

Beauties of the Truth

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BEAUTIES OF THE TRUTH is published as a service to the brethren to stimulate their consideration and appreciation of the boundless riches of God's Word. It is published free of charge. Subscriptions will be entered for all who request it. Address all correspondence to: Beauties of the Truth, 10034 S.W. 52nd Avenue, Portland, OR 97219. Editorial board: Brs. Jerry Leslie (Editor-in-Chief), David Doran, Carl Hagensick, Michael Nekora, David Rice, David Stein.

“In the Name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit”

With this statement, a candidate is baptized and welcomed as a new member of the body of Christ. The phrase taken from Matthew 28:19 followed Jesus' command to baptize all nations. But is this phrase really the saying of Jesus? Or was the scripture altered during the third century to support the development of the doctrine of the trinity?

Since the concession that 1 John 5:7 is spurious, only Matthew 28:19 remains as a scriptural support for the triune name. That is why the triple formula, “father, son and holy spirit” formed the framework of the Apostles' Creed. Oxford scholar Moberly (1902) claimed Matthew 28:19 to be a “solemn precept to baptize in the name of the holy Trinity, which fell from the divine lips of the newly risen Lord”

Because this scripture is important to the trinitarian belief, there has been little interest in pursuing its authenticity. Yet some scholars of the 19th and 20th centuries believe the scripture was altered. James Martineau, in *Seat of Authority*, says that the “very account which tells us that at last, after his resurrection, he commissioned his apostles to go and baptize all nations, betrays itself by speaking in the Trinitarian language of the next century and compels us to see in it the ecclesiastical editor.”

In *History of Dogma*, Adolph Harnack claims Matthew 28:19 is “no word of the Lord” Even the cautious critic Canon Armitage Robinson, in *Encyclopedia Biblica*, says that Matthew “does not here report the (very words) of Jesus, but transfers to him the familiar language of the church of the Evangelist's own time and locality.”

There are early church writers who also seem to support these views. Eusebius, a fourth century writer, had the greatest library of any early church scribe. It contained manuscripts of the new testament that were at least 200 years older than any existing today. Manuscripts copied by Origen, Clement of Alexandria, and others not available today gave him access to almost original material. Eusebius cites Matthew 28:19 eighteen times in his work, always in the same form: “Go ye and make disciples of all nations in my name, teaching them to observe all things, whatsoever I commanded you”

When he comments on the verse, Eusebius places great stress on the phrase, “in my name.” Apparently his sources, Origen, Clement and Justin Martyr, excluded “father” and “holy spirit” from this scripture.

Justin Martyr wrote between 130 A.D. and 140 A.D. While much of his work is no longer available, there is a passage that is generally thought to be a reference to Matthew 28:19:

“God hath not yet inflicted nor inflicts the judgment, as knowing of some that still even today ARE BEING MADE DISCIPLES IN THE NAME OF HIS CHRIST, and are abandoning the path of error, who also do receive gifts each as they be worthy, being illumined by the name of this Christ.”

Aphraates, a Syriac writer of the middle-fourth century, cites the text in yet a different manner, “Make disciples of all nations, and they shall believe in me.”

It probably was not until the middle of the third century that the current rendering of Matthew 28:19 appeared when Bishop Cyprian of Rome insisted on the triple formula for baptism. Ironically, Pope Stephen used only one name, Jesus.

During the fourth century, the orthodox church used the phrase, “in the name of the father, son and holy ghost” as a battle cry against the Macedonians who claimed that no new testament text supported the spirit as part of the trinity. However, by the seventh century the church had wholeheartedly accepted the current rendering of the scripture, and excommunicated the Celtic church for insisting on one name in baptism.

In 1902, the modern scholar F.C. Conybeare summed up the history of the development of Matthew 28:19 as follows:

“It is worth considering, however, whether the original text of the gospel did not end at the word 'nations,' and whether the three rival endings of the text were not developed independently, viz:

- (i) 'in my name' in Justin, Eusebius, and perhaps Stephen of Rome and the Pneumato-machi
- (ii) 'and they shall believe in me, in Aphraates, representing the older Syriac version
- (iii) 'baptising them in the name of the Father, the Son and the holy Ghost; or similar in the Greek gnostic Theodotus, Ter-tullian Latin version of Irenaeus, and the surviving Greek MSS.”

BAPTISM AND THE APOSTLES

There are four instances of baptism by the Apostles recorded in the book of Acts. In each instance, only the name of Jesus is used in connection with the baptism.

Acts 2:38. Peter's sermon on the day of Pentecost was followed by a call to those who would become followers of Jesus: "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, IN THE NAME OF JESUS CHRIST so that your sins may be forgiven. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit" (NIV)

Acts 8:16. Philip preached throughout Samaria and gained several converts. However, when Peter and John arrived, those converts had not received the gifts of the spirit that normally accompanied conversion in those days. They then laid their hands upon them, "because the Holy Spirit had not yet come upon any of them; they had simply been baptized INTO THE NAME OF THE LORD JESUS" (NIV)

Acts 10:48. Cornelius, the first Gentile convert, was baptized after a lengthy conversation with Peter: "So he ordered that they be baptized IN THE NAME OF JESUS CHRIST." (NIV)

Acts 19:5. Paul's initial encounter with the brethren at Ephesus caused him concern as they had been baptized by Apollos with John's baptism. He instructed them regarding Jesus: "On hearing this, they were baptized INTO THE NAME OF THE LORD JESUS" (NIV)

BIBLE STUDENT PRACTICE AND THE TRIUNE NAME

In *The New Creation*, page 455, "The Baptism of the New Creation:' Brother Russell recommended the words that we traditionally use. However, it is important to note how and why he made this recommendation:

"No particular form of words for this service (baptism) ie, set before us in the Scriptures, and all can readily see that the words are of secondary importance—that the baptism might be equally valid if no words at all were used; because, as previously stated, the real contract is between the baptized one and the Lord and the act of water baptism is the open confession of it. It is not, therefore, a question of what the administrator may believe or disbelieve, say or omit to say, but of what is the thought and intention of the heart of the one thus symbolically baptized. Nevertheless, BASING OUR JUDGMENT UPON THE WORDS OF THE LORD, IN MATTHEW 28:19, AND THE WORDS OF THE APOSTLE IN ROMANS 6:3, WE RECOMMEND AS A SIMPLE FORM OF SOUND WORDS FOR THE OCCASION THESE: BROTHER JOHN, IN THE NAME OF THE FATHER, AND OF THE SON, AND OF THE HOLY SPIRIT, BY THIS AUTHORITY, I BAPTIZE THEE INTO CHRIST."

Note that Brother Russell's recommendation was based on his assumption that Matthew 28:19 contains the words of the Lord. Romans 6:3 contains no reference to the Father or the holy spirit.

It is only recently that the authenticity of Matthew 28:19 has come into doubt. As Bible Students, we have always examined the translations carefully to assure that we are following the original texts as closely as possible. When dealing with subjects like the trinity, this has especially been

true. Although Matthew 28:19 has not yet been agreed upon by a majority of scholars as spurious, there is certainly enough evidence to limit its use. At least it would be wise to consider it inappropriate for use in baptism, given its questionable history and subtle support of the doctrine of the trinity.

-Leonard Griehs

Atonement: Leviticus Chapter 9 vs. Chapter 16

Bible Students have long appreciated the Plan of God as it is illustrated in the Tabernacle arrangement of the ancient Israelites. This Tabernacle or tent had two compartments containing articles of gold. It was placed in a courtyard surrounded by a high white curtain. The Tabernacle's construction details are recorded in the book of Exodus.

A structure alone benefits no one. There must also be people who know what to do with it. God dedicated the tribe of Levi to be His servants and assigned them the job of physically transporting the Tabernacle from place to place. From this tribe, He selected Aaron as high priest and his sons as assistant priests. Leviticus chapter 8 describes the seven day ceremony that consecrated these individuals for their duties.

From a human viewpoint, this should have been enough. There was a place for worship, a law that said how to worship, and a priesthood capable of organizing that worship. However, one thing was missing. In God's sight, the Israelites were in an unclean, fallen condition and could not approach Him. Atonement for sins had to be made to give them a standing to bring sacrifices that He could accept. According to Strong's Concordance the Hebrew word translated "atonement" is also translated cleanse, disannul, forgive, be merciful, pardon, purge, reconcile.

Immediately following the consecration of the priesthood in Lev. 8, Aaron was told to "make an atonement for thyself and for the people" (Lev. 9:7) The remainder of that chapter describes what had to be done to make atonement a reality in God's sight.

The necessity for atonement was so important that in Leviticus 16, God directed that a ceremony similar to Lev. 9 be repeated every year, on the tenth day of the seventh month (Lev. 16:29). The people knew this was a special day because it was the only day of the year when fasting was required. "Ye shall afflict [fast -see Isa. 58:5] your souls by a statute for ever." -Lev. 16:31

An annual day of atonement was necessary because "it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should [really] take away sins." (Heb. 10:4) Although the Israelites may not have realized it, their Tabernacle arrangement with its sacrificial rituals was a grand picture of a great high priest to come, of real atonement that would take place during a 2,000-year sacrificial period, and a time when the entire human race would have a relationship with God after those sacrifices were completed.

Students of the Tabernacle might expect that the sacrificial arrangements of Lev. 9 and 16 would be identical. The sacrifices of chapter 9 were needed to give the people a typical standing before God as soon as the priesthood was ready, so the people could bring acceptable sacrifices to Him. Six

months later, the annual atonement day sacrifices began, renewing the nation's typical cleansing. Although the outcome of both days was the same (atonement), the arrangements were carried out in very different ways. Determining the reason God ordered these differences constitutes one of the beauties of the truth.

THE DIFFERENCES

There are said to be more than 20 significant differences between the atonement ceremony of chapter 9 and the atonement ceremony of chapter 16. Here are just a few:

Who officiated?	Lev. 9 Lev. 16	Moses, Aaron, Aaron's sons Aaron only
What is offered?	Lev. 9 Lev. 16	Sin, burnt, meal, peace, wave offerings Sin, burnt offerings
Where was the blood sprinkled?	Lev. 9 Lev. 16	Horns and bottom of brazen altar Mercy seat and horns of incense altar
What was the people's sin offering?	Lev. 9 Lev. 16	One goat Two goats, one of which was killed
How does it end?	Lev. 9 Lev. 16	People are blessed and "glory of the Lord" appears Aaron changes clothes and offers the burnt offerings

Note that in Lev. 9, activity in the Holy and Most Holy is not an integral part of the service. In Lev. 16 it is, particularly in the ceremony of sprinkling the blood on the Mercy Seat. Many people are involved in Lev. 9, including the elders of Israel (evidently as observers). Only Aaron is shown in the picture in Lev. 16.

THE DIFFERENCES EXPLAINED

God provided for differences in the two atonement ceremonies in the inaugural year of the Tabernacle, in order to show the antitypical atonement day (the Gospel Age) from two completely different perspectives. His own perspective of the Gospel Age is shown in chapter 16; the church's perspective is shown in chapter 9.

In chapter 16, only Aaron is present. So God sees one entity: His son as head and the church as body members. "We are members of his body." (Eph. 5:30) However, from the church's perspective as shown in Lev. 9, we see our great high priest, Jesus, officiating and fellow assistant priests helping. We also see the "elders" who obtained a good report (Heb. 11:2).

In chapter 16, the blood of both sin offerings goes into the Most Holy and is sprinkled on the Mercy Seat. The satisfaction of God's justice illustrated by this ritual is not something the church actually "sees" Thus it is absent from the account of Lev. 9. It is very real to God, and in fact, the sprinkling of the blood is the most important event of Lev. 16.

Lev. 9 describes meal, peace, and wave offerings, all of which are absent from Lev. 16. These show our consecration from three perspectives. With the meal offering, each person brings an individual “handful” of meal, mingled with oil, and burns it on the altar. No measure is specified, just that it be what one hand can hold. The peace offering illustrates the payment of vows because of the peace enjoyed. The wave offering continued until it was removed, illustrating that our sacrifice continues until God says it is enough. These three perspectives of our consecration can be appreciated by the church. Their absence in Lev. 16 teaches that these perspectives do not pertain to God's relationship toward the Church.

The interpretation of the scapegoat in Lev. 16 has been debated by Bible Students. Br. Russell suggests that it represents the Great Company. If this is the correct understanding, the distinction between the Lord's goat and the scape goat is one which only God perceives. Those who are attempting to make their calling and election sure do not determine among themselves who is in one classification and who in another.

At the culmination of this “day” of sacrifice, the church, as shown in Lev. 9, sees that the people are blessed and God's glory is revealed. No such dramatic ending can be found in Lev. 16. There, the burnt offerings showing God's acceptance of the other offerings are made, and it is over.

Although no special blessing of the people takes place, they are now able to come to God with their sacrifices and have a relationship to Him. This was, after all, the whole point of the day of atonement.

CONCLUSION

Most people get little out of their reading of Leviticus chapters 9 and 16. They cannot understand why so many animals had to die. They would prefer another way -one with no suffering, no sacrifice, and no death. The picture shows us that the remission of sins - atonement- comes only by the death of a perfect bullock, illustrating the perfect man Jesus. He has passed into the Most Holy and offered his blood, his life, to God's justice. By his sacrifice he opened up a new and living way for us (Heb. 10:20).

Because of Jesus' faithfulness, we have the opportunity of laying down our lives sacrificially during this Gospel Age, the antitypical day of atonement. "For the bodies [plural] of those beasts whose blood is brought into the sanctuary by the high priest for sin are burned without the camp. Let us go forth therefore without the camp bearing his reproach " -Heb. 13:11, 13

So it remains for us to continue to lay down our lives faithfully in sacrifice that we may have a share in the great work of blessing the entire world of mankind in the coming kingdom.

-Michael Nekora

“I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore.” – Revelation 1:18

“Three Days and Three Nights”

I. PROBLEM

In Matthew 12:40 Jesus indicated he would be in the tomb for "three days and three nights:" an expression in our time and culture that implies three 24 hour time periods, or 72 hours. The rest of the biblical record, however, indicates the time was considerably shorter (Friday afternoon to Sunday morning). How do we harmonize this apparent disagreement? An understanding of Hebrew idiom is necessary to resolve the difficulty.

II. HISTORICAL FACT AND PROPHECY

When considering the phrase, "three days and three nights" (Matt. 12:40) we must keep an important principle in mind. Interpretation of prophecy can not, must not, dispute fact; instead, fact must be used to interpret prophecy, fact takes precedence. The text in which the above phrase appears is a prophecy, not a record of historical fact.

A. Historical Fact

The historical record concerning the day of Jesus' death and the day of his resurrection is found in the following texts:

Matt. 27:62 to Matt. 28:6 Mark 15:42 to Mark 16:2 Luke 23:52 to Luke 24:3 John 19:31, John 19:42; John 20:1 1 Cor. 15:4 Acts 10:40 Luke 24:7,21, 46	<i>Crucifixion and burial</i> Day of preparation Day before Sabbath Friday (14 Nisan)
	<i>Resurrection</i> First day of week Day after Sabbath The third day Sunday (16 Nisan)

It is well documented that the day preceding the weekly Sabbath, the sixth day of the week, our Friday, was designated by the Jews as the Day of Preparation. This no doubt arose from the need to prepare the food and all else that was required for the day of rest -no work being permitted on the Sabbath (Lev. 23:3).

In Luke 23:54, the day of the crucifixion is stated to have been "the preparation," and it is also explained, "the sabbath drew on. ' Verses 55 and 56 tell of some women preparing "spices and ointments:'then resting on "the sabbath day."

The account in Mark 16:1, 2 relates that "when the sabbath was past" certain women "came unto the sepulchre at the rising of the sun. " They found the tomb empty. This day, the day of the

resurrection, is declared to have been the "first day of the week" (Mark 16:2), our Sunday. The preceding day, therefore, a day identified as a sabbath, must have been a regular, weekly sabbath, the last day of the week, our Saturday. Thus, the day before that, "the preparation," the day of the crucifixion, would have been Friday.

The phrase, "the preparation of the passover" in John 19:14 may refer to the day preceding the passover as some believe; however, such idiomatic use has not been documented. As others have suggested, this writer understands the phrase to mean "the preparation day of the passover week"-in other words, Friday of the passover week, like our Easter Friday.

Verses 31 and 32 explain that the bodies were to be taken down so they would not remain "upon the cross on the sabbath day," and they declare Jesus was taken down and laid in a tomb on the "Jew's preparation day." In these verses the preparation day of the weekly sabbath is meant. (This is significant when it is stated that the passover of our Lord's death occurred on a day other than the weekly Sabbath.)

B. Prophecy

Difficulty exists not only between prophecy and fact, but between prophecy and prophecy as well. There is an apparent disagreement between the two prophetic phrases, "three days and three nights" and "the third day."

1. Matt. 12:40 - ... so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.
2. Matt. 16:21- ...be raised* the third day.
Matt. 17:23-...the third day he shall be raised* ...
Matt. 20:19-...the third day he shall rise*.
Luke 9:22- ...and be raised the third day.
Luke 18:33- ...and the third day he shall rise*.

This difficulty, too, may be resolved by an understanding of Hebrew idiom.

III. BIBLICAL IDIOM

While the language of the New Testament is Greek, the human agents employed by God through the holy Spirit were mostly Hebrew. Hence, though the thoughts were of divine origin, the words spoken and written came from minds conditioned to Hebrew expression, Hebrew idiom.

In a living language there is a continuous growth and decay of phrases, constructions, and expressions that are contrary to the usual patterns of the language and have a meaning different from the literal one. These are called idioms, and are usually particular phrases which we learn as separate items-easily in our own language, with difficulty in another. For example, consider the literal meaning of these common expressions in our culture:

to talk turkey
to put through the mill
to catch his eye

to take the bull by the horns
to get your ducks in a row
to be taken in

It is clear we must be careful about idiomatic phrases when interpreting the Bible. If we insist at all times on the absolutely literal, it can be a fruitful source of error.

A. Old Testament Idiom

1. Ex. 19:10, 11 - “sanctify them to day and to morrow ... the third day the LORD will come down ...” The third day is here defined as the day after tomorrow.

2. Gen. 42:17, 18 - Verse 17 states Joseph kept his brothers in prison “all together into ward three days.” Verse 18 states Joseph spoke “unto them the third day,” and in the following verses, he released them that same day (the third day).

3. 1 Sam. 20:12 - Again, the day after tomorrow is referred to as “the third day.”

4. I Kings 20:29 - Israel and Syria camped opposite each other “seven days.’ Yet, “in the seventh day the battle was joined”

5. II Chron. 10:5, 12 (I Kings 12:5, 12) - In verse 5 Rehoboam told the people of Israel to “come again unto me *after* three days’ “ In verse 12, they return, “*on* the third day” and restate Rehoboam's orders as “come again to me on the third day.”

6. Esther 4:16; 5:1 -In 4:16 Esther asked the Jews to “fast ye for me, and neither eat nor drink three days, night and day: I also and my maidens will fast likewise; and so will I go in unto the king’, Yet, in 5:1 it is stated “*on* the third day” Esther went into the king.

7. I Sam. 30:12, 13 -An Egyptian found by David's men “had eaten no bread, nor drunk any water, three days and three nights’ “ In verse 13 he told David he was deserted “three days ago”

B. New Testament Idiom

1. Luke 13:32 -”I do cures to day and to morrow, and the third day I shall be perfected As in the Old Testament, the third day is defined as the day after tomorrow.

*Note: There is no Greek word for “again” in these verses as rendered in the KJV, it should be omitted.

2. There are four passages that describe the resurrection as occurring “after three days” (in the Kiv Mark 9:31 and 10:34 were mistranslated. The Greek phrase is identical to that in Mark 8:31).

a. For three of the passages there are parallel accounts which help our understanding:

- “after three days”	- Mark 8:31	Mark 9:31	Mark 10:34
- “the third day”	-Matt. 16:21	Mark 17:23	Mark 20:19
		Luke 9:22	Luke 18:33

b. In the fourth passage-Matthew 27:63, 64 - it is recorded that the Pharisees told Pilate how Jesus had predicted, “*after* three days I will rise again” In verse 64, they asked that the tomb “be made sure *until* the third day.”

From these texts it may be seen that the expression “after three days” was equivalent to “the third day” in the idiom of Israel in Jesus' day.

IV. CONCLUSION

This study has shown we must be ever careful when we are dealing with ancient idiomatic expressions. We must not apply modern literal meanings. Hebrew reckoning is as distinct from our reckoning as is their practice of commencing the day at sunset and ours to begin it at midnight. These different modes of expression are peculiar to the respective peoples and languages and must be taken into account.

From the evidence of both the Old and New Testaments, we find it was Jewish idiom to equate “three days,” “on the third day,” and “after three days” Apparently, this custom was derived from the practice of counting a part of a day as a whole day-and-night. This practice is corroborated by the Rabbinic literature. Today, in the U.S.A., if we say an event happened “on the third day,” we mean it occurred sometime during the third day. If we state it took place “after three days” we mean after three days have passed. And, if we say “three days and three nights,” we mean three 24 hour periods or 72 hours. Yet Christ and the Apostles used all these expressions in reference to the same period of time.

Therefore, understood in the context of Biblical idiom, the phrase “three days and three nights” presents no problem to a Friday crucifixion and a Sunday resurrection, as recorded in the Gospel accounts.

Based on the idiom of the time, “three days and three nights” may be thus explained:

1. The first night and day Jesus was in the tomb was from about the tenth hour (4:00 pm) of the day of preparation, Friday, to the evening, the end of the day (6:00 pm).
2. The second night and day was from the beginning of Sabbath (Friday night) to the end (Saturday evening).
3. The third night and day was from end of Sabbath (Saturday night) to the resurrection early in the morning of the “first day” (Sunday).

-R.E. Evans

Israel, Iraq and the Gulf Crisis

A LAND BROUGHT BACK FROM THE SWORD

“After many years thou shalt be visited: in the latter years thou shalt come into the land *that is brought back from the sword*, and is gathered out of many people, against the mountains of Israel, which have been always waste: but it is brought forth out of the nations, and *they shall dwell safely all of them.*”- Ezekiel 38:8

“And thou shalt say, 'I will go up to the *land of unwalled villages*, - I will go to them that are at rest, *that dwell safely*, all of them *dwelling without walls, and having neither bars nor gates.*”- Ezekiel 38:11

Most Bible scholars agree that the detailed prophecy of Ezekiel 38 and 39 describes Israel's final battle before the full introduction of Messiah's glorious kingdom.

The texts excerpted above indicate that at the time of this battle Israel would be a land:

- * Brought back from the sword
- * Dwelling safely
- * Of unwalled villages
- * Having neither bars nor gates.

Any observer of world conditions during the past 40 years finds these conditions difficult to imagine. From the time that Israel became a nation in 1948 until the present they have been living constantly either under attack or in fear of imminent attack.

Surrounded by enemies without, and disrupted by foes within, it is little wonder that Israel has armed itself to the teeth. With one of the most modern armies in the world, and rumored to have nuclear weaponry, they are confident of taking on all opponents. Strong lobbies in the United States and other world capitals seek to insure agreements to add to their defense capabilities. As a result, this threatened nation has moved from an importer of arms to one of the chief exporters of military technology.

The above is hardly descriptive of “a nation brought back from war” “living with neither bars nor gates” What scenario will bring about this dramatic change of condition?

40 YEARS OF CONFLICT	
1948	Statehood declared, Arab neighbors instantly attack
1956	Nasser's Sinai campaign threatens destruction
1957	The Six-Day war expands Israel's borders
1973	The Yom Kippur invasion catches Israel by surprise
1982	Israel invades Lebanon to secure Northern borders
1987	Arab Intifada seeks to destabilize Israel internally

THE EVENTS OF 1990

The past year has seen two great events on the world stage that may bear on our question. The break-up of the Communist bloc in Eastern Europe, along with the accompanying spread of Russia's new policy of glasnost and the thawing of the "cold war," have produced a global climate of hoped for "peace and safety."

Long a supplier of arms to the Arab peoples in their struggle against Israel, Russia has signalled its intention to stop arming the Arabs. Not only so, they have also been putting pressure on their client state of Syria to press for peace with Israel.

Secondly, the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait has drastically realigned Arab alliances. While alienating most of the world powers, including many of its Arab neighbors, Iraq has formed a league with Jordan and begun to improve its relationship with Iran.

The alliance with Jordan provides a clear pathway between Iraq and Israel, and hardly forebodes a condition of peace and safety."

TWO CONTRASTING PROPHECIES

In seeking a scriptural perspective to the current situation, two prophecies stand out in marked contrast -Ezekiel 38 and Psalms 83.

It has been noted by many that the Ezekiel context portrays an alliance of seven or eight nations that will come against Israel "from the north parts." While the modern identities of these nations are problematic, one thing seems clear-none of them are of Semitic origin. Thus, they do not represent Arab powers, nearly all of whom are Semitic.

In marked contrast, Psalms 83 describes a coalition of some 10 or 11 nations who come against Israel with a common purpose, "Come, and let us cut them off from being a nation" In this coalition *all* of the names, except one, are Semitic and ancestors of present-day sworn enemies of Israel. The lone exception are the Philistines, a Hamitic people who are considered by many to be the ancestors of present day Palestinians.

These two sets of Scriptures then do not seem to refer to the same event. One describes an invasion of Arab peoples; the other an invasion of non-Arab countries.

Which comes first? Inasmuch as the "peace and safety" precondition for the Ezekiel battle is not laid down in the Psalms reference, the natural assumption is that the Psalms prophecy is fulfilled first.

The confederacy referred to in Psalms 83:6, 7-"Edom, Ishmaelites, Moab, the Hagarenes, Gebal and Ammon" *all* reside in modern Jordan. Only Amalek, in the northern Negev, and Tyre, in southern Lebanon, are exceptions. It is interesting to note that these areas are today where the Arab Palestinians are the strongest.

The text becomes even more appropriate in verse 8, “Assur also is joined with them: they have holpen the children of Lot.”

Ancient Assyria claims its name because it owes the ancestry of its inhabitants to Assur. The modern name for Assyria is Iraq. The “children of Lot” were two -Ammon and Moab. Ammon dwelt in central Jordan. Today's Jordanian capital, Amman, takes its name from this ancient tribe. Moab dwelt just to the south, in the hill country surrounding the fabled redrock city of Petra.

The confederacy mentioned in Psalms 83:8 includes approximately the same nations as that formed in the past few weeks, during the “Gulf Crisis’ “ Could it be that this modern coalition will be provoked to attack its ancient nemesis, Israel? Could it be that Israel's victory will be so decisive that not only this league, but other Arab enemies of Israel as well, will have to agree to a treaty of “peace and safety”?

While we, in studying Bible prophecy, must be careful not to become prophets ourselves, the above possibilities appear very real in the light of current developments.

If this, in fact, is true, then certainly it can be said in the aftermath, that Israel truly is “the land that is brought back from the sword,” and the stage is set for Israel's final battle.

ISRAEL’S FINAL BATTLE

The description of Israel's final battle in Ezekiel 38 and 39 is quite simple. A coalition of nations attacks from the “north quarters” The reason for their attack is stated specifically “to take a spoil, and to take a prey.”

The lure is apparently not only to take spoil, but also the ease of obtaining it. The relaxation of Israel's military preparedness, indicated by “dwelling without bars and gates:’ encourages the invaders to expect an easy victory.

THE PARTICIPANTS

There is considerable discussion as to the identification of the participants in the battle of Ezekiel 38 and 39. This is largely because of the various methods of interpretation used in arriving at an answer to this question.

Two methods of approach are the most predominant. The Geographical approach seeks to locate the areas occupied by these tribes in Ezekiel's day, and identify the participants in this battle as being those living there at the present time. The Genealogical method traces the migrations of these people to their present locales, thus identifying modern day participants.

While a number of opinions prevail as to the precise identification of the nations involved in this battle, many agree on the following:

THE INVADING CONFEDERACY	THE SECOND CONFEDERACY
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Rosh¹ Russia * Meschech² Northern Turkey * Tubal³ Georgia * Persia Iran * Ethiopia⁴ Central Africa * Libya⁵ Northwest Africa * Gomer Northern Turkey, Armenia⁶ * Togarmah Turkestan⁷ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Tarshish Western Nations⁸ * Sheba Saudi Arabia⁹ * Dedan Yemen
<p>1. "Rosh" is the Hebrew word translated "chief prince" in the King James Bible.</p> <p>2. Some take "Rosh, Meschech and Tubal" to be Russia, Moscow and Tobolsk. The ancient title of the Czar of Russia was the "Czar of Russia, Moscow and Tobolsk." It is worthy of note that the three important forces in the Soviet Union today are Gorbachev in Moscow, Boris Yeltsin of the Republic of Russia and the Mohammedans, centered around Tobolsk.</p> <p>3. The capital of Georgia, Tbilisi, is from the same origin as the Biblical "Tubal."</p> <p>4. Or, Cush. Settling not only in Ethiopia, but throughout central Africa.</p> <p>5. Or, Phut; primarily the Berbers.</p>	<p>6. Some, following the Genealogical method of interpretation, identify the migrations of Gomer with the Eastern European countries.</p> <p>7. Linguistically identified with South Central Russia. Others say Armenia since "Tog;Y" is the Chaldaic word for "Tribe: thus, "the tribe of Armah: or 'Armenians."</p> <p>8. Tarshish is variously identified with southern Spain or the British Isles. In either case, it represented the Westernmost reaches of civilization and thus is identified with Imperial England and her "young lions" or colonies, including the United States and Canada.</p> <p>9. There are two sets of "Sheba and Dedan" in the Bible; one was Hamitic, being sons of Cush (I Chronicles 1:9) and the other Semitic, being descendants of Abraham and Keturah (I Chronicles 1:32). The Semitic descendants settled in southern Saudi Arabia, while the Hamitic ones were nearer to present-day Yemen.</p>

Gog and Magog

Two mysterious names dominate the 38th chapter of Ezekiel, Gog and the land of Magog. Gog appears to be the head of the confederacy against Israel in this traumatic battle. Magog is given as the sphere of his influence, seemingly encompassing all of the various tribes mentioned in the coalition of enemies.

It is obvious from the context that the battle of Ezekiel 38 occurs before the introduction of Christ's kingdom, for the result of that battle is "that all men may know that I am the Lord"

Gog and Magog appear one more time in the Bible, in a far different context. This is found in Revelation 20:7, 8:

'And when the thousand years are expired, Satan shall be loosed out of his prison. And shall go out to deceive the nations which are in the four quarters of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to battle: the number of whom is as the sand of the sea.'

Here, a thousand years after the battle of Ezekiel, when evil has been restrained and righteousness has ruled on the earth, we find the same foes appearing once more.

One more reference is worthy of note-Numbers 24:7-a Messianic promise of Israel's Millennial king: "He shall pour the water out of his buckets, and his seed shall be in many waters, and his king shall be higher than Agag, and his kingdom shall be exalted."

The Septuagint and other ancient manuscripts here read, "Gog:" instead of "Agag." The reference seems clear in showing the height of Messiah's throne to be above that of his chief adversary-Satan, the devil.

Therefore it seems that in the name Gog we have a reference to the real leader of the hosts of the north against Israel, Satan himself. The land of Magog refers to his entire dominion.

These nations apparently will be brought into this battle after having been previously involved. The Lord himself takes credit for causing them to once again invade Israel -"I will turn thee back, and put hooks into thy jaws, and I will bring thee forth, and all thine army." (Ezekiel 38:4) From another prophecy of the same conflict, Zechariah 14:1-3, it appears that at first the battle will go against Israel, so much so that "the city shall be taken" "It is at this desperate turning point for Israel, with its back against the wall, that both Zechariah and Ezekiel prophesy a dramatic turn of events.

"Then shall the Lord go forth, and fight against those nations, as when He fought in the day of battle." - Zechariah 14:3

The method employed by this fighting of the Lord is implied in Ezekiel 38:21-23:

“And I will call for a sword against him throughout all My mountains, saith the Lord God: every man's sword shall be against his brother. And I will plead against him with pestilence and with blood; and I will rain upon him, and upon the many people that are with him, an overflowing rain, and great hailstones, fire, and brimstone. Thus will I magnify Myself, and sanctify Myself; and I will be known in the eyes of many nations, and they shall know that I am the Lord'

Evidently God will use two methods in turning the tide of battle for Israel. First, he will set the invading horde in disarray, fighting among themselves - “every man’s sword shall be against his brother.”

Anarchy has frequently been a method used by God in defeating Israel's enemies. This was especially true when he helped Gideon rout the hosts of Midian. Many Old Testament prophecies speak of this outbreak of anarchy which immediately precedes the full establishment of Messiah’s kingdom.

The second notable feature of this battle is that God will fight for Israel in such a manner that it will leave no doubt that the intervention was supernatural. The outcome of this battle will be that then, “they shall know that I am the Lord.”

Nor will this revelation of God's intervention be restricted to those participating in the conflict itself. In Isaiah 66:18, 19, speaking of the same battle, we read:

“For I know their works and their thoughts: it shall come, that I will gather all nations and tongues; and they shall come, and see My glory. And I will set a sign among them, and I send those that escape of them unto the nations, to Tarshish, Pul, and Lud, that draw the bow, to Tubal and Javan, to the isles afar off, that have not heard my fame, neither have seen my glory; and they shall declare My glory among the Gentiles”

With the present world situation favoring a more peaceful relationship between the great power blocs of East and West, and with Middle East developments pointing to an armed conflict that could eventually place Israel in a secure position, it certainly appears possible that we may be on the very brink of the fulfillment of the prophetic words of our text.

We must wait and see, watch and pray, to see whether the world scene around us imports this grand climax or is merely another spasm of world travail with the finale at some point in the future. But whether now or later, one thing is sure - it *will* come, “for the mouth of the Lord of Hosts hath spoken it.”

- *Carl Hagensick*