Daniel. "None of the wicked shall understand; but the wise shall understand" suggests that this true understanding of prophecy motivates the faithful remnant in holding on to a righteous lifestyle. Time and again Israel are condemned because their lack of *understanding* of the prophecies led them into sinful behaviour (Dt. 32:29; Ps. 94:8; Is. 44:18).

Daniel is described as both "wise" and "understanding" (Dan. 1:4,17); he was given understanding of earlier visions by an Angel (9:22). There is a connection between this fact and the idea of a "wise" and "understanding" minority who the Angel would reveal the correct understanding to, as he had earlier done to Daniel. The Angel was refusing to reveal the understanding of the final visions to Daniel, but implies he will reveal it to the faithful of the last generation. It seems that in spirit, Daniel is somehow representative of the faithful of the last days: holding on in an apostate ecclesia amidst both subtle and obvious persecution from Babylon, loving the word, wise and being given understanding by the Angel. We have earlier

suggested the possibility of the Holy Spirit gifts being given during the tribulation period. If this is so, the new understanding of the prophecies may be revealed through a gift of knowledge. The idea of knowledge being increased is alluding (in the Hebrew text) to Ecc. 1:16 and 12:9 concerning Solomon's knowledge being increased by the gift of wisdom.

However, it may well be that it is the experience of the traumas of the last days which opens our eyes to the word. It is a Biblical theme that physical suffering opens eyes to God's word (Job 36:15 and many references in Ps. 119). In passing, consider the truth of this in the spiritual height reached by the Lord in the agony of the cross. Men like Job were driven to understand the ideas of resurrection and judgment by their own agonies and struggles leading them to see the implication of these things in Scripture like the promises to Abraham. And so the last days traumas will doubtless open our eyes to so much. Already we are being forced to be more Biblical, as our community enters situations which are totally new to us. It seems from Dan. 12:4LXX that the final opening of our eyes will follow a period of progressive gaining of knowledge: "Seal the book (its understanding) until the time of accomplishment; (i.e.) until many be taught and knowledge abound"- then the full understanding of the book will be unsealed.

This progressive knowledge will increase throughout the tribulation, until towards the end there is a final revelation: "it shall be for a time, times and a half (the tell-tale three and a half year tribulation period); and when an end is put to the dispersion, they will know all things" (Dan. 12:7 LXX). Daniel would have seen the similarity with his own times; at the end of Judah's "dispersion" in Babylon, he came to understand the time period in Jeremiah's prophecies, and therefore he knew for sure that the time of restoration of the Kingdom was near (Dan. 9:2). "When an end is put to the dispersion (in the last days), they will know all things" suggests that Daniel's experience was a foreshadowing of the leap in understanding among the faithful in the latter day ecclesia, who perhaps will also be suffering the results of Babylon's aggression. When we consider Jer 25:11,12; 29:10, these prophecies seem clear and obvious; after 70 years, the restoration would occur. But somehow the meaning of those simple words were sealed to Daniel and the remnant. Likewise what may then seem the obvious and relevant understanding of the prophecies may now be sealed to us. The whole of the restoration, typifying as it does the final restoration of the Kingdom, was characterized by Bible-based enthusiasm amongst a faithful minority. Consider the prominence of the priests (Law-teachers) in getting things going, and the way the work prospered as a direct result of the encouragement of the prophets teaching God's word in Ezra 5:1-3 6:14; 7:11,12,14,21; and also Neh. 8:8 NIV,13; 9:2.

Other Hints

There are a number of other hints outside Daniel that there will be a progressive growth in Biblical understanding amongst the latter day faithful. In the spirit of Daniel, Habakkuk was told that the full understanding of his vision concerning the latter day judgment of Babylon was "yet for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak, and not lie", and *at that time* the one who reads and understands it will "run"- using the same idiom as in Dan. 12:4 concerning the latter day believers 'running' in response to their understanding of God's word (Hab. 2:2,3). The Olivet

prophecy repeatedly talks about 'seeing' or (Gk.) understanding things and then acting upon this knowledge. The English translation somewhat masks this. Thus Mt. 24:15 "Whoso *readeth*" uses a Greek word which really means to recognize, distinguish- and he who recognizes, understands, let him "understand" or, better, *meditate*. Or again, "When ye shall see (Greek, to know, perceive) the abomination that maketh desolate..." (Mt. 24:15). This might suggest that the "abomination" isn't necessarily something physical. The idea seems to be 'When you understand that the abomination that makes desolate is in place, then...', rather than 'When you see (physically) on the telly or in the newspaper an abomination in Jerusalem, then...do something about it'. "Let him that readeth understand" is yet another Olivet allusion back to Daniel (12:10); yet generations of believers have read those very words and *not* understood. Presumably the latter day remnant *will* clearly understand Daniel's enigmatic words about the abomination. Whilst we should live *as if* we expect the Lord's imminent return, it has to be said that we don't seem to have yet reached this level of understanding. "When ye shall see (Gk. perceive, understand) all these things, (then you will) know that it is near" (Mt. 24:33). "Behold (same Greek: perceive, comprehend) the fig tree..." (Lk. 21:29). The emphasis is undoubtedly on the need for understanding of the signs, not just observing them.

The expansion of understanding may be not only of prophecies like Habakkuk, Daniel and Revelation. Because Revelation especially is so full of reference to other passages throughout the Scriptures, our comprehension of the whole Bible will go into another paradigm. It may be that in the last days, *all* the words of God will in some sense be fulfilled (Rev. 17:17)- we will realize that the whole Bible is especially speaking to us, the last generation. Many of the parables are specifically aimed at the last generation of believers- they have a very secondary application to believers of other ages. They are specifically about the attitudes of those who will be alive when the Lord comes in glory; e.g. the wise and foolish virgins, or the men given talents, or the servants left watching the household etc. The Lord's letters in Revelation speak of him being about to come, as do many other NT passages. They were written specifically for the last generation of believers! Their full meaning and relevance will therefore only be perceived by us. Take Rev. 3:20 as an example: "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". Whatever else this may be taken to mean, according to its connections with other passages, this is clearly relevant to the Lord's second coming; the believer who responds to the Lord's voice in the last days will be rewarded with the Lord's coming. Verses like this and the parables mentioned above are pre-eminently relevant to the last generation. No wonder there will be a growth in understanding in the last days!

Are We Increasing?

Inevitably, one starts to consider whether such a growth in knowledge is beginning amongst us as a community; and there seems no doubt that it is. The latter day phenomena of computers, easy and cheap printing and desktop publishing, greater mobility and freedom to organize Bible Schools etc, study aids, access to Hebrew and Greek lexicons without the need for knowing the languages...all this has doubtless been arranged by the Father to enable the Biblical revolution to occur. Whether one analyzes number of Christian books published, number of published

interpretations of Revelation (or any book), subjective comments on the quality of our Bible studies, availability of relevant study aids... the graph is the same over time: since the 1980s, there has been a J-curve increase. Despite all this, there has also been the increase in worldliness, doctrinal apostasy, division, bitterness and apathy which other prophecies of the latter day ecclesia also mention. Yet for the faithful minority, there is the very real opportunity to grow in knowledge. Likewise, there has been the beginnings of the evangelism explosion which Mt. 24:14 implies must be forthcoming from our community in the last days- again, largely performed by a minority. This kind of analysis of the latter day household really encourages me that the approach to prophecy we have adopted in these studies is indeed the correct one.

The Lord speaks in a latter day context about “let him that readeth understand” Daniel’s prophecies (Mk. 13:14)- referring to the special gift of understanding them which Daniel himself was told would come in the very end time. But note the parallels in the Lord’s teaching here: “Let him...understand...let him...not go down...let him...not return...let them...flee”. The understanding He refers to is not merely academic. It is the understanding that will lead to concrete action.

SECTION 6:

THE KINGDOM

CHAPTER 26: TYPES OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD

Introduction

For many of us, the Kingdom can be just a concept in our minds. We may have to suffer in this life for various things. So we say to ourselves, in our deep subconscious, 'Well, I'll be rewarded in the Kingdom'. But 'the Kingdom' can become just a big black box in our brain- 'I'm doing this for the Kingdom's sake...I'll be in the Kingdom'. And yet do we really have an accurate picture of that time? If it is going to be a motivating, driving force in our lives, then we need to have some detailed appreciation of it. We need to be aware that the Kingdom of God will take up the vast majority of our eternal destiny. The only part of our future that will not be spent in the Kingdom of God is the few days or years of this life which may be left to us. The Kingdom of God will be a supreme expression of God being "all in all" ; of God's ways being physically exhibited upon the earth. It is to be expected, therefore, that the Bible should be absolutely full of descriptions of what the Kingdom will be like.

Yet although there are far more hints at what the *Millennium* will be like than we may think, there is very little physical information about the Kingdom. The parables of the Kingdom concern the principles of God's relationship with men here and now, rather than describing the physicalities of some future age. The Millennium will be a physical expression of those principles which we as the kingdom of priests *right now* (Rev. 1:5; Col. 1:13) are experiencing. The Kingdom is fundamentally a *relationship* with God. Thus the foretaste of the Kingdom

presented at the transfiguration was of faithful men in spiritual conversation with the glorified Lord Jesus, with his face shining as the sun (Mt. 17:3). *He* is the Kingdom of God (Lk. 17:21); *he* is the salvation of God rather than anything physical (Lk. 3:6). The Lord paralleled entering into the Kingdom with entering into "life" (Mt. 19:17 cp. Mt. 19:23; Mt. 18:3 cp. Mt. 18:8). He saw being in the Kingdom as essentially being about a *life* that would be enjoyed. The more 'physical' approach to the Millennium adopted in the following chapters must be seen in this context.

This section presents just one man's interpretation of the Millennium. For each of us the Kingdom will mean slightly different things; and perhaps to some limited degree, the Kingdom *will* be different things for each of us. It will be a stone with a name on it which only we know. Yet is this the real reason why there is such little discussion about the Kingdom amongst us? A very small proportion of published Christian material in books and magazines concerns itself with the Kingdom of God. Yet the Gospel and Hope of the Kingdom must be the light at the end of the tunnel which we are groping and struggling through now. Because it is impossible for us to fully imagine, in our present mortal state, what that age will be like, it is to be expected that Scripture encourages us to imagine and speculate concerning it. The degree to which we find this motivating will depend upon our view of Bible study. If we are convinced that things like allusions and hints are really designed by the Spirit inspiring the record, then these things cease to be pure speculation, but become part of the glorious reality of the coming Kingdom.

Eden

There is the implication throughout Scripture that it is God's purpose to bring the world back to the situation it was in before the fall. However, seeing that there were male and female before the fall, and also the possibility of procreation, it follows that Eden is to be seen more as a type of the Millennium than the full Kingdom age (cp. Lk.20:35,36). In passing, we will be speaking of the 'Millennium' as being part of the 'Kingdom'. As Adam had the capacity to eat before the fall, and found joy in eating of the fruit of the ground, so the mortals will find fulfilment in their agricultural work, rather than seeing it as a dreary necessity of human life (Gen.3:17). As the earth still needed 'subduing' by Adam before the fall, so there will still be some degree of struggle with nature in the Millennium (Gen.1:28). Adam was to "have dominion over" (Heb. 'to crush to powder') the animal creation. There is here some hint of a struggle for absolute supremacy, intended to point forward to our struggle against our animal instincts. This struggle will still continue at some level among the mortals of the Millennium.

In the dialogue between Jesus and the thief on the cross, there is a parallel between Christ's Kingdom and 'paradise', i.e. the restored Eden of the Millennium years. The imagery of the garden of Eden is used at the end of the book of Revelation to reveal something of what the Kingdom, especially in the Millennium, will be like. Chapter 31 looks at this in more detail.

The Flood

We are told by Jesus and Peter that the second coming is typified by the flood. There is therefore a similarity between the world of Noah's time, and our last days. It is easy for us to fail to appreciate the carnage of the flood; the Sunday School image of happy giraffes with extra long necks poking out of the ark really isn't on. The destruction wrought by the flood was absolute and devastating. This gives us a clue to the huge amount of change which the Lord's coming will suddenly bring on the earth. 2 Peter 3 draws a parallel between Noah's world being destroyed by water, and ours being ended by fire. The flood water changed the sea level, the climate, and totally remoulded earth's topography; whole mountain ranges were created and destroyed. We can safely assume that even *greater* physical changes will be brought about by Christ's return.

Is.54:9 speaks of the latter day judgments upon Israel being "as the waters of Noah unto me: for the *mountains* shall *depart*, and the *hills* be *removed*; but my *kindness* shall not *depart* from thee, neither shall the *covenant...be removed*". Thus in the future, the mountains and hills *will* depart as they did at Noah's time; but God's kindness and covenant will not. An obvious example of these physical changes is in Ezekiel and Zechariah's descriptions of the plateau upon which the temple will be built in the Millennium. That fire rather than water will achieve this may suggest God's use of volcanoes or meteorites in the future (descriptions of the heavens literally ablaze could refer to these).

We can imagine Noah coming out of the ark into that glorious new world, cleansed from the effects of sin. It would have been a world whose physical and human features he did not recognize; there would have been no physical strand of continuity with his former life. And when we emerge from the Christ-ark at the ending of the world's judgments, we will be in a like position. Remember those words in Isaiah: "Come, my people, enter thou into thy chambers, and shut thy doors about thee: hide thyself as it were for a little moment, until the indignation be overpast" (Is.26:20). Thus whilst we may experience the first stages of the judgments, we will be preserved from this final physical cataclysm which will come on the planet. It may be that somehow we will be involved in the execution of those judgments.

Israel Under The Law

We can well ask 'Why is there so much detail about the Law recorded in the Old Testament?'. We may have gone on to muse: 'It's all very well saying that it all points forward to Jesus, but there's so much of the Law which seems concerned with the day to day life of Israel, and can only obliquely point to Christ'. One of the reasons for this is that Israel living under the Law should have been a type of the situation in the Millennium. There is ample evidence that the Mosaic Law will be re-established to some degree in the Millennium (see '*Jesus Of Nazareth*' p.92-95 concerning this). The covenant made at Sinai will in some ways be re-established with Israel in the Millennium. The 'new' covenant will enable them to keep the 'old' acceptably. Israel under the Law were God's Kingdom (Ex.19:5,6); when that Kingdom is re-established, it follows that then Israel will also be under the Law. There is ample supporting evidence:

- The last eight chapters of Ezekiel describe a temple in the Millennium age, serviced by mortal priests who are governed by regulations based upon the Mosaic Law.

- Zech.14:16 speaks of the nations keeping the feast of tabernacles, a Mosaic feast. They will "go up from year to year to worship the King, the Lord of Hosts, and to keep the feast of tabernacles". Mention is made of "the bowls before the altar" being inscribed with "holiness unto the Lord", as was the High Priestly mitre (v.20). It should be noted that these descriptions show *similarities* to the Mosaic system, rather than an identical revival of the Law.

- Mal.3:4 prophesies that the future work of Elijah will result in "the offering of Judah and Jerusalem (being) pleasant unto the Lord, as in the days of old". The offerings will still be made, but then they will truly please God. Mal.4:4 confirms that Elijah's work will be to turn Israel back to the Law: "Remember ye the Law of Moses my servant, which I commanded unto him in Horeb for all Israel, with the statutes and judgments (i.e. not just the ten commandments)...Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord". That alone should put an end to any question as to whether Elijah will come or not in the last days! "He shall turn the hearts of the fathers to the children". His work will be to turn Israel back to a true keeping of the Mosaic Law.

- Ez.20:41 says that when Israel have repented and the rebels been purged from them, "I will accept you with your sweet savour ('a savour of rest' A.V.mg.). This connects with Noah (= 'rest') offering a savour of rest to the Lord after coming out of the ark. The experiences of the flood therefore point forward to the cleansing of Israel, leading them to afterwards offer up an acceptable offering to God. Their offering of acceptable sacrifices would therefore fit in beautifully.

- Ez.36:26 speaks of how God will enable Israel to keep the laws of the old covenant, through the new covenant which He will enter into with them in the last days: "A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them". This connects with Malachi's prophecy that Elijah will turn Israel back to the Law of Moses in the last days.

- "All the flocks of Kedar shall be gathered together unto thee (Israel), the rams of Nebaioth shall minister unto thee: they shall come up with acceptance on mine altar, and I will glorify the house of my glory (the temple)...they shall bring gold and incense" (from Sheba; Is.60:6,7). This teaches that there will be a temple, an altar and sacrifices in the Kingdom.

- "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" (Is.66:23). The sabbath will be kept in some way, as will the new moon festival; there will be a system of regular worship, as there was under the Law.

- Therefore the nations will say " Let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, and to the house (temple) of the God of Jacob...for the Law shall go forth of Zion" (Mic.4:2).

In the light of all these passages, is it really a question whether the passages in Ezekiel about a future temple and sacrifices will have a literal fulfilment in the Millennium? Therefore we read in Is.42:21 that when Israel are obedient to the Law in the Millennium, God will " magnify the Law and make it honourable" . Although the nations are spoken of as keeping the feasts, many of the hints that the Law will be kept in the Millennium are in this context of *Israel* keeping it.

Israel's obedience to the Law will be evident to the whole world, and they will receive the promised blessings for obedience (Dt.28). In this way the Law will be openly magnified and honoured. David's vision of the Kingdom seems to have been along similar lines. Psalm 51 was written after his repentance concerning Bathsheba. David looks out from his own repentance towards that of Israel as a whole. He realized that his offerings and obedience to the Law were *now* acceptable, now that he had come to know the forgiveness of God which was ministered to him outside of the Law. " The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit...do good in thy good pleasure unto Zion: build thou the walls of Jerusalem...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).

Mortal Priests

The details about the priests in Ezekiel's temple give quite some insight into the nature of the Millennium and its mortal population. They are told that they are not to marry a widow " nor her that is put away; but they shall take maidens of the seed of the house of Israel, or a widow that had a priest before" (Ez.44:22). All we can say from this is that divorce will occur in the Millennium age. The hardness of the human heart which God took into account when permitting divorce under the Law will not have changed in the mortal population of the Millennium. The trauma of broken relationships, whether from divorce or widowhood, will therefore still be experienced in the Millennium. As the King-priests of that age, it is likely that we will be involved in the counselling and spiritual strengthening of the victims of such things.

The priests are not to shave their heads, " nor suffer their locks to grow long; they shall only poll their heads" (Ez.44:20,21), perhaps hinting at a return to the principles of Nazariteship. " Neither shall any priest drink wine when they enter into the inner court" (Ez.44:21) shows that wine will still be made in the Millennium; and therefore there will be the temptation for people to abuse alcohol. The disillusion of the mortal population towards the end of the Millennium which Rev.20 hints at will probably be accompanied by things like a growing abuse of alcohol. To some degree the saints may even play a 'policeman' role in the Millennium dealing with drunks, comforting the widows, strengthening those with broken relationships. Another hint that the Millennium will not be as idyllic for the mortal population as we may imagine is to be found in the fact that there will be money in the Millennium. Jeremiah was told to buy the field of Hananeel, as a sign

of his faith that there would come a day when fields were again bought and sold in Jerusalem. That time is yet to come- in the Millennium. The very existence of a property market and currency will doubtless spark off ample disputes for the saints to sort out. The commands of the Law certainly show that there will be the concept of private property and personal ownership of goods in the Millennium.

However, there is a strong hint throughout the Law that transactions will involve material goods rather than coinage. The impression is given of an agriculturally-based, self-sufficient community; an extension of God's ideal for Adam in Eden. Our imagination is given full vent in imagining the details of the Millennium by almost every verse in the Law. For example, Dt.26:2 speaks of the people bringing the firstfruits to God in a basket; leading us to imagine people making baskets in those small, agricultural hamlets of the Millennium. The sacrifices in the future temple must be offered with salt, Ezekiel was told. This leads us to the picture of someone mining the salt, or perhaps trapping it in salt pans along the Mediterranean. These pictures are somewhat different to the image of people literally sitting under trees with fruit literally dropping into their mouth. The Millennium will be full of dynamic activity; the physical, moral and intellectual lethargy which now engulfs mankind will be greatly lessened, rather than given greater rein due to the more advantageous physical conditions.

The System Of Judges

There is ample emphasis on the Lord Jesus being the supreme judge of His Kingdom. He will be "of quick understanding in the fear of the Lord: and he shall not judge after the sight of his eyes, neither reprove after the hearing of his ears; but with righteousness shall he judge the poor, and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth" (Is.11:3). The presence of Christ and the saints on earth will not stop the weak being ripped off by the unscrupulous, nor will it totally remove poverty. These things will exist, but there will be the opportunity of appeal to Christ, who will judge righteously.

Under the Law, there was a referral system up to Moses, smaller cases being dealt with by the 70 elders and family heads. These 'elohim' must surely point forward to us, the King-priests of the future age. It may well be that some of the cases tax even our spirit nature to resolve, and they are referred up to other saints with greater Spiritual endowments than we, and finally to Christ. "We shall judge angels" (1 Cor.6:3) may refer to each believer being in the position to pass judgment on a messenger or representative of, e.g., a town or village. This mention of angel-messengers implies that we will be geographically located in one place in a region, to where cases must be brought by a messenger.

Blessings And Cursings (Dt.28)

The world will receive the blessings outlined in Dt.28, on account of their obedience to the Law. "The fruit of thy body...the fruit of the ground...the fruit of thy cattle" etc. would be blessed (Dt.28:4). It is reasonable to assume that the Bible-minded Israelite would have read Isaiah's prophecies of the Kingdom with this passage in mind- he would have seen the Kingdom first and foremost as a time of great obedience to God's Law, resulting in all these physical blessings coming upon

the land. This also raises the question, to be addressed more fully later, as to whether the blessings of the Kingdom prophecies will only come upon the Jews and the land of Israel, rather than on all the earth.

" The Lord shall give unto thee his good treasure, the heaven to give rain unto thy land in his season (suggesting that there will be rain and seasons in the Millennium), and thou shalt lend unto many nations, and thou shalt not borrow. And the Lord shall make thee the head, and not the tail" (Dt.28:12). Due to their continual sin, Israel have never really been the head of these nations; this prophecy awaits fulfilment, both literally and spiritually, in the Millennium. In passing, notice the implication that there will be currency in the Millennium; there will be lending and borrowing, ever a potential cause for strife. It is often said that this prophecy about Jewish money lending has been fulfilled in the Jews already. But note that this is said to be conditional on their obedience, which as yet Israel have not shown. The riches of the Gentiles will be given to Israel, notably the riches of their Arab enemies. They will be in a strong position to lend and totally control the economy of the mortal population. Words like " I will set thee on high above all nations of the earth" (Dt.28:1) shout for a Kingdom application. Zechariah's prophecy of ten men taking hold of the skirt of a Jew and going up to Jerusalem with him intimates something similar.

The curses that would come for disobedience are alluded to in the Kingdom passages, the implication being 'But if you *are* obedient, then the reverse of those curses will come upon you'. Dt.28:30 warns: " Thou shalt build an house, and thou shalt not dwell therein: thou shalt plant a vineyard, and shalt not gather the grapes thereof" . This language is picked up in Isaiah 65: " They *shall* build houses and inhabit them...they shall *not* (any longer) plant and another eat" . This permits us to look at the curses for disobedience, and imagine their opposite being realized in the Millennium. " They shall plant vineyards, and dress them, but shalt neither drink of the wine, nor gather the grapes; for the worms shall eat them" (Dt.28:39) will certainly be reversed in the Millennium. Each man will sit under his own vine and fig tree (the implication is, enjoying the fruit of them). As Noah made wine after the flood (a clear type of the Millennium), so will the Jews. Noah's abuse of the wine is proof enough that there will be a possibility to misuse alcohol in the Millennium by the mortals. Our role as teachers will doubtless include educating the mortals in its use.

Any law of God, be it the Mosaic or otherwise, highlights the seriousness of sin. The commands to sacrifice animals were an ideal method of doing this. In the same way as the Mosaic sacrifices looked forward to the work of Jesus, so those made in the Millennium will point back to this. It will be our thrilling joy to explain to ready minds the wonder of the cross and our Lord's perfect life. Faith is of utmost importance to God. What we can see with our eyes is not faith. The mortal population will be able to see Jesus; but God will not want them to 'believe' in him just as some provider of good, having the popularity of any other successful leader. He will require them to have faith in the spiritual aspect of Christ, centred around his work on the cross. The animal sacrifices pointing back to his offering on the cross will help develop this kind of faith. Rev.20:13 describes the second judgment at the end of the Millennium (i.e. of the mortal population) as being a judgment according to their works, as if great stress will be placed upon their

works. Faith will have been turned to sight then, in many ways. Works are a proof that a man really does have the faith which he professes, as James highlights. Performing the works of the Law in a right spirit will be proof of this, although of course total obedience will not be a condition for entry into the Kingdom proper, seeing that forgiveness will be available through the work of Christ. In passing, note that Rev.20:13 speaks of the sea giving up the dead which were in it. Presumably, some people will drown during the Millennium. The shock of death, the trauma of tragedy, will still be experienced in the Millennium. Again, we can imagine the work of comforting the families in their loss, encouraging them with the prospect of the second resurrection. We need to ask whether in this life we have that desire to reach out into the world of suffering around us, ministering the grace of God and the love of Christ; if we rejoice to do such things now, our joy and fulfilment will be the greater in the Kingdom.

Settlement Patterns

Under the Law, the land and administration of Israel was very well organized. There were certain cities of refuge and priestly cities. Passages like Joshua 15 indicate that the cities of Judah were divided up into various groups. We read of groups of "cities", "with their villages" - e.g. "...all the cities are twenty and nine, with their villages" (Josh.15:32). When we read that the righteous will rule over a certain number of cities in the Millennium, we have reason to imagine that this same system of administration will be re-established then. We will, as it were, be ecclesial elders for one or a number of towns.

Whilst towns will exist in the Millennium, the ordinances of the Law suggest that God's ideal for His people is for them to live a settled, agricultural life in a rural environment. Lev.25:28-31 contains the laws concerning inheritance. *Land* that was bought from another tribe had to be returned to the original owner at the year of Jubilee. But a house within a walled city could only be redeemed within a year of purchase; after that, it had permanently changed hands. This would indicate that God is more concerned with the people's continuous ownership of their agricultural land, than of urban property. "But the houses of the villages which have no wall round about them shall be counted as the fields of the country...they shall go out (or back) in the year of Jubilee". This would hint at God's discouragement of large, "walled" cities, which are so often associated with evil. They were not to sell the land because it belonged to God (Lev.25:23). That they were allowed to sell houses within walled cities shows that God did not count them as belonging to Him any more, in the way that the rural areas did.

The Priests

We are told that we shall be 'king-priests' in the Millennium (Rev.5:10 Gk.), as we are now. "Kings and priests" is a poor translation; we will be both kings and priests, after the order of Melchizedek, rather than some of us being kings and others priests. If we can gain a clear picture of God's intended roles for the priests under the Law, we will have further insight into our future work as king-priests.

The book of Malachi stresses what the priesthood *should* have been like, compared to what it actually was. Indeed, many of the Old Testament prophecies against

Israel are specifically aimed at the priests. The priests should have followed the example of the early descendants of Levi: "The law of truth (God's word- Jn.17:17) was in his mouth, and iniquity was not found in his lips: he walked with me in peace and equity, and did turn many away from iniquity" (Mal.2:5,6). These words are alluded to in James 5:20 concerning how we, as the new "royal priesthood" (1 Pet. 2:9) should turn our brethren from the error of their ways. This covenant was given on account of Eleazar's going in among the people to slay them, and thereby turning many others away from iniquity. He was not just showing an iron fist to those who were being disobedient; his real role was to turn men away from sin. As the future priests, our role will also be to execute the judgments written; but it will be to the end of bringing men to appreciate the seriousness of sin, and to turn them away from it. To this end, "the priests lips should *keep* knowledge (i.e. they shouldn't apostatize from it), and they should seek the (meaning of the) law at his mouth: for he is the messenger of the Lord of Hosts" (Mal.2:7) by reason of accurately speaking forth His word. The priests were to use their knowledge of God's word to turn the people away from sin. If we have a real hate of sin and a true love of God's righteousness, we ought to have a burning wish to take the Gospel to the kids in the tower blocks, to the call girls and drug addicts. Yet we are frustrated by the knowledge that somehow they are deaf to God's word. The joy of the Kingdom is that we will be able to speak forth the word with convicting power within the community we rule over, and to see its very real effect.

Then, men will *come* to us, to seek the true meaning of God's word from us! "They (will) *seek* the law" from the priests' mouth. This reminds us of passages like Is.2 and Mic.4, which speak of all nations going to *seek* the Law at Jerusalem. As the people *rejoiced* because of the Levites being amongst them at the time of the restoration (another type of the Millennium; Neh.12:44), so we will be truly loved and appreciated amongst the believing mortals. It would seem from Jer.26:2,7 that the people came up to Jerusalem with their priests, from "all the cities of Judah"; exactly the same pattern will be seen in our bringing of our charges to Jerusalem. Having initially learnt this desire to seek the meaning of God's word from us in the towns and villages we rule over, they will then be motivated to go up to the massive Bible schools which the Lord Jesus will hold for the mortals at Jerusalem, based around the Jewish feasts. That pilgrimage will be made from a love of Bible study which we have taught them to acquire. Even in this life, there is nothing more gratifying and soul-warming than to see one's own convert grow in the truth after baptism, developing a real love for the word and the knowledge of God. We will each experience this on a far more glorious scale in the Millennium.

An example of seeking the meaning of the Law is to be found in Numbers 36. The children of Gilead and the daughters of Zelophehad came to Moses and sought a fuller statement from God about their position regarding inheritance. Moses then expounded the Law in more detail to them, under inspiration. It is interesting that David associates worshipping at the temple with appreciating the greatness of God's word (Ps.138:2), as if meditation on the word was part of going up to the tabernacle. If we ourselves have no real love and thirst for the knowledge of God in this life, no desire to really communicate this with other believers and the world outside, then how much can we really look forward to being in the Kingdom? For this is what it will be all about.

The priests were scattered throughout the land of Israel, in fulfilment of the prophecy that Levi would be scattered in Israel (Gen.49:5-7). This curse was turned into a blessing through the priests being placed in their priestly cities throughout the tribes of Israel. They were given "suburbs" around the towns where they could live, often quite small in area (Num.35:4,5). Thus there was a well known location within each town for the priests; they were constantly ready to counsel the people. One can imagine a similar set-up in the Millennium. Lev.22:10 warns that "a sojourner of the priest" was not to eat of the holy things which the priest's family could feed on. This provides the beautiful hint that it was the place of the priest to entertain visitors to the town; the Law recognized that there was a good likelihood that 'strangers' would be putting up in the priests' houses; therefore there was the need for this warning against such people eating the holy things which would have been lying around in the family kitchen. They were only for the priest and his immediate family. Num.35 says that the priests would have their houses outside the city wall. This further shows God's dislike of big city life; His people will have to go outside the city to find the true knowledge of Him (cp. the pitching of the cross outside the walls of Jerusalem). Neh.11:30 hints that there were priests stationed in quite small villages; the priests were from "Zanoah, Adullam, and in their villages, at Lachish, and the *fields* (hamlets?) thereof". This all gives our imagination ample homework concerning our possible situation in the Millennium.

As the Levites were *given* their cities, so the faithful will be *given* ten or five cities etc. to reign over. Instead of the division into civil and religious leaders which was seen in early Israel, we will be 'king-priests' (Rev.5:10 Gk.), fulfilling both roles as part of the Melchizedek priesthood. The hierarchy amongst the priests will be seen among the saints; they will take over the present hierarchical system of the Angels. Hierarchy appears to be a feature of the *elohim* of all ages. There will be a referral system for hard cases, where more knowledge of God's word is required; from those ruling over one city to those over five, to those over ten etc., until some things are left to Christ Himself at Jerusalem. It may well be that some of the most senior saints are located with Jesus in Jerusalem, forming the "camp of the saints" there (Rev.20:9), in the same way as the "heads of the fathers...chief men...dwelt in Jerusalem" during the kingdoms of David and Solomon, which were also typical of the Millennium (1 Chron.8:28).

Spiritual Ambition

This shows how those who have the greatest knowledge and appreciation of God's word will have the highest places in the Kingdom. This does not mean that those with the capacity to cram their brain with Scripture in this life will have the rule over ten cities etc. It is those who know God and His ways, who appreciate His judgments and have made them their own, who will use those very same attributes in judging the mortal population in the Millennium. Christ's parable implies that the more we trade our talents, the more cities we will be given. The talents must therefore represent something like our appreciation of God and His word. As one star (or believer) will differ from another in glory in the Kingdom, so some will rule over one and others over ten cities. Our ruling over the cities will be reflecting God's glory like a star. It is therefore possible to be spiritually ambitious to want to be great in the Kingdom. If we truly want to give God glory, ours will not be the

attitude which says 'I just want to scrape into the Kingdom; I'm not worried about anything else'. Such reasoning has relegated the Kingdom to a black box in our mind; we want to be 'in the Kingdom', but we don't stop to think *why*, or indeed what the Kingdom will be all about. If we truly appreciate this, then spiritual ambition will dominate our lives. Our Lord taught, both by example and in so many words, that whoever humbles himself now will be the greatest in the Kingdom. This in itself is encouraging us to seek true greatness in God's Kingdom.

Preaching The Word

The priests' major role was as teachers. A teacher needs to have some kind of credibility with those who are to learn. The High Priest had his credibility established by the fact that he was also prone to the same temptations as those for whom he made atonement. He could therefore "have compassion on the ignorant (i.e. those committing sins of ignorance) and on them that are out of the way; for that he himself also is compassed about with infirmity" (Heb.5:1,2). This is supremely shown in the suitability of Jesus as our teacher, example and priest. The mortal population will therefore be aware that at one stage we, their priests, were also ignorant and spiritually "out of the way" to eternal life; and who better to explain this to them than we ourselves? The eternal reality of God's forgiveness of us will be the encouragement to the mortal population to believe that their sins too can be forgiven, and they too can become related to the hope of eternal life, as we have been. Our own example and relationship with God will powerfully preach to the world in those days- as it should now. To some degree, therefore, we will be aware of our present spiritual state in the Millennium, although no longer will we remember the sadnesses and traumas related to it.

Ex.19:5,6 says that God intended the whole people of Israel to be a Kingdom of priests. Therefore Israel in the Kingdom will no longer teach their brother saying "know the Lord", for then they shall all know Him, and speak to each other about Him. No longer will the tribe of Levi be those who teach their brethren the knowledge of God; they will each individually have this knowledge, and will pass it on to others. We should be a whole Kingdom of priests now, in this life.

Although Israel will have this knowledge of God, it seems that we will teach this to them. Of Israel in the Millennium it is written: "Thine ears shall hear a word behind thee, saying, This is the way, walk ye in it, when ye turn to the right hand (becoming legalistic again?), and when ye turn to the left" (Is.30:21), perhaps by going the way of the flesh again. We will be the initial teachers of Israel, according to Jer.3: "I will give you pastors according to mine heart (then we will fully have and represent the mind of God!), which shall feed you with knowledge and understanding". We will therefore tell Israel "this is the way (Christ is the only "way"; i.e. we will teach Christ to them), walk ye in it". Their ears hearing a word behind them surely implies that we will somehow monitor their spiritual progress, and guide them accordingly. It will need our constant attention to keep them on a balanced spiritual course, not going to the right hand or left. Truly we will take over the work of the Angels! This is exactly their relationship with us.

We must remember that the priests under the Law were limited in their wisdom and knowledge; and to some degree, our being part of a hierarchy implies that we

will also be. Our reward will largely be in terms of how far we are allowed to know and express God's mind. Seeing there will be degrees of reward, some stars differing from others in reflecting God's knowledge, so there must be degrees of knowledge, implying that there must be limitation of knowledge in that age.

THE KINGDOMS OF DAVID AND SOLOMON

The Messianic promises to David about having a seed who would have a glorious Kingdom were primarily fulfilled in Solomon. Therefore his kingdom was typical of the future Kingdom of Christ. The dimensions of Ezekiel's temple are identical in many ways to those of Solomon's; this is surely evidence enough for believing that a temple will be literally built in Jerusalem for use in the Millennium. Isaiah 11 describes Jesus as the perfect judge between people in the Millennium, earning him the people's respect; this may allude to Solomon's legendary wisdom in judging the difficult cases which Israel presented. The wisdom of God was "in the midst of" Solomon (1 Kings 3:28), as "all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge" are hid *in* Christ. The Kingdom prophecy of Is.60:1-8 is full of allusions to Solomon's Kingdom: "Thy light (Jesus) is come...the Gentiles shall come to thy light (cp. Is.2:3, and how the nations flocked to Solomon)...the multitude of camels shall cover thee, the dromedaries of Midian and Ephah (the regions which sent tribute to Solomon); all they from Sheba shall come (cp. the Queen of Sheba); they shall bring gold and incense (as they did to Solomon)".

The visit of the Queen of Sheba is therefore typical of how the peoples of the Millennium will come to worship Christ. The motive behind her visit was that she had heard about Solomon's wisdom, and wanted to learn more for herself. Through our teaching of the people in the towns and villages over which we rule, the motivation for the visits to Christ at Jerusalem will be similar. The Queen of Sheba saw Solomon's wisdom through seeing the "sitting of his servants, and the attendance of his ministers, and their apparel" (1 Kings 10:4-8). It was through her observation of Solomon's people that she perceived and understood his wisdom. The nations will likewise learn the knowledge of Christ through observing the example of natural Israel and ourselves; as they should in this life too.

Passover In The Kingdom

The record spotlights how much she was impressed by "the meat of his table...his cupbearers...the sitting of his servants", as if she observed a banquet held by Solomon for his servants, at which wine was shared. This connects with how we will keep the Passover with Christ; presumably on a regular basis, not just once at the beginning of the Millennium. This will be a fitting way in which to constantly have before us the means of our salvation; not that we will have the tendency to forget, but in order to commemorate His work. Likewise our present 'memorial table' is not just to jog our memories concerning events of two thousand years ago; it is to commemorate and glorify the work of our Lord. From the type, it would seem that our Passover feast with Jesus will be observed and known by the nations; our evident joy of fellowship with him will persuade them to hearken to his teaching. Likewise there is reason to think that the present memorial service was something designed to witness to the world. By keeping the agape (the love feast), "so shall all men know that ye are my disciples". Although we can in no

way share those precious emblems with the world, shutting the doors on them on Sundays at 11a.m. hardly fulfils our Lord's intention.

The Queen of Sheba gasped in amazement: " Happy are thy men...happy are these thy servants, which stand continually before thee, and that hear thy wisdom" . Here she saw true joy and spiritual fulfilment of a type beyond her previous conception. Their joy was through continually hearing Solomon's wisdom. As the people of Christ, we too will desire to continually be in his presence, hearing his words. If we do not love them now, if they do not ceaselessly inspire and mesmerize us, how much will we enjoy the Kingdom? David's picture of the Kingdom was of continually being in the temple, hearing God's wisdom: " 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). The joy of the Kingdom, and of our relationship with God now, will be on account of our knowledge of Christ, our love of the wisdom of God as manifested in Him. Our joy will not be because of the ideal climate, the lack of death etc. It will be for the joy of knowing Christ, of appreciating the righteousness of God in Him. The former things will be forgotten. We will not be shaking hands with the brother next to us and commenting how great it is not to be living in the bad old days. That is not the joy of the Kingdom; it will be the joy, the exaltation of spirit, which comes from knowing God for ourselves.

Solomon was not just given the gift of heightened intellectual powers for their own sake. The wisdom which he asked for, and was given, was in order to lead God's people spiritually (1 Kings 4:29,32,33). Therefore when " he spake of trees...of beasts, and of fowl, and of creeping things, and of fishes" (i.e. all the things of the natural creation; note the Genesis 1 language), this was for the spiritual edification of Israel. It was not his academic, scientific exposition of these things which would have motivated people to cross the known world to hear his words. It is quite likely that the knowledge of God in the Millennium will be spread through Christ's exposition of the lessons inherent in the natural creation. This was quite a favourite method of his in the parables; and that too pulled the crowds. In this context of Solomon's wisdom about the natural creation, we are told that " his songs were a thousand and five" ; it may be that the people memorised his wisdom in the form of songs. It is likely that such music will play a major part in the spreading of the knowledge of God in the Millennium.

We have seen how the priests typify the saints in the Kingdom. 2 Chron.5:11,12 explains what the priests were like in the days of Solomon: " When the priests were come out of the holy place...also the Levites which were the singers...of Asaph, of Heman, of Jeduthun, with their sons and their brethren, being arrayed in white linen (quoted in Revelation about the saints in the Kingdom) having cymbals and psalteries and harps, stood at the east end of the altar...(they made) one sound to be heard in praising and thanking the Lord...saying, For he is good" . This division of the priests into different groups again hints at some kind of similar organization on the Kingdom. The emphasis on the " one voice" which they had shows hints at the glorious unity of God's children in the age to come; although even now we can praise Him " with one mouth" . It is possible that Paul was alluding to this Kingdom type in Solomon's reign when he wrote that, showing that in prospect we can now

be in the Kingdom, through our unity in worship. It is tragic that the form of our worship sometimes creates so much bitter *disunity* amongst God's people now.

There are a number of other points which demonstrate the connection between Solomon's Kingdom and that of Christ. For example, Solomon "made silver in Jerusalem as stones" (2 Chron.9:27)- it was so common. The margin says that Solomon "gave" silver as stones, heightening the link between silver and redemption. In some sense, the people will have to go to Jerusalem for redemption in the Millennium; will it be there that baptisms are conducted, or some rite of entry into the covenant is conducted? The points we have considered so far are but the tip of an iceberg.

David's Kingdom

Jesus will be given the restored kingdom of David (Lk.1:35); therefore David's kingdom also prefigures that of Jesus. One of the emphasized features of David's Kingdom is the system of hierarchy around which the administration was organized: there were chief rulers, and then "Ezer the first, Obadiah the second, Eliab the third..." (1 Chron.12). The subdivisions of the mighty men of David is another example. Again we see the theme of a variation in rank among the saints in the Millennium. We will rule over different things, and with varying degrees of power. Christ will rule the world "by the rod of his mouth", i.e. by his word. Those who reign over ten cities will be able to speak forth this word with more power than those who rule over only two cities, for example. Our love of the wisdom of God in this life will therefore be proportional to the extent to which we use it in the ages of eternity.

It is also emphasized how that there were very specific spheres of authority in David's kingdom. 1 Chron.27 outlines how someone was over the tribute, another over the army, the camels, the asses, the flocks, the sellers of oil, the vineyards, the tillage of the ground etc. (see 1 Chron.27). It may be that Solomon's wisdom concerning the natural creation was for the benefit of those who had the charge over the different animals and elements of agriculture. There may be a similar specific subdivision in the Kingdom; one of us, or a group of us, in control of, e.g., the camels, or a certain type of animal. We will be guided by the wisdom of Solomon/Jesus in how to control that animal and the use of it to the glory of God. The natural world is presently under the control of the Angels; but it is to be handed over to us.

The list of names of those who ruled over these various things in David's kingdom is very similar to the list of the men who were with him in his wilderness days; when he was down and out, those men followed him through thick and thin, even when it must have seemed crazy to keep following a nobody, one who at times saw himself as a flea and a dead dog. In these our wilderness years, we need to be ever thankful for these precedents which we see recorded in the word. Those men had far fewer than we have. Yet there is something about both Christ and the difficult life in Him which should keep us with him; knowing that "if we suffer with him, we shall also reign with him" (was Paul alluding to David's men here?).

The Early Church

The first century church possessed the powers of the age to come (Heb.6:15), thus making them a small fulfilment of the Kingdom prophecies. Passages like Joel 2 which the church fulfilled in a primary sense are clear Kingdom prophecies (see *'The Doctrine Of Salvation'* in 'James and other studies' for more examples). There was again a hierarchy in the early church, due to the fact that some had greater and more lavish gifts of the Spirit than others. It must be noted that the greatest of the gifts were those which brought spiritual edification to others. Paul says that the gifts of knowledge and understanding were far greater than, e.g. the gift of tongues. It is easy when we are new in the faith to think of the Kingdom age as a time of powerful preaching, using the gifts of tongues and miracles to validate our message. But the greatest priorities in that age will be the spiritual glory to God which we will give by the more fully knowing Him. Yet although all the members had different gifts, together they made one gloriously unified body. Likewise there will be this tremendous unity of God's children in the Kingdom, all pulling together, conscious of the individual actions of every one of our fellow saints, working in harmony with it to the common end of God's glory- just as the natural body does.

Through the use of the Spirit gifts, Paul was able to enter into and share his brethren's spirituality: " though I be absent in the flesh, yet am I with you in the spirit, joying and beholding your order, and the steadfastness of your faith" (Col.2:5). No longer will we just relate to each other as humans who are doing the same kind of thing to give God glory, e.g. Bible reading, breaking bread, preaching. Presently, we do not really know each other's spiritual state, nor the peculiar nature of another's personal spirituality. We are all different in this respect. This is why we are sometimes so shell-shocked when we find that one whom we so trusted has fallen away, or has been secretly living in sin. But then we shall be able to touch the souls of our brethren, as well as to read the minds of the mortal population and help them accordingly. No longer will we have that feeling of helplessness as we counsel, frustrated by our limited powers of analysis. Then we shall know, both God and others, even as we are now known by God.

CHAPTER 27: THE ESSENCE OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD

There is fair reason to think that as a community, we have failed to appreciate the fact that the Kingdom will be fundamentally about the expression of God's spiritual characteristics, both in us and in the natural creation. All too often we focus on the *results* of this, such as there being no more war or famine, and that alone is our view of the Kingdom. " The Kingdom" becomes a hazy picture of an ideal world with none of the physical frustrations of the present order. But fundamentally, the Kingdom is about the triumph of God's righteousness over sin, it is about the supreme state of glory to God, given to Him by redeemed mankind.

We must ask the question: 'Why do I want to be in the Kingdom?'. It seems that there is a widely held perception of the Kingdom as a kind of glorified tropical holiday which stretches on for eternity, with palm trees blowing in the wind and exotic fruit dropping into our mouths. If this is why we want to be there, are we not downright selfish? Are we not striving to achieve a state of eternal personal happiness in terms of our present, worldly experience of life? We may look, for example, at the promise that " the former troubles (will be) forgotten" (Is. 65:15),

and enthusiastically apply to the struggles of our present lives. But the context is concerning the "troubles" of sinful behaviour; we may well remember the physical activities of the past (with Divine nature it seems we certainly will); but like Israel we will forget our sins (Is. 54:4).

John Thomas wisely pointed out that "God manifestation, not human salvation" is the purpose of God. We should not be in the faith, labouring towards the Kingdom, just so that we personally can have eternal life. Indeed, "eternal life" in John's Gospel refers to knowing and understanding God rather than simply to infinity (Jn. 17:3; 1 Jn. 5:20). Rev. 4:8 describes eternity as ceaselessly revelling in the moral glory of God's character, rather than abstractly enjoying the fact we have eternity in our natures. We must strive for the Kingdom because we wish to see our perfect Father, the God whose righteousness we have come to love and be consumed by, gloriously manifested in ourselves. We will wish to live to give Him maximum glory and pleasure. The concept of eternal life is therefore almost incidental to our existing in a morally perfect state; it is a by-product of that state. "Eternal life" should be read as referring more to the *quality* of that life, rather than its eternal duration being the fundamental construct behind our conception of the Kingdom. This is how the phrase "eternal life" seems to be used in John's letters (1 Jn. 1:1-3; 2:24,25; 3:15; 5:11,13). We must not be like the rich young man who desperately asked: "What must *I do* that *I* may have *eternal life*?", as if he saw having eternal life as the ultimate possession to get under his own belt. Notice how our Lord's reply described 'having eternal life' as 'entering into life', 'having treasure in heaven', 'entering the Kingdom of God', rather than personally possessing eternal life (Mt. 19:16-23).

We need to intricately examine ourselves on these issues; is our spiritual endeavour truly unselfish? Or do we somehow, subconsciously, seek for entry to the Kingdom as some kind of personal self-justification? Do we have chronic fear of rejection at the judgment? If so, this may well be due to the intensity of our desire to have a personal reward which we feel we have risked a lot of present enjoyment in order to attain. But if we only want to be in the Kingdom to give God glory, surely our attitude will be that we will not want to be there, if we cannot glorify God. If rejected, our attitude would be 'Thank You, Lord, for being able to give You just a fraction of glory in my few days of life!'. All we wish for then is to be destroyed: 'If I don't give You glory Lord, just take me out as soon as possible, *please*!'. But if we are correctly motivated in seeking entry to the Kingdom, then surely we can be so humbly confident of being there, that such speculations about rejection are only pipe-dreams.

If we are truly seeking *God's* glory, then we will know the ineffable joy that we have in this life, when we feel that we *are* living to God's glory. It may be that we get through a trial how we know God wished us to; we may live an hour or day in truly clear conscience with God. Without being self-congratulatory, or self-righteous, we know the joy of living with God and in Him, to His glory. To be absolutely perfect in our very nature should strike us as so wonderful that we will be willing to go through 70 years of trauma in this life, just to experience 10 years of that. But the Kingdom will be *eternity* in such a state! *This* is why we must grow to truly love God's ways, to adore His spirituality, and be committed heart and soul

to reflecting it in our own characters. There is a massive difference between wanting the Kingdom for these reasons, and seeing it as a glorified paradise island.

David's view of the Kingdom and his longing for it, were not expressed in terms of his exulting that he would live for ever in a time when all present problems had vanished. Instead, he and other men of God have looked forward to the time when they would be perfectly spiritual. Ps.119:5,6 is an example of this: " O that my ways were directed to keep Thy statutes (in this life); then shall I not be ashamed when I have respect unto all Thy commandments" . David looked forward to the Kingdom as a time when he would be totally obedient to God's will, as expressed in His commandments. David therefore asks that God will help him in this life to be obedient to them. Our love of righteousness now will therefore be proportionate to the fulfilment which we experience in the Kingdom. David's view of the Kingdom was of a time when he would be obedient to all the commands. The one thing he desired was to sit in God's house and enquire further into God's ways, " that I may behold the beauty of the Lord" (Ps.27:4 cp. 60:6); all he wished to do was to enter further into the spirituality of God. If we have no desire for that now, then how much verve will we have to be in the Kingdom? Life eternal will be all about coming to know God and Jesus (Jn.17:3). Paul was prepared to " count all things but loss" in this life, " for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord (that he would have in the Kingdom)...that I may know him" (Phil.3:8-10) more fully and completely, in the Divine nature. It is no accident that the Scriptures speak of intercourse as 'knowing' the other party, and that they liken the Kingdom to an eternal consummation. Selah.

Loving righteousness, speaking about the characteristics of God and their beauty, tend to be seen as only things for the soft hearted, or those who are 'into that kind of thing'. It seems as if we feel that 'getting on with the work' is just another way of giving God glory which can excuse us from being truly spiritual. But bashing a thousand bills does *not* compensate for hearty, loving discussion of " the beauty of the Lord" . A discussion about how to refurbish the Bible exhibition is *not* just another way of doing this. Eaves drop a few conversations at the back of the ecclesial hall. Is the presence of *real* spirituality evident in many of them? Could it be true that we have come to perceive the Kingdom as a glorious retirement package which includes eternal life, and we feel we must work as hard as possible in order to pay the premiums for it? If we see the Kingdom in 'physical' terms, as an arena for our own self-fulfilment and enjoyment, then our attitude to God will also be very material and utilitarian; the love of God, the two-way knowledge of Him which we should have, will disappear. We will forget the child-like faith which is somewhere within each of us, dealing with God in a clipped, business-like way, with an eye on what we are going to get out of the whole exercise. Is this one of the reasons for the coldness in our worship, the triteness of our communal prayers, the emptiness of our protocols, which are so often lamented?

" They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint" (Is.40:31) is a clear Kingdom prophecy. It has a simple literal fulfilment; we will no longer be hampered by our puny energy level, perhaps we will literally run every where in the Kingdom. Yet there is also a very strong spiritual aspect to this. The idea of running in response to the word of God is common in Scripture (Hab.2:2; 2

Thess.3:1 A.V.mg.; Ps.119:60,32; 147:15; Am.8:11,12; Dan.12:4). Isaiah is therefore speaking of a time when no longer will we *spiritually* weary as easy as we do now; then we will walk in God's ways and not faint. In this flesh, we so easily tire of being spiritual. "I will run the way of thy commandments, *when* thou shalt enlarge my heart" (Ps.119:32) shows how David longed for this very thing in this life. If we love righteousness, then we will pray this with like fervour; and have the full answer in the Kingdom. Do we *long* for our minds to be spiritually and intellectually enlarged, so that we might glorify God the more? Are we like Daniel, *grieving* for our lack of comprehension of the word?

"The sun shall be no more thy light by day...for the Lord shall be unto thee an everlasting light, and thy God thy glory" (Is.60:19) does not mean that the literal sun will be destroyed. The true light is God's word (Ps.119:105); in the Kingdom, we will not be conscious of whether there is or is not a sun or moon. The revelation of God to us through His word will totally fill our consciousness; it is in the light of this that we will see all things, rather than seeing things physically in the light of a literal sun. It will not be a case of the sight of our eyes giving us some kind of heightened aesthetic pleasure in the Kingdom; the mental vision and insight into God's character which we will then have will be all we are aware of.

In the Millennium, the greatest blessings of the mortal population will be in spiritual terms. It is easy to think of their lives being enhanced just in physical terms. But there is ample evidence that having fruitful fields, healthy children, a high standard of living for little work- all things mentioned in Isaiah 65 as being experienced by the mortals- do not necessarily give a higher level of peace and true joy. The good time that is coming on the earth, even for the mortals, we must perceive from a spiritual angle. Even in this life, there is nothing more beautiful to behold than someone coming out of the world, their life being progressively influenced by God's word, their whole being joyfully opening up like a flower to the Lord's voice. It will be our matchless joy to behold this in the Millennium years. *This* will be the fundamental cause for the contentment which the mortal population can enjoy. An unspiritual man would not enjoy *sitting* under his own vine and fig, nor would he be content with just building for himself and not renting out to others. Isaiah 65 speaks of a time when the mortal population will do just this. However, this will not be a state into which they are forced, or just find themselves in. There is ample reason to think that not all will respond to the word, and it is inconceivable that these are the ones pictured in prophecies like Isaiah 65. Indeed the reference to 'sitting under vine and fig tree' (Mic. 4:4) is likely an allusion to the 'dwelling in booths' of the feast of Tabernacles; and the rabbis used the expression to refer to the studying of the Law (1). The intended picture may be of a Bible School which never ends.

"They shall not labour in vain, nor bring forth for trouble...for they are the seed of the blessed of the Lord" (Is.65:23) proves that these descriptions only concern "the seed of the blessed of the Lord" among the mortals. No longer will the bearing of children be in vain, due to children not going the way of God. Because "their offspring with them" will glorify God, "they shall not labour...nor bring forth" in childbirth in vanity. This must mean that the lack of vanity in these things will only be on account of the children ("their offspring with them") glorifying God. The pain of childbirth and the vanity of child-rearing will remain for those who do not

centre their lives around spiritual things. " Before they call (in prayer), I will answer" (Is.65:24) is a more obvious example of these blessings on the mortals being fundamentally spiritual in nature.

The Saints In The Kingdom

It cannot be over-emphasized that the saints will not be passively doing nothing in the Millennium age. Mt.21:28-31 defines being in " the Kingdom of God" as *working* in the vineyard, both now and in the future Kingdom. " The vineyard" must refer to the means of bringing forth spiritual fruit, according to the Lord's use of the vine figure in Jn.15. Being in the Kingdom is therefore all about bringing forth the fruits of spirituality, glorying in showing forth the moral likeness of God. It follows that when we enter the Kingdom, we will not bear the fullness of fruit in a moment.

As God is infinite, it will take eternity to get to know Him. Life eternal will be all about getting to know God and Jesus (Jn.17:3). By all means compare this with how David saw the Kingdom as a time of *enquiring* after God in His temple (Ps.27:4). Likewise the priests of the Old Covenant would have grown in their knowledge of God. " I am the good shepherd, and know (Gk. 'am getting to know', continuous tense) my sheep, and am known (*being known*) of mine. As the Father *knoweth* (is knowing) me, even so know I (I am getting to know) the Father" (Jn.10:14). The relationship between us and our Lord will therefore be one of progressive upward knowledge, as He has with God. Thus a state of ultimate knowledge of God will not be flashed into us at the moment of acceptance at the judgment.

For this very reason, the Kingdom cannot be an inactive state. God is dynamic. For us to grow in His knowledge will be a continuously dynamic process. It is pointed out in John's Gospel that those who will truly know God will not fully know Him now, in this life. Thus the blind man in Jn.9:12 said that he did not know where Jesus was; Thomas likewise said that the disciples did not know where Jesus was going (Jn.14:5,7); in Jn.4:32 Jesus said that He had meat which we do not know of. Those who said (in John's Gospel) that they *did* know Jesus, often found that they did not. Thus Jesus said that the Samaritans worshipped what they did not know (Jn.4:22), although they were convinced that they did. Nicodemus thought that he knew Jesus, when he did not (Jn.3:2); the Jews thought that they knew whence Jesus was (Jn.7:26); " now we know that thou hast a devil" , they boasted (Jn.8:52); " we know that this man is a sinner" (Jn.9:34)- and how wrong they were. Those who accepted they did not fully know Jesus will spend eternity coming to know Jesus (Jn.17:3).

God's word in the Kingdom

We may well ask 'Will we have the Bible with us in the Kingdom? Will we grow out of it? We will immediately understand *all* its depths, or will they be revealed over a period of time? Or is the Bible just a means to an end, an introduction to God for our use in this life only?

If the Law of Moses is to be re-enstated to some degree, we can reasonably expect substantial parts of the books of the Law to be in use in the Millennium. As the

priests, it will be our duty to expound these to the people. Israel's journey through the wilderness typifies our struggle through this life towards the Kingdom. In this wilderness journey, we are fed daily by the manna, symbolizing God's word. Yet as soon as they entered Canaan, the manna ceased. Then they ate the fruit of the land. This may mean that for us personally, we may well be sustained by a far more glorious form of spiritual feeding than the manna which we now know. 2 Pet.1:19 speaks of the more sure word of prophecy shining as a light (candle) in the dark ("squalid", R.V.mg.) place of our mortal mind, "until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts". When the day of Christ's coming arrives, we will then have the fullness of the light of God's revelation. The present word of prophecy is but a lamp struggling against the darkness of our natural mind, in this life. But at the Lord's return, our very innermost beings will be filled with the light of God's revelation in Christ. Somehow our knowledge of God will be of such a different magnitude, that we will no longer relate to the word of prophecy in the same way as we do now.

Thus in the new Jerusalem, "there shall be no night there; and they need no candle" (Rev.22:5). The candle, common symbol of God's word (e.g. Ps.119:105) will no longer be needed by the faithful, because "the Lord God giveth them light". Our personal, direct contact with God will replace the ministry of the Bible as we now have it.

2 Chron.9:23 records how people came to Solomon to hear his wisdom. This points forward to the Lord's future Kingdom (cp. Is.2:1-5). The people will have to physically travel to hear this wisdom, it being the motive behind the journeys. This would suggest that instruction will be more by spoken than written means. The parable of the marriage supper (Mt.22:1-13) is what "the Kingdom of heaven is like". As with so many of Christ's parables, this one too is quarried from the book of Proverbs; in this case Prov.9:2-5, which describes how wisdom makes everything ready for her feast. The food and wine which is there represents the wisdom of God. The Kingdom of God is therefore likened to this supreme feast on the knowledge of God. The Kingdom will therefore be a feast of such things. We love God in this life, but surely we cry out for a greater understanding and appreciation of Him? Do we not cry for wisdom, and lift up our voice for understanding? If we do have this feeling, then we will be supremely motivated to strive to reach that glorious time of true knowledge.

Lk.16:11,12 draws a parallel between the "true riches" and "that which is your own"; both phrases, in the context, refer to our reward in the Kingdom. The true riches is the spiritual knowledge of God. In Christ are hid all the riches of God. David rejoiced at the truths of the word more than at finding great riches. We can look forward to a highly personal knowledge of God in the Kingdom; the riches of knowledge "which is your own". This is in the same sense as Rev.2:17 speaks of each believer receiving a stone with "a new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it". No other being will be able to enter into the personal knowledge of God which we will then have; as even in this life, it is scarcely possible to enter into another believer's spirituality and relationship with God. To some degree, the Kingdom will be something different for each of us, although this diversity will be bound together by the great unity of all being the collective bride of Christ, and all manifesting the same God, all having the same "penny a day".

To summarize this chapter. We have been suggesting that the pictures of the Kingdom which we have should not just be of the frustrations of present life being overcome. The curing of the blind, the healing of the deserts etc. must not be seen as ends in themselves. We must see behind the physicality of these things to the idea that they will all be declarations of the fact that sin has been overcome. Thus Jesus in Lk.5:24 says that basically there was no difference between him doing a miracle, and forgiving someone. There is a strong connection between physical and spiritual healing, especially seen in the way in which Christ's miracles are recorded. The praise of the nations in the Millennium will not just be because of the better physical environment which they now experience; they will praise God because of His mercy and truth in forgiveness, according to the ancient promises (Ps.117:1,2).

The offer of the Kingdom of God must not be seen as a glorified insurance policy, either deep within our hearts or in the way we preach. It is the love and mercy of God, His fundamental characteristics, which should be what we preach to others. The full manifestation of them is what the Gospel of the Kingdom is all about. Our Lord went around preaching the Gospel of the Kingdom (Mt.4:23); but rarely, if ever, did He launch off into an exposition of Isaiah's Kingdom prophecies as we are wont to. Instead He spoke continuously of the love of God, speaking parables which illustrated various facets of His loving character, and how God would have us respond to it. Now of course it is true that we cannot understand or respond to God's love without a detailed understanding of true Bible doctrine about Him. But it is equally true that to remain at these *alone* is *not* the true knowledge of God. They are but a pre-requisite, a vital first stepping stone, to a living relationship with Him which we show in our lives.

Notes

(1) See Peter Ackroyd, *Exile And Restoration* (London: S.C.M., 1968) p. 191.

CHAPTER 28: WHAT WILL THE MILLENNIUM BE LIKE?

Personal Relationships In The Kingdom

We have shown earlier that there will be a degree of hierarchy in the Kingdom. Yet this should not let us imagine that there will be any awkwardness of relationship between us and other saints who are 'above' us. Our Lord uttered a difficult saying in Lk.12:42: " Who then is that faithful and wise steward, whom his Lord shall make ruler over his household...he will make him ruler over all that he hath" . We each individually have this promise of being made ruler over *all* that Jesus has. The " all things" refers to the believers; a concordance study of these two words gives fair testimony to this. The ecclesia *is* the body of Christ, " the fulness of him that filleth all in all" (Eph.1:22,23). Let us pause to exult in this fact; that Jesus *exists* for no one else except the believers. Each of us is promised by Him that He will make us ruler over " all that he hath" , i.e. all the saints. We will each rule over each other because we will each be so closely identified with the Lord Jesus; yet in another sense there will be a hierarchy of spiritual glory in the Kingdom.

We have the great comfort of knowing that we will see dead believers again in the Kingdom. But we must not think that we will meet them in exactly the same physical form as we now know each other. The aged brother whom I only knew as a wizened old man, the chronically deformed sister...if I were to meet them as they were in their prime, or without their present physical maladies, then I would probably fail to recognize them. We must be careful not to see the Kingdom in too human terms. It will not just be a continuation of the pleasant Christian life which we now experience, but with no end in sight. We will share the dynamism and un-human power of God's nature, both physical and mental. We will not have the same *human* relationship as we now have. For example, we will not be male or female, there will not be marriage as we now know it.

Yet there is no doubt that we will recognize our loved ones in the Kingdom, *in some form*. We will see Abraham in the Kingdom. Of course, we will not physically recognize him; he won't have a placard on him saying 'Abraham'. But we will know him through seeing his spiritual characteristics of faith etc. *This* is how a loving husband will recognize his sister-wife in the Kingdom. On account of the deep appreciation of her spirituality which he has, he will be able to know her again, and rejoice again in the joy of each others' company. The whole basis of their relationship then will be around the things of the Spirit, as it would have been in this life. It must be said that it is frighteningly easy to have a very non-spiritual relationship with our brethren and sisters, especially among the believing members of our family. The depth of our eternal togetherness is dependent upon the degree to which we *now* have a *spiritual* closeness. Our relationships in the truth must not be just 'physical', as members of the same religious body.

The relationships which we may now have to sacrifice for the sake of the Lord will blossom fully in the Kingdom. Consider how Hannah offered Samuel to God, when she would have dearly loved to keep him at home with her. She is described as *lending* him to the Lord. Yet she never received him back in this life; so she must do in the Kingdom. It is interesting to reflect upon the future relationship between Jesus and Mary in the Kingdom. The closeness which they sacrificed will then be revived.

We will relate to each other in terms of our spiritual characteristics. We will each have a name or character which is individual to us (Rev.2:17). We will relate to each other not by names as pieces of language, but by reason of the characteristics which they speak of. To relate to each other for ever as we do now, in human terms, would be totally unfulfilling. There is an urgent need for us to develop a spiritual aspect to our relationships now, especially between husbands and wives, parents and children.

The Millenium: How Different?

We must bear in mind that the curse will have not been fully lifted in the Millennium; the seeds of rebellion which openly manifest themselves at the end of it will always be there. There will be no compulsion on the mortals to respond to our preaching; and seeing that human nature will not have been changed one bit, it is to be expected that there will be a fair degree of rejection of our message, or failure to live up to its standards among those who do accept it.

There are ample hints that the Millennium will not be universal bliss; evidence of the curse will not be lacking. The cloud of glory over Zion will be "a tabernacle for a shadow in the day-time from the heat, and for a place of refuge, and for a covert from storm and rain" (Is. 4:6). The evidently symbolic application of all this will presumably be re-inforced to the mortals by the simple practical lesson that the glory of Yahweh brings shelter from the vagaries of the climate, which will still, by implication, not be ideal for mortals. Ez.46:4 warns that the burnt offering in the future temple must be of unblemished animals- showing that there will still be blemished animals in the Millennium. The Prince, the Lord Jesus, will physically be in the temple to offer these sacrifices every Sabbath, the record says. Whilst we will have the power to be present where we wish at a moment's notice, there is a fair degree of emphasis on the physical presence of Christ being mainly in Jerusalem. "When the Prince (Jesus, Dan.9:25 etc.) shall prepare a voluntary burnt offering...voluntarily unto the Lord" (Ez.46:12) shows that Jesus will at times voluntarily offer an offering. Even Jesus will have freewill in His choice of service to God. Even in His exalted status, Jesus will *chose* of His own volition to express His love of the Father in this way. And how much more for us too? Our glorifying of God will not be mandatory or automatic in any sense. "The prince shall not take of the inheritance by oppression" (Ez.46:18) is the language of Ps.72 about Jesus; "he shall give his sons inheritance out of his own possession". The "sons" of Jesus are the believers, his spiritual children. This indicates that there will be a concept of property in the Millennium and the Kingdom too. We will have a largely sedentary existence, rather than constantly being on the move. This would also match the typology of our taking over the role of the priests under the Old Covenant.

Yet we are told that what He gives them will remain theirs by "inheritance" (Ez.46:16). Seeing that we will not have literal children, what can this mean? It seems that the record of the future temple is to some degree written in human terms so that it was comprehensible to those of Ezekiel's time. It would have been *possible* for the temple prophecies to have had a primary fulfilment at the time of the restoration; hence the use of such human language. Our possession of the land by inheritance would therefore refer to our eternally having the land. Earlier Ezekiel speaks of Gog's invasion of Israel in the latter days with many horses and spearmen clearly using the language of the day to describe modern weaponry.

"The priests shall not eat of anything that is dead of itself or torn" (Ez.44:31) indicates that the animals will die, and even fight each other ("torn"). Yet the mind flies to Is.11:9: "They (the context includes animals) shall not hurt nor destroy in all *my holy mountain*". The resolution of this lies in the recognition that the conditions of the Kingdom will be more intensely seen in the mountain of the Lord, i.e. "mount Zion which He loved" where the temple will be. Yet this mountain will spread (Dan.2:44) to fill the whole earth. This is one of many indications, to be discussed fully in a later chapter, that the curse will be especially lifted in the Jerusalem area, although those blessings will spread throughout the earth in accord with the spread of acceptance of the Gospel.

There has always been some objection to the idea of animal offerings in the Millennium. Yet in terms of responsibility to God, there is no difference between the offering of animals or vegetables. The fact that animals will die and be torn in the Millennium is not out of keeping with the fact that the curse will not have

been fully lifted. There will be mortal priests, the literal sons of Zadok, who " shall not gird themselves with anything that causeth sweat" (Ez.44:18). Yet it seems that Adam before the fall did not sweat; the curse was that in the sweat of his face he would have to produce food for himself. The sons of Zadok will therefore be still under the curse. They will not be allowed to marry a divorcee (Ez.44:22); showing that the pain of broken relationships will still occur, even among the families of the mortal priests.

The land of the priests is not to be exchanged or sold (Ez.48:14); surely implying that there will be the possibility of commercial transaction in the Millennium. Unless God's ways are forced upon men, there will continue to be some degree of trading and financial currency amongst the mortals. The priests under the Law had no mandate to get involved in the control of this kind of thing, and it is doubtful if the saints will in the Millennium. Neh.9:23-25 says that Abraham's seed will possess houses full of good things, the riches of the Gentiles, as Israel did in the primary fulfilment of the Abrahamic promises. It may be that to some degree the possessions of the world will come under the control of the saints, or more likely that of natural Israel ; although it must be remembered that there will be massive physical destruction of such things in the latter day judgments.

The Kingdom prophecies imply that there will arise a specific vocabulary associated with the worship of God in the Kingdom, similar to how we speak of 'fraternals', 'memorial meetings' etc. - phrases which only make sense to believers. " They shall call thee, 'The city of the Lord', 'The Zion of the Holy One of Israel'" (Is.60:14) is an example of this; instead of saying 'We're going to *Jerusalem*', the mortals will speak of 'The city of the Lord'. Is.61:6 is another example: " Ye shall be named 'The priests of the Lord', men shall call you 'The ministers of our God'. This all indicates a new way of thinking and speaking among the mortals who respond to our message. This will truly be a change from the present attitude of the world towards Israel, both natural and spiritual.

" The fruitful field will be reckoned as a forest" (Is.32:15)- i.e. there will be much less emphasis on the need to produce food, so great will be the change in the fertility level of the earth. This is an aspect worth bearing in mind when considering the extent to which the Millennium will be different from our present experience. Fruitful trees will grow wild, without the need for constant tending. The release of time will therefore give the mortals the opportunity to consider God's ways. Lack of time due to the pressures of the daily round is the most common excuse given for lack of response to the Gospel.

Sin In The Millennium

" Remember ye not the former things, neither consider the things of old" (Is.43:18)- i.e. the things of the preceding verses, which speak of Israel's sinfulness in Egypt. It seems from this that all the things related to sin will be expunged from our consciousness. Yet what we have learnt from the experience of sinful flesh will go with us for eternity. Jesus, despite the moral splendour of Divine nature, is still able to be *touched* with the feeling of our infirmities as He intercedes for the forgiveness of our sins (Heb.4:15). As we counsel distressed sinners in the

Millennium, we too will have the same degree of empathy with them as Jesus now has with us.

This leads to the question: "To what degree will sin be present in the Millennium?" . The devil being bound for 1000 years may well refer more to the lack of expression of sin in a political form, rather than human nature itself being somehow altered for all the mortal inhabitants, regardless of their response to the Gospel. Being aware of the judgments that came upon the earth at Christ's return, many mortals will doubtless respond to the Gospel from a motive of fear, sensing that this is what they *ought* to do, rather than doing so from a true love of God's righteousness. It is highly significant that in a number of the prophecies about the nations submitting to Christ's rule, a Hebrew word is used which means *feigned obedience*. Ps.66:3 speaks of "all ye lands" saying to God "How terrible art thou in thy works! through (on account of) the greatness of thy power shall thine enemies submit themselves ('yield feigned obedience', Heb.) unto thee" . Ps.81:15; 18:44 are similar examples.

Whilst thinking of sin in the Millennium, it is worth reflecting upon the place of the rejected saints in the Millennium. Rev.14:11 speaks of the smoke of torment ascending up "for ever and ever" in the presence of the Lamb and His Holy Angels. This going on throughout the 'aion of the aions' would suggest that there will always be the reminder of the condemnation of sinners, certainly for the duration of the Millennium. How this will be achieved in practice is hard to envisage. But in some way, there will always be a reminder of the rejection and judgment of the unworthy saints of this present dispensation. This will serve as a powerful reminder to the mortals of the Millennium age; it may well be something which we use to remind them of the seriousness of sin.

2 Pet.3:7 speaks of the heavens and earth being reserved unto "the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men", and then goes straight on to point out that "one day is with the Lord as a thousand years" . Whilst the judgment seat itself may last a very short time, does this read as if *the day* or era of judgment will in some way be the 1,000 years of the Millennium, even though the wicked individuals themselves will probably die fairly quickly? The Millennium will be the period in which the earth will gradually be cleansed of the results of the sins of "ungodly men" .

The Rebellion

It is reasonable to assume that there will be about three generations in the Millennium. A child will die at 100 years old (Is.65:20), whereas today a child would be considered anything from five to 15 years old. If a child will then be thought of as 100 years old, then life-spans will be increased by about 10. The average life of a mortal believer would then be around 700; it is for this reason that we suggest that there will only be three generations in the Millennium. We have noted earlier that apostasy is usually evident in the third generation after a revival of the truth. It seems that this same tragic pattern will be observable in the Millennium. Ez.37:25 speaks of how Israel would dwell in the land, in the Kingdom, "they and their children, and their children's children", under the rulership of "David their prince"; again hinting at three generations? Compare this

with " to you and you children" in Joel 2:28 (cp. Acts 2:39), possibly referring to the two generations who had the miraculous power of the Holy Spirit after Pentecost. That prophecy has a future fulfilment in the Kingdom- in the first two generations of natural Jewish believers having the gifts in order to support the spread of the Gospel? They will be heavily involved in preaching in the earlier stages of the Millennium.

The rebellion comes from " Gog and Magog" . The rebellion may be from the same geographical region as the Gog of Ez.38; or (more likely), the Gog/Magog invasion of the last days will be typical of the rebellion at the end of the Millennium. Their motive will be to take a great spoil, to capitalize on the weak defences of what seems to them like a paradise on earth. These same motives will be seen in the final rebellion. Notice that they come up against Jerusalem; as if the conditions and blessings of the Kingdom are particularly manifest there, as compared to the rest of the earth. This rebellion has support in " the four corners of the earth" (Rev.20:8); it will be widespread. 'Satan' does not just mean abstract diabolism; it is sin manifested in something, either an individual or an organization. It seems that such a movement, collectively embodying the diabolism of the flesh, will gain support in the Millennium. They are described as being as numerous " as the sand of the sea" - immediately shouting for comparison with the true seed of Abraham having the same description. This connection may imply that the rebels are apostates from the true seed of Abraham- they outwardly appear as the seed, yielding 'feigned obedience' to the Gospel, and then apostacizing.

The rebellion happens " when the thousand years are *expired*" (Rev.20:4). " The rest of the dead" did not live again " until the thousand years were *finished*" (Rev.20:5). This conscious connection between the 1000 years expiring and being finished may suggest that the rebellion is in some way associated with " the rest of the dead" who are resurrected and judged at the end of the 1000 years. It may be that those who are rejected at the second judgment, having the outward appearance of the seed of Abraham, will be associated with this rebellion.

Notice that it is *after* the end of the Millennium and the second resurrection/judgment that the " nations" are gathered to rebel. Who are these " nations" , seeing the second judgment is passed, and the Millennium has ended, by the time they are gathered? Presumably they must refer to the rejected responsible of all nations, who have been sent back to their various geographical homes to live for a while. As the rejected responsible of the first judgment may see part of the Millennium (cp. Moses seeing the land, the rejected Jews seeing Abraham enter the Kingdom, the goats seeing the sheep accepted), so those of the second judgment may exist a fraction into the glorious ages of eternity. There are many problems with interpreting these verses in Rev.20. These are just suggestions!

CHAPTER 29: THE NATIONS IN THE MILLENNIUM

It is reasonable to think that to some degree the curse of differing languages given at the tower of Babel will be reduced in the Millennium. However, there are many references to *nations* coming to worship the Lord, and submitting to His Gospel. The final rebellion will be due to *the nations* being gathered by Gog and Magog.

However, before the time of Babel, there was still some concept of nationhood. After the flood (before the time of Babel), " the Gentiles (were) divided in their lands; every one after his tongue, after their families, in their nations...the sons of Shem, after their families, after their tongues, in their lands, after their nations...by these were the nations divided in the earth after the flood. And the whole earth was of one language, and of one speech" (Gen.10:5,31-11:1). Thus the world was of one *language* but of different *tongues*. This indicates that they had one language, but many different dialects, which clearly divided the people into nations.

It is easy to imagine such a scenario in the Millennium too. If we will have the miraculous gifts of the Spirit again in the Millennium, this will include that of tongues- being able to preach in foreign languages. We have shown that the possession of tongues at Pentecost was but a foretaste of the situation in the Kingdom. The need for tongues is proof that there will still be language barriers in the Kingdom. Note that the Pentecostal gift was to speak in different (Jewish?) 'dialektos', i.e. dialects, which were fundamentally different. Likewise there may be one universal language in the Millennium (Hebrew?), which will be spoken with such different dialects that there will still effectively be language barriers in the Millennium. The fact that there was only one language gave the people of the world the opportunity to unite around a single objective- the building of Babel (Gen.11:6). That objective will doubtless change to the building up of glory to God rather than man, in the Millennium.

1 Cor.15:24 speaks of " the end" of the Millennium, when he will have put down " all rule and all authority and power" ; he will reign until " all enemies" are subdued. There will still be enemies of Christ throughout the Millennium; and there will also be human rulers and powers opposed to Him, to some degree, until they are finally subdued at " the end" of the Millennium. As Solomon's reign featured local rulers still existing in surrounding lands, so there is reason to think that Christ's Kingdom will still feature local human rulers of some kind, who may not be forced to be subject to Him. It takes time for the little stone to destroy the kingdoms of men, and totally establish God's Kingdom. Zeph.3:19 speaks of the Jews getting glory and praise in every nation which have persecuted them. The lands of their dispersion, Russia, Germany etc., will then recognize the spiritual status of God's people. This in itself implies that humanity will not be one homogeneous mass. The *nations* will decide to go up to worship God at Jerusalem (Zech.14:16); hinting at some kind of high level national decision by their leaders, as well as the individual desire of ordinary people from all nations?

The invitation to come up to Jerusalem will go forth early in the reign of Jesus; " every one that is left of all the nations which came against Jerusalem shall even go up from year to year..." (Zech.14:16). Another proof of this is in the description of the graves of Gog stopping the noses of " the passengers" during the seven months in which Gog lies unburied (Ez.39:11,12). These " passengers" surely refer to the mortals who are coming up to Jerusalem to seek the Lord, in the immediate aftermath of Gog's destruction. We have shown earlier that the motivation behind these pilgrimages will be to find the greater knowledge of God. " Peace" will be given in the future temple (Hag.2:9)- " the peace of Jerusalem" . The " mountain"

of the Kingdom will gradually " be exalted above the hills" , i.e. the small nations which still exist in the Millennium.

" Peace" usually refers to the peace with God which comes through forgiveness. Forgiveness will therefore in some sense be granted at Jerusalem. This could well be a reference to the keeping of a day of Atonement in the Millennium; forgiveness can be granted at any time, but its granting will be formalized at that feast. Zion will therefore be " the joy of the whole earth" because it will symbolize the victory over sin which is possible in Christ. Thus Ps.47:6 prophesies the people singing praises to God " with understanding" . The praise will not just be a pressure-release after the traumas of the last days. The same thing is hinted at in Jer.3:17. " The nations shall be gathered unto it, to the name of the Lord, to Jerusalem: neither shall they walk any more after the imagination of their evil heart" . They will not come to Jerusalem from fascination; but through loving God's *Name* /character, and having forsaken their sins. Mic.4:2 likewise describes the people going up to the temple *because* they have decided " to walk in His paths" . Again, the nations coming to Jerusalem is associated with their repentance, and desire to grow in the knowledge of God which comes through experiencing forgiveness.

If we are to be the ones who lead them to Jerusalem, we must now develop a fine love of spirituality; not seeing the Kingdom in terms of physical fulfilment, but as the ultimate expression of the character of God which we love. In our preaching of the Gospel of the Kingdom, we need to inculcate a love of God's ways, so that people will desire to be baptized for the right reason; they will wish to be in the Kingdom so that they can glorify His righteous character. All too often we preach to people with our eye on their baptism as being the end result; rather than seeing our duty to change their way of thinking, so that they will join the path which will lead to an eternity of God manifestation in His Kingdom. Likewise with the teaching of our children. It's not just a question of getting them under that water; 'Well, they're in! I haven't been too bad a failure in life'.

Praise In The Millennium

The nations will come with singing to Zion; as Solomon taught the people songs of spiritual wisdom, so may Christ. In the Kingdom, David said that he would " Praise thee with the psaltery...with the harp" (Ps.78:20-23; this is in a Kingdom context). This may imply that the saints use literal instruments in God's praise. However, we must not be too human about this. The reason for that praise is all important. In the Millennium, " the sacrifice of praise" will be brought " into the house of the Lord" , " *for* the Lord is good; *for* his mercy endureth for ever" (Jer.33:11). Notice how praise is likened to an animal sacrifice. The same careful preparation which was lavished on them will be put into preparing our praises to God. It will not be wholly spontaneous; that is a human concept of praise. Men will " sacrifice the sacrifice of thanksgiving" , as David wished that men would have done under the Old Covenant (Ps.107:21-23). Lev.7:12 describes the peace offering as " the sacrifice of thanksgiving" . The use of this same phrase in a Kingdom context in Ps.107 suggests that the equivalent of the peace offering will be in our prayers to God, being a mixture of freewill devotion and careful preparation. And in this life, we must also offer this " sacrifice of praise" ; the spirit of the Mosaic Law, e.g. the peace offering, must be *fulfilled* in us; the Law was not just destroyed full stop.

Thus the praise of God at Jerusalem will not be a glorified Billy Graham rally; the praise of God will be motivated by the correct understanding of God, through the instruction of His word and the real experience of God's character in His forgiveness.

ISRAEL IN THE MILLENNIUM

Jer.31:7 speaks of how Israel in the Millennium will say " Arise! Let us go up to Zion, unto the Lord our God" after their acceptance of the New Covenant. Their enthusiasm will spread to the surrounding Gentiles; *their* pilgrimage to Zion is described in almost identical language (Is.2:3). Zech.8:22 describe how " ten men shall take hold out of all languages of the nations (implying there are still nations and languages) of the skirt of him that is a Jew, saying, We will go with you" . This seems to be talking about the early years of the Millennium, when Israel first go up to Zion from their dispersion. Thus in the Millennium the Jews will " walk up and down in His Name" (Zech.10:12), declaring the Name/character of God, showing His mercy by their very existence and glorification. Thus they will fulfil God's original purpose for them; that they should be a missionary nation, witnessing His Name to the world. " Keep therefore and do them (the commandments); for this is your wisdom...in the sight of the nations, which shall hear all these statutes (by Israel speaking of them), and say, Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people" (Dt.4:6).

The Jews will have the gifts of the Spirit in the Millennium (Joel 2:29-32). These will include the very important gift of prophecy; i.e. speaking forth the inspired words of God. This may suggest that the Bible will not be the only textbook for the mortals; God's revelation to the mortals may be through the Jews' teaching them.

We know from the way in which the little stone gradually fills the whole earth that the fullness of the Kingdom will not immediately fill the whole earth the moment that Jesus is back on earth. There is reason to think that many of the Kingdom prophecies of great future blessing will apply mainly to natural Israel and their land. It is the Negev (" *the wilderness...the desert*, in Israel) which will rejoice and " blossom abundantly" . This is certainly how the Jews of Isaiah's day would have understood this. The weak hands and feeble knees of the latter day Jewish remnant will be strengthened by the knowledge that " your God will come with vengeance...he will come and save you" , i.e. Israel. " *Then* the eyes of the blind shall be opened...*then* shall the lame man (cp. " feeble knees") leap...and an highway shall be *there* (in Israel)...the ransomed of the Lord shall return

(along that highway) and come to Zion" , where it terminates (Is.35).

THE SPREAD OF THE KINGDOM

We know from the way in which the little stone gradually fills the whole earth that the fullness of the Kingdom will not immediately fill the whole earth the moment that Jesus is back on earth. Kingdoms are often described as mountains. They are also composed of people; the spread of the mountain/Kingdom therefore refers to the progressive conversion of the mortals, and their subsequent experience of the Kingdom conditions in their lives, for example as outlined in Is.65:20-25. We have

earlier shown that passages like this only apply to the mortals who accept the Gospel. Seeing that they will progressively accept it as the stone spreads world-wide, it follows that the conditions of the Kingdom such as fertile lands, lack of pain in childbearing etc., will also spread gradually and selectively. " They shall not hurt nor destroy in *all my holy mountain*" , which will spread world-wide (Is.11:9). These conditions will therefore spread, in accordance with the acceptance of the Gospel. The animals will not fight each other in the " holy mountain" (Is.11:7-9); but Ezekiel's prophecies teach that it will be possible to try to offer a mauled animal in the Millennium. Such an animal would therefore have come from the areas which are not yet part of the " holy mountain" .

" There shall be no more *thence*" , i.e. in Jerusalem and " my people" , the frustrations of this present life (Is.65:19-21) is further indication that the Kingdom conditions will not be universal, but will be specific to the land of Israel, the natural Jews, and the mortal believers who respond to the Gospel. " They (" mine elect")...shall not plant and another eat" etc. The fact that there will still be freewill among the mortals, their human nature will not have been changed, means that there will be a fair degree of rejection of the Gospel; and therefore the Kingdom conditions will not be absolutely universal. Is.61:5 speaks of how in the Millennium " strangers shall stand and feed your flocks, and the sons of the alien shall be your plowmen and your vinedressers" , although in Is.65:21-24 we are told that God's people will no longer be vinedressers or agricultural labourers for others. Under the Law of Moses, it was God's intention that each Israelite should have their own vineyard (Ex.22:5); and we have seen that the Law was a prophecy of the conditions of the Millennium for *Israel*. The conclusion from all this must be that Is.65:21-24 is not speaking about the experience of *every* mortal person in the Millennium, but rather about that of natural Israel and those mortals who accept the Gospel.

The following passages give a clearer picture of the Kingdom spreading:

- " The mountains shall bring peace to the people, and the little hills, by righteousness" (Ps.72:3). These " mountains" must refer to the constituents of the great mountain of the Kingdom; the " little hills" must refer to us, who will bring peace to the mortals by teaching them the Gospel of God's love and righteousness. Peace will be *brought* to the people like this, in the same way as the little stone spreads gradually.

- " Thy seed (Jesus) will I establish...and build up thy throne to all generations" (Ps.89:4) implies that the throne of Christ will be built up, or expanded, throughout the Millennium. Likewise I Cor.15 speaks of Christ's rulership over the nations growing progressively until " the end" of the Millennium.

- " Of the increase of His government and peace there shall be no end" (Is.9:7) must also refer to the gradual spread of the Gospel of peace with God.

- " *When* the poor and needy (language often used in Isaiah about those who recognize their spiritual poverty) seek water...I the Lord will hear them...I will open rivers...I will make the wilderness a pool of water" (Is.41:17-19) suggests that the conditions of the Kingdom will not come indiscriminately upon the mortals.

When men (natural Israel, in the strict context of Is.41) truly seek God, *then* the physical blessings are given to them.

- Because of the physical blessings which will come with acceptance of the Gospel, there will be much "feigned obedience" of the type spoken of earlier; as there was in the first century, due to the presence of the Holy Spirit gifts. However, there is reason to think that there will be many genuine converts in the Millennium. We are the "firstfruits" of all God's spiritual creation; indicating that many more people will be converted to God in the Millennium than those who have been redeemed during the previous 6000 years of God's purpose?

- "Thus saith the Lord, in an acceptable time have I heard thee" (Is.49:8) is quoted by Paul in 2 Cor.6 about us. The next verse, Is.49:9, must therefore also be about us: "That thou mayest say to the prisoners, Go forth; to them that are in darkness, Shew yourselves...they shall not hunger nor thirst; neither shall the heat nor sun smite them: for he that hath mercy on them shall lead them, even by the springs of water". In the same way as we have experienced the "acceptable time" in this life, so we will be able to encourage the mortals to make use of the "accepted time" of the Millennium. It is *when* they do this that "they shall not hunger nor thirst".

- Likewise Ps.67:5,6 speaks of the people praising God in the Millennium; and "*then* shall the earth yield her increase", when the peoples of the earth properly praise God. Again, we see that the blessings of the Kingdom are related to peoples' acceptance of the Gospel.

- "So thou shalt do the seventh day of the month...and for him that is simple" (Ez.45:20) surely speaks of a sacrifice for sins of ignorance. That there will be ignorance shows that the Gospel will not be fully spread to everyone immediately, and therefore the Kingdom will also spread rather than be a condition which arises overnight on the whole earth.

- Our thesis is nicely summarized by Ezekiel's prophecy of the river of water of life (representing the Gospel) going out from Jerusalem, with the result that wherever it went, a forest of healthy trees sprung up, and healing was brought to the nations. This shows how the physical blessings of the Kingdom will only be given in relation to peoples' response to the Gospel. "Everything shall live whither the river cometh", both naturally and spiritually (Ez.47:9). It is to this verse which Jesus alluded in Jn.7:38: "As the Scripture hath said (in Ezekiel), he that believeth in me, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water". Through our preaching with the Spirit, we will be this river of living water. However "that which shall not be healed, they shall be given to salt" (Ez.47:11 A.V.mg.) shows that some will refuse our preaching. Salt is used in Scripture as a figure of God's judgment and a place which is uninhabited (Dt.29:23; Jud.9:45; Jer.17:6). This means that in the Millennium, there will be some places which are "salt" due to their rejection of our Gospel. Again, we see reason to believe that the *whole* earth will not necessarily have the conditions of the Kingdom which we are familiar with.

- "The mountains (us) shall drop down new wine" (Joel 3:18) speaks of our preaching of the Gospel; "drop down" is a Hebraism often used of doctrine

dropping down. Yet here the mountains result in wine and milk dropping down; as if the dropping down of doctrine is related to that of physical blessing too.

- Jesus will have a Kingdom, the house of Jacob, which shall have no end (Lk.1:33). We know that " of the *increase*" of His Kingdom there will be no end; surely meaning that Christ's domination of the believers' minds will grow and grow; our relationship with Christ will grow progressively deeper. Likewise the grip which He has on the lives of the mortal believers will also increase. " Wisdom and knowledge shall be the stability of thy times" , and therefore as those things progressively increase, so will the peace and stability of the physical and spiritual environment in which the mortal believers live.

CHAPTER 30: THE NATURAL CREATION

The Spiritual Aspect Of The Natural Creation

There is good reason to think that God does not wish us to perceive the natural creation as having no spiritual sensitivity at all. Seeing that the Angels control the natural world, each of its elements to some degree manifests them. This may be the reason for the following Biblical hints that we are meant to recognize a certain degree of spiritual awareness in the natural creation:

- Man who does not know God's ways is like the animals (Ps.48:20). Yet all men have some degree of moral consciousness. Seeing that they are in the same spiritual state as the animals with regard to responsibility to God, is it possible to infer that animals too have a certain level of morality? Can they too discern God's ways and be aware of Him, without being responsible to Him?

- God spoke to Daniel's lions, to Balaam's donkey and to Elijah's ravens. Those animals are portrayed as being responsive to God's commands. Thus at the end of the book of Job we read of Leviathan praying to God, asking Him for things (Job 41:3). God even speaks of Himself as playing with His animal creation, having a master/servant relationship with them (Job 41:4,5).

- The trees and plants rejoice because of the prospect of the second coming (Ps.96:12-14 cp. Acts 17:31). Josephus records that there were many strange signs in the natural creation in the run up to AD70; as there will be in the last days which they prefigured?

- " The young lions...seek their meat from God...they all wait upon thee" (Ps.104:21) for their food; as Leviathan also prayed to God for his food.

- Rom.8:21 may have some reference to the natural creation. The *whole* of creation earnestly looks forward to the manifestation of the sons of God. The whole of creation was made " subject to vanity, not willingly" - it was not their fault that the curse came upon them. " The *whole* of creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together" , longing to share in the manifestation in glory of God's spiritual creation. The sadness and bitterness of the animal creation is due to their

longing for that day of " the glorious liberty of the children of God" in which they will share.

- Jer.8:7,8 uses the " stork in the heavens" as an exhortation to wayward Israel. He says that the animals have a sense of future events which will be brought by the Lord, and so even more so should God's people. As the stork does not build a beautiful nest before it migrates, neither should God's people just before their calling away.

- Heb.1:12 speaks of the natural creation as a vesture which will be folded up and put away. Job likewise speaks of the natural creation as " the outer fringes" of God's garments. If God clothes Himself with them, they must to some degree be connected with Him personally, rather than being irrelevant to God's self revelation to man.

- Ps.69:34 speaks of how *everything* in the sea, heavens and on earth should praise God. This cannot refer to believers in all those places. Rev.5:13 uses similar language to describe how every creature in the sea, under the earth and on the earth and in Heaven, all praised God for Christ's ascension into Heaven. The dead do not praise God. The impression is given that the whole natural creation did in some way render praise to God.

- Job 35:11 says that God teaches *us* more than He does the animals; as if He *does* teach them to some degree. " Doth not even nature itself teach you..." shows that Paul saw that the natural creation does have *something* to teach us. For example, the physical state of the natural creation in Israel reflects the state of God's people. Lev.18:25 says that because " The land is defiled, therefore I do visit the iniquity thereof upon it...the land vomiteth out the inhabitants" . Time and again, the prophets dropped their words against *the land* of Israel (e.g. Ez.7; Hos.1:2; Am.7:10; Mal.3:12; Hab.2:8; Ez.9:9; 14:13), seeing that the land was so closely associated with the people. The physical joy to come upon the land will therefore reflect the spiritual joy of the inhabitants; showing that many of them will repent and accept the Gospel. It may even be that there will be literal physical healing in some of the trees in the land, to match the spiritual healing which will be present there too (Ez.47:12). In the same way as the trees give their fruit monthly, so it may be that we too give some special spiritual blessing to the people under our jurisdiction on a similar regular basis. " From one new moon to another (monthly?), and from one sabbath to another (weekly), shall all flesh come to worship before me" (Is.66:23) surely refers to the mortals presenting themselves before *us*, rather than going to Jerusalem each week.

- " They (the animals) shall not hurt nor destroy...*for* the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord" (Is.11:9) shows that the animals will somehow be affected by the abundant knowledge of the Lord.

The Natural Creation In The Millennium

If the curse on the whole creation is to be greatly reduced in the Millennium, we can look forward to the spiritual aspect of the natural creation being greatly developed. The following passages indicate how this will happen:

- Having described how the wild animals would desolate Babylon, Is.35:1 goes on to speak about how "The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for *them*", the mournful creatures who were once used by God to mark the desolation of His enemies. There will be a sympathy between the physical state of the wilderness and that of the animals; because of them, the wilderness will blossom. Is.35:8,9 speaks of the way of holiness, which would be free from the lion and "ravenous beast", presumably because the aggression of the animals in that area will be taken away. "They shall not be found *there*" may imply that they will be found in other areas of the earth, where the Kingdom conditions have not yet spread to.

- Is.35:6,7 LXX implies that there will be a channel of water flowing out from Jerusalem into the deserts which subdivides into further channels. This language of flowing recurs in Is.2:2-4, regarding the flowing of the nations to Jerusalem; as if the spiritual state of the people, flowing to Jerusalem, will be related to the flowing of physical water and blessings from God.

- "The beasts of the field shall honour me...*because*" God gives water in the desert to his people (Is.43:20). The thankfulness of the desert tribes for these things will be based upon that of the natural creation. Seeing that even in this life they ask God for their food and water, they will rejoice the more when God gives them these things abundantly in the Millennium.

- Is.44:23 speaks of the joy which there will be in the forests and trees "for the Lord hath redeemed Jacob, and glorified Himself in Israel". The joy of Israel's redemption will somehow be shared by the natural creation (cp. note on Is.43:20 above).

- The impression is often given that sitting under our own vine and fig tree will mean lazing away the day, only needing to expend minimum effort on the natural creation. However, Am.9:13 presents a picture of zealous agricultural work, with the ploughman overtaking the reaper, working with a real enthusiasm. The great physical blessings will therefore provoke hard, joyful work amongst God's people of natural Israel. The emphasis on the production of wine in this and other such prophecies, is surely to hint at the great zeal which there will be for the work of Christ.

Deserts In The Millennium

Is.42:15 is in the context of the Gospel being spread in the Millennium. But some mountains will also be made waste, and "I will dry up their pools", rather than the wilderness becoming pools. This is the exact opposite of Is.41:18, describing the blessings of the Millennium for those who accept the Gospel. This indicates that the state of the natural creation will reflect the spiritual response of people to the Gospel; if they reject it, then the physical conditions will be the very opposite of what they will be in the areas which accept the Gospel. "Where there were a thousand vines...all around shall become briars and thorns" (Is.7:23,25) is another example of this reversal of the planned blessings for those who wilfully reject the Gospel. Seeing that satan *will* be bound, the curse *will* be greatly reduced, and yet it will have been conditional upon people's acceptance of the Gospel, we can conclude that the mortals will generally accept the Gospel. Thus the mortal priests

will not wear linen garments, *so that* they will not sweat (Ez.44:18); this evidently alludes to the curse of working in the sweat of our face. The decrease in literal sweat is not necessarily automatic; it will come as a result of obedience, in this case to the commands concerning clothing.

Joel 3:19, in a Kingdom context, speaks of Egypt and Edom as being a "desolate wilderness" in the Millennium presumably because they refuse the Gospel. Hence Zech.14:16 warns that if Egypt do not keep the feast of Tabernacles, they will not have rain. In similar vein God warned Seir (i.e. Edom?): "When the whole earth rejoiceth (in the Millennium), I will make thee desolate...I will make thee perpetual desolations, and thy cities shall not return" to prosperity, as other areas do in the Millennium (Ez.35:14,9). Babylon will remain "a dry land, and an Arabah" (Jer.50:12 Heb.). The Arabah or Negev of Israel will be changed (Is.35:1,2); whilst Babylon will become like that once was. The curses upon Israel are brought upon her unrepentant enemies, and the physical state of their land will bear witness to that. Thus the physical abundances of the Kingdom prophecies will not come upon these nations; although presumably most other nations *will* respond.

CHAPTER 30: THE NATURAL CREATION IN THE KINGDOM OF GOD

The Spiritual Aspect Of The Natural Creation

There is good reason to think that God does not wish us to perceive the natural creation as having no spiritual sensitivity at all. Seeing that the Angels control the natural world, each of its elements to some degree manifests them. This may be the reason for the following Biblical hints that we are meant to recognize a certain degree of spiritual awareness in the natural creation:

- Man who does not know God's ways is like the animals (Ps.48:20). Yet all men have some degree of moral consciousness. Seeing that they are in the same spiritual state as the animals with regard to responsibility to God, is it possible to infer that animals too have a certain level of morality? Can they too discern God's ways and be aware of Him, without being responsible to Him?
- God spoke to Daniel's lions, to Balaam's donkey and to Elijah's ravens. Those animals are portrayed as being responsive to God's commands. Thus at the end of the book of Job we read of Leviathan praying to God, asking Him for things (Job 41:3). God even speaks of Himself as playing with His animal creation, having a master/servant relationship with them (Job 41:4,5).
- The trees and plants rejoice because of the prospect of the second coming (Ps.96:12-14 cp. Acts 17:31). Josephus records that there were many strange signs in the natural creation in the run up to AD70; as there will be in the last days which they prefigured?
- "The young lions...seek their meat from God...they all wait upon thee" (Ps.104:21) for their food; as Leviathan also prayed to God for his food.
- Rom.8:21 may have some reference to the natural creation. The *whole* of creation earnestly looks forward to the manifestation of the sons of God. The

whole of creation was made " subject to vanity, not willingly" - it was not their fault that the curse came upon them. " The *whole* of creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together" , longing to share in the manifestation in glory of God's spiritual creation. The sadness and bitterness of the animal creation is due to their longing for that day of " the glorious liberty of the children of God" in which they will share.

- Jer.8:7,8 uses the " stork in the heavens" as an exhortation to wayward st1:country-region>Israel. He says that the animals have a sense of future events which will be brought by the Lord, and so even more so should God's people. As the stork does not build a beautiful nest before it migrates, neither should God's people just before their calling away.

- Heb.1:12 speaks of the natural creation as a vesture which will be folded up and put away. Job likewise speaks of the natural creation as " the outer fringes" of God's garments. If God clothes Himself with them, they must to some degree be connected with Him personally, rather than being irrelevant to God's self revelation to man.

- Ps.69:34 speaks of how *everything* in the sea, heavens and on earth should praise God. This cannot refer to believers in all those places. Rev.5:13 uses similar language to describe how every creature in the sea, under the earth and on the earth and in Heaven, all praised God for Christ's ascension into Heaven. The dead do not praise God. The impression is given that the whole natural creation did in some way render praise to God.

- Job 35:11 says that God teaches *us* more than He does the animals; as if He *does* teach them to some degree. " Doth not even nature itself teach you..." shows that Paul saw that the natural creation does have *something* to teach us. For example, the physical state of the natural creation in Israel reflects the state of God's people. Lev.18:25 says that because " The land is defiled, therefore I do visit the iniquity thereof upon it...the land vomiteth out the inhabitants" . Time and again, the prophets dropped their words against *the land* of Israel (e.g. Ez.7; Hos.1:2; Am.7:10; Mal.3:12; Hab.2:8; Ez.9:9; 14:13), seeing that the land was so closely associated with the people. The physical joy to come upon the land will therefore reflect the spiritual joy of the inhabitants; showing that many of them will repent and accept the Gospel. It may even be that there will be literal physical healing in some of the trees in the land, to match the spiritual healing which will be present there too (Ez.47:12). In the same way as the trees give their fruit monthly, so it may be that we too give some special spiritual blessing to the people under our jurisdiction on a similar regular basis. " From one new moon to another (monthly?), and from one sabbath to another (weekly), shall all flesh come to worship before me" (Is.66:23) surely refers to the mortals presenting themselves before *us*, rather than going to Jerusalem each week.

- " They (the animals) shall not hurt nor destroy...*for* the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord" (Is.11:9) shows that the animals will somehow be affected by the abundant knowledge of the Lord.

The Natural Creation In The Millennium

If the curse on the whole creation is to be greatly reduced in the Millennium, we can look forward to the spiritual aspect of the natural creation being greatly developed. The following passages indicate how this will happen:

- Having described how the wild animals would desolate Babylon, Is.35:1 goes on to speak about how "The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for *them*", the mournful creatures who were once used by God to mark the desolation of His enemies. There will be a sympathy between the physical state of the wilderness and that of the animals; because of them, the wilderness will blossom. Is.35:8,9 speaks of the way of holiness, which would be free from the lion and "ravenous beast", presumably because the aggression of the animals in that area will be taken away. "They shall not be found *there*" may imply that they will be found in other areas of the earth, where the Kingdom conditions have not yet spread to.
- Is.35:6,7 LXX implies that there will be a channel of water flowing out from Jerusalem into the deserts which subdivides into further channels. This language of flowing recurs in Is.2:2-4, regarding the flowing of the nations to Jerusalem; as if the spiritual state of the people, flowing to Jerusalem, will be related to the flowing of physical water and blessings from God.
- "The beasts of the field shall honour me...*because*" God gives water in the desert to his people (Is.43:20). The thankfulness of the desert tribes for these things will be based upon that of the natural creation. Seeing that even in this life they ask God for their food and water, they will rejoice the more when God gives them these things abundantly in the Millennium.
- Is.44:23 speaks of the joy which there will be in the forests and trees "for the Lord hath redeemed Jacob, and glorified Himself in Israel". The joy of Israel's redemption will somehow be shared by the natural creation (cp. note on Is.43:20 above).
- The impression is often given that sitting under our own vine and fig tree will mean lazing away the day, only needing to expend minimum effort on the natural creation. However, Am.9:13 presents a picture of zealous agricultural work, with the ploughman overtaking the reaper, working with a real enthusiasm. The great physical blessings will therefore provoke hard, joyful work amongst God's people of natural Israel. The emphasis on the production of wine in this and other such prophecies, is surely to hint at the great zeal which there will be for the work of Christ.

Deserts In The Millennium

Is.42:15 is in the context of the Gospel being spread in the Millennium. But some mountains will also be made waste, and "I will dry up their pools", rather than the wilderness becoming pools. This is the exact opposite of Is.41:18, describing the blessings of the Millennium for those who accept the Gospel. This indicates that the state of the natural creation will reflect the spiritual response of people to the Gospel; if they reject it, then the physical conditions will be the very opposite of what they will be in the areas which accept the Gospel. "Where there were a thousand vines...all around shall become briars and thorns" (Is.7:23,25) is another

example of this reversal of the planned blessings for those who wilfully reject the Gospel. Seeing that satan *will* be bound, the curse *will* be greatly reduced, and yet it will have been conditional upon people's acceptance of the Gospel, we can conclude that the mortals will generally accept the Gospel. Thus the mortal priests will not wear linen garments, *so that* they will not sweat (Ez.44:18); this evidently alludes to the curse of working in the sweat of our face. The decrease in literal sweat is not necessarily automatic; it will come as a result of obedience, in this case to the commands concerning clothing.

Joel 3:19, in a Kingdom context, speaks of Egypt and Edom as being a "desolate wilderness" in the Millennium presumably because they refuse the Gospel. Hence Zech.14:16 warns that if Egypt do not keep the feast of Tabernacles, they will not have rain. In similar vein God warned Seir (i.e. Edom?): "When the whole earth rejoiceth (in the Millennium), I will make thee desolate...I will make thee perpetual desolations, and thy cities shall not return" to prosperity, as other areas do in the Millennium (Ez.35:14,9). Babylon will remain "a dry land, and an Arabah" (Jer.50:12 Heb.). The Arabah or Negev of Israel will be changed (Is.35:1,2); whilst Babylon will become like that once was. The curses upon Israel are brought upon her unrepentant enemies, and the physical state of their land will bear witness to that. Thus the physical abundances of the Kingdom prophecies will not come upon these nations; although presumably most other nations *will* respond.

CHAPTER 31: The Location Of Eden

The hope of the Kingdom should be the blinding light of our lives; it is surprising what great insight into that time can be gained from tracing through the allusions to it which are constantly made through the teaching of figures and types. One such means of visualizing the details of the Kingdom is through a study of the Garden of Eden. We are going to suggest that the Garden was originally located in the area around Jerusalem, centred on the temple mount, and that God's throne was originally located there, with a river going from it and every desirable thing located in the area. In the Millennium- the "restoration of all things" - this scenario will be repeated.

The location of Eden

A number of passages clearly associate Eden with Jerusalem and Israel:

1) Ezekiel 28:13,14: "Thou hast been in Eden the garden of God; every precious stone was thy covering, the sardius, topaz, and the diamond, the beryl, the onyx, and the jasper, the sapphire, the emerald, and the carbuncle, and gold: the workmanship of thy tabrets and of thy pipes was prepared in thee in the day that thou wast created. Thou art the anointed cherub that covereth; and I have set thee so: thou wast upon the holy mountain of God; thou hast walked up and down in the midst of the stones of fire." This prophecy concerns Tyre, and comments on her important place in the temple worship; it may well refer only to Hiram, described as "ever a lover of David" and presumably a proselyte. Being in "Eden the garden of God" (v.13) is associated with being "upon the holy mountain of God" (v.14)-so Mount Zion, the temple mount, was part of Eden.

2) There are many points of contact between Christ as the seed of the woman in the garden of Gethsemane (near the temple mount) and Eve in the garden of Eden- e.g. " The woman whom Thou gavest Me" (John 17:11) recalls Adam's " the woman which Thou gavest Me" (caused me to be sinful in Your sight- as we did to Jesus on the cross in the same garden). Not least there is the contrast between the struggles against temptation which took place in the same garden.

3) Isaiah 51:3: " For the Lord shall comfort Zion: He will comfort all her waste places; and He will make her wilderness like Eden, and her desert like the garden of the Lord; joy and gladness shall be found therein, and the voice of melody."

Here we see an association between the land of Israel and Eden. The verse seems to allude to Gen.13:10: " And Lot lifted up his eyes, and beheld all the plain of Jordan, that it was well watered everywhere.. even as the garden of the Lord" . Cannot " her wilderness.. and her desert" be the area around Sodom, which will be greatly changed by the healing of the Dead Sea? Thus Sodom and Gomorrah were located in " the plain of Jordan" just to the north of the Dead Sea. This area is directly East of Jerusalem, and this explains why Isaiah 51 says it will be a place of especial singing and melody, as presumably it will be here that the worshippers gather before ascending the temple mount to enter the temple, whose entrance gate will be on the East- Ez. 46:1. Thus the " garden of the Lord" is connected with the area around the temple mount. Ezekiel 36:35 becomes relevant here: " And they shall say, This land that was desolate is become like the garden of Eden; and the waste and desolate and ruined cities are become fenced, and are inhabited" . The cities mentioned are Sodom and Gomorrah- most other major cities have already been rebuilt in the land, and Ezekiel 36 must have its main fulfilment after Christ's return. Not now is the fertility of the land as proverbial as these prophecies say it will be. Thus the " desolate land" - whether Israel or the area of Sodom East of Jerusalem which we are suggesting- is described as " the garden of Eden" . Alternatively, the area being described is the temple or Jerusalem, seeing that the word " ruined (Pulled, thrown down)" in Ez. 36:35 is often used about the destruction of these places by the invasions. " Cities" would then be seen as an intensive Hebrew plural for the great city- Jerusalem. Jeremiah 12 and other prophecies strengthen this by using the figure of a wilderness to describe the desolation of the temple and Jerusalem- " I have forsaken My house (temple).. they have made My pleasant portion a desolate wilderness" . Also Is. 64:10 " Zion is a wilderness, Jerusalem a desolation" .

4) Lamentations 2:6: " He hath violently taken away His tabernacle (A.V. margin- 'hedge'), as if it were of a garden: He hath destroyed the places of His assembly" (in Jerusalem). The context of this verse is Jeremiah lamenting the fact that the temple had not been protected by God, even if the rest of the land had been overrun. He describes the withdrawal of God's protection from the temple as if a hedge had been taken away from around a garden. Thus the temple area is associated with God's garden- Eden.

5) Joel 2:1,3: " Blow ye the trumpet in Zion, and sound an alarm in My Holy Mountain: let all the inhabitants of the land tremble.. the land is as the garden of Eden before them, and behind them a desolate wilderness" . Again, Eden is associated with the land of Israel and Jerusalem. Of possible interest here is the

Septuagint of v.3 " the land before them is as a paradise of delight (Eden), and behind them a desolate plain" , perhaps alluding to Sodom and Gomorrha, " cities of the plain" , thus associating them with Eden again.

6) Isaiah 66:17 " They that sanctify themselves and purify themselves in the gardens behind one tree in the midst.." . This clearly alludes to the tree of knowledge in Eden, and primarily describes the abominations of the priests in the temple, thus connecting Eden with the temple.

7) A more complicated argument comes from a study of the terminology of Isaiah 14, Ezekiel 28 and 31. We have listed below the more obvious similarities between the passages. It can be shown that the terms 'Assyria' and 'Babylon' are often used interchangeably. This is shown especially in Isaiah 14 ,which in the context of Isaiah's time was more relevant to Sennacherib of Assyria than to Babylon, which was not a significant power at the time Isaiah prophesied. The prophecy speaks in v.25 of the Assyrian being broken in the land, as if continuing the prophecy about the downfall of the king aiming to capture Jerusalem. Thus Ezekiel 31 concerning Assyria is commenting on Isaiah 14, both of which have great parallels with the history of Tyre as outlined in Ezekiel 28. The basis for this parallel is that both the kings of Assyria and Tyre aspired to change the system of temple worship in Jerusalem. Sennacherib wanted to set his throne on the temple mount (compare Is. 14:13 and Ps. 48:2 and notice the many allusions in Ps.48 to the raising of Sennacherib's siege of Jerusalem); whilst Hiram, ceasing to be content with contributing the physical materials for the worship of Yahweh (see Ezek.28:13- the tabrets made by Tyre were instruments of the true worship in David's time -e.g. 1 Sam.10:5; Ps. 150:4; the tabrets were made of " fir wood" - 2 Sam. 6:5- which came from Hiram, 1 Kings 5:8), aspired to be the High Priest, Ezekiel 28; v.13,14 describe Hiram's freedom of movement in the temple area (v.13 " Eden the garden of God"), and the LXX of v.13 describes all the stones of the breast-plate as covering Hiram, as if he made himself a breast-plate; he also made " pipes" , which is a unique word which means 'a bezel for precious stones'- all indicating he constructed his own priestly equipment. Ezekiel 28 describes these actions as Hiram being " in Eden" , and there are other allusions in Ezek. 28 to Eden- e.g. v.14 " the anointed cherub" , v.15 " perfect (very good) from the day that thou wast created" , and the abundance of precious stones in v.13, similar to the description of Eden in Genesis 2 as a place abounding in precious minerals.

Is. 14 and Ezek. 31 describe Sennacherib's aspirations as wanting to be king on Mount Zion, thrusting himself above the firs and cedars in the garden of Eden. Is.37:24 reports Sennacherib's desire to " come up to the height of the mountain (cp.Is. 14:13 " the mount"), to the sides of Lebanon (Is.14:13 " the sides of the North" -i.e. Jerusalem, Ps.48:2), and I will cut down the tall cedars thereof and the choice fir trees thereof" . " Lebanon" is here used to describe the area around Jerusalem, as it is in Josh.1:4, where " this Lebanon" where Joshua was standing was the territory around the lower part of the Jordan- which earlier we suggested was the location of Eden. Ez. 31:3 describes Sennacherib's pride as a " cedar in Lebanon" . The parallels with Is. 14 show this refers to his proud boasting as his armies camped outside Jerusalem. The cedars and fir trees of Ez. 31:8,9 who stand in awe of Sennacherib in the garden of Eden refer to the fearful rulers of Jerusalem. Firs and cedars are figures used elsewhere for Israel's leaders- e.g.

Hosea 14:8; Is. 2:13; Nahum 2:2,3 (again in the context of the Assyrian invasion) and Zech. 11:1,2,4. Thus Eden and the garden of God in which these figurative trees grew was the area around Jerusalem. This desire of Sennacherib to exalt himself over the Jewish leaders- the firs and cedars of Ezek.31- is described in Is.14:13 as wanting to be exalted above the stars of God- i.e. the leaders of the political heavens of Israel (see Dan.12:3 and its Jewish context). Indeed, Ez. 31:16 parallels Eden and Lebanon.

It may be argued that Gen.2 clearly defines the location of Eden in relation to the four rivers. However, it seems impossible that the course of those rivers remained the same after the flood. There is considerable evidence that the whole of Arabia was drastically changed by the Genesis flood. Gen.2:10 calls the four streams "headstreams" (N.I.V.)- as if they were short streams, not major rivers like the present Euphrates. It is suggested that the descriptions of Gen.2:11-14 are Moses' contemporary comments on what the 4 streams became after the flood. With this in mind it is important to note the tenses in Gen.2: " a river went (past tense) out of Eden..the name of the first is.. " (present tense). Similar examples of contemporary details of location being added to the record are common in the Pentateuch e.g. Genesis 14:2 " Bela (which is Zoar)...vale of Siddim (which is the salt sea)" and see also v.7,15,17.

Most references to Eden in later Scripture require reference to Israel or the Jerusalem area; none of the allusions to it seem to go back to the traditional location of it. The reference to " the children of Eden" which Assyria conquered near Babylon need not undermine the theory advanced; in the same way as this is where we have placed Eden today, so due to their reading of Genesis the ancients would have called people living in the Euphrates area " children of Eden" . As all students of Ezekiel 38 have found, the name of an area can be most deceptive, and is no indication that the area's identity is correctly reflected by the name. It is hard to understand why Eden should have been located on the site of Babylon, with all its associations with sin and the children of men. The many connections between Eden and the descriptions of the world's state during the Millenium become more meaningful if it was geographically located around Jerusalem, seeing that many descriptions of the Millenium apply mainly to the land of Israel and Jerusalem. The following passages are a selection of those which imply the conditions of the Kingdom will be far more in evidence in Israel/ Jerusalem than elsewhere in the world:

1) Rev.21:27-only the saints will be allowed in the new city.

2) Rev.22:3 " no more curse" in the city- this cannot apply to the whole earth.

3) Is.11:7-9 describes the animals living at peace and states " they shall not hurt nor destroy in all My holy mountain" ; yet the animals will hurt and destroy each other, albeit less than they do now, elsewhere in the earth during the Millenium- see Ez.44:31.

4) Is.65:20 " there shall be no more thence (i.e. in Jerusalem) an infant of days.." . This whole prophecy of the Millennial conditions is in the context of v.17: " I create new heavens and a new earth" . " Heaven and earth" is often a figure of the state

of Israel. " I create new heavens and...earth" is paralleled by " I create Jerusalem a rejoicing" . Indeed, all Isaiah's Kingdom prophecies are what he saw " concerning Judah and Jerusalem" in the future (Is.1:1), rather than the whole world.

5) Psalm 72 and other passages describing the fruitfulness of the earth apply mainly to the land of Israel- there will be deserts elsewhere ,see Joel 3:19.

6) The passages about living under our own vine and fig tree and not labouring for others must apply only to the land, because Is.61:5 describes some labouring for others in the Kingdom; and Jer.32:43 implies there will still be money used in that age

7) The promises to Abraham comprising " the Gospel of the Kingdom" are primarily concerning the land of Israel. " I will bless them that bless thee...and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed" (Gen.12:2,3) will only be totally fulfilled in the Kingdom. The blessing of the earth will therefore be based around that of natural Israel. The " Holy Mountain" , a phrase often used to describe the coming Kingdom, is a separate area from the rest of the world; this agrees with Daniel 2 describing the little stone returning to the land (A.V. " earth")- i.e. the mount of Olives (Acts 1:11) and becoming a great mountain, filling the land of Israel and then the world. If we take the " earth" to be the land of Israel- it is the same word used, the metals of the image refer to the powers which governed Israel, rather than world empires, thus avoiding the problem of other contemporary world empires existing at the times of the Babylonians and Persians. Therefore the nations say " Let us go up to the Mountain (a common figure for a Kingdom) of the Lord" ; they do not live in the " mountain" , which is only in Israel.

8) " The plowman shall overtake the reaper...and the mountains shall drop sweet wine" in Israel *because* " I will bring again the captivity of my people of Israel...and I will plant them" (Am.9:13,14).

9) That Eden had a mountain in it is shown by the four streams being " headstreams" (N.I.V.), necessitating the existence of a mountain. It is fitting that this mountain should be so prominent in the new Eden, and that from this mount should flow streams of living waters as they did originally. We need to be ever mindful that the Millenium will be a " restitution of all things" . It is interesting to note in passing the significance of this mountain as the place where Abraham offered Isaac (Moriah='The Lord will provide', Jerusalem='The Lord will see (provide) peace'), the Jebus of David's time, and other important events. The four rivers mentioned in Genesis are each types of the future river of life:

Pison ='freely flowing'- cp. Rev.21:6; 22:17 " take the fountain of the water of life freely"

Gihon = 'stream'- this river is presumably the same as the Gihon headstream which is mentioned as starting from Mount Zion in 2 Chron.32:30, thus again associating Eden and Jerusalem.

Hiddekel ='living water'

Euphrates ='bursting, sweet'

It would seem that four streams will flow out of the new river of life which Joel, Ezekiel Zechariah and Revelation describe as appearing in the future, hence the references to 'springs' (plural) in the Jerusalem area in the future- e.g. Ps.87:7; Is.49:10 (cp. 'heat nor sun' with Rev.22:5, thus making this apply to the saints in the new Jerusalem); Rev.7:7 (the Lamb's throne will be in Jerusalem). It may be that the "waters" of Ez.47:11 imply several streams originating from the temple mount. In the same way as the streams watered Eden, they will water the special area of blessing around Jerusalem in the Kingdom. "There is a river (singular) the streams whereof (the four streams into which it splits, as in Eden) make glad the city of God" (Eden)- Ps.46:4. In Joel 3:18 we see a new stream flowing East of Jerusalem to water the Shittim valley which is directly East of the new Jerusalem, again implying that the main effect of the river of life will be felt primarily in this area East of Jerusalem where the original Eden was located.

There seems to be a theme running through Scripture of all good things being concentrated in Eden, thus making it a good type of the Kingdom. Genesis 2 describes precious stones and gold being found in the Eden area. The word 'Eden' is translated "delights" in 2 Sam.1:24, in the context of describing the scarlet, gold and rich clothing Saul gave to the daughters of Israel- a picture of abundance. As we have seen, Ezekiel 28:13,14 also associates Eden with an abundance of precious stones and riches. With this understanding it now becomes clear that Psalm 36 is a commentary on Adam's fall in Eden, contrasting those deceived by sin and the serpent who are cast out of Eden, and those who will abide in it forever:

v.1 "his eyes..his own eyes" - lust of the eyes in Adam

v.2 "he flattereth himself.. that his iniquity shall not be found out" (A.V. margin)- as Adam trying to hide his sin with fig leaves. LXX:"he has dealt craftily before God" - the serpent

v.3 "he hath left off to be wise" - the serpent most wise of all the animals; "the words of his mouth are deceit"

v.4 "he does not reject what is wrong" (N.I.V.)- Adam

v.12 "there are the workers of iniquity fallen; they are cast down, and shall not be able to rise" - the serpent cast onto its belly in Eden.

Then there is the contrast with those who will inherit Eden:

v.5 "Thy mercy, O Lord, is in the Heavens" - despite Adam's sin

v.6 "the mountains of God" - two mountains in Eden?

v.7 "the shadow of Thy wings" - the cherubim guarding the way to the tree of life

v.8 "saturated with the abundance of God's house" - God's house to be built again in Eden and to include a super-abundance of good things as it did before. "Thou

shalt make them (cp.Lk.12:37) drink of the river of Thy Eden" (same word 'pleasures').

v.9 Because " with Thee is the fountain of life" - the fountain of the water of life in the new Eden.

The only other place where 'Eden' describes abundance is in Jer.51:34. Here God says that Babylon has devoured and crushed Him through taking Israel captive; one of His lamentations is that Babylon " hath filled his belly with My delicates" (same word 'eden'), thus associating Eden with the people of the land of Israel. However, 'eden' is normally translated 'sockets', with reference to the tabernacle. This connects with the idea that the future temple will be built on the area of Eden. The reference in Deut.11:12 to the eyes of the Lord (i.e. the Angels) continually being upon the land of Israel, despite the people being rejected and removed from the land, can be better understood if this is a result of the cherubim Angels placed around the tree of life still being there, although invisible, constantly watching Eden and the old location of the tree of life, in readiness for the day when the garden and the tree will again be brought into visible existence.

The descriptions of the new city of Jerusalem in the prophets and Revelation can be better understood once it is appreciated that Eden will literally be restored in that area. Zech.14:8-11 lays the basis for the descriptions of the city in Revelation, and includes the main elements of Eden- " living waters" ('Hiddekel') going out from a " Lifted up" mountain in Jerusalem, with " no more curse" there, v.11 (the phrase " no more utter destruction" is translated like this when it is quoted in Rev.22:3).

Rev.21 and 22 seem to describe a " wood of trees of life" (22:2- A.V. 'tree' must be wrong because the 'tree' is on either side of the river), watered by the river of life proceeding from the mountain of " the throne of God and of the Lamb" . We have seen that there was a mountain in Eden, and it seems fitting to suggest that God's throne was on this same mountain before the fall. Ezek. 47:12 also implies that the new 'garden' will consist solely of trees of life, " whose leaf shall not fade" - a contrast with the bright, glossy fig leaves Adam and Eve used to cover their sin which would have faded so quickly. Another allusion is the description of the trees of life as " trees for meat" , implying that instead of all the trees except those of life and knowledge being " for meat" (Gen.1:29;2:9), the tree of life alone will be for meat. Similarly, Rev.22:17, in the context of describing the new Eden, speaks of drinking " the water of life freely" , reminding us that " of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat" - except for the tree of life. The garden is now composed of that tree and its associated water, which can be freely consumed. The new rivers and mountains described have both a physical and spiritual fulfilment- e.g. there will literally be a high mountain in Jerusalem to symbolize that God's ways are exalted above the nations, and the river of life physically healing the land represents the spiritual healing of the barren nations. For this reason it seems we can interpret the description of many of the rewards of the faithful literally; we will literally eat the fruit of the trees of life in the midst of the new Eden- i.e. at the throne of the Lamb where judgement (or the ceremony of glorification) will take place; we will literally pluck leaves from those trees with which to heal the nations' sicknesses (Ezek.47:12), symbolizing spiritually the

fact that the nations are healed by God's provision through the medium of the saints.

Rev.22:2 states that there is a " street" running through the city, on either side of which is the wood of life, thus implying that the new Jerusalem and the new Eden are synonymous. The city's foundations ('edens') are of precious stones- the abundance of which, as we have seen, was associated with the literal Eden. Rev.22:14 again parallels the city and Eden by equating having " right to the tree of life" with entering " in through the gates into the city" . Rev.22:3 tells us that the throne of God will be in " it" - i.e. the wood of life (not the river- see context), as in Eden God's throne was in the garden, which garden was presumably a wood of trees and little else (" of every tree of the garden.." -other plants are not mentioned), in the same way as the new Eden is composed solely of trees of life. The invitation " of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat" is mirrored in " take the water (lit.:take from the stream) of life freely" - the stream being that of Eden. Rev.21:27 stresses that no serpent -" whatsoever worketh abomination or maketh a lie" - will enter the new Eden as it did before. The midst of the new Garden will be the throne of Christ, who in every way will then be the tree of life and knowledge.

This association between the city and the paradise of God raises an interesting question, in that the descriptions of the city in Rev.21 and 22 seem to contradict those given in Ezekiel 40-48:

Revelation	Ezekiel
21:27 Only those in the book of life can enter	45:6 the city is for natural Israel (Zech.8:5- children play in the streets). 44:11;46:9 ordinary mortals enter it.
21:25 City gates never shut	44:1 Gates shut at times
22:5;21:23 Glory of God is the light,eclipsing sun and moon	45:17;46:1,3 Moon shines in the city
22:14 those who enter the city eat the tree of life	mortal priests inside the city
21:22 no temple in the city	a temple in the city
The true temple has already been sprinkled by Christ's blood.	45:20 This temple needs regular cleansing (" so shall ye reconcile the house") by sprinkling of blood.

These are just some of the many disparities, yet both cities are said to be built on a great mountain. No satisfactory explanation seems to account for this, except to assume that the " great mountain" of Zion, God's throne in Eden, will split into two " great mountains" as foretold in Zech.14:4, the temple of Ezekiel being built on one and the Saints' city of Revelation on the other. Zech.14 mentions the rivers from one of the mountains as flowing twice a year, whilst the river of Rev.22 flows constantly with the result that the trees of life blossom every month, another

indication that although the two cities have certain similarities they are also clearly separate. Thus the temple and city of Ezekiel seems to be a lesser replica of those of Rev.22, as if to show the mortal worshippers what they can aspire to. This is perhaps based on the distinction in the prophets between 'Zion', the temple mount (to be equated with the future throne of God and the saints dwelling around it) , and the 'daughter of Zion' being the inhabited city, which in the future will be the city where children play in the streets, inhabited by mortals and visiting gentiles, with the temple for the Jews in it. A similar distinction is found in Is.24:23 : " When (in the Kingdom) the Lord of Hosts shall reign in Mount Zion, and in Jerusalem, (as if separate places), and before His ancients (saints in the city) gloriously" . A further possible basis for this arrangement is the clear difference between the " two houses, the house of the Lord and the king's house" (1 Kings 9:10) during the time of Solomon, a clear type of Christ's Kingdom. The personal dwelling of the King would then connect with the saints' city, and the Lord's house- the temple- would be the temple of Ezekiel, whose dimensions are exactly the same as those of Solomon's temple.

Notes

1) Links between Isaiah 14, Ezekiel 28 and 31

Ezekiel 28 Ezekiel 31 Isaiah 14

	:5	:13
:2	:10	:14
:7		:12
:8	:15	:15
:10	:18	
:12	:8	:4
:13	:18,8	:8
:16	:11	:12
:17		:16
:19		:16,17

2) I summarize here evidence that has been presented elsewhere, showing that 'Assyria' and 'Babylon' are often used interchangeably:

Is.13:8, part of a " burden of Babylon" is alluded to in Ps.48:5,6 concerning Sennacherib's Assyrian army; Is.13:21,22 echo Assyrian inscriptions; the prophecies about Babylon in Is.47 are repeated about Assyria in Nahum 3:4,5,16 and Zeph.2:13,15. Micah says to Zion in 4:10 " now..thou shalt go to Babylon" , as if it

was to be fulfilled straight away- but he prophesied at the time of the Assyrian invasion. 2 Chron.33:11 says the King of Assyria took Manasseh to Babylon- i.e. back to Assyria. Ezra 6:1 describes Darius as king of Babylon; v.22 calls him king of Assyria.

This confusion between Assyria and Babylon is understandable seeing the two nations initially spoke the same language, shared the same culture, and Sargon of Assyria called himself the 'vicar of the gods of Babylon'.

DIGRESSION 9: The Seven Final Visions Of Revelation

One of the keys to understanding Revelation is to realize that it is structured as a series of visions based around the number seven. It must also be understood that as with many Old Testament prophecies, the book of Revelation is not strictly chronological in its fulfilment. Sometimes we read something which is actually the final picture, and then we read how this situation came about. At other times, we find a series of visions give us as it were 'snapshots' of different aspects of the same process. The seven final visions are introduced by the rubric "And I saw...". It is my suggestion that they each show different aspects of the process of setting up the Kingdom. All references are to Revelation unless otherwise stated.

Overview: The thoughtful student of the final chapters of Revelation will realize that there are difficulties in 'fitting in' our usual view of the Millennium with the information presented there. The suggestion is made in these notes that the "thousand years" simply means 'a very long time', and refers to eternity. This solves the problem that a rebellion at the end of the 'Millennium' would contradict Is. 9:7; 60:18; Jer. 3:17 and other passages which teach that "they shall learn war no more" after the Kingdom is established. The wrath of God is finished when the seven *last* plagues are poured out (Rev. 15:1 RV), at the Lord's return, i.e. at the *beginning* of the 'Millennium'. At the coming of Christ, the powers represented by the dragon and beast are defeated and chained up. The dead are raised and judged. The rejected join the dragon in the 'bottomless pit', an area on the borders of the land of promise, i.e. the initial geographical extent of the Kingdom. Here they are restrained, but once the Kingdom is established, perhaps after a period of 7 years or so, they 'attack' the land of Israel, where the Kingdom of God has been established. They are then destroyed. The Kingdom then continues eternally. The descriptions of a judgment seat in these final chapters are all related to the same judgment seat, i.e. that when Christ returns. The OT prophecies of a 'Millennium' with mortal people in it either apply to the setting up period of the Kingdom, or they are to be read in a more figurative way.

First Vision: 19:11-16

19:11 Christ goes out to make war, the Beast and his armies go out to make war against Him (v.19)- head on conflict.

19:12 Cp. our name in the Kingdom; no-one can enter into Christ's sense of resurrection and reward; there will always be an unreachable, untouchable

element in him throughout eternity. Surely this makes our relationship with Him the more appealing.

Second Vision: 19:17,18

19:17 birds of prey gathered together = Ez. 39:17-20; therefore Gog / Magog = Beast and false prophet (19:19). This = 14:18-20, which is Joel 3:13. Therefore Joel 3 and Ez. 38/39 are parallel.

Third Vision: 19:19-21

19:19 This is war with Christ- therefore Ez. 38/9 = after Christ's return- the Psalm 2 scenario. He is already crowned, 19:12.

19:19 The beast, the kings of the earth and their armies 'gather together' to fight against Christ. This is the gathering of 16:13,14; they are gathered together by the power of the false miracles. Thus v. 20 mentions how "the false prophet that wrought miracles before [the beast]" is captured with the beast- the scene of 16:14.

19:20 "that wrought miracles"; the connections between Revelation and John's Gospel take us back to the miracles of Christ, for which John uses the same phrase (Jn. 2:11,18; 3:2; 4:54; 6:2,14,30; 7:31; 9:16; 10:41; 11:47; 12:18,37; 20:30. Thus the false prophet is an anti-Christ, a fake Christ with fake power and fake validation.

19:20 Destruction of the beast by fire = Dan. 7:11; Is. 30:30,33 (who is "the king"?). The beast and false prophet are cast into the lake of fire. This is the lake of 20:14,15; 21:8- where the unworthy saints are thrown. Thus the punishment of the rejected and that of the world is the same; and therefore there must be a separation *now*, lest we be "condemned with the world" (1 Cor. 11:). "Burning with brimstone" / sulphur recalls Sodom- where the unworthy believers shared the same fate as the 'world' around them. Lot's wife was turned into salt, as was the surrounding country (Lk. 17:29).

"The lake of fire" will be in the presence of Christ (14:10)- not underground. "Cast alive" suggests torture; cp. 14:10 "tormented". Others are simply killed outright by Christ's word of command (20:21). This would suggest that even among the irresponsible there are degrees of punishment.

Casting into a pit and fire as punishment cp. Babylon's persecution of Daniel and his friends.

Fourth Vision: 20:1-3

20:2 Satan is bound. Surely 'satan' here is the political forces of the dragon, not abstract sinfulness. Satan in the sense of the power of the flesh was bound by the Lord during his life and death (Mt. 12:29). However, it may be that the Lord's binding of satan was only for believers; he still has the power to bind (Lk. 13:16).

Bound 1000 years- i.e. for ever? Note the difference between binding and sealing.

20:3 The pit is s.w. Lk. 8:31,33, where the demons ask Christ not to send them into the abyss; the parallel record says that they asked not to be sent out of the land of Israel (Mk. 5:10). Also Rom. 10:7 uses the abyss as a term for the lands beyond Israel (it is referring to Dt. 30:13). The beast that comes out of the abyss comes out of the sea (11:7; 13:1). It seems that the geographical area outside Israel from where the beast comes (i.e. the Arab world?) is where it is returned to for punishment.

Loosed a little season once eternity (the "1000 years") is established. "Fulfilled" = s.w. accomplish; to establish, build up (Lk. 22:37; Gal. 5:16; James 2:8; LXX: Ruth 3:18; Is. 55:11; Dan. 4:30). The little season cp. 6:11- the time of persecution just before the Lord's return. Do the forces of evil try to persecute the saints by repeating their behaviour during the holocaust period which lead up to the Lord's return? If that lasted 3½ years, will their rebellion last a similar 3½ years? Both periods are described as "a little season".

Fifth Vision: 20:4-10

20:4 "Them that were beheaded". Death by beheading was only for Roman citizens; is this reference a special recognition of the sacrifice of those who could have had much in life, but gave it up for the sake of God's Truth?

Saints sitting on thrones = Dan. 7:22; the throne of the beast is cast down, and judgment given to the faithful.

"The word of God" = the preaching of the word; the word is designed by its very nature to be preached.

20:5 "But the rest"- those not among the righteous, v.4.

"Lived not again (no, not even when) the thousand years were established". For other examples of this idiom see 2 Sam. 6:23; Dt. 23:3 cp. Neh. 13:1. Who are the "rest of the dead"? The wicked responsible, raised to judgment along with the righteous? The rest of humanity?

"The first resurrection" doesn't have to imply that there is a second one chronologically. Jn. 5:29 says there are two resurrections; the first, to life, and the second to death. The second death is this second resurrection to death.

20:8 Gog and Magog. The similarities with Ez. 38/9 are so strong; an invasion of God's land when His people are in "peace and safety" (a phrase elsewhere used about the Kingdom), destruction by fire. According to the usual view of Rev. 20, this similarity means absolutely nothing. This cannot be correct exposition. There must be a connection; surely this must refer to the same invasion?

20:8 "Shall go out"- implying the bottomless pit is a geographical area?

Satan deceives the "nations"; but 21:1 says that when the Kingdom is established, there will be no more sea, no more nations. Therefore this must be appropriate to the beginning of the Kingdom. During the setting up period, the nations come up to worship Christ, as often prophesied in the OT; however, they are described as entering into the city (21:24-27), i.e. attaining immortality through their faith and obedience.

The dragon "will come out to deceive the nations which are at the four corners of the earth/ land" (RSV). The Gog / Magog invasion comes from those dwelling in the "isles" (Ez. 39:6); but this Greek phrase often means Gentile areas on the borders of the land (Is. 41:5; Jer. 47:4; and "the isles" in Ezekiel refer to Arab lands bordering the land of promise). Abraham was from the sides of the land of Israel (Is. 41:8,9), the margins of the land of promise- from where the final Arab invasion will come.

There is triple emphasis on his deception (vv. 3,8,10). He continues the work of the false prophet, after the false prophet is put into the lake of fire. The dragon carries on his work; the false prophet is Babylon (19:20), who also deceived (18:23). The bottomless pit, where the rebellion comes from, is therefore at the borders of the land. The Kingdom of God is fundamentally based upon the land of Israel. They are gathered to "*the* battle" (RV)- the final battle which the OT prophets so often mention.

The dragon was a deceiver back in 12:9, and still is, as Jezebel in the early church deceived (2:20). The dragon of chapter 12 is cast down at Christ's return; the description of the dragon being cast into the pit is an amplification of this. When the dragon is thrown down in chapter 12, he persecutes those of the land (natural Israel?) and the sea (the nations?) for "a short time" (12:12)- the "little season" of 20:3? The dragon is cast out of heaven in 12:9- meaning that he is thrown out of the 'heavens' of the land of Israel (or the temple specifically), into the earth / world.

Rev. 12	Rev. 20	Comment
The dragon persecutes the woman for 3½ years		The holocaust before Christ's coming
Thrown out of the temple / land of Israel (heaven) to the earth / rest of the world	Dragon cast to the earth / abyss	Christ comes to throw the man of sin out of his place in 'heaven' (2 Thess. 2)
There for a while until he realizes he has a short time	Chained	Setting up of the Kingdom
Makes war with the saints for another 3½ years, replicating the holocaust, also involving the sea (nations) and the land-dwellers (natural Israel?)	Makes war with the saints; aims for Jerusalem.	Rebellion; the invasion of Ez. 38 and maybe Joel 3; the desire for the temple forin Joel 3 would then be another similarity between the rebellion and the invasion prior to Christ's return.

Destroyed The Ez. 38/39 invasion is
by fire destroyed in two stages;
five sixths are destroyed
first, then the final sixth-
by fire.

20:9 They compass Jerusalem- s.w. Lk. 21:20. As they did during the invasion of the land prior to Christ's coming, so they will do in this re-enactment of it.

The rejected saints and defeated Arab armies will make the rebellion of 20:9. This will connect with the rebellion of Korah and his company of rejects against the encampment of God and His faithful people- which was also destroyed by fire. The lake of fire / bottomless pit / second death all seem to be parallel.

20:10 The dragon is in the abyss and deceives the nations which are there. The devil will deceive during the rebellion as it did in the period of the holocaust before the Lord's return (12:9; 13:14; 18:23; 19:20).

The devil is cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and false prophet already *are*. This suggests that their punishment lasts until the Kingdom is established, and until the "little season" of the rebellion is finished. Thus it would seem that the punishment of the wicked and rebels is to exist for some time into the Kingdom age. A number of passages tend to agree with this. The righteous will go forth from the borders of the promised land and look at their carcasses (Is. 66). The rejected saints go to the same place (20:15), condemned with the world (1 Cor. 11).

20:13 The sea giving up the dead doesn't refer to dead bodies floating upwards; sea = nations (17:5), which won't exist after the Kingdom is established (21:1); therefore this refers to the judgment at Christ's return.

Is the bottomless pit to be equated with the lake of fire? A place of punishment? The rebels are punished and then those who survive (i.e. those deserving more punishment) are sent back to this area, where they are punished for a long time, day and night for ever (20:10). But there will be no day and night as such in the Kingdom (21:25; 22:5). Therefore we must take this description of their punishment figuratively.

Sixth Vision: 20:11-15

20:11 is amplified / repeated in 21:1. This is about the judgment at the second coming, not the end of the 'Millennium'. Earth and heaven flee away (cp. 6:14)- the old human system. "There was no place found for them" = Dan. 2:35 re. the human system being destroyed at Christ's second coming, not the end of the 'Millennium'. This is surely the new heaven and earth of 21:1; that of Is. 65:17 and 2 Pet. 3:13, which will be established at Christ's return. The opening of the books (20:12) = Dan. 7:10; 12:1, which concern the start of the 'Millennium'.

20:14 The destruction of death = the second death, which occurs at the judgment (21:8), when Christ comes. The second death can't happen twice, at the start *and*

end of the Millennium. Death, sorrow etc. (21:4) are destroyed for *us*, the believers; this is believer-centric language. Likewise "men" in 21:3 = the believers, not all human beings then alive (some will still be enduring punishment).

Seventh Vision: 21:1-8

21:1-8 connects with Is. 65, concerning the establishment of the Kingdom, not after the Millennium.

21:1 No more sea, i.e. nations, 17:15

21:1 Heaven and earth pass away, the former (Gk. *proton*) things pass, v.4- the things that were once first place now pass.

21:2 "The bride" is married at the marriage supper (19:7-9)- not at the end of the Millennium. Therefore this is about the setting up of the Kingdom at Christ's return.

21:3 "The tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God" (21:3) = Ez. 37:26,27, concerning the time of Christ's return. If God lives with us at Christ's return, how will He be shielded from the 'mortal' population? This problem dissappears if the 1000 years is seen as a description of the Kingdom itself.

21:3 = fulfilment of Gen. 17:3.

21:4 wiping away tears s.w. Acts 3:19 sin blotted out at Christ's return. Tears = for our sins (sorrow = sin in Is. 53).

Will we have an emotional breakdown straight after the judgment?

21:6 Invitation to mortals to drink fountain of water of (eternal) life freely, as the river in chapter 22, implies the mortals will be progressively granted immortality during the setting up period. 21:24 Gk. speaks of the nations of those who are being saved. *We, now*, take the water of life (22:17; Jn. 4:14; Mt. 10:8). The mortals will replicate then our experience now. Therefore we can preach to them from our personal experience and they can follow our pattern of redemption.

Christ will give the water of life freely then to the mortals- as he did in his mortality. It's the same Jesus, with no fundamental change. Freely we received, freely give- not a reference to not charging for the Gospel, but a command to reflect the gracious enthusiasm for our salvation which we have received from the Lord.

21:8 These people are the responsbile of 20:15, those of 22:15 who are placed (Geographically?) outside the encampment of the people of God.

The fearful- s.w. only Mt. 8:26; Mk. 4:40 re. disciples. We either have faith or no faith; there's no third road. "I believe, help thou mine unbelief" was counted as faith. On the other hand, "O ye of little faith. How is it that ye have *no* faith?"

The unbelieving- s.w. re. the disciples (Mt. 17:17; Jn. 20:27; Tit. 1:15).

"Liars"- only s.w. elsewhere in Rev. re. believers (2:2).

"Abominable, murderers, whoremongers (s.w. re. believers in 1 Cor. 5:9,11; Heb. 12:16; 13:4), sorcerers, idolaters, liars". These are the rejected saints. It means that in essence this is how God sees some in the ecclesias. Or does it show that far more people than we expect will be classed as responsible to judgment?

This overall sequence of judgment on the kings of the earth, gathering them into a pit, shutting them up, then their revival and final destruction and then the unchallenged, eternal reign of Christ is the same sequence as in Is. 24:20-23. Very significantly, Psalm 2 has a similar picture, of Christ ruling amidst his enemies, "the kings of the earth" (cp. Rev. 19:19), who then decide to cast away the cords with which Christ has bound them (Ps. 2:3). This is exactly the scene of Rev. 20; the enchained remnants of the first invasion, along with the rejected saints, being loosed from their chains and surrounding Jerusalem. Interestingly, Psalm 2 describes them throwing off their chains, whilst Rev. 20 says that their chains of condemnation are loosed. Presumably this means that they try a rebellion against the Lord Jesus which he 'lets' succeed. The language of Rev. 19:15-18 combines allusions to both Psalm 2 and also Ezekiel 38- as if to imply that they both prophecy of the same invasion, i.e. that after Christ has returned.

We can construct a possible timeline of events from the evidence here presented:

Arab invasion; 3½ year domination of Israel? Temple desecrated?

Christ comes

Invaders destroyed and punished, some immediately, others by being placed outside the confines of the land of promise, i.e. the Kingdom. The rejected 'saints' also go there. They are 'chained', i.e. kept out of the territory which comprises the Kingdom. They rebel against this.

During this period of 'chaining' and punishment, the Kingdom is established.

Their invasion aims for the temple (Joel 3; Ez. 38) . It replicates the earlier invasion, prior to Christ's return. He is King in Zion (Psalm 2). The rebellion lasts a short time- maybe 3½ years?

It is destroyed by fire (Ez. 39).

As with the first invasion, some are destroyed immediately, others are punished in a certain geographical area on the borders of the Kingdom, for a very long time.

APPENDIX 1:

" ARE THERE FEW THAT BE SAVED?"

By baptism we become members of spiritual Israel, and therefore all the experiences of natural Israel must be relevant warnings to us in some way. That such a significant proportion of God's revelation in the Bible is concerning the Jews highlights this point. The uncanny thing is that natural Israel were a spiritual failure. Whilst the Gentiles were intended to be a more productive tree for spiritual fruit, the following evidence suggests that we should not be over confident that spiritual Israel will be any better than natural Israel. It seems that God's true people have always been a remnant of a remnant.

- The ecclesia in the wilderness (Acts 7:38) were tempted to commit the same sins in principle as we are tempted to (1 Cor.10:1-10). Twice Paul hammers home the point: " These things were our examples...now all these things happened unto them for ensamples; and are written (i.e. the process of inspiration became operative) for our admonition" (v.6,11). Paul seems to read the minds of many Gentile Christians as they quietly reason 'But that was Israel- we Gentiles have been called because we shall do better'; he warns that such an attitude places us in grave spiritual danger: " Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall. There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man" (v.12,13). This could be paraphrased as follows: 'The Jews (" man") had the same human nature as you; if you think that you can stand up to it better than they, then such spiritual arrogance will lead you to fall'. Such reasoning goes against the grain of what we would naturally like to hear, which is that we will certainly reach salvation just as we are, with no conditions, and without having to have any conflict with our sinful nature. Paul therefore concludes by saying that only the spiritually wise will grasp his line of argument here: " I speak as to wise men; judge ye what I say" (v.14).

- The way the Lord speaks of dividing the sheep from the goats and not vice versa could suggest that there are far fewer sheep compared to goats (Mt. 25:32). This would imply that the majority of those who are responsible are in the goat category.

- Paul's parable of the Olive tree in Rom.11 warns that in some ways the Jewish branches are preferable to the Gentile ones (11:24; 3:2; Jn.4:22). Because we stand by faith, " be not highminded, but fear: for if God spared not the natural branches, take heed lest he spare not thee" (v.20,21). By the use of 'thee' (singular) rather than 'you' (plural) the impression is being given that each Gentile believer is hanging on to his place in God's purpose by the skin of his teeth, compared to the Jews. " I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits" (v.25).

- Paul perceived through the Spirit that Isaiah *cried aloud* with passion the idea that although there were many people theoretically " of Israel" in that they were the seed of Abraham, only a remnant of them would be saved. And Paul implies that this holds true in our dispensation too (Is. 10:22 cp. Rom. 9:27).

- " *Many*" of those who call Christ their Lord and who regularly break bread in his presence, where two or three others are gathered believing they are in his name, will find they are rejected, *and they just won't be able to understand why on earth they were rejected* (Lk. 13:24-27 cp. Mt. 18:20). Anyone who thinks the

majority of believers must surely make it through to salvation needs to think again. Please God, we will- but " many" (the Greek can mean, but not always, 'the majority') will be in for this inexplicable (to them) rejection, when they were sure they'd lived a good Christian life.

- Moses' sprinkling of Israel with blood and then going away for forty days (the period of probation), returning after a perceived delay to a people lost in revelry with only a faithful minority, must point forward to our Lord's ascension to the Father's presence after the blood sprinkling of the cross, and His subsequent return. Christ's words of Mt.24:48,50 suggest he read this incident along these lines: " That evil servant shall say in his heart, My lord delayeth his coming (cp. " Where is the promise of his coming?" and the people feeling Moses had delayed to return); and shall begin to...eat and drink with the drunken (cp. " the people sat down to eat and drink" , 1 Cor.10:7); the Lord of that servant shall come...in an hour that he is not aware of, and shall cut him asunder" - recalling the Levite's sudden massacre of the people on Moses' return. If the return of Moses from the mount is indeed typical of the second coming, then it would follow that the majority of the new Israel will be unprepared at the Lord's return also.

- When the Lord said that many are called but few chosen (Mt. 22:14), He was actually alluding to a well known saying from 4 Ezra 8:3: "Many have been created, but few shall be saved". He was as it were raising the bar. It was to be a minority of those called, not just a minority of all creation, who were to be saved.

- " Let us therefore fear, lest, a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it. For unto us was the Gospel preached as well as unto them" (Heb.4:1,2). As in Rom.11, there is the command to fear because of the real possibility of our being like natural Israel. There is a very powerful parable in the account of the wilderness journey through life, whereby the Red Sea represents baptism, eating the manna daily corresponds to daily feeding on the word etc. This parable is alluded to in so many parts of Scripture. However, only a minority of those baptized in the Red Sea actually reached the promised land. Can we expect the parallel with the new Israel to break down at this point? An analysis of church news in one magazine over 40 years indicates that for every three baptisms there is one disfellowship- and the ratio is worsening. Just look back at your own Christian experience if you can't believe it. Add to this the number of those who spiritually fall asleep, and the frightening similarity between natural and spiritual Israel comes abruptly into focus.

The present materialism of Israel and neglect of their real responsibilities towards God may have some parallels with the position of the new Israel. The following words describe the reasons for the holocaust to come upon " all Israel" : " Jeshurun waxed fat, and kicked...then he forsook God which made him, and lightly esteemed the rock (Jesus) of his salvation. They provoked Him to anger with strange gods...newly come up (telly, flash cars and holidays), whom your fathers (Abraham? Paul? Robert Roberts?) feared not...and when the Lord saw it...He said, I will hid my face from them, I will see what their end shall be (the holocaust will reveal our true colours)...they are...children in whom is no faith...I will provoke them...with a foolish nation (the beast)...I will heap mischiefs upon them...they shall be burnt with hunger, and devoured with burning heat, and with bitter

destruction (the faithful are described as coming out of a latter day tribulation of hunger, heat and fire in Rev.7:14-17): I will also send the teeth of (Daniel's) beasts upon them...O that they were wise, that they understood this, that they would consider their latter end" (Dt.32). But perhaps this final verse is embedded somewhere in Dan.12:10: " The wise (in our last days) *shall* understand" - won't we.

Some may feel that considering these things is unduly negative. Yet the Biblical facts as presented above still remain. We must constantly remember that God is not willing that any of His people should fail of His mercy. The history of Israel is surely the supreme example of God's mercy and patience with sinful man. We have been chosen because it was God's intention that we should learn from the mistakes of Israel, and thereby please Him where they failed to. This in itself underlines the importance of constantly re-reading and meditating upon their history. We can never be made too aware of the deceitfulness of sin within our very nature; our nature is the same as Israel's. This is why we need the constant warning not to feel that we are intrinsically superior to them. Israel generally failed to struggle against their human nature; yet God was love and patience itself to them, and only rejected them with great pain to His own fundamental nature, which is love and mercy. This should surely inspire and gloriously encourage all of the new Israel who, unlike natural Israel, do at least strive, in their weakness, against sin.

APPENDIX 2: Identifying The Beast

Throughout Scripture the political manifestation of the enemy of God's people has been symbolised by a beast. Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Rome, the Jews and the Papacy have all been described as 'beasts' in their aggression towards the true believers. The beast in Revelation has been convincingly expounded by different writers with reference to at least three separate powers - Rome, Israel and Catholicism. Whilst these interpretations hold true over certain periods of history, the present writer feels that 'the beast' must have a specific latter-day application. Copious evidence has been presented to show that the Babylon beast of history must have a latter-day equivalent. Much has already been said about this in the present volume; this study aims to fill in some background.

The Serpent

The most basic principle behind the symbolism of the beast is found in Gen. 1:28, where man is told to " have dominion over" (Heb. 'to break to powder', cp. Dan. 2:35) the beasts. This was to teach him the need to dominate the bestial instincts of the flesh. Thus the beasts are set up as representative of the flesh. Indeed, Strong defines the Hebrew word for 'beast' as fundamentally meaning 'raw flesh'. It is therefore understandable that the devil (sin), the beast and the serpent are linked in Rev. 12:9, and that Prov.28:15 parallels " a wicked ruler" with a wild bear or lion; the beast epitomizes the sinful person who controls it. The Apocalyptic beast of the earth (Rev. 13:11) must look back to the common phrase " beast of the earth" in Genesis (e.g. Gen. 1:25).

The serpent is an epitome of the bestial desires found in the beasts, and is thus the prototype 'beast' of later prophecies. The serpent being the greatest of the

beasts (Gen. 3:1,14) points to the latter-day beast being supreme over the other nations; its being cursed above all beasts (Gen. 3:14) points forward to the latter-day beast-power being relegated beneath all other nations in the Millennium. As the serpent dabbled in spiritual things but was not morally responsible ⁽¹⁾, so the beast of the last days will do likewise.

This beast being a manifestation of sin, the significance of the conflict between it and Christ at the second coming lies in the open declaration of Christ's victory over sin, the motivating spirit of the beast. Thus Is. 51:13 describes the Assyrian beast in language which is picked up in Heb. 2:14-18 concerning the "devil" of human nature. Christ's victory will not just be the means of Israel's salvation from the Arab oppressors. The two-fold conflict between the serpent/beast and the woman (Christ), and between their respective seeds, must therefore have a latter-day application (Gen. 3:15). The temporary bruising of the saints by the beast must be seen in the last days - and we have earlier examined the prophecies concerning the holocaust to come upon both natural and spiritual Israel. The final crushing of the serpent/beast and vindication of the woman's seed will therefore be at Armageddon. The language of Gen. 3:15 is alluded to in Rev. 12:17, which describes the dragon making war with the woman and her seed. We have earlier shown this to have a specific latter-day application.

As the serpent deceived Adam and Eve, so the beast will deceive the weak believers of the last days. The serpent/beast in its first century Jewish manifestation is described as seducing the saints through the subtle reasoning of the Judaizers (2 Cor. 11:3). These people used many "fair speeches" (Rom. 16:18 cp. Jude 15), suggesting that their prototype, the serpent, persuaded Eve to eat the fruit after a lengthy series of discussions, albeit unrecorded. "Yea, hath God said..." (Gen. 3:1) implies the continuation of an unrecorded conversation. The beast's ecclesial agents of the last days will likewise use the tactic of extended public speeches using superficially deep arguments. Their political arm will be doing the same to destroy the morale of natural Israel, after the pattern of Rabshakeh's speeches to the Jews during the Assyrian invasion. Being an apostate Jew (3) he may possibly have a latter-day equivalent in a Jewish leader, who deserts to the Arab cause, urging Israel to capitulate. Likewise there may be a specific "man of sin" who similarly tempts spiritual Israel. The description of him in 2 Thess. 2:3 is framed in terms of Judas - implying that he will be an apostate member of the ecclesia?

These two evil individuals may well meet their opposite numbers in the "two witnesses" who will arise (Rev. 11:3), as discussed in Chapter 12. The judgment of the serpent was by the voice of God (cp. Christ, the word) walking through the garden, summoning the sinful parties to judgment. This easily looks forward to Christ's second coming, and the judgment by Him in His role as the word made flesh (Rev. 19:13; Gen. 3:8).

The beast has always been associated with a pseudo-spirituality, an aping of true God manifestation. We have shown earlier that there will be much of this in the latter-day Babylon/beast. There is a connection between the beasts of God manifestation and the cherubim in Rev. 4:7; indeed, the Hebrew word for 'beast' seems to be the equivalent of the phrase "living creature" used in Revelation

concerning the cherubim. The beast and beasts therefore represent systems which falsely claim that they are the vehicle of God manifestation. This most clearly fits the claims of Islam, and also those of Catholicism.

With all this in mind, it must be significant that Isa. 14:29 speaks of Assyria as a "cockatrice" born out of "the serpent's root", i.e. she was the seed of the serpent. "His fruit shall be a fiery flying serpent" is the language of Isa. 6:2 concerning the seraphim. Thus the Assyrian seed of the serpent is associated with a pseudo-seraphim, and a false God manifestation.

Spotting the beast

The precise political identification of the latter-day beast seems to have preoccupied the minds of many students. Instead, there needs to be close Biblical analysis of what the beast *does* to God's people. When a system arises which fulfils these expectations, there will be no more doubt in the minds of those who have had ears to hear concerning *who* the beast is.

This said, there is such extended use of the beast symbology concerning Israel's previous enemies that it seems reasonable to suggest that the beast largely refers to Israel's Arab neighbours. Deut. 32:24 connects the 'beasts' of the surrounding nations with the Genesis serpent: "I will also send the teeth of beasts upon them, with the poison of serpents of the dust" (cp. Gen. 3:14). There is also a connection between the serpent and beasts in Isa. 30:6. "The teeth of beasts" coming down upon Israel will be finally fulfilled in the Arab desolation prophesied in Joel 1:6,7, where the Assyrians of the future (Joel 1:15) are described as having Israel between their "cheek teeth" tearing the bark off the Israeli vine and fig (cp. Isa. 9:12 concerning the Philistines).

Sheep and Wolves

Israel being the sheep of God's pasture is a common Bible figure. Whenever their shepherds were negligent over a prolonged period, the figure was extended to describe the 'wild beasts' of the surrounding nations invading the land and mauling the flock. Hos. 13:6-8 is typical of those passages which speak in these terms. Verses 7 and 8 liken these nations to the lion, leopard and bear, all of which are nations mentioned in Dan. 7, which are constituents of the huge system of Arab domination described in Dan. 2.

These three beast nations are all part of one "wild beast", as the nations of the image in Dan. 2 are all part of the same latter-day confederacy headed by 'Babylon': "I will be unto them as a lion: as a leopard...as a bear...*the* wild beast". Likewise Isa. 56:9,10; Jer. 30:16 and Eze. 34:5 feature the beasts of Babylon and the surrounding Arab nations as preying on the flock of Israel due to their sleepy shepherds. After Israel's spiritual awakening *they* will become like a beast among the 'sheep' of the Arab nations (Mic. 5:8), continuing the theme of the Jews doing to the Arabs as they did to them.

It is possible that Deut. 28:26 also refers to the beasts of the surrounding nations: "Thy carcase shall be meat...unto the beasts of the earth, and no man shall fray

them away". This alludes to the fowls being frayed away while the covenant was made to Abraham. Thus while Israel abode in the covenant, the Arab nations surrounding them were kept away. Similarly Eze. 34:25 associates the making of the covenant with Israel in the last days, with the "evil beasts" leaving the land.

Time and again Israel's Arab enemies are likened to "wild beasts". The list of references is impressive: Hos. 2:12; Eze. 5:17; 14:15; Ps. 80:13; Jer. 7:33; 15:3; 16:4; 19:7; Deut. 7:22. Job's Sabeans (i.e. Arab) invaders are called "the beasts of the earth...the beasts of the field" (Job 5:22,23). It is possible that "beasts" in these passages can be read as an intensive plural - i.e. 'the great beast', which symbolizes all of Israel's various enemies. This equivalence of the multitude of these enemies with a singular beast is seen in Eze. 34:28, which parallels "the heathen" (enemies of Israel) with "the beast of the land" (singular). Rev. 17 similarly exhibits *the* (singular) beast as comprising a number of nations (heads/horns).

Ps. 74:19 RV asks God not to deliver His people "unto the wild beast". This is one of the Asaph Psalms, written in the context of the restoration. The 'beast' threatening to destroy Judah then was a confederacy of her surrounding Arab neighbours. Ps. 73:13,14 likens these enemies to a many headed dragon. Another such Psalm, Ps. 83, asks for protection against a confederacy of 10 such nations. In all this we have a remarkable type of the last days after the pattern of Daniel and Revelation-a beast with 10 horns, seeking to devour the recently returned people of God from off their land.

There is repeatedly the theme that Israel's enemies are confederated together under one confederacy which has one leader. Ps. 118 can be shown to be relevant to Hezekiah at the time of the Assyrian invasion (see George Booker, *Psalm Studies*). He speaks of how "all nations compassed me about", i.e. the surrounding Arab nations confederate with Assyria. And yet Hezekiah speaks about them as if they are really headed up by one individual: "Thou [you singular] didst thrust sore at me" (Ps. 118:13). The beast is to punish people by beheading them (Rev. 20:4)-and it's only Islam at the moment which legally practices beheading as a form of execution.

Babylon

The symbology of the beast was particularly used concerning Babylon. Nebuchadnezzar, Babylon's king, was given a beast's heart and lived with them (Dan. 4:16) to show his personification of the beast. "The beasts of the field", i.e. the surrounding Arab nations, were given into his control (Dan. 2:38), thus they constituted part of the beast of Babylon, "the noisome beast" of Eze. 14:21. Babylon's army is likened to "beasts" in Jer. 34:20,21. As God gave power to Assyria and Babylon to achieve His will (Isa. 10), so He will to the latter-day beast (Rev. 13:5,7). The description of the beast leading people into captivity (Rev. 13:10) shows another connection with Assyria/Babylon, whose trains of captives were well known. The beast causing men to worship it (Rev. 13:12) recalls Nebuchadnezzar's decree concerning the statue on the plain of Dura (Dan. 3:1,5). The historical "beast of the field" was associated with the wilderness (Isa. 43:20), as the beast of Rev. 17:3 is a wilderness power.

Babylon's beasts

Israel's Arab neighbours confederated with Babylon in their invasion of Israel. Jeremiah describes this in beast language: "I have given all these lands into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar...the beasts of the field have I given him...to serve him...to serve him...all nations (around Israel) shall serve him" (Jer. 27:5-7; 28:14). Ps. 79:1,2, a passage whose links with Rev. 11 give it a clear latter-day application, speaks of the beasts of the surrounding Arab nations being confederate with Babylon.

As the horns hate the Babylon/whore and turn against her to destroy her (Rev. 17:16), so the beast nations once confederate with Babylon will come and lie down in her (Jer. 50:39; Isa. 13:21). Beasts lying down in a ruined city is representative of nations dominating another one (Zeph. 2:14,15).

Note that the beast is "scarlet coloured" (Rev. 17:3). Whilst this may have had reference in its time to imperial Rome, let's note that "The Canaanites... derived their name from the purple dye which was produced there and used for making an expensive cloth" (2). In the light of all this, it is difficult to read the latter day beasts of Revelation as referring to anything other than a conglomeration of Arab powers under the leadership of a revived Babylon, between them constituting the most powerful system of opposition to God's people which there has ever been.

Notes

(1) John Thomas in 'Elpis Israel' has an excellent section concerning the a-morality of the serpent - i.e. its lack of moral perception.

(2) R.E. Clements, *Exodus* (Cambridge: C.U.P., 1972) p. 21.

Extension work

Some good homework for the enthusiast lies in expounding the 'beasts' described at the end of Job. 'Behemoth' is the Hebrew word elsewhere translated "beast" (Job 40:15). Leviathan and 'behemoth' appear to use the language of both God manifestation and the political aspects of the beast as elsewhere recorded.

Appendix 3: The Antichrist Principle

We are familiar with the personification of sin as a man called 'Satan', the enemy. This symbolic man is in fact the antithesis of the Lord Jesus Christ. As we follow this theme through Scripture, it becomes apparent that we are just at the tip of an iceberg. This symbolic man has a kingdom and almost every attribute of the Lord Jesus and *His* Divine Kingdom of righteousness. Consider the similarities:

Satan has a Kingdom (Lk. 11:18)

The power and glory of which have been *delivered* to him by God, and which he can give to whomsoever he will (Lk. 4:6)

Angels (Mt. 25:41; 2 Cor. 12:7 Gk.)

The power of death (Heb. 2:14 cp. Hos. 13:14; Rev. 1:18; 20:6)

Power to condemn men (1 Tim. 3:6)

A judgment seat and system of rewards based on that of Christ (Mt. 6:1 cp. 2,16)

Condemned sinners are invited to the 'feast' of God's judgments and given suitable wedding clothes (Zeph. 1:7,8) in parody of the Kingdom (Mt. 22:2,3)

Is a father (Jn. 8:44)

Has children (Acts 13:10; 1 Jn. 3:10 cp. Heb. 2:13)

And a wisdom that is opposed to God's wisdom (James 3:15-17)

Armour (Lk. 11:22)

Power (Acts 26:18)

Spiritual " depths" (Rev. 2:24, s.w. Rom. 11:33; 1 Cor. 2:10; Eph. 3:18)

Seed which he sows (Mt. 13:39)

A throne (Rev. 2:13; 2 Thess. 2:4)

A mystery (2 Thess. 2:7; Rev. 2:24)

" Power...signs and...wonders" (2 Thess. 2:9; Rev. 13:13)

Stands at the right hand of men (Ps. 109:6 cp. 109:31; 16:8; 110:1)

Is likened to lightening (Lk. 10:18 cp. 17:24)

Puts things in men's' hearts (Jn. 13:2 cp. 2 Cor. 8:16)

He is a son who will be " revealed" (2 Thess. 2:4), as Christ will be (Lk. 17:30, same Gk.)

He is " he that cometh" (2 Cor. 11:4), a phrase so often used about the Lord Jesus (Lk. 7:19,20; Jn. 7:27,31)

He will be "revealed *in his time*" (2 Thess. 2:6), as Christ will be (Lk. 17:24)

"The god of this world" who emits a bright light into the hearts of men (2 Cor. 4:4 cp. 6)

Enthroned in God's temple (2 Thess. 2:4)

He has "works" (1 Jn. 3:8)

Figuratively comes down from heaven to earth in the last days (Rev. 12:12)

Has bread and wine of wickedness (Prov. 4:17)

His followers "hold" Christ, as the true disciples do (same words in Col. 2:9; Mt. 28:19 cp. Mt. 26:4,48,50,55,57)

Will be 'apocalypsed' as Christ will be (2 Thess. 2:8)

The logic of devotion

Every one of these attributes is seen in the Lord Jesus Christ and the things of his Kingdom. And this list is by no means complete. But the point is clear enough: the well-versed Bible reader will observe that there are two systems, two Kingdoms, revealed in the word: the kingdom of Satan, and the kingdom of God. So strong is this theme that it is quite possible that sometimes the things of Satan are purposefully described in language which is reminiscent of the Kingdom of God; e.g. Paul describing his affliction as an Angel of Satan (2 Cor. 12:7). God's Kingdom and Satan's are in absolute opposition to each other; there is no overlap, no common ground. The people of God, those who truly accept His Kingship, are therefore fundamentally separated from Satan's Kingdom. In practice, of course, we are tempted to think that there can be some overlap in our lives; that we can enjoy the ways of the world *and* the blessings mediated on account of being in God's Kingdom; that we can be part of apostate *and* true religion; that we can have a little of both. But if we properly understand the idea that Satan's Kingdom and God's Kingdom don't overlap, it will become evident that ultimately, it's all or nothing.

When the Lord spoke of the impossibility of serving two masters, he had this in mind. He personified the one as "Mammon", the antithesis of God. He goes on to define what he meant: "Therefore...take no *thought* for your life...which of you by *taking thought*....why *take ye thought* for raiment...therefore take no *thought* saying, What shall we eat?....seek ye first the Kingdom of God....take therefore no *thought* for the morrow" (Mt. 6:24,25,27,28,31,33,34). Clearly the Lord saw "Mammon", this personified anti-God, as an attitude of *mind*. He had the same view of

'Satan' as we do: a personification of sin in the human mind. He also saw seeking " the Kingdom of God" as somehow parallel with serving God rather than mammon. We would wish there were some third category, God, mammon and something in between; as we may idly speculate that it would suit us if there were three categories at judgement day, accepted, rejected, and something else. But both then and now, this very minute, this isn't the case. A deep down recognition of this will have its effect practically. If we are serving God, let's not give anything to mammon, let's not play games, juggling and using brinkmanship.

Non-political Kingdoms

Satan's Kingdom has members, those he is king over. His Kingdom is the people of this world, those dominated by the fleshly mind. When the Kingdoms of this world become those of God at the second coming (Rev. 11:15), this is more than a physical handover of political authority. " The earth is the Lord's, and the fullness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein" (Ps. 24:1). The political power in the world is ultimately God's even now (Rom. 13:1-4). The idea of a handover of the Kingdoms of this world to God must therefore refer to the end of Satan's power; no longer will the world be structured around the desires of the flesh, but around the principles of God.

Satan's Kingdom is not a political Kingdom, but an influence, a way of thinking, life lived according to certain principles, permeating every part of a man's thinking and behaviour. The Kingdom of God is the antithesis of Satan's Kingdom. The fact Satan's Kingdom exists now and is the antithesis of the true Kingdom is proof enough that in some sense the Kingdom of God exists in some non-political sense now, although of course this will be politically manifested at the Lord's return. God's Kingdom exists in the same sense as Satan's; as an influence, a way of thinking, life lived according to certain principles, permeating every part of a man's thinking and behaviour. This is why the Lord's parables describing the Kingdom of God refer not to the political Kingdom, but to His ways and principles as they should operate in our lives today. The Kingdom of God in this non-political sense was taken from the Jews and given to us, so that we might bring forth the fruits of the Kingdom (Mt. 21:43). The political Kingdom had already been taken from Israel (Ez. 21:27).

The logic of separation

Appreciating all this means that there absolutely must be a separation between us and the world. We are God's Kingdom, surrounded by Satan's Kingdom. It's quite right, therefore, that we make every effort we can to keep the ways of Satan's Kingdom out of the ecclesia, God's Kingdom. *This* is why (e.g.) the use of the cross should be outlawed amongst us, the influence of television minimised. not just because these things don't

suite us, but because we are *God's* Kingdom, not Satan's. False doctrine about Christ is part of the antiChrist system (1 Jn. 4:3); yet it seems tempting for some to reason that those who believe (e.g.) the trinity are basically pleasing to God, although they don't understand things as we do. Yet this is the teaching of antiChrist, the Spirit says.

The Devil is a deceiver, he has a fake Kingdom of God; the antiChrist appears as a false Christ. If we think that the antiChrist is the real Christ, that those who teach false doctrine about Christ are part of the body of Christ, then we have been deceived; we have been taken in by the appearance of righteousness. Sometimes, Satan or the Devil is used as a personification of the world, or a human political system, e.g. the Roman empire in the book of Revelation. This is because the world or human empires are structured around the thinking of the flesh, the real Satan. Thus overcoming the world is parallel to overcoming the devil (1 Jn. 5:4 cp. 2:13,14); "the whole world is under the control of the evil one", the Devil (1 Jn. 5:19 NIV). The lust of the flesh and eyes (the Biblical devil) are "all that is in the world" (1 Jn. 2:16). Thus our own private Satan, the lusts of our dark side, are somehow in league with the world around us. The world has been set in our heart (Ecc. 3:11).

World systems

This explains why the various world empires mentioned in the Bible are described in the language of the Kingdom of God; they are anti-Kingdoms of God. Take Babylon:

Babylon	The Kingdom of God
A hammer (Jer. 50:23)	God's word is described in the same way in the same prophecy (Jer. 23:29)
Had proselytes and prophets (Jer. 50:36,37)	Ditto for the Kingdom
A mountain (Jer. 51:25)	Dan. 2:44
"The golden city" (Is. 14:4) with a thick, embellished wall (Jer. 51:58); springs and rivers within her (Jer. 51:36)	The description of the new Jerusalem in Rev. 21,22 and it's wall, foundations etc. seems an allusion to the city of Babylon; as if to shew that Babylon was a fake city of God.
"He that ruled the nations" with an iron rod " ...that did shake kingdoms" (Is. 14:6,16)	Cp. King Jesus (Ps. 110:2; Rev. 19:15)
The morning star (Is. 14:12)	Rev. 22:16
Desired to be exalted above the Angels in Heaven (Is. 14:13)	As Christ was (Heb. 1, 2)

" O virgin daughter" (Is. 47:1)	As Israel (Is. 37:22)
" The king of Babylon, my servant" (Jer. 25:9)	Ditto for Christ
Babylon, like Persia, had a king with seven senior counsellors before his throne (Ezra 7:14)	As Christ and the seven spirits before the throne, Rev. 1:4; 4:5
" Whom he would he slew; and whom he would he kept alive; and whom he would he set up; and whom he would he put down" (Dan. 5:19)	This is all alluding to Yahweh as the God who is and will be as He wishes; and cp. Dt. 32:39; 1 Sam. 2:6-8; Ps. 113:7,8; Lk. 1:52
The Kingdom of Babylon was a sight gazed at by all the earth (Dan. 4:11)	As the cross of Christ
The laws of the kings of Babylon, Media and Persia altered not (Heb. passed not, were eternal), Dan. 6:8.	A mimicry of God's unchanging word: Is. 34:16; 45:23 (passages which in their immediate context were God's comment on the Assyrian / Babylonian claims that the words of their kings were never changed).
Nebuchadnezzar's golden image	
It is emphasized that Nebuchadnezzar "set up" an image, symbolic of himself and his Kingdom (Dan. 3:1,2,3,5,7,12,14,18).	Intended as a replica of the image of Daniel 2-implicating Babylon's Kingdom was the eternal Kingdom of God.
	Dan. 2:21,39,44; 4:17; 5:21 had used the same words to describe how <i>God</i> sets up Kingdoms and their Kings. Babylon and the other Kingdoms were set up [s.w.] by God, not man (Dan. 7:4,5,17,24 Heb.).
Gave Israel a King they named 'Zedekiah'. 'Yahweh our righteousness'- a false Christ, who is Israel's true " Yahweh our righteousness" (Jer. 23:6)	God gives Israel the real Christ
Babylon was " raised up" by God (Hab. 1:5,6)	This very passage is quoted by Paul as proof that God would raise up Christ (Acts 13:41)- he saw Babylon as such a clear anti-Christ!
Arrayed in fine linen (Rev. 18:16)	As the bride of Christ

The Babylonians destroyed Jerusalem, grouped together the temple implements according to the different metals from which they were made, old, silver and brass, and then broke them in pieces (2 Kings 25:13-16)

The King of the North, based on Babylon as his prototype, comes against Israel with a whirlwind (Dan. 11:40)

The nations with her in the last days will be "of one mind" (Rev. 17:13)

"Thou...that sayest in thine heart, I am, and none else beside me" (Is. 47:8)

A few years after this, Daniel 2 indicated that the true Messiah would break Babylon's future Kingdom, comprised as it would be of gold, silver and brass.

Just as God is said to do; whirlwind is the language of *God* manifestation (Ez. 1:4)

As those believers confederate with Christ

Hammurabi, early King of Babylon, set himself up as a pseudo-Messiah, speaking of himself in language which God appropriates to Himself. The well versed reader will discern the many connections between Hammurabi's words and the Biblical descriptions of the Father and His Son: "The great gods have *called me* and I am indeed a *shepherd* who *brings peace*, whose *sceptre is justice*; my pleasant *shade* is spread over *my city*, in *my bosom* I have *carried* the people...that the strong *may not oppress* the weak, and so to *give justice to the orphan and the widow*, I have *inscribed my precious words* on my monument" ⁽¹⁾. And even worse: "I Hammurabi *the shepherd*...established an *everlasting Kingdom that shall not be left to others*", and having said this, he proceeds to give a list of blessings for obedience and curses for disobedience to him, reminiscent of Dt. 28 ⁽²⁾. Again, we are on the tip of an iceberg; so much Old Testament language is an allusion to the beliefs and claims of surrounding religions, which were effectively setting themselves up as fake Kingdoms of Yahweh ⁽³⁾.

And all we have said about Babylon are just a few examples of this kind of thing. This same sort of language is also used about Israel's other Arab enemies. Thus Sodom, persecutor of God's faithful remnant (Lot) and epitome of the evil world of the last days, appeared as the garden of Eden with all its innocent beauty (Gen. 13:10). Adonizedek King of Jerusalem (Josh. 10:1) was the counterpart of Melchizedek. Joel 2:20,21 describe both God and Israel's latter day invader as doing "great things"- as if the King of the "northern army" is some kind of fake God, and the final conflict between Christ and anti-Christ is the ultimate showdown of "great things".

The beasts of Revelation seem to be described in terms of the Kingdom of God, and the descriptions link within Revelation to the descriptions of God's Kingdom. The point is being made that these beasts, both over time and in the last days, are fake Kingdoms of God.

Beasts	The Kingdom Of God
The dragon has Angels (Rev. 12:9)	As Christ
He figuratively comes from heaven " to earth (12:10)	
Speaks of us day and night before " God's throne (12:10)	
Has a name in his forehead (13:2) "	
Given power, throne and authority " (13:13)	
Does great miracles and signs " (13:13)	
Faithful followers have mark in their hands and foreheads (13:17; 20:4) and are " sealed" (13:16)	Ez. 9:4; Rev. 7:3
All the world worships the beast (13:12)	All the world will worship God (15:4)
Followers as numerous as sand on the sea shore (20:8)	As the seed of Abraham
Their followers have one mind (17:3), and are world-wide	How it should be amongst us
The woman clothed with a blood red robe and a cup (17:4)	Cp. the sacrificial office of Christ
The beast is, was and will be (17:8-11); an allusion to the Yahweh Name	God is, will and will be (16:5)

The beast systems, as Babylon and Assyria before them, were false Kingdoms of God. The beast has the power to give *pneuma* to the image / body of the first beast (Rev. 13:15)- an evident mimicry of God's creation of Adam. They appear to offer, here and now, the things of the Kingdom, and the fleshly-minded are persuaded by them. This is all playing out the drama of Eden again; the serpent offered equality with God, the wisdom of God, when it was actually the wisdom of the serpent. Adam and Eve grasped for what was offered, unlike the Lord Jesus, who refused to grasp at equality with God (Phil. 2 is full of allusion to the events of Gen. 3). What happened in Eden is in essence the epitome, the prototype of all temptation and sin (1 Jn. 2:16 = Gen. 3:6). Every one of our temptations has an element of this; we are tempted to grasp for what looks like the Kingdom here and now. Pentecostals are an evident example of this; they think they can obtain the full healing and physical ecstasy of the future

Kingdom here and now. And on a more common level, there are many of us who reach out for the supposed fulfilment of hobbies, the supposed peace and 'security' of a nice home and bank balance, when these things are actually a false fulfilment, peace and security, the peace and security of Satan's Kingdom which is a counterfeit of the spiritual fulfilment, peace and security of Christ's Kingdom. A very evident example of this is found in Rabshakeh's offer to the inhabitants of Jerusalem: 'If you reject Yahweh as your God, the King of Assyria will give you a Kingdom where you will "eat every one of his vine, and every one of his fig tree" ' (Is. 36:16); in saying this, Rabshakeh was quoting the very words of Mic. 4:4 concerning the Kingdom of God. The Jews were faced with the choice of God's Kingdom, or Satan's Kingdom, couched as it was in terms of God's Kingdom. Likewise, the world around us isn't passive. It is actively seeking to deceive. There is a tension between us and this world, including the apostate 'Christian' world, which is vital to recognize if we are to share the salvation of God's Kingdom and avoid the condemnation of Satan's Kingdom. There can be no half way position.

Joel describes Israel's invaders as a false Israel and a pseudo-cherubim. They have a fire going "before them" (Joel 2:3) just as Israel did in the wilderness, "a great people and a strong", Yahweh's war-horses (Joel 2:4 RVmg.) just as Israel were to have been (Zech. 10:3); and the whole of Joel 2:5-9 describes the mightiness of the invaders in the very language appropriated to Israel (Zech. 10:5).

Further help

Following these themes through helps explain at least four noticeable Biblical themes:

- Many Bible bad men are described in the language of the Lord Jesus; Saul is an example of this. Cyrus is another one. It doesn't mean that they were therefore righteous. This is to be expected once the Antichrist principle is perceived. It seems that often the things of Satan's Kingdom are consciously spoken of in the language of God's Kingdom; thus Satan is called "the God of this world" (2 Cor. 4:4), and spoken of as having Angels as God does (Mt. 25:41; Rev. 12:9). The size of this theme of Antichrist has to be realized to appreciate why the Bible should use this device so extensively.

- It seems the rejected saints will share the judgements of Satan, the beast, the antiChrist. Thus Babylon has a millstone tied round her neck and she is thrown into the sea (Rev. 18:21), just as the judgement of the rejected saints is described (Mt. 18:6). They will be ground to powder by the stone of Christ (Mt. 21:44), just as he will fall on the nations of the Babylon confederacy and grind them to powder (Dan. 2:34). The Lord will appoint his unwatchful servant a place of condemnation "with the unbelievers" (Lk. 12:46). This is understandable once we appreciate the

idea that there are only two Kingdoms, God's and Satan's. The unworthy were effectively in Satan's Kingdom, therefore they will suffer the judgement that is prepared for it. Therefore we *must* separate from Babylon, Satan's Kingdom, or else we will receive her judgements (Rev. 18:4). Likewise the condemnation of the apostate in Israel is very often described in the language of the judgements on the surrounding kingdoms (e.g. Joel 1:5,10-12 = Is. 16:10; Ez. 16:37-39 = Rev. 17:16; Jer. 16:9 = Rev. 18:23; Jer. 49:4 = Jer. 31:22; Jer. 51:27 = Joel 1:4; 2:1; Jer. 50:13 = 19:8) ⁽⁴⁾. The cup of judgement that Israel will drink will be given to the Arab nations who have afflicted her (Is. 51:23). This is all the principle of Rev. 18:6; as the latter day Babylon does to natural and spiritual Israel, so it will be done to her. Apostate Israel are often described as if they are Arabs- they share the same judgements, because they have effectively sold their birthright. Israel "sat...as the Arabian in the wilderness" (Jer. 3:2). Judah would be punished along with Egypt, Moab and Ammon, the circumcised with the uncircumcised (Jer. 9:25,26). Thus Rom. 9:8 describes faithless Israel as "the children of the flesh", with allusion to Arab Ishmael; and Gal. 4:23 likewise. The early chapters of Romans reason that both Jew and Gentile receive the same judgment, because both have sinned.

- The judgements on the nations are all described in similar language, whatever time or place they were in ⁽⁵⁾. Thus Babylon's judgement in Rev. 18 is based on the judgement of Egypt as recorded in Ez. 32:4-10, and Egypt's judgement of Ez. 29:4 is that of Gog in Ez. 38:4. The whole description of Egypt's judgments in Ez. 29 is also full of links with those in store for Israel. *They* will cry unto Yahweh in their affliction (Is. 19:20), just as Israel did when Egypt persecuted them (Ex. 2:23; 14:10). There are so many examples of this. Surely the point is that fundamentally, all the nations of the world, in whatever time and place, are all fundamentally the same Kingdom of Satan, and will suffer the same destruction by the Kingdom of God. Likewise the Kingdom of God to which we belong is not limited by time or geography.

- The non-political aspect of the Kingdom of God comes up time and again in the New Testament. We are helped in our understanding of this by realizing that this is the antithesis of the Kingdom of Satan, which is also more abstract than political. The beauty of the Lord Jesus Christ and his Kingdom can be plumbed the more fully by realizing how he is the antithesis to the antiChrist, Satan. This theme of there being a true Christ and a fake Christ is reflected in gematria [whereby each letter of the Hebrew alphabet has a numeric value]. The numeric value of *mashiah* [Messiah] is 358, as is *yavo shiloh* ['Shilo will come']. But the value of *nahash* [snake] is also 358.

A Moslem / Arab AntiChrist?

The Genesis record seems to frame the confederations of Arab tribes contemporary with the 12 tribes of Israel as being a kind of pseudo-Israel- for they too are described as being 12 tribe confederacies. There were 12 Aramaean tribes who came from the 12 sons born to Nahor, Abraham's brother (Gen. 22:20-24); 12 tribes from Ishmael (Gen. 25:13-16); and the five tribes from the sons of Esau (Gen. 36:9-14) joined with the seven Horite tribes in Seir (Gen. 36:20-28). Joel 2:20 speaks of the latter day invasion of Israel by "the northern army", which will then be consumed by the Lord's return. The Hebrew word for 'north' meaning 'hidden / concealed'- the 'north' is seen in Hebrew as the hidden / concealed place- the Jewish Encyclopedia interprets "the northern army" as "the concealed one". This may connect with 2 Thess. 2:4 speaking of the "man of sin" as a "Wicked one" who is revealed for who he is and then consumed by the Lord's second coming. This would associate the man of sin with the latter day invaders of Israel, which the Old Testament appears to define as the Arab neighbours of Israel. The Jewish Encyclopedia [article on "Ahriman"] mentions "a Judæo-Mohammedan tradition identifying the "Northern One" with the Mohammedan Antichrist, Al-Dajjal—the Liar".

There is a New Testament theme that in the last days, the ecclesia will be infiltrated by a "man of sin" who appears to be an apostle, and who in league with the Arab beast, the power dominating the world, corrupts the ecclesia. He is an anti-Christ, a false God ⁽⁶⁾. His sitting in the temple of the ecclesia is matched by Tobiah the Arab having rooms in the temple-rooms which should have been symbolic of the dwelling place of God's people with Him (Neh. 7:13 cp. Jn. 14:1-3). He will get this place, as Tobiah got his place, because the ecclesia has failed to grasp the rigid line of demarcation between the things of God's Kingdom and those of Satan's. They will have been deceived by the apparent similarity between the two Kingdoms. The presence of antiChrist within the ecclesia will be the sign "whereby ye know that it is the last time" (1 Jn. 2:18); and 2 Thess. 2:3 and Mk. 13:5,14 say the same thing. The recognition of the presence of such false teaching within the ecclesia will be what tells the faithful remnant that the Lord's return really is imminent. If the "man of sin" is to be connected somehow with the Arab beast as we have suggested in Chapter 23, it may be that the vague, outline similarities between Islam and the One Faith are what are capitalized upon in order to make the differences seem minimal. Thus Moslems tenaciously believe in one God and a restored paradise on earth, and Shi'ite Moslems (comprising 99% Iranians and 60% Iraqis) look for the return of the 12th Imam (who they believe has ascended to Heaven) to rule the world. Moslem mosques are fake temples of God, designed as they are around an outer court and two sanctuaries. As Adam desired equality with God (see the allusions to his fall in Phil. 2) and was punished with an inability to hide, shame and nakedness as a result, so Edom will be punished in precisely the same way (Jer. 49:10)- because they too desire equality

with God, as Babylon did in Is. 14:13, and as the man of sin will attempt (2 Thess. 2: 4). The connection between Babylon, Edom and the man of sin's blasphemy suggests that he is connected with Arab / Islamic religious blasphemy.

It is also apparent that for each aspect of true spirituality, there is a fake counterpart; an appearance of peace when a man has no peace with God; a semblance of prayer and Bible study when actually these are performed as exercises devoid of meaning. The pseudo-believer takes "ease" (Lk. 12:19) in his materialism; and yet this is the same word used about the true "rest" which the Lord gives in His ecclesia (Mt. 11:28). Many other examples of this are given in 'Devotion: A Caveat', in *Beyond Bible Basics*. If we allow ourselves to be caught up in this, then we are effectively having our part in the spirit of antiChrist. There will not only be a fake Jesus, but there is already within our natures a shadow spirituality, which apes the real thing, and thereby seeks to persuade us that we can take the crown without the cross. In this lies the colossal practical relevance of this theme to the serious believer.

Notes

(1) Rosamond Mack, *The Code Of Hammurabi* (Baghdad: Iraq Min. of Culture, 1979).

(2) Quoted from G.R. Driver and J.C. Miles, *The Babylonian Laws* Vol. 9 pp. 7-107 (Oxford: O.U.P., 1955). This whole section makes most fascinating reading for anyone familiar with the Old Testament scriptures.

(3) Many cases of this are discussed in *Demons: A Biblical Discussion* (London: Pioneer, 1994).

(4) I have given many examples of this in *In Search Of Satan* pp. 107-109.

(5) Examples of this will be found in Chapter 9.

(6) See Chapters 11 and 23.

APPENDIX 4: Loving Christ's Appearing

Thus our Lord said that all those whom he finds *watching* will be welcomed into the marriage feast (Lk. 12:37). And 2 Tim. 4:8 is plain enough: "All them also that love his appearing" will be rewarded along with Paul. Paul's own confidence in salvation was because he knew the earnestness of his desire to be "present with the Lord" Jesus (2 Cor. 5:8), such was the closeness of his relationship with him. Is this really our attitude too? Can we feel like Simeon, that we are quite happy to die after we have just seen our Lord with our own eyes (Lk. 2:29)? Is there really much *love* between us and our Lord? The faithful are described as "those that seek

(God)...such as *love thy salvation*" (Ps. 40:16). None truly seek God (Rom. 3:11- the context concerns all of us, believers and unbelievers); and yet we are those who seek Him. We must be ambitious to do the impossible. Those who truly *love* righteousness and the Kingdom will be rewarded with it. Likewise Paul in 1 Cor. 8:2,3 describes the faithful man as one who accepts he knows nothing as he ought to know, but truly loves God. Heb. 9:28 is clear: " Unto them that look for (Christ) shall he appear the second time...unto salvation" . Those who truly look for Christ will be given salvation. People from all over the world, the living responsible, will see the sign of the son of man, will know His return is imminent, and wail with the knowledge that they have crucified Him afresh and must now meet Him (Mt. 24:30,31 cp. Rev. 1:7; Zech. 12:10). Their response to the certain knowledge that His return is imminent will in that moment effectively be their judgment.

The Master is so delighted that his servants are watching for Him that He immediately sits down and gets a meal ready for them, doing the serving Himself (Lk. 12:37). There is an arresting element of unreality here. Would a Master really do this, at such an unlikely time at night, would he really serve himself, and would he really be so glad that the servants were waiting up for him? But these elements of unreality serve to teach the lessons: that the Lord will have unspeakable joy at His return because of our expectancy of the second coming, and He will surprise us by His glee and enthusiasm for us.

The idea that whoever truly loves the Lord's coming will therefore be accepted by Him can easily be abused by those who reason that anyone who has the emotion of love towards Christ will be rewarded by him. We know that true love involves both having and keeping his commands. But for those of us in Christ, these verses are still a major challenge. If we truly " look for" Christ's second coming, if we " love his appearing" , this will lead us to acceptance with him. So the point is surely clinched: our attitude towards the second coming is an indicator of whether we will be saved. Time and again in the Psalms, David expresses his good conscience in terms of asking God to come and judge him (e.g. Ps. 35:24). Was this not some reference to the future theophany which David knew some day would come?

The fact is, our attitude and response in the split second when we know 'He's back' will effectively be our judgment. When the Lord speaks about knocking on the door of our hearts and our response (Rev. 3:20), He is picking up the language of the Song of Solomon 5:2-8, where the bridegroom (cp. Jesus) knocks at the door of the bride. But notice the sequence there:

While she sleeps at night, the bridegroom comes and knocks [unworthy virgins sleeping instead of being awake; the Lord Jesus comes]

She replies that she's not dressed properly, makes excuses about her feet, she can't come and open [the unworthy don't respond immediately]

He tries to open the door from the outside, putting his hand through the latch-hole [by grace, after the pattern of Lot being encouraged to leave Sodom when he hesitated, the Lord will be patient even with sleepy virgins in His desire for their salvation]

Her heart is moved with desire for him [the rejected still call Jesus 'Lord, Lord'; they love Him emotionally]

She starts dressing herself up, and then is overtaken by desire and rushes to the door, her hands dripping all kinds of perfume and make up over the lock as she opens it [cp. the virgins going to buy oil, the unworthy trying to prepare themselves all too late, not trusting that their Lord loves them as they are at the moment of His coming]

But he's gone , he *withdraws himself* [all too late, the door is shut, He never knew them]

Her soul fails [the shock of rejection]

She seeks him but doesn't find him, calls but he doesn't answer [Prov. 1:28; the rejected call, but aren't answered; they seek the Lord early, but don't find Him. Hos. 5:6 is likewise relevant: " They shall go with their flocks and with their herds to *seek* the LORD; but they shall not find him; he hath *withdrawn himself* from them" .]

She feels tired of her relationship with him (" sick of love").

She is persecuted by the world around her [" condemned with the world"]

The basic point is that if we don't immediately respond to the Lord's knock, we show ourselves to not love Him enough. If we don't open immediately, it's as if we didn't open at all. The Lord wants us as we are, bleary eyed and without our make up, but with a basic overriding love of Him , and faith in the depth of His love, which will lead us to immediately go out to meet Him.

The same Greek word translated " meet" in Matt. 25:6 concerning the wise virgins going out to " meet" Christ occurs also in 1 Thess. 4:17: " We which are alive and remain shall be caught up...in the clouds to *meet* the Lord in the air" . The picture is therefore presented of the righteous obeying the call of their own volition, and then being confirmed in this by being 'snatched away' to meet Christ in the (literal) air. We will then travel with Christ " in the clouds" (literally) to judgment in Jerusalem. In no way, of course, does this suggestion give countenance to the preposterous Pentecostal doctrine of being 'raptured' into heaven itself. Every alternative interpretation of 1 Thess. 4:17 seems to run into trouble with the phrase " meet the Lord *in the air*" . 1 Thessalonians is not a letter given to figurative language, but rather to the literal facts of the second coming.

It is necessary to side-track in order to show that Paul is speaking of the faithful believers in 1 Thess. 4 and 5 rather than all the responsible:-

- He comforts them that the dead believers really will be rewarded with immortality, and that they can take comfort from the fact that they would live for ever (1 Thess. 4:13,14,18). Paul is therefore assuming their acceptability at judgment.

- "Ye are all the children of light" (1 Thess. 5:5) as opposed to the unworthy within the ecclesia, who were in darkness. This suggests that Paul wrote as though his readership were all faithful and assured of eternal life.

" Caught up"

Those wise virgins who go forth to meet Christ immediately are therefore those who will be " caught up together" with the faithful believers who will have been resurrected. Just as eagles mount up into the air and come down where the carcass is, so we will come to judgment. This will be when the Angels " gather together *his elect*" (Mt. 24:31). They then " meet the Lord in the air" literally, perhaps connecting with Rev. 11:12: " They (the faithful, persecuted saints of the last days) heard a great voice from heaven (cp. " the voice" of 1 Thess. 4:16) saying unto them, Come up (cp. " caught up...") hither. And they ascended up to heaven in a cloud (cp. " caught up...in clouds"); and their enemies beheld them" . It may well be that Rev. 11:12 is speaking of the faithful Jewish remnant of the last days, who will be snatched away along with us.

" So great a cloud..."

This cloud of witnesses (Heb. 12:1) will then go with Jesus to judgment, which must be located on earth for the glimpses of the judgment seat which we are given to be realistically fulfilled. The Lord Jesus comes to judgment with His saints with Him (1 Thess. 3:13; Zech. 14:5; Jude 14). It is reasonable to guess that this assembly of faithful believers will visibly reflect God's glory, giving the impression of a 'shekinah' cloud. This may be due to the physical presence of the Angel with us during our time in this cloud. Such a picture is presented in Dan. 7:9-14; Jesus comes with the faithful, symbolized as clouds, along with the Angels, to the judgment seat. It is at this stage that the responsible from all nations come to the judgment (Matt. 25:32) so that there can be a separation of sheep and goats. The 'coming down' of the righteous responsible to Jerusalem will be at the same time as the judgment of the wicked nations in that same place: " Thither cause thy mighty ones to come down" (Joel 3:11) occurs in the context of Armageddon. The bride comes down out of Heaven as a prepared bride. " Saviours shall come up on mount Zion to judge the mount of Esau" (Obad. v 21), i.e. Israel's Arab enemies. The apparent confusion between our gathering to judgment in Jerusalem and the judgment of the nations there at the same time is explicable if we accept that the meaning of time will be collapsed around the second coming. The sequence of events here suggested chimes in with the thought so often expressed by generations of believers - that our initial reaction to the knowledge that our Lord is back will effectively be our judgment, although this will be formally confirmed at the judgment seat before which all the responsible must appear (2 Cor. 5:10).

With Jesus To Judgment

The key passage in our reasoning, 1 Thess. 4:15-18, begins with " For..." . This is explaining 1 Thess. 4:14, which states that " them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring (up) with him" . This will thus be true both spiritually, in that they will share His victory over death, and, literally, in that they will come with their judge

to judgment. John 14:3 may also become easier to handle with this understanding: "I will come again, and take you to be with me" (N.I.V.). Initially, this will mean a literal ascent into the sky, followed by a return to earth to be with Christ eternally in the Kingdom. "That where I am, there ye may be also" may be the spirit's basis for 1 Thess. 4:17, "And so shall we ever be with the Lord"

The idea of literally travelling through the sky to the judgment seat was plainly taught by our Lord in His explanation of how "one shall be taken (literally disappear) and the other left" at His coming; "Whosoever the body is, thither will the eagles be gathered together" (Luke 17:36,37). The point of this allusion is to show that as the eagle travels through the air with a natural homing instinct, without fear or worry as to correct direction, so there should be no apprehension in the mind of the believer concerning the mechanics of how he will be taken away to meet his Lord. The objection that a carcass is an unseemly figure for the Lord Jesus surely becomes insignificant once it is recognized that the Bible often speaks of God and the things of His Truth in what we would consider inappropriate language (e.g. Mt. 13:33; Ps. 78:65). The Lord comparing His teaching to "dung" is another one (Lk. 13:8).

The chronology we have suggested can now be summarised:-

- Persecution of believers.
- The Lord is revealed; the resurrection.
- An Angel invites each of the responsible to go and meet Christ.
- The unworthy delay, whilst the worthy go immediately.
- The worthy are snatched away into the air, forming a cloud of glory which is visible to all. They are physically with Jesus.
- Along with Him they come to Jerusalem.
- The unworthy are then gathered there.
- There is a tribunal-style judgment. The sheep and goats are together before the judgment seat. They are then finally separated by Christ's judgment, and receive their rewards.
- The wicked are destroyed along with the nations then surrounding Jerusalem.

The time scale for all this is unimportant - it could well be just a few seconds, if the meaning of time is to be collapsed, although there presumably must be a period of time for the cloud of witnesses to be beheld, and for the unworthy to desperately try to slap themselves into spiritual shape. The collapsing of time which it seems there will be around the judgment is discussed in Appendix 1. The tremendous encouragement offered by the scenario here presented should not be missed: we will come with our judge, possibly already reflecting His glory, to the

judgment. This in itself should give us a sense of humble certainty as we come before His tribunal. So much will depend on our reaction to the Angel's coming - our faith in acceptance, our degree of concern for the things of this life - all will be revealed in that instant.

APPENDIX 5: Protestant Phobia About Russia

There are passages in several Protestant works which undoubtedly make out Russia to be the greatest enemy of God and the Jews, the very epitome of the devil, far worse than any other nation. The following is a critique of those found in John Thomas, *Elpis Israel*. They seem fairly typical of much right-wing Protestant exegesis.

Therefore, he may be fairly taken as the type of Israel's last and greatest enemy, who shall come to his end, with none to help him

.

Thus, though corruption of the flesh, nationally expressed, was restrained by the overthrow of Gogue, the Dragon-chief, at the pre-millennial advent of the King of Israel, it is finally subdued only when the head of the Serpent-power is crushed at the end of the thousand years.

Here we have the implication that the Russian nation is the epitome of the corruption of the flesh. The Russians are as "fleshly" as any other ethnicity; Paul makes it clear in the epistle to the Romans that all humanity is equally guilty before God. The book implies that they are all thieves and anti-semites, e.g.:

"Behold", says the former prophet concerning Israel at this time, "at evening-tide trouble; and before the morning he is not. This is the portion of them that spoil us, and the lot of them that rob us" - referring, doubtless, to the overthrow and destruction of Gogue. Now, the invasion of their country by a spoiler at "evening-tide", who robs them, implies their previous return.].

This great Adversary of the latter days, is the Northern Autocrat for the time being. He is styled Gog by Ezekiel. In him will be acuminated "all the power of the enemy"; that is, of SIN, imperially manifested in a dominion, such as the world has never seen before. Because of this, it is styled the Old Serpent; and because it will exist upon the old Roman territory, it is called the Dragon: and from its hostility to God and His truth, it is "surnamed the Devil and Satan".

When Gogue comes to be lord of Europe, like Pharaoh of old he will not permit Israel to remove themselves and their wealth beyond his reach. His dominion must, therefore, be broken before the north will obey the command to "give up", and the south to "keep not back"; and even then Israel must fight their way to Palestine as in the days of old.

The Russian Autocracy in its plenitude, and on the verge of dissolution, is the Image of Nebuchadnezzar standing upon the Mountains of Israel, ready to be smitten by the Stone. When Russia makes its grand move for the building-up of its Image-empire then let the reader know that the end of all things, as at present constituted, is at hand.

THE ANTAGONISTS ARE INDICATED -NAMELY, THE SON OF MAN ON ONE SIDE, AND GOGUE ON THE OTHER...IT WILL, THEREFORE, BE MY ENDEAVOUR IN THE FOLLOWING PAGES TO IDENTIFY THIS ADVERSARY OF ISRAEL AND THEIR KING; SO THAT THE READER MAY KNOW WHICH OF "THE POWERS THAT BE" IS CHOSEN OF GOD TO PERSONATE THE SERPENT'S HEAD WHEN IT IS CRUSHED BY THE WOMAN'S SEED.

President Putin and other Russian leaders have repeatedly stressed their pro-Jewish stance, and have openly apologised for anti-semitic acts in Russia's past. They make a big issue of condemning any anti-Jewish graffiti that appears. To distribute throughout Russia that the Russian leader and Government are the most virulent anti-semites of all time could well cause for our brethren and the work of our community. Even if this is what some Western brethren believe, is there need to go out of the way to publicise this fact within Russia itself?

To say that Russia did things in history because they were demon possessed is a very provocative comment to translate into Russian and distribute:

The unclean spirit of the Little Horn went forth to Russia and brought down its hosts upon Hungary; it is also going forth to Prussia in opposition to the democratic constitution it is developing at Erfurt; and, in concert with Russia, it has gone forth to Sultan, with whom it has interrupted its former amicable relations.

Russia is seen as the cause of the whole world being doomed:

The Russians lead on the world to the day of doom.

When we believe that "the whole world is guilty before God" it seems somehow wrong to be stating with such dogmatism that one Gentile nation is particularly guilty. The Russian people and leaders are people no more or less guilty before God as any other nation.

The state of Russia's finances is daily news in Russia and beyond. *Elpis Israel* likens Russia to "Barbarians" bent on overthrowing the West and raising money to do so by seizing the wealth of other nations. At a time when many nations have thrown off the Russian yoke and no longer support her financially, and when there is so much distrust between Russia and much of the rest of Eastern Europe [especially in the Baltic states], these statements are just incendiary. It is also apparent that it is capitalism that robbed Russia of so much, impoverishing the ordinary people- not vice versa. There have been generations of "cold war" between the USSR and the Western world; and we need to be fostering trust between our Eastern and Western brethren, not telling them that there is a natural,

Divinely intended antagonism between Britain and Russia. To preach that Russia is planning on overthrowing the West doesn't seem much of a Gospel; and there is no Bible verse that says this at all. It is a very indirect *inference* that Gog will overthrow the West- nowhere does Scripture state this plainly. And in reality, the events of the last 10 years have shown the West to have effectively overthrown Russia, not vice versa.

Politicians speculate as though money were omnipotent; and we hear "financial reformers" predicting the inactivity of Russia and Austria for want of funds! Where did the barbarians procure funds for the overthrow of the western empire in the fifth and sixth centuries? Did they not support themselves by the spoil? Let the Russian treasury be as empty as it is said to be, and its expenditure exceed its revenue by double the alleged deficit, it will only operate as a pressure from within, causing her Autocrat to "enter into the countries and to overflow and pass over", and to enrich himself with the spoil of those he is destined to subdue.

Middle East relationships are something that the Russian Government is careful to present in a certain way. To make out that Russia is seeking to invade Iran, after all the trouble caused by her invasion of Afghanistan, is going to immediately alert the Russian censors to suspicion of Christians, who according to Elpis Israel are seeking to make out Russia and her president/leader to be an aggressive power planning on invading neighbouring countries. This is the very image Russia and Putin wish to change, and they will not take well to reckless dogmatism as follows:

The Autocrat of Russia now remembers that of Sennacherib in the days of Hezekiah, but believes not in the repetition of so terrible a destruction.

This Power is the Russian, whose symbol is a Bear. This is so well known that the phrase "the Russian Bear" is as familiar as household words. Russia, which already comprehends some of the Persian territory in its bounds, is destined to conquer Persia, and to possess it from India to Ethiopia. This is not conjecture but an absolute certainty; for God has declared by Ezekiel that Persia in the latter days shall be a constituent of the dominion of Gog; and that Gog is the autocratic dynasty of Russia will be seen when we come to treat of that prophecy in its proper place.

To say that Russia will invade Iran, Iraq etc. before the Lord's coming, and that this is "an absolute certainty", is really going to be telling the brotherhood that the Lord's return is very far from imminent - if we have to wait for Russia to invade Iran and Iraq first. And moreover, an equally dogmatic claim is made that Russia's invasion of Iran will be accompanied by "England" invading Afghanistan and the Gulf states:

The conquest of Persia by the Autocrat will doubtless cause England to conquer Afghanistan, and to seize upon Dedan that she may command the entrance to the Persian gulf.

These predictions are mere speculation. Nowhere does the Bible text say this. To make so much effort to have this material translated and distributed in the Russian speaking world will be at best confusing, if not totally disillusioning. And again, Elpis Israel matches the supposed Russian capture of Istanbul with Britain capturing some Mediterranean islands belonging to Greece. I don't know what our Greek and Macedonian brethren would make of this idea:

Its supremacy over the Ionian Republic still further approximates it to the Macedonian character: which will become still more conspicuous, when it beholds “the prince of Ros, Mosc, and Tobl” possessed of Constantinople, and contending for the Gogueship of Magogue; it will, then, doubtless, make extensive seizures of the Isles of Greece, to strengthen itself in the Mediterranean, and to antagonise, as much as possible, the power of the Autocrat in that direction.

Likewise to suggest that the Lord can only return once Russia has dominated Germany and the Russian president has become king of Germany, seems to be pushing the time of the Lord's coming far back. Russia has huge debts to Germany and her leadership would not wish this kind of aggressive, anti-German image to be created. Again, we are asking for trouble from the Russian Government by making these statements:

This personage at present is only “Autocrat of All the Russias”, that is, of Ros, Mosc, and Tobol; while the Emperor of Austria holds the position of Gogue and Magogue. But, as we have seen elsewhere, the Austrian and German empire is doomed to extinction by fire and sword; so that when this is broken up the Gogueship will be assumed by the Autocrat, or “prince of Ros, Mosc, and Tobol.” Having proved as I think, that the phrase “Gogue of the land of Magogue” signifies Emperor of Germany, and that the particular emperor referred to will also be the “prince of Ros, Mosc, and Tobl” -that is, that at some time hereafter, and that not far off, a Czar of Russia will be both Emperor of Germany and Autocrat of All the Russias.

Elpis Israel keeps calling Russia an autocracy, when it is very proudly a democracy. To so consistently stress that Russia is not a democracy but an autocracy [Russia is

called this about 30 times in Elpis Israel] is really asking for opposition from the Russian authorities and Government - for we would be seeking to make out that democracy means nothing in Russia. Whether or not we feel this to be the case, it seems quite out of order for us to willingly get themselves involved in this kind of political controversy and commentary by translating this kind of material into Russian. In any case, the continual description of Russia as “the autocrat”, “the Czar” is totally outmoded- there has been no Czar/autocrat in Russia since 1917. Sadly one just has to accept that bro. Thomas got it wrong about this. Or, there can be no second coming until Putin/the Russian president is replaced by a Czar. Which again is a highly controversial statement to make and publicise within Russia, and which hardly encourages a struggling Russian brotherhood to believe that their Lord is coming soon.

The Bible is the enlightener. If men would not be carried about by every wind that blows, let them study this. It will unfold to them the future, and make them wiser than the world. The coming years will not be years of peace. The policy of the Autocrat will be to throw his adversaries off their guard, and take the Sultan by surprise. He is to “come against him like a whirlwind, with chariots, and with horsemen, and with many ships; and he will enter the countries, and overflow and pass over. And many countries shall be overthrown.” This is the career marked out for him.

We have a growing number of brethren in Turkey, and it hardly seems likely to foster love between the Russian and Turkish brotherhood by telling them that Russia is going to invade Turkey. If this was foretold in the Bible in so many words, it would be different - but the Biblical text cited to prove the supposition are so inferential and forced that the impression is inevitably given that we are really trying to agitate the issue. To say that Britain somehow gets a better deal in the final judgement than Russia again seems to be introducing an element of nationalism. And to say that God intends Britain “to antagonise Russia”, as observed earlier, hardly dovetails with our preaching that racial differences are irrelevant and we all belong to a world equally “guilty before God” and needing His gracious salvation.

I shall be able to show, from other parts of the prophetic word, that the power destined to play the conspicuous part indicated above is RUSSIA. That it will dominate all the ten kingdoms, subdue Turkey, and incorporate Persia into its empire; but that when it has reached its zenith, it will in turn be precipitated into the abyss, and its dominion suppressed for a thousand years. When I come to unfold these things, the reader will see why Britain is not included in the ten toes. She is reserved of God to antagonise Russia, as she did France, when all Europe was prostrate at the feet of “Napoleon le Grand”. The ten toes belong to the image as a united dominion; hence Britain cannot be included among them unless it is first conquered by the overshadowing power, which it will not be, as is clearly demonstrable from many parts of the divine testimony. Russia will command the land, and Britain rules the sea. They will contend for dominion of the East; but neither will obtain it.

There are statements that could easily be read as seeking to provoke or desire a major war between Russia and Turkey. Again, these are sensitive issues that we

should not be seeking to go into print about an area where there is press censorship. These predictions have remained unfulfilled for over 150 years now, let it be noted. Again, if we are teaching the brotherhood that they must wait until Russia invades Turkey before the Lord can come, then we may well be making them unprepared to live life watching for the Lord's imminent return.

They have assured him of their support in case of his being attacked by Russia. This promise is sure to bring on war between the Porte and the Autocrat. If the Sultan had been left to himself, being weak, he would have yielded and so have avoided war; but being energised by France and England, two strong military and naval powers, the Sultan feels himself a match for Russia, and prepared to assume a bold and warlike attitude. But these assurances will only lure him on to ruin. No powers, however strong, can save dominions foredoomed by God. Their friendship for the Sultan will be as fatal to him as the friendship of England for Austria and the Pope was to them in the days of Napoleon. The Autocrat, being God's sword upon Turkey, will be too strong for them both; for in the tumult and confusion created by the measures of the Sultan, the emperor, and the Roman bishop, their several dominions will be abolished, and the Autocrat remain lord of the ascendant.

Much of Eastern Europe bitterly resents the way Russia annexed/dominated their states in the 1940s and 1950s, and to say that Russia can do this because they were compelled to do so by God is enough to turn a lot of ordinary people against our message - if this is what we are supposed to believe as "the Gospel". Is Russia really "God's sword" against other nations? The Assyrians were, against Israel. But where does the Bible say Russia is God's sword, and where does it say that they are God's sword against other European powers? Where actually are the chapters and verses for these statements? In any case, the way many states have in the last 12 years broken free of Russian domination would seem to indicate that the 2nd coming is a lot further away in terms of prophecy than it was 12 years ago-if Bro. Thomas' interpretations are correct.

What inducement was there for the kings of Europe to meet Napoleon at Dresden, and to march their armies into Russia in 1812? It was compulsion, and not inclination. A similar cause will operate on them again. When the king of the north "overflows and passes over" their countries, they will become subject to him as their emperor; and when his autocracy shall attain the extent marked out for it in the Word, his dominion will be fitly represented by Nebuchadnezzar's Image, of which they will be the toes. They must exist as regal parts of a great dominion until Christ comes: because they are to war with him in person; and because God will set up His kingdom in their time; and, having broken to pieces the power of their imperial ruler on the mountains of Israel, by that same kingdom He will "break in pieces and consume all theirs".

The continual personification of Russia as "the autocrat", "one man", amounts to a direct allegation that the leader of Russia, i.e. Putin at present, is very evil, anti-God, and leading the world to destruction. Russian presidents are especially sensitive to these kind of things being said about them, and those who distribute them would be held guilty of anti-State activity. You may have noticed the recent press closures in Russia and arrest of journalists for saying far less than this about

the Russian leadership. All the more dangerous for our brethren are the following statements:

The Press is prophesying smooth things, and persuading the world of the moderation of the Autocrat, when the Autocrat (for Gogue is an autocrat, ruling by his own will)...[i.e. he will be a dictator, not taking the peoples wishes into consideration through democracy - this is definitely a provocative statement.]

Of course, the prophecy must be future, because the Prince of the Ros is the Gogue of Magogue; and as yet no Emperor of Russia has been also Emperor of Germany...

The overthrow of the Sultan will not be contemplated by the British Government with indifference. They have already beheld continental Europe to the confines of Russia subject to the will of one man, and they are destined to witness it again. They will unquestionably adopt all possible measures to circumvent the Autocrat.

There is without doubt language in Elpis Israel that condemns the leader of Russia as being personally and morally a far worse man than anyone else. This is bound to cause comment from the authorities:

Impious and cruel as Antiochus, and superstitious and fanatical as Justinian, with the arrogance, ambition, and profanity of the Roman Bishop in his halcyon days, this incarnation of the sin-power in the crisis of its fate, will fully answer to all that has been predicated of the king who does according to his will, and “for whom Tophet is ordained of old”....we shall see in him a potentate, unrivalled in presumption and impiety by any of his fathers, not excepting Pharaoh of the olden time.

England’s Indian Empire, and its contiguity to Asiatic Russia, make her his natural enemy. It will be her policy to prevent him from taking possession of Egypt and the Holy Land; for if he were to do this, he would intercept all communication between England and India by the Red Sea. Hence, while she is the natural enemy of the Autocrat, she is also the natural friend of Egypt and the Jews. The triumph of Russia in the west will cause her to strengthen herself in the east; and, as I shall show, she will take possession of Sheba, Dedan, Edom, Moab, and part of Ammon.

Again, to describe Britain as Russia’s “natural enemy” is surely reckless. It is untrue geographically and politically, and we should not seek to inflame the potential divide between West and East by statements of these kind. It seems nationalistic rather than spiritually minded to claim that Britain is the “natural friend of the Jews” whilst Russia is their great enemy. Britain has been and is as anti-semitic as anyone else. And the tragic fact is that the state of Israel was established as a result of a Jewish guerrilla war against the British. Britain is certainly not pro-Jewish.

Further evidence of heightening British-Russian tensions is to found in the following:

The united imperial power of Britain and merchant-power of India, is the power of the latter days, destined of God to contend with the Autocrat, when, having laid all Europe prostrate, his ambition prompts him to grasp the sceptre of the east . [to state that India and Russia are to go to war is another statement that will attract unfavourable attention from the authorities, but is nowhere to be found in God's word].

But these measures of the British will be the means of luring on the Autocrat to his destruction. Having fulfilled the mission of his "sacred Russia" to put down rebellion, to plant the Greek cross on the dome of St. Sophia, and to prostrate Europe before his feet, he will next address himself to the work of establishing his dominion over the east. The prosperity of Egypt and Judea will tempt him to seize them for himself; for, as the prophet saith, "He shall enter also into the glorious land, and many shall be overthrown; but these shall escape out of his hand, even Edom, and Moab, and the chief of the children of Ammon." He will have proclaimed war against the east; and at the head of his vassal kings and their armies have invaded Syria. The war will be bloody, and his hosts like a cloud to cover the land. Having over-run Syria and Persia, he will invade Egypt, Libya, and Ethiopia. For it is written, "He shall stretch forth his hand also upon the countries: and the land of Egypt shall not escape. But he shall have power over the treasures of gold, and of silver, and over all precious things of Egypt; and the Libyans and Ethiopians shall be at his steps." This subjugation of Egypt arouses all the indignation of Britain. England's interference troubles him: therefore he shall go forth with great fury to destroy, and utterly to take away many." Judea will now feel the weight of his power. He will lay siege to Jerusalem, and take it; for, "He shall pitch his palatial tents in the glorious holy mountain." "Yet," though thus far triumphant, "he shall come to his end, and none shall help him."

And yet all this talk about Britain and Russia being intended by God to be enemies is based on the most slender of Biblical evidence.

Elpis Israel makes reference to other Eastern European states in a way that nationalist Governments are bound to take exception to. Georgia, Armenia, Chechniya ("Circassia" in bro.Thomas' time) etc., have all broken free of Russian domination, often as the result of bloody wars. And Tatarstan is seeking to do the same. To predict that these nations will be pro-Russian and will contribute their troops to Russia's war games is about the most controversial thing one could say in those areas, where many families have lost loved ones in the struggle against Russia. These predictions are not based firmly on scripture, and the fact so many in the brotherhood discount these interpretations surely means that we are needlessly provoking issues and endangering the safety of many brethren and sisters in these volatile areas.

Russians, and Independent Tartary, are the countries of Togarmah, from which in former times poured forth the Turcoman cavalry, "which", says Gibbon, "they proudly computed by millions." Georgia and Circassia, probably, are "bands of Togarmah's house....These, then, are the regions which are to supply the numerous and formidable armies with which their arrogant and mighty Emperor, prophetically denominated Gogue, is hereafter "to ascend as a cloud", against the Holy Land.

Again, to describe the Russian leader as “arrogant” is just the kind of thing that leads to the imprisonment of journalists today. For us to go on record as saying this kind of thing is, we repeat in all soberness, asking for serious trouble for our community. We personally plead for a stop to be put to seeking to publish these statements.

The war between Russia and the Porte, however, in 1828, advanced the frontiers of the Russian empire to Asia Minor, Ararat, and thence to the Caspian; by which a considerable portion of the territory of the old Assyro-Macedonian kingdom is included in the dominions of the Autocrat. He is, therefore, in relation to Judea, the king of the north and representative of Antiochus Epiphanes. He is also “the Assyrian” of the latter days, for whom Tophet is ordained of old

Those “advances” of the Russian empire to Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, Azerbaidjan, Armenia, Georgia, Chechnya etc. have in the last ten years been undone. To say that these nations must come again under Russian domination because scripture says so is going to provoke a major outcry from those highly nationalistic Governments. And of course the question arises: where in scripture does it explicitly state this? It doesn’t.

Most serious of all is that the Bible text is changed and twisted to apparently mention Russia, Uzbekistan, Chechnya, Ukraine [“cossacks”] etc. - when the Hebrew, Russian and English texts say nothing of the sort. Yet it is enclosed in quotation marks and therefore not differentiated from the original text:

“Behold I am against thee, O Gogue, Autocrat of Russia, Moscovy, and Tobolskoi: and I will turn thee about, and put a bit into thy jaws, and I will bring thee forth from the north parts, and all thine army, horses, and horsemen, all of them accoutred with all sorts of armour, even a great company with bucklers and shields, all of them handling swords: among whom shall be Persians, Ethiopians, and Libyans; all of them with shields and helmet: French and Italians, etc.; Circassians, Cossacks, and the Tartar hordes of Usbeck, etc.: and many people not particularly named besides.”

Moscow cannot replace “Meschech” in scripture, ditto Tobolski for Tubal. “The house of Togarmah of the north quarters, and all his bands”, hardly sounds like the Caucasian republics, Ukraine and Uzbekistan. These are geographically separate regions. The situation in Uzbekistan is especially volatile, and to suggest that they will ally with Russia [having struggled for ten years to achieve independence] is enough to land an Uzbek in prison.

From these premises, then, I think, there cannot be the shadow of a doubt that the Autocrat of Russia, when he shall have attained the plenitude of his power and dominion, is the subject of the prophecy contained in the thirty-eighth and thirty-ninth of Ezekiel.

The sheer dogmatism of these suggestions is bound to cause division, as it has done in many other parts of the world. If the impression is given that Elpis Israel is the founding document of our faith- and this impression is undoubtedly given by the

more extreme wing - then readers are forced to either accept these dogmatic assertions, or are made to feel inferior as second class believers.

The situation in the Balkans is always very fragile, and there is very strong anti-Western sentiment in many countries, especially Macedonia. Provocative remarks from Elpis Israel can only worsen the situation. Brother Thomas envisaged the British invasion of Afghanistan and parts of the Asian former USSR, but he saw this in the context of Britain accepting the imperial mantle of Alexander, not as a “war” against terrorism.

The Lion of Tarshish is Alexandrine in its dominion, and will then possess much of the territory represented by the Unicorn Goat and the Leopard -all, indeed, not included in the Image. Alexander the Great extended his conquests over Afghanistan, the Punjab, and into India beyond the Indus. The Lion of Tarshish has already annexed much of his territory, indeed quite sufficient to confer upon it Unicorn and Leopard attributes. Its supremacy over the Ionian Republic still further approximates it to the Macedonian character.

Bible prophecy is **not** about Britain, America and Russia; they are only incidental to the picture, insofar that their actions allow the development of the beast empire in the middle east. It is the destiny of Israel that is central to prophetic utterance. The Gulf war forced Israel into the Oslo process, and one can imagine that the latest terrorist outrage will lead to some sort of enforced “new world order”, as Bush senior advocated in the aftermath of the Gulf crisis.

Brother Thomas lived during a time of Empire, when Britannia ruled the waves and India was still the “jewel” in the crown, and this shows in his writings. It is however an anachronism to apply the language of the British East India company to current world events:

And Sheba and Tarshish in the prophecy of Gogue are manifestly indicative of the Lion-power of the Anglo-Indian empire.

But, in corroboration of this, I remark further, that the lion power is represented also as a merchant power, in the words, “the Merchants of Tarshish shall say unto Gogue.” Having ascertained the geography of Tarshish, it is easier to answer the question, Who are its merchants? This inquiry will admit of but one answer, namely, the British East India Company, which is both the merchant and the ruler of the elephant-tooth country of the east. But the association of “the young lions of Tarshish” with the “merchants of Tarshish”, makes this still more obvious; for it represents the peculiar constitution of the Anglo-Indian government.

A whole edifice of prophecy has been erected around a few ambiguous verses, the central role of Israel has been neglected, and the references are anachronistic as we no longer have an “Anglo-Indian Government” or a “Czar” or a “British East India Company.”

Moreover, post-imperial Asia is now predominately Muslim. These disparate countries are unified by the Islamic religion (even the Soviet republics) **not by their Anglo-Saxon imperial heritage.**

The impetus to have material like Elpis Israel translated and distributed into Russian, coupled with an uncritical eulogising of bro. Thomas as "divinely guided", coupled with the dogmatic assertion of certain prophetic views, will have a detrimental effect on the truth in those regions. It is very sad that the wishes and advice of those working within the region has been so consistently disregarded and walked all over by a group of brethren living the other side of the world. One can only hope and pray that they will see sense and not endanger the work and lives of our brethren.

APPENDIX 6: Some Criticisms Of Futurism Considered

The following comments are taken from the section about prophecy in "Be ye doers of the word" - a publication which has many otherwise excellent chapters relating to our walk in Christ.

"New theories on prophecy, some borrowed from the apostasy, are being introduced"

The fact one may have a view of prophecy differing to that of Dr Thomas doesn't mean that it was borrowed from the apostasy. Many brethren have not read 'outside' interpretations of prophecy but have in all spiritual honesty come to their own conclusions. It seems to be overlooked that whole sections of Dr Thomas' prophetic writings are culled directly from writers of the Protestant apostasy. Sometimes he acknowledges his quotes; other times he quotes by the *page* without acknowledging . So if 'the true' interpretation of prophecy happens to coincide with something an apostate interpreter also said, why is there so much objection to it if , say, ones' conclusions as a 'futurist' happen to agree with those of an apostate interpreter? Dr Thomas presumably wasn't guilty of introducing the apostasy - and so neither is anyone else who happens to have another view of prophecy. This kind of poor logic and baseless allegation only fuels immature brethren to attack any brother or sister who holds another view and brand them as apostate, introducing apostasy etc. This is where *attitude* to prophecy has been the source of division.

"In these instances, the interpretation of these prophetic books of the Bible is regarded as a matter of opinion and the absence of any reference to a continuous historic approach in our Statement of Faith is cited as justifying this position."

This seems to imply that holding the CONTINUOUS HISTORIC approach is just as important as anything else in a statement of faith. Yet if this were so, why then wasn't the CONTINUOUS HISTORIC view of prophecy included in it? And why has our community consistently welcomed the presence of those with other views amongst us? To this day the likes of Harry Whittaker and Alf Norris are quoted widely; and many futurist expositors of prophecy are all active speakers in our community even though they advocate a non CONTINUOUS HISTORIC view. So surely, there are true principles and uncertain details. How we view the beast etc. is surely one of the uncertain details in terms of fellowship- and I don't just mean the breaking of bread, I mean also practically working together.

" [Examples:]

The small temple theory which is at variance with Bro. Sulley's exposition"

We notice the small temple theory is wrong with reference to its contradiction of Bro Sulley, not Scripture. There is no shred of evidence that the temple will be circular- so one can scarcely insist on THIS matter. There are many many brethren who deny a large temple theory...and many others who believe the whole prophecy is conditional and will not come true. Now one could hardly round up all those brethren and accuse them of leading the brotherhood into a state of unpreparedness, lack of zeal etc. These very brethren are amongst our most zealous!

" The view that the Arabs will invade Israel as well as Russia and that the invasion of Ezekiel 38 will occur once Christ has established the Kingdom"

Can anyone say the Arabs WON'T invade Israel? It seems almost certain they will join in with any invader of Israel, be it Russia or whoever. To say that to believe they will invade Israel leads to all the allegations....lack of watching for Christ's return, lack of zeal and witness...this is just slanderous. Those of us who believe the Bible teaches the Arabs WILL invade Israel really aren't any better or worse in these areas than those who believe something else. It is surely a matter of sadness that some can be SO dogmatic that ONLY his or her views are possibly correct and ANY other alternative must be labelled as heretical and destructive.

" Old views are deemed to be outdated and wrong [just] because they are old...[this is the result of humanism in education affecting our community]"

This is unfair to say this. We don't reject the Continuous historic view of basic doctrine just because it's old. This is a judging of the motives of brethren who see things differently. No possibility is accepted that they prayed and studied for years to come to the conclusions which historic they did.

" Current evangelical literature espouses the cause of the Papal theory relating to Antichrist...to deflect the identification of the Roman church with the harlot of Rev. 17 and place the bulk of Apocalyptic predictions into the future. Unfortunately some of these current views relating to the identity of the beast and the harlot have been accepted by some within the brotherhood."

This is one of the irresponsible statements that causes some to brand those of who have a futuristic view of the antichrist or Apocalypse as Jesuits or Jesuit influenced. It isn't a case that I, for example, read and accepted any of these Papal views, as they are called here. No, I honestly didn't. I just studied my Bible and used a concordance and my knowledge of current affairs. It is no more introducing Catholic dogma into the Truth than Bro. John Thomas could be accused of introudcing Protestant dogma through his views. It shoud also be noted that the Protestant apostacy is full of literature which identifies the whore of Rev. 17 with

the Papacy.

" These new theories:

1. Undermine our faith."

But who ever can say this or know this?? How can the author judge that someone whose faith is weak has been weakened by an honest attempt to interpret Scripture. How about all those whose faith is built up by them? The brethren who have written futuristic views of Revelation or subscribed to them have a strong faith . What is being said is just plain wrong, as well as slanderous and defamatory.

" If part 3 of Elpis Israel is fundamentally wrong, what about the earlier two sections?"

This is a totally bogus argument. Because a brother writes something that's right does it mean everything else is right?? Sadly this view that Elpis Israel *must* be right stems from the wrong view that Dr Thomas was 'Divinely guided' in his writings therefore he *must* be right. This means then that all independent study of Scripture is immediately made of little value, and must be conducted not as children coming to the words of their Father, but as men tramlined into only one set of possible conclusions. Dr Thomas was Divinely guided only as much as anyone else is amongst us- otherwise we are becoming like any other sect who bases their beliefs upon the words of uninspired men, and whose faithfulness is judged by their lack of deviation from the founder rather than from God's word.

" Also disagreement among us as to the meaning of God's word can generate apathy and undermine our zeal."

No. This implies that every matter of Biblical interpretation must be uniformly agreed amongst us or else we will not be as zealous as those who claim to be uniform in their views. It just is slanderous to say that brethren who hold or held futuristic views were not zealous and were apathetic. It just isn't true. In fact, it's worse than not true- it's slanderous. And it leads those who think they ARE unified in their views to despise those who rejoice in their diversity of opinion, and to consider them less zealous than themselves.

There seems to be a confusion in some minds between uniformity and unity. The great theme of God's manifestation in men and women is that His one Name is manifested in the diversity of those making up the body of Christ. There IS unity, yet in diversity. There would be no need for the virtue of tolerance, if the aim of the body of Christ was to produce a community which were agreed on every detail of Biblical interpretation. Our aim should be unity of spirit, based upon the facts of the one Lord, one faith, one Hope, one baptism. But not uniformity on every detail of the Bible. Our unity around the basics leads us to lovingly tolerate each other on non-essentials. But instead, it seems that some have so blurred the definition of the Gospel that they insist that almost every matter of Bible understanding becomes something to insist upon.

This behaviour is often justified by saying that we mustn't cause confusion and

must therefore allow only one view- which happens to be *their* view, who are suggesting this zero-tolerance of others' opinions. The existence and genuine tolerance of differing opinions is a healthy culture to inculcate in our community. To inculcate intolerance of others, even a despising of them as being less zealous and prepared and eager for the Lord as a result of the view of prophecy they hold, can only lead to division. And there is no lack of evidence this is exactly what has happened.

It also needs to be noted that the continuous historic school of thought hardly speaks with one voice about prophecy. The writings of, e.g., Geoff Walker and those of Robert Roberts all adopt the continuous historic approach but they offer quite different interpretations.

" 2. Many of these views leave us waiting for events to occur that will never happen..."

That's pretty arrogant to say that. The Bible doesn't say the Arabs WON'T EVER invade Israel, etc. How does the writer KNOW they won't happen??

" we may not appreciate either, the real urgency of our days and be unprepared for the Lord's appearing. Christ's return may well come 'as a thief in the night'."

He comes as a thief to those who are drunken with the cares of this world. The writer is strongly implying that if you don't hold his / her view of prophecy, then, you are one of those who will be condemned at Christ's coming because it will be as a thief for them. Harry Whittaker had the greatest effect upon many of us than any single brother. Yet he and Phyllis were living examples of preparedness for the Lord's return, as are others who so strongly maintain his views. So it just doesn't follow that holding another view means we don't look out for the Lord's coming.

" 3. If the interpretation of prophecy in Elpis Israel and Eureka are largely astray we can hardly say to the stranger that the brotherhood has had a consistent platform for over 140 years. Our capacity to witness is mitigated."

But again, isn't it strange that many of those who are actively involved in mission work also hold futuristic views of prophecy? So it's not true to say we mitigate witness. The vast majority of new converts in our wider brotherhood don't hold the CONTINUOUS HISTORIC view of prophecy and yet many of them convert many many others. If we are preaching prophecy and the interpretation of it in terms of who the antichrist is, Revelation etc. then we aren't preaching the Biblical Gospel. Both Thessalonians and Revelation were written well after the preaching of Acts 2-6. Here, thousands heard the Gospel and were validly baptized- without knowing about Revelation or antichrist, nor Russian invasions of Israel or Britain coming in to the rescue etc. as 'Tarshish'. Therefore these matters were not part of the apostolic Gospel- which is what we ought to be preaching. If our Gospel is 'we have said the same thing about prophecy for 140 years', then sadly we are guilty of preaching ourselves not Jesus Christ. And in any case, that claim just isn't true. It needs to be well noted that those who hold a futuristic view of prophecy have been converting far, far more people to the Truth

over the last generation than those who so strongly insist on teaching the continuous historic view. Their capacity to witness is clearly not "mitigated". The reverse seems to be true.

" 4. Without a correct understanding of prophecy we are unable to appreciate that the hand of providence has worked in the events transpiring around us."

Again, this is just assumption. How does the writer KNOW that those who have another view of prophecy don't perceive the hand of providence? The author is blanketly stating that anyone who holds any other view than his / her one is just spiritually hopeless. This is the danger of these claims and this kind of language- it leads to an arrogant and aggressive spirit against anyone who has another view, and a sense of moral and spiritual superiority due to holding one view of Revelation rather than another.

" We would not have been excited by the events in Israel in 1948 and 1967 and we would not be stirred to faithful action."

But those who hold an Arab view of things are and were excited by those things!! These were battles with Arab forces- not a united Europe or Catholicism. Note too that in 1946-48 the British did all they could to STOP the state of Israel being founded! Which hardly sounds like 'Tarshish' enabling it as has been so wrongly claimed.

At the time of the renewed *intifada* in 2000, those who had a futuristic view of prophecy were far more excited about the increased prospects of the Lord's soon return as a result of these things than those of the continuous historic school. The latter insisted that what was happening wasn't that significant because Russia and the Catholic church weren't involved. So it could well be that it is those who see the Arabs rather than the Catholics or Russia as the latter day invader are the ones who will be the more "stirred to faithful action" than others.

" Both Daniel and Revelation promise a blessing to those who understand the message. 'The wise shall understand'. Those who are wise will be found written in the book of life..."

This strongly implies that the wise are those who understand prophecy according to the view of the author. Entry into the book of life doesn't depend on understanding prophecy. In that case a lot of faithful brethren and sisters especially in the mission field won't be there. Notice that the parallel in Daniel is between the wise and those who turn others to righteousness. This is the true wisdom- to turn others to the way of life, not to hold a supposedly pure understanding of who the beast of Revelation is. Would that salvation were so easy- by mere correct intellectual understanding of Bible prophecy.

The passage in Rev. 1:3 " Blessed is he that readeth and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein" has been misread as meaning that blessing is related to 'correctly understanding' the

Revelation. The Greek word translated "readeth" doesn't HAVE to mean 'correctly understands'. The obvious sense is to link it with those who HEAR the words...the message is being sent by a messenger, who was to READ it out loud- as we know Paul's letters were thus read to a largely illiterate brotherhood- and it was then HEARD by the ecclesias. Both reader and hearer were blessed if they KEPT what the prophecy implied- which was and is an awareness of God's claims upon His people, their separation from this world, and an earnest readiness for Christ's return. The 'blessing' is elsewhere applied not to those who intellectually understand something but to those who are doing and living and saying the right things at the return of Jesus. The same Greek word for 'Blessed' is used of those who are ready at the Lord's return and doing the right things (Mt. 24:46; Lk. 12:37,38,43). Rev. 22:7 links back to 1:3, the epilogue interpreting the prologue: "Blessed is he who keeps the logos of the prophecy of this book" - the essence / logos / underlying idea of it all, which is that God's persecuted people will remain faithful to His word, will testify it to an unbelieving world, and will live lives always prepared for their Lord's return. The blessing is in the preparedness, not in the detailed understanding. If blessing depends upon holding the CONTINUOUS HISTORIC view of Revelation, then the majority of God's servants aren't blessed- seeing that Dr Thomas' views of prophecies couldn't possibly have been understood throughout most of the time from the 1st century until now.

"We are told also that it is vital to identify the beast of Revelation and refuse its teachingthe Lord states that those who fail to identify the beast and separate from its ways will be rejected."

Well, here we have the clearly and commonly stated view- that if you identify the beast any way different to them, you will be rejected at the last day. One pleads with any who agree with this claim to PLEASE think again, for the sake of their own eternal future apart from the pain and discord this is causing. If we condemn our brother, we will be condemned. Many hold another view of the beast to that of Dr Thomas. According to the above statement, they will be rejected. The import of this is terrible. It is too easy to write and publish hurtful and damning words. But by our words we will be justified, and by them too some will sadly have to be condemned.

"Ezekiel stresses the importance of understanding prophecy when he calls on us to be watch. Those who fail to warn others will bear a great responsibility- their 'blood will I require at the watchman's hand'."

Ezekiel is surely teaching that the watchman who doesn't do his job will be condemned. And here yet again the view is implied - that if you 'see' or 'watch' the 'signs' differently to them, then, you are an unfaithful watchman and will be condemned. The watchman was to plead with Israel to align their behaviour to God's word, in view of the coming of judgment day; not dogmatically interpret the details of latter day prophecy to them.

"We cannot watch if we do not first know what to look for. We need to have a

clear vision of what lies ahead. Careful study of the word of God is essential."

But those who have other views of prophecy DO study the word. Surely what our community needs is exhortation to Bible study, not exhortation to condemn those who don't agree with us on non-essentials like the interpretation of latter day prophecy. And we have to ask whether the purpose of 'prophecy' is merely to predict future events. The Lord foretold the details of His own passion so that WHEN IT CAME TO PASS his servants would THEN believe; not to merely provide them with a timeline in advance. And there is no real reason to understand 'watching' as merely comparing our interpretation of Bible prophecies with present events. The contexts all say that our 'watching' is in being aware of our own spiritual frailty amidst all the temptations of the very last days.

" Prov. 29:18 states: 'Where there is no vision the people perish'. The word 'perish' means 'to be made naked' and this accords with the Lord's warnings in Rev. 16:13 'Blessed is he that watcheth and keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked and they see his shame'. " "

Yet again, the implication is that if we have a different 'vision' of latter day prophecy to the writer/s, then we will be condemned. In any case, the Prov. 29:18 passage doesn't seem to me to have anything to do with latter day prophecy. The NIV gives the sense of the Hebrew well here: " Where there is no revelation, the people cast off restraint; but blessed is he who keeps the law." Keeping the law- the Mosaic law, in the context- is paralleled with having a revelation / exposition of it. If the priests didn't teach the law, then the people wouldn't keep it. The blessedness of the 'watching' is not that they have an accurate timeline in place; we must watch exactly because we DON'T and CAN'T know the exact time of the Lord's return. We cannot, therefore, have a detailed timeline which tells us FOR SURE that Jesus will return after event x or y. We can speculate, of course, but we cannot say for sure. The message is to be ready, to love Him and His return, just because we DON'T know when exactly He is coming (Mt. 24:42; 25:13). 'Watching' means holding to our faith and repenting of our weaknesses in Rev. 3:3- not interpreting latter day prophecies. This of itself won't make us spiritual people. The Greek word translated "watch" is usually translated "prison" - the idea is of guarding oneself and one's faith, "vigilantly" watching out against the [Biblical] devil [same word in 1 Pet. 5:8], rather than searching for the understanding of latter day prophecy.