

Beauties of the Truth

A Forum for the Publication of Scriptural Viewpoints
Thought to be Harmonious with God's Plan of the Ages
Volume 18, Number 1, February 2007

The Letter to Smyrna

(Revelation 2:8-10)

THE TITLES OF CHRIST IN REVELATION

In the book of the Revelation, Christ reveals himself to the Church according to their moral condition, and the title which Christ assumes in addressing each church anticipates what is vital and with moral significance to them. For example, in the writing to Pergamos we read, "By the angel of the church in Pergamos write; These things saith he which hath the sharp sword with two edges" (Revelation 2:12). Given such a superscription what may we expect from the Lord Jesus, its speaker, who bears "the sharp sword with two edges?" Can we expect him to utter words of gentle sympathy and consolation? Would such words be in harmony with the attitude and weapon of battle?

From such a superscription we may infer a purpose to smite, to avenge, to "break in pieces the oppressor" (Psalm 72:4). We find that such an inference is justified by the exclamation of the offended Judge, "Repent; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will fight against them with the sword of my mouth" (Revelation 2:16).

Let us take another example, "By the angel in Thyatira write, These things saith the Son of God, who hath his eyes like unto a flame of fire, and his feet are like fine brass" (Revelation 2:18). Can there be any hesitation in foretelling the moral intent of such a superscription? When the Son of God enters a church with "eyes like unto a flame of fire," that church may expect examination, scrutiny, trials, penetration that cannot be resisted. Again, the epistle shows that the aspect and the purpose are in perfect harmony, "I am he which searcheth the reins and hearts: and I will give unto every one of you according to your works" (Revelation 2:23).

"By the angel of the Church in Philadelphia write, These things saith he that is holy, he that is true, he that hath the key of David, he that openeth and no man shutteth, and shutteth and no man openeth" (Revelation 3:7). Is such a superscription at all enigmatical? He who lays his hand upon the doors of the universe, and bears upon his shoulder the

key of David, is surely about to commission his saints to arise and grasp some opportunity that is fraught with eternal blessing, to enter upon a course of service which will involve and sanctify the highest interests of his dear ones. Is this anticipation warranted at all? Let the letter answer, "Behold, I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it" (Revelation 3:8).

TENDERNESS TO SMYRNA

"By the angel of the church in Smyrna write, These things saith the first and the last, which was dead and is alive" (Revelation 2:8). The introduction paves the way for a gush of tenderness; such a reference to the most pathetic facts of his earthly history must anticipate a stream of infinite pity and tenderness, and that such anticipation is realized will be seen as we proceed. The church in Smyrna was a suffering church. It sat in the dust, and its lamentations were turned into mockery by a malicious and triumphant foe.

Its history was one of toil and tribulation, and the prophetic throbs of the coming time foretold suffering, imprisonment, and death. The church assumed a mourner's attitude and gathered sackcloth round its trembling frame; and

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BEAUTIES OF THE TRUTH is published as a service to the brethren to stimulate their appreciation of the 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, 6748 Breckenridge, Lisle, IL 60532. Editorial Board: Brothers Richard Doctor (Managing Editor), Carl Hagensick, Raymond Luke, Michael Nekora, David Rice, Richard Suraci. Online, www.BeautiesoftheTruth.org

to such a church how could the Savior come, but in the tenderest aspect of his holy and blessed nature?

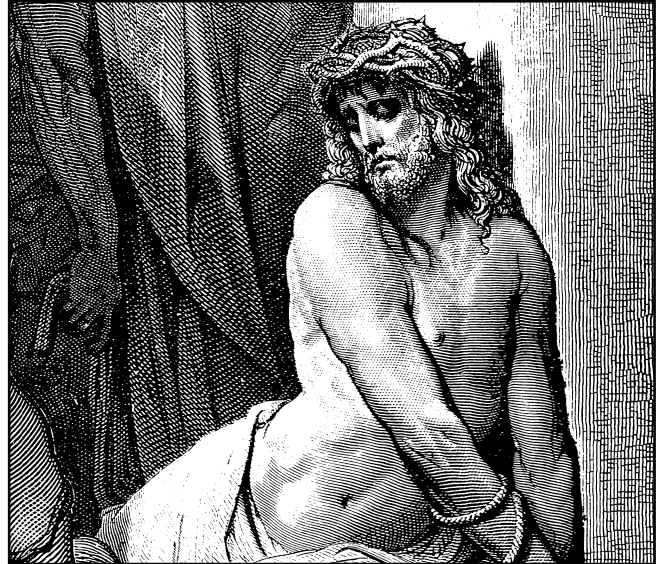
When we say to his people, we mean to each saint individually and to the Church collectively (Revelation 1:4, 7-17, see also R4870 par. 3-5, R5718 par. 1, R3569 par. 1,2). In this, we believe we have an explanation of the diversified and changing mission of the Church throughout the Gospel Age. To one man, or to one Church, Christ presents himself bearing “the sharp sword with two edges;” to another, with eyes blazing with penetrating light; to another, as holding the key of opportunity; and to another, as grasping infinitude, and girt with the pledges of ascension. It is possible to have all these, and many more, visions of the selfsame Savior. Our apprehensions of his identity are regulated by our moral conditions, so that every man has only to declare the attitude and tone of his own soul.

With this before us as a general principle, it will not be difficult to show how such a superscription would animate and sustain the Church in Smyrna. As our Savior is the First and the Last, he must be the only direct creation of the Father; and, as the Logos, all things were created through him. Any other view would be in conflict with the Scriptures (Revelation 3:14, Colossians 1:15, 1 Corinthians 8:6, John 1:1-3, Diaglott, R5992).

“THE FIRST”

Who can fathom the immensity of these words and realize the number of ages we must re-traverse before we can behold the time not only when the Logos was created, but when God was alone. When can we behold the first gleam in an infinite universe which encircles God as a radiant glory of un-waning light. This expression takes us back over immeasurable gulfs into which the centuries have sunk; we wing our way beyond the dust of every empire; pass every galaxy, constellation, star and planet that glows in mysterious silence in the domes of creation; we penetrate far beyond the sound of the song of the oldest seraphim; and we enter the solemn pavilion of the unpeopled infinitude. Here no voices sing, no footfall resounds, no heart throbs. We stand trembling at our own presumptuousness in the palace of the solitary God in a silence so great that it terrifies; we are there, before the Logos was brought into being, before he has made all the galaxies, constellations, stars, and planets in the infinite voids; all this, and infinitely more, we must realize in order to attain the dimmest apprehension of these words. If we look back, beyond the birth of time, or the worship of angels, or the fabrication of the ages, Behold! He stands as the Father’s agent in all things.

Yet, he stands a slain Lamb receiving in anticipation the adoration of a grateful universe. And if we look forward, we behold him in the far-off horizon, King of kings, Lord of Lords, crowned with unnumbered crowns, the heir of all things. As our Savior was dead and is alive again, so those who are now enduring the fellowship of his sufferings shall know the power of his resurrection. The cycle is suffering, death, and resurrection. All who follow Christ pass this discipline. The story of the resurrection is far from fully told.



He who died, and lived again.

The angel sitting at the head of the grave might have told us more, but he did not (John 20:12, 13, Luke 24:1-6, Mark 16:1-7, Matthew 28:1-7).

“I WAS DEAD”

The councils of eternity are epitomized in this declaration. The problem over which the ages bent in perplexity, the questions at which they looked again and again in the wonder of a great agony, and which they bequeathed to posterity is, in reality, solved by this fact, by this hope. All the love which glows in the infinite heart is expressed in words so simple, “I was dead.” But now am Alive again.

Let us inquire, “Around what centering truth does the Church assemble?” Do we hasten to reply, “the Cross?” “Yes,” but not there only. It is the Cross first, but afterwards the grave! “If Christ be not risen (from the dead), then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain” (1 Corinthians 15:14). In the center of the Church is an empty tomb, and to a doubting world the Church can ever answer, “Come, see the place where the Lord lay” (Matthew 28:6). And after seeing it, what then? Not many will hear, many will scoff, but in due time, when the Spirit and the Bride say, “Come ... and him that is athirst come, And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely” (Revelation 22:17).

From that sacred smitten rock a living stream will break forth, and as the countless multitudes of earth drink, they will exclaim, “Lo, this is our God; we have waited for him, and he will save us: this is the LORD; we have waited for him, we will be glad and rejoice in his salvation” (Isaiah 25:9). “For with joy shall they draw water out of the (144,000) wells of salvation” (Isaiah 12:3). Need more be said to establish the harmony between the method of revelation and the moral condition of the Church in Smyrna? Could suffering have been approached with greater tenderness? Never was grief asked to look through her weary and swollen eyes at an image so beautiful and inspiring as this; and all the saints of God who are called to the discipline of pain may

gaze on the same aspect. When you are in sadness, O Child of God; Go, see the place where the Lord lay. When all your aspirations darken into clouds, and hang heavily around you; Go, see the place where the Lord lay. When your questionings and wonderings and yearnings beat back upon the soul whence they issued, and finding no rest on earth — for this is not our home; Go, see the place where the Lord lay!

“I KNOW”

Christ assures his people that he is infinitely acquainted with every feature of their history; “I know thy works and tribulation and poverty” (Revelation 2:9).

Hence, the Pastor writes “Some of the most sublime pictures of Christian endurance that the world has ever seen were enacted during the Smyrna period of the church” (R5992). Indeed, the very word “Smyrna” is taken from the word “myrrh,” meaning bitter. Can you conceive the thrilling joy with which these words would be heard by the suffering saints of Smyrna?

It is something to know that every wound, every pang, and every sorrow we endure for Christ is perfectly known to him, who carried our sorrows and bare our sickness. Howsoever deep in which your tears are showered, the eye of Jesus is full upon you in every crisis of woe; and when, in bitterness of imagined solitude, you exclaim like Job, “Oh, that I knew where I might find him!” (Job 23:3), Christ reveals himself through the darkness of your grief and says, with his own infinite gentleness, “I know ... I know ...”

Is not that enough?

Jesus sees our sufferings, is present in the cloud of our sorrow, needs not to be told what the New Creature has undergone. All that we suffer for him should serve three purposes.

First, it should embolden us to seek his help. He is within whisper reach of all his saints (1 Corinthians 8:6). The soul’s necessities may be too urgent to set forth in words. Have we ever seen a little child lift its tiny finger and point to an object which it desired to possess? Has not that outstretched finger been prayer enough to avail with the loving father and mother? Yes. And there have been experiences in the life of every saint in which he could but point, or yearn, or glance, or groan, without uttering a word. In such hours the heavens have often dropped upon him the most golden blessings and have been his most cherished memories.

Second, it should inspire us with invincible courage. As the presence of a valorous leader stimulates an army, so should the assured guardianship of the Son of God inspire every soldier of the Cross. The shadow of Christ falls upon us, and that shadow is stronger than a thousand shields. “Lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age” (Matthew 28:20). Does your courage fail? Look unto the Son of God whose eye is evermore upon you. He knows your frame; he remembers that you are dust (Psalms 103:14, 1 Corinthians 8:6). He gives power to the faint, and to them that have no might he increases strength. “He fainteth

not, neither is weary” (Isaiah 40:28-29, 1 Corinthians 8:6). We say, then, that his presence and the “exceeding great and precious promises” (2 Peter 1:4) should inspire each saint individually, and the Church collectively, with invincible courage.

Third, It should clothe us with the profoundest humility. Recognizing that we can do anything at all for Jesus is a fact which should extinguish all fleshly pride. That the Father should permit the Church to fill up the afflictions as part of the sin offering and that Jesus should permit the Church to receive a single blow which was intended for his own heart, is a circumstance which should not only awaken the most rapturous joy, but should overwhelm us with the profoundest sense of our own unworthiness to sustain so transcendent a dignity.

The Father might have deprived the Church this privilege of suffering; but it has pleased him, in the infinite fullness of his wisdom and love, to permit us to be wounded for the sake of his beloved Son. The apostles appreciated their high calling in this manner of doing and suffering: when their cheek was smitten, their honor insulted, and their name cast out as an abomination, we there find humility and joy holding sweet fellowship, for “they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer for his name” (Acts 5:41). Throughout the history of true saints we find such rejoicing; “Rejoice and be exceedingly glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you” (Matthew 5:12). For, “We glory in tribulation ... knowing that tribulation worketh patience; and patience experience; and experience hope: and hope maketh not ashamed” (Romans 5:3-5). For as the voice of one of the Lord’s choicest saints testifies, “I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ’s sake: for when I am weak, then I am strong” (2 Corinthians 12:10).

Such is the sweet assurance of Christ, and such the resulting experience of suffering saints. Are you suffering? To thee Jesus says, “I know.”

TRUE WEALTH

Christ reveals to his suffering saints that in fact they hold imperishable wealth: “I know thy works, and tribulation, and poverty, (but thou art rich) and I know the blasphemy of them which say they are Jews, and are not, but are the synagogue of Satan” (Revelation 2:9). Can there any doubt as to the most precious expression in such a verse?

It is found in the phrase in parenthesis: “but thou art rich.” It flashes upon one so unexpectedly. It is like a garden in the wilderness, a song of hope mingling with the night winds of despair. Slowly we pass over the dismal words, “Thy works, and tribulation, and poverty ...” and with startling suddenness we overpass the separating parenthesis — and then — the impact is felt. Without this phrase we have cold, shivering, desolate “poverty;” and inside, “an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away!” (1 Peter 1:4). Think of it, only a parenthesis between “poverty” and “rich.” Is it not so even in reality?

Happy is the Church into whose history this parenthesis has been interjected by the Son of God. If we, as an ecclesia, were to ask how to ascertain whether we are “rich,” what in fact do we mean by “rich?” To a starving man a crust of bread would be riches, indeed. To a business tycoon \$1,000,000,000 dollars would be true riches. But what are true riches for the Church?

Is our faith strong? Do we know what we believe? Why we believe it? In whom we have believed, so that our faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God? (1 Corinthians 2:5). Is our faith real? If we truly have faith in our heavenly Father and the Lord Jesus, we should have no fear, no anxiety, no difficulty.

Next, what is our faith doing? The joyous Christian does not live in his circumstances. He lives above them. He lives in faith (Acts 26:1-32). We have it in our power to rejoice the hearts of our heavenly Father and the Lord Jesus. How pleased they always are with faith! (Matthew 8:5-13, Hebrews 11).

In 2 Corinthians 5:10 we read, “For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ” (Volume 6, page 418, par. 3). Are we bearing witness to the truth upon every suitable opportunity? Are we seeking first the kingdom of God and his righteousness? (R5917, R5219). Are we studying to show ourselves approved unto God? (2 Timothy 2:15, R4838, R5511-12). Are we laboring in the word and doctrine? (1 Timothy 5:17). What about our labors of love in ministering to the brethren? Faith in Christ must always be proved by love for the brethren (R5818-19, Hebrews 10:32-36, 1 Corinthians 13:1-3, Colossians 1:4, 1 John 3:14). Are we laborers together with God? (R5302, Philippians 2:12, 13). Are we building with what scripture calls “gold, silver, and precious stones,” or with “wood, hay, and stubble?” (1 Corinthians 3:10-15, R5408, Studies in the Scriptures, Volume 1, pages 320-1, R5407, Revelation 14:14-17).

Are our spiritual children prospering? Are they being properly disciplined and encouraged? Are they growing in grace and knowledge? (2 Peter 3:18, Colossians 2:3). Are they putting on the whole armor of God? (Ephesians 6:10-18).

Surely, every holy, faithful, laborious, humble ecclesia may claim this divine promise, “but thou art rich.”

THOSE THAT SAY THEY ARE JEWS

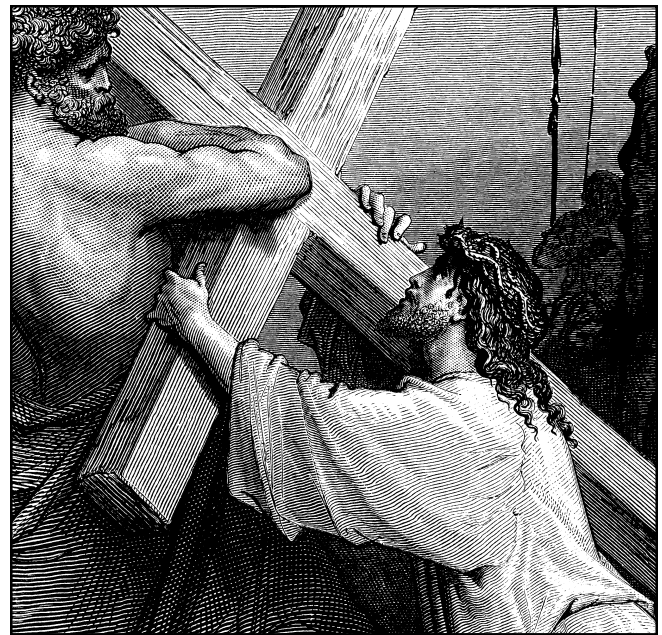
“And I know the blasphemy of those that say they are Jews, and are not” (Revelation 2: 9). This warning is not addressed to literal Jews (Harvest Gleanings, page 97). The true Israelites are engrafted into the root of promise, and take the place of the natural Israelites. And to this agree the words of the Apostle Paul, “They are not all Israel which are of Israel” (Romans 9:6, 7). And again, “He is not a Jew which is a Jew outwardly, neither is that circumcision which is outward in the flesh: but he is a Jew which is one inwardly, and circumcision is that of the heart” (Romans 2:28, 29, R2442-3).

These that say they are Jews are false Christians claiming the promises, “are the synagogue of Satan.” These have

become “slaves of sin” through the weakness of heredity (Romans 5:12, 21, 6:16-23, 7:14, 8:20, 21). In this condition they have been blinded by the god (ruler) of this present evil world who puts evil before their minds as good and darkness for light. (2 Corinthians 4:4, Ephesians 6:12, Isaiah 5:20). “Satan has general control; first of the masses through ignorance; and secondly, of the more intelligent through pride, selfishness, etc.” (Volume 5, page 189, par. 1).

CHRIST’S COMFORT

Christ comforts his suffering ones by disarming their fears saying, “Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the Devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days” (Revelation 2:10). Pagan Rome, here symbolized as the Devil, has been the most devilish of all earthly governments, when viewed in the light of its bloody persecutions and here the Lord informed his faithful servants of this period that theirs would be a time of great persecution (R5992). The ten symbolic days (years) refer to the last and most severe persecution under the Roman Emperors — that of the reign of Diocletian, AD 303-313. Those who have read the history of



He who suffered for us knows our trials.

this period can understand the depths of these words, “that ye may be tried.” (James 1:2, 3, 1 Peter 1:6, 7). One commentator noted that “the human imagination was, indeed, almost exhausted in inventing a variety of tortures.”¹

The general principle here is that there is a limit to the suffering of the Church. Persecution is an affair of “ten days.” Diocletian is the tyrant of a vanishing hour. Today he raves in madness, but tomorrow his last yell has forever expired. In 2 Corinthians 4:17 Paul exhorts, “Our light affliction, which is but for a moment ...” Here the Apostle triumphantly contrasts the brevity of suffering with the duration of glory. Hear him!

In prospect of suffering, Christ says to his people, "Fear not." But why this counsel? It is because he knows the full interpretation of suffering. Suffering is an education, grief is discipline. The suffering referred to is external. The house is smitten, but the tenant is infinitely beyond the sphere of flood, or flame, or steel. The Master said, "I have overcome the world" (John 16:33).

Are you in Gethsemane? Do the winds howl drearily around you? Is it a sevenfold darkness that shuts out the light of the stars? The Master says, "I know ... I know full well the meaning of your great suffering; I felt the nails tear through my flesh ... I remember the excruciating agony as I hung on the cross ... I know the intense suffering when my beloved heavenly Father forsook me that I might bear the full penalty for all sinners ... I know ... I know ... and therefore I can sympathize with the children of grief ..." For Christ soothes and nerves his suffering saints by the promise of infinite compensation: "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life" (Revelation 2:10).

Look at the words "and" — "Thou" — "I." We see the suffering saint and the promising Savior! "Be thou faithful and I give," as it is personal suffering, so also shall it be personal reward, for he is faithful that promised.

The saints are not to lie forever under the cruel imputation of unworthiness. As in the case of a man who has been wantonly defamed and injured, is it enough that his peers pronounce him merely, "not guilty?" Is no account to be taken of the wrongs he has endured? Are his wounds to be unmollified except by the healing of tardy time? No! "not guilty" is to be translated into "innocent" — "well done thou good and faithful servant." Well-attested faithfulness is to be succeeded by compensation; it is to be adorned with a crown. It is so, only in an infinitely higher degree in the spiritual life — the Divine Nature! The Lord Jesus Christ will not only deliver his saints from the sphere of suffering; he will also introduce them into the eternal sphere of rest and joy beyond the veil. There is a "recompense of reward" (Hebrews 10:35), and the joyous brightness of an "inheritance incorruptible" (2 Peter 1:4), and the crown radiant with immortal glory.

And when life's last gasp shall expire, when your course is finished, we shall stand as the beloved Bride in the infinite and majestic presence of our heavenly Father and the Lord Jesus, our Bridegroom. "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life" (R5913-14).

— Bro. David Skein

(1) From *McClintock and Strong's Cyclopedia of Biblical Theological and Ecclesiastical Literature*, Vol. VII, pp. 966-967, "The human imagination was, indeed, almost exhausted in inventing a variety of tortures. It began in Nicomedia, and became universal. Some were impaled alive; some had their limbs broken and were left to expire. Some were roasted by slow fires; some suspended by their feet with their heads downward, and, a fire being placed under them, were suffocated by the smoke. Some had melted lead poured down their throats; the flesh of some was torn off with fingers and toes. Houses filled with Christians were set on fire. Numbers of Christians were tied together and thrown into the sea."

Pastor C.T. Russell, Messenger of Millennial Hope

By Charles F. Redeker

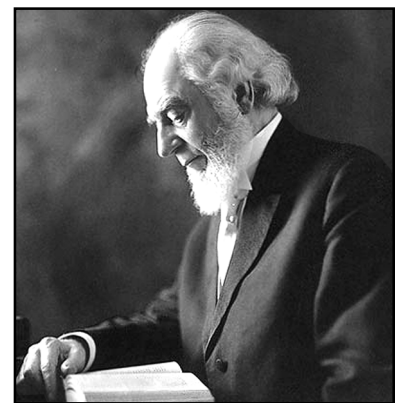
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Ninety years ago the founder of the Bible Students, Pastor Charles Taze Russell, died. The organization he established became fragmented and subject to strong personalities who felt they knew how to best continue his legacy. These differences between the groups who trace their roots to the Pastor's ministry continue to our day.

The Pastor's message of hope, so different from that of the Christian denominations of his day, attracted critics who, when unable to counter his Scriptural arguments, resorted to maligning his character. Such attacks still continue even though few today embrace his original message in its purity.

Ten years of research and writing by Charles Redeker has resulted in a 468-page, hard-cover book tracing the work of Pastor Russell from the earliest days of his search for truth, through the immense popularity he enjoyed particularly through the publication of his sermons in the newspapers, and the events that followed his death. All the fundamental beliefs he promulgated are reviewed. Each of the attacks brought against him are thoroughly investigated including his credentials to preach, the selling of "miracle wheat," the state of his marriage, and the question of which books he really authored. End notes make it easy for a reader to check the original sources to confirm what is said.

Single copy, post-paid price: \$10 to U.S. addresses, \$15 elsewhere. Discounts available for five or more copies to a single address. Checks payable to "The PBI" may be sent to 1425 Lachman Lane, Pacific Palisades, CA 90272.



Pastor Russell

Financial Report

1,715.01	Balance January 1, 2006
5,355.41	Donations
- 2,903.29	Expenses
4,167.13	Balance December 31, 2006
552	Current Subscribers

Days of Daniel

A popular account of the Allenby campaign by Owen Wister, *The Romance of the Last Crusade — with Allenby to Jerusalem*, points to the interest in the apparent fulfillment of Biblical prophecy with the conquest coming in 1917.¹

First, it is necessary to point out that for the hopes of the Lord's people comprising the true church, the interpretation of the Days of Daniel — that is the 1260, 1290, 1335 days as explained by Pastor Russell — still satisfies both mind and soul. These dates point to the time of Harvest for the Gospel Church and the presence of the Chief Reaper in 1874 AD.² In brief, Pastor Russell's interpretation is as follows:

The date for the establishment of civil and religious power by a false system identifies the starting point. Respecting the church, this was the date 539 AD. All the "days" begin at the same start date (this was one of Bro. William Miller's problems).

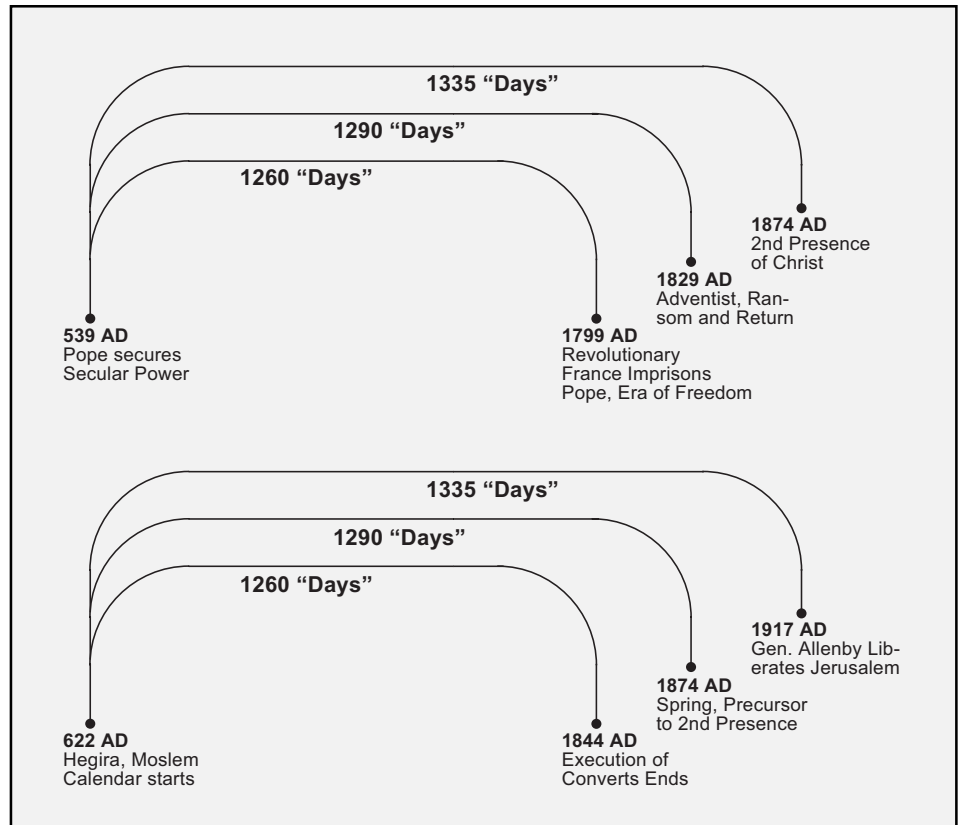
The count forward from 539 AD uses solar years for prophetic "days."

This shows the finger of prophecy pointing to the years 1799 AD, 1829 AD, and 1874 AD. However, the deliverance of the natural seed is also of prophetic importance. Here something remarkable was noted about the date of Allenby's conquest that should be of interest to the Lord's people since other prophecies also shows a dual application to both houses of Israel and this parallel interpretation has appeared in the Bible Student fellowship much earlier.³ For the natural house, papal Rome only briefly controlled the holy land during the short-lived success of the crusades.

The date for the establishment of civil and religious power by a false system identifies the starting point. For the natural house this is the date 622 AD. This system of reckoning begins the counting Moslem year 1 which marks the time of the Hegira when Mohammed and his followers moved from Mecca to Medinah and he assumed the role of a formidable political and military leader in addition to his role as a false religious leader.

All the "days" begin counting from the same start date. Counting moves forward from that date using the Moslem calendar which counts lunar years rather than solar years.

The year 1917 AD was 1335 by Moslem reckoning. In rhapsodic praise, Wister quotes from Daniel's prophecy as seeing its fulfillment in this campaign for Jerusalem:⁴ "Blessed is he that waiteth, and cometh to the thousand three hundred and five and thirty days" (Daniel 12:12).



True Church Perspective — Papal Rise, Solar Years for "Days" (Ezekiel 4:6, Numbers 14:34).
Natural House of Israel Perspective — Islam's Rise, Lunar Years for "Days."

Since Allenby's campaign, the Moslem year 1335 being 1917 AD has been observed by a number of Biblical commentators. They have also seen significance in the Moslem year 1260 as 1844 AD, for in that year the Turkish government was forced by Great Britain to renounce an open policy of executing converts to Christianity. However, they found the fulfillment of Moslem year 1290 as 1874 AD something of a puzzle. Certainly the significance of this date will not be lost on our readers. The Gospel interpretation points to the Fall of 1874; the Natural Israel interpretation points to the Spring of 1874. This dual application of Daniel's prophecy to both houses of Israel was put forward previously by Bro. Streeter and the emerging position of Islam in the Time of Trouble gives this topic special importance for us today.

1260 days — Rev. 12:6, "a thousand two hundred and threescore days." Rev. 12:14, Dan. 7:25, "a time, and times, and half a time" (time = 360 days, 360 + 2 x 360 + ½ x 360 = 1260.) Rev. 11:2, 13:5, "42 months" (42 x 30 = 1260).

1290 days — Daniel 12:11

1335 days — Daniel 12:12

— Richard Doctor

(1) Wister, Owen, *The Romance of the Last Crusade — with Allenby to Jerusalem*, Appleton, New York (1925), pages 177-8.

(2) Russell, C.T., *Thy Kingdom Come*, Studies in the Scriptures, Vol. 3, Study 3 (originally published 1890).

(3) Streeter, R.E., *Daniel the Beloved of Jehovah*, Pastoral Bible Institute, Pacific Palisades, CA (1998 ed., originally pub. 1928), page 248.

(4) Wister, *op. cit.*; page 178.

The Liberation of Jerusalem, 1917

“I will bring again the captivity of my people Israel and Judah, saith the LORD ... [they will] return to the land that I gave to their fathers, and ... shall possess it” (Jeremiah 30:3).

On December 9th the city of Jerusalem surrendered to the British Third Army under General Sir Edmund Allenby. So important was this victory in World War I that news of the surrender was embargoed. Great Britain announced it to the world from Parliament on the following day — December 10th — and Allenby accepted surrender on the 11th.¹ British victory meant that the oppressive rule of the Ottoman Turks for 400 years was ended. Jerusalem was taken in accordance with the strictest orders from General Allenby, “that there should be no fighting by British troops in and precincts of the holy city.”²

This date’s significance was clear to the Jews. December 10, 1917, the date of the announcement, was Kislev 25, 5678 on the Jewish calendar. That marked this as the first day of the joyous festival of lights, or “Hanukkah.” Once long before on a Kislev 25 in 165 BC, Jerusalem had been delivered. The first Hanukkah marked the deliverance from the oppression of the gentile Grecian despot Antiochus IV Epiphanes and the liberators were the army of Judas Maccabeus. For students of prophecy, the 1917 liberation of Jerusalem from Ottoman Turk rule marked one more stage in the fulfillment of the promised end of the “Times of the Gentiles” — “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” (Luke 21:24).

ARAB INTERESTS

Rejoicing in the Jewish, Christian and Arab communities was sincere, for the Turks had proven to be oppressive even to their Arab brothers in Islam. Part of the British success must be credited to support from military commander T. E. Lawrence (“Lawrence of Arabia”) working among the Hashemite Arabs. These Arab allies employed tactics they had honed through the centuries to disrupt Turkish supply lines. Raids by their marauding cavalry were characterized by General Allenby as their “national pastime” and the British provided £200,000 in gold to secure their service.^{3,4}

God providentially can use even superstition against his opponents and a strong sentiment of awe surrounded the person of Allenby among the Turkish defenders and civilians. To their ear, the name “Allenby” sounds very much like “Al Nebi,” meaning “the prophet” in the Arabic tongue and this added weight to an Arab prophecy that rapidly circulated. Here this “Arab prophecy” is cited from the official records in the Brief Report of the British war office⁵ — “The Arab prophecy was fulfilled that when the Nile flowed into Palestine the prophet (Al Nebi) from the west should drive the Turk from Jerusalem.”

Though the populace could well have interpreted the Nile flowing into Palestine metaphorically as the British troops in the “Egyptian Expeditionary Force” washed into the land of promise starting from the Nile, waters from the Nile did literally flow during the campaign. The daunting task of providing 500,000 gallons per day of water for the massing expeditionary force in the Sinai was met by laying a pipeline from the Nile that came within 5 miles of Beersheva.⁶ On page two of the Brief Report, Allenby recounts of: “the difficulties to be overcome in the operation against Beersheva ... the chief difficulties were those of water and transport.”

To the Arabs, “the prophet” from the west was liberating them from the Turks.

GAZA’S CAPTURE CRITICAL

Ottoman Turkish troops and their heavy fortifications in Gaza controlled the approach to the Holy Land and provided the defense against the British forces based in Suez, Egypt. Initial British assaults on Gaza had stalled after two unsuccessful attempts in the spring of 1917 and a tense stalemate prevailed. Having reorganized and reinforced the forces when he took over command of these forces in late June 1917, Allenby opened the campaign with the “Third Battle of Gaza,” from October 31 to November 7, 1917. He surprised the defenders not with an attack directly on Gaza, but with an attack at Beersheva to the west. This strategy permitted the army to capture Gaza from behind the main Turkish defensive lines.

Reasonable claims have been made that this stratagem of attacking Beersheva and this key victory for the capture of the Holy Land was pressed upon Allenby by Aaron Aaronsohn, an agricultural scientist and Zionist living in Palestine. Aaronsohn had established the “NILI” spy network comprised of Zionist settlers to support the British.⁷

ON TO JERUSALEM

After moving past these defenses in Gaza, the Egyptian Expeditionary Force made steady progress day-by-day until confronting Jerusalem in early December. The general made certain that his attacks from the outer defenses on the north of Jerusalem left plenty of opportunity for Turkish retreat.

All accounts of the campaign note an abrupt change in weather three days prior to surrender. Discomforting heat gave place to cold drenching winter rains. This both reduced the fighting and made it impractical to carry out Turkish orders that Jews and Christians be forced to join the Turkish retreat.⁸ Turkish defenders continued serious resistance, but Allenby’s string of victories, combined with massive desertion from the Turkish ranks, left them outnumbered 6:1.⁹ A note of surrender was received late on December 9th.



General Allenby

ENTERING THE HOLY CITY

We now know that Allenby followed orders from London when he dismounted to enter Jerusalem through the Jaffa gate on foot out of respect for the Holy City.¹⁰ In contrast to all custom for victorious entry, no flags were displayed by the conquerors. The rains stopped and on the crisp midday of December 11, 1917 —



Entering Jaffa Gate on foot.

“At 12:30 the Holy city was surrendered for the 23rd time and for the first time to British arms, and on this occasion without bloodshed among the inhabitants or damage to the buildings of the city itself.”¹¹

This entrance was to be staged as a pointed contrast in conduct to the pomp of the German Kaiser’s visit of 1898.

The Egyptian Expeditionary Force was comprised of troops and cavalry from England, Scotland, Ireland, Wales, Australia, India, New Zealand, France, and Italy. Allenby was also following orders from the Prime Minister that he “secure the Holy places, both Christian and Mohametan, from violation of any kind.”¹² After the victorious general reassured everyone in a public announcement that all holy places would be respected and business as usual should continue, Mohammedan officers and soldiers from the Indian contingent were assigned to guard the mosque of Omar.¹³

A POLICY OF TOLERANCE FOR ALL

It is easy to read into the British posture a real desire for tolerance for all in Jerusalem. We see a policy aimed at bringing together Moslem Arabs, Christians, and Jews in a united front against the Turks. But especially bright were the hopes for the Zionist Jews now that the Balfour declaration and its promise of Jewish independence could have force. The British recognized Zionism as a civilizing and reforming influence that was a marked contrast to Turkish misrule. In closing the official Brief Record (of 1919) almost prophetically, the only Zionist leader named was Chaim Weizsmann:



Proclamation of Tolerance

“... the [Zionist] colonists ... were able to cooperate in the efforts made on behalf of the whole Hebrew community by the energetic Dr. Chaim Weizsmann and the Zionist Commission, which culminated in the ceremonial foundation of the University of Jerusa-

lem as a symbol of their confidence in the future and their recognition of the necessity of imparting higher education in their own language.”

This good will between Great Britain and the Zionists would soon vanish like the waters of a cloudburst on a desert. On the part of the Zionists, further growth in numbers and organization were necessary. Before Israel’s independence, once again Rachel would weep as the horrors of the holocaust would slay her children without mercy. Thirty-one years after Allenby’s victory in Jerusalem the British would turn over authority in 1948 to Chaim Weizsmann who became the first president of the reborn nation of Israel.

— Richard Doctor

(1) Massey, William T., *How Jerusalem was won*, London, Constable and Co. (1919), page 191. Massey, a correspondent accompanying the expedition, writes “Communications from correspondents were suspended until the announcement could be made by a minister in the House of Commons.”

(2) Massey, *op. cit.*, page 158.

(3) Pritchard, James B., *The Ancient Near East — A New Anthology of Texts and Pictures*, Princeton University Press (1975), page 112. The Arab marauding tactics were ancient, and Nebuchadnezzar spent a full year in campaigning against the Arabs before turning his armies towards the capture of Jerusalem. Allenby was a careful student of history and was giving an honest appraisal.

(4) Army Records Society, Allenby in Palestine — the middle east correspondence of FM Viscount Allenby June 1917 to October 1919, Matthew Hughes Sutton Publishing GL, for the Army Records Society, Heritage House, PO Box 21, Baldock, Hertfordshire SG7 5SH (2004), page 42. Correspondence from Allenby 26 July 1917.

(5) A Brief record of the advance of the Egyptian Expeditionary Force: under the command of General Sir Edmund H.H. Allenby, G.C.B., G.C.M.G., July 1917 to October 1918, compiled from official sources (2nd ed.), London, H.M.S.O. (1919), page 107. 11 Dec. 1917 report.

(6) A Brief Record, *op. cit.*, pg 83, The Royal Engineers, Water Supply.

(7) Bloom, Cecil; Aaron Aaronsohn: Agronomist, Spy, Zionist, <http://www.hagshama.org.il/en/resources/view.asp?id=1854>. Bloom writes, “In fact, after Aaronsohn’s death, Allenby acknowledged his contribution in paying tribute to the man. He wrote that “Aaron Aaronsohn’s death deprived me of a valued friend and of a staff officer impossible to replace ... His death is a loss to the British Empire and to Zionism, but the work he has done can never die.”

(8) A Brief record, *op. cit.*, Plate 55. “The arrival of the Egyptian Expeditionary Force was fortunately timed as to prevent the wholesale deportation of Hebrew colonists and residents that had actually been ordered by the Turks, and these careful agriculturalists were able to restore to a great extent the properties in the Kaza of Jaffa which they had been able to preserve in part from the spoliation of the enemy.”

(9) A Brief Record, *op. cit.*, Plate 22, 26-27 November 1917.

(10) Army Records Society, *op. cit.*, page 92, Correspondence from Field Marshall Robertson, London, 21 Nov 1917, specifically instructed Allenby, “In the event of **Jerusalem** being occupied, it would be of considerable political importance if you, on officially entering the city, dismount at the city gate and enter on foot.”

(11) Massey, *op. cit.*, page 190.

(12) Army Records Society, *op. cit.*, page 87, Correspondence of 16 November 1917.

(13) Army Records Society, *op. cit.*, page 106, 11 December 1919. The Indian contingent from whom these troops were drawn had already distinguished themselves in this campaign by their adeptness at the hill and cave fighting. Such warfare was familiar to them from previous experience skirmishing in Baluchistan (the mountainous border region of Pakistan and Iran).