

Beauties of the Truth

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Thought to be Harmonious with God's Plan of the Ages
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Harmonizing Habakkuk 3:9

"Thy bow was made quite naked, according to the oaths of the tribes, even thy word. Selah ..."
(Habakkuk 3:9, AV)

Considered by most translators and commentators as an obscure and difficult to translate passage, Habakkuk 3:9 has confounded interpreters for centuries. The United Bible Societies Bible Translator Handbook states that "with so many possibilities to be found in reputable translations (and many other suggestions in scholarly writings), how are translators to decide what to do?" The Commentator Delitzsch said this was possibly the most difficult passage to translate in all of prophecy.¹ F. C. Cook's Commentary says "the ablest critics admit that no very satisfactory explanation of the text, as it stands, is given" and Henry Cowles Commentary on the Minor Prophets states that this "has perplexed commentators, and scattered their opinions more than almost any other passage in the Bible."

Following are twenty-six variant translations of this verse; but one scholar claims "upwards of one hundred different interpretations have been proposed."²

26 Translations, Habakkuk 3:9

The oaths to the tribes were a sure word (ASV)
The oaths to the tribes were a sure word (ERV)
The oaths to the tribes was thy word (Calvin)
According to the oaths of the tribes (AV)
According to the oaths of the tribes (R Webster)
According to the oaths ... spoken to the tribes (Douay)
And the oaths unto the tribes, eternal word (JB2000)
As ... promised with an oath unto the tribes (Tyndale)
Sworn are the tribes — saying, 'Pause!' (Youngs)

The arrows are ready to be used with an oath (HCSB)
Uncovered your bow ... called for many arrows (NIV)
Arrows were ready and obeyed your commands (CEV)
The arrows of your word (Romanian Curnilescu)
For the arrows you promised (GWN)
Calling for many arrows (ESV)
Let loose a volley of arrows (Message)
Commanded many arrows to be brought to you (NCV)
You commission your arrows (NET)
Curses are the arrows of thy word (Noyes)
The arrows were abundant at the command of thy glorious word (Laamsa)
The rods of chastisement were sworn (NASB)
Like severe rods of punishment goeth forth thy word (Leeser)
The rods of discipline sworn according to thy word (Darby)
Sworn are the rods of the word (JPS)
Surely thou didst bend the bow at scepters, saith the Lord (Septuagint)
Bared thy bow, oaths of chastisement (Rotherham)

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THREE GENERAL TRANSLATIONS

The most common concepts of the rendering listed above can be summarized as follows:

- (1) Arrows were ready
- (2) Oaths unto the tribes
- (3) Rods of punishment

“In this line the three Hebrew words of the traditional text are a serious problem. The first two words have different possible meanings, but no combination of the various possibilities makes much sense or shows much connection with the context.”³

“ARROWS WERE READY”

This translation might fit the context, but we are led to doubt this construction since the relevant Hebrew word is not translated “arrow” anywhere in scripture. “The word has nowhere the signification of arrow, which would suit excellently the bow, and which is held by some interpreters ... It can at the most, as in 2 Samuel 14:17, signify spears ...”⁴

The versions which translate the word “arrows” assume “... that the third Hebrew word is different from the one in the traditional text, but it does give a meaning which fits the context. This possibility is accepted by some modern versions: NAB has ‘filled with arrows is your quiver,’ and NEB ‘charge thy quiver with shafts.’”⁵

“OATHS UNTO THE TRIBES”

“According to the oath of (to) the tribes, ‘the oath which He swore unto our father Abraham,’ which oath He often renewed to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and again to David (See the end of Micah, Psalm 89:3, 132:11.) This oath, the word and promise of God, was the pledge of the deliverance of His people, that they ‘should be saved from their enemies, and from the hand of all that hate them.’”⁶

If “oaths of the tribes” is the better translation, then it would call to mind the promises God made to Israel to protect them. “Selah” would be an admonition to pause and consider the promises to Israel, that God would curse those who curse them and bless those who bless them. “May peoples serve you, and nations bow down to you; be master of your brothers, and may your mother’s sons bow down to you. Cursed be those who curse you, and blessed be those who bless you” (Genesis 27:29). Contextually we see Habakkuk 3:13 states that the LORD went “forth for the salvation of thy people.”

While this is a possible translation, and “a rendering accepted as on the whole presenting least difficulty,” it is “a construction which, if grammatically defensible, is harsh, and scarcely intelligible.”⁷ “(It) cannot signify oaths, is determined by the circumstance that ‘the oaths of the tribes,’ the rendering of our common version, affords no tolerable sense as here introduced, whether we regard the tribes as the persons swearing, or as those to whom oaths are sworn.”⁸ “Of the two meanings which may be given to

mattooth, viz., branches, rods, or staffs, and tribes of the people of Israel, the latter can hardly be thought of here, since *mattooth* would certainly have been defined by either a suffix or some determining clause, if the tribes of Israel were intended.”⁹

There are other alternatives.

“BOWS” OR “RODS OF PUNISHMENTS”

“Rods of punishment” or “chastisement” is a thought completely opposite that of the previous concept of oaths. If this is correct, perhaps *selah* is used here to warn Israel to pause and consider their punishments, or perhaps to consider the punishments against nations who were against them. The exact meaning is difficult to grasp from the context.

Most of the translations use “bow” instead of “rods,” and “some of the moderns have explained [this bow to be] ... the rainbow, than which nothing can be conceived more incongruously out of place in a passage containing a sublime poetical description of warlike operations.”¹⁰ In the Authorized Version, Strong 4294 is translated tribe 182 times, rod 52 times, staff 15 times, and staves 1 time.

“Though Habakkuk 3:9a has been subjected to numerous interpretations, there is general agreement that *qesheth* (Strong 7198) refers to the Lord’s bow. There are numerous verses in the Hebrew Bible that use the term *qesheth*, but few of these refer specifically to the Lord’s bow. The Lord’s bow is only referred to in Genesis 9:13-14,16, Ezekiel 39:9, Habakkuk 3:9, Lamentations 2:4 and 3:12.”¹¹

Though this seems a more plausible rendering, it is not the most common translation used in our common English translations. But there is yet another possibility.

AN ALTERNATE POSSIBILITY

The solution may be found in the root meaning of the Hebrew words translated here, especially the first word which “may be a noun in the sense of oaths, possibly sevens, or a participle, meaning sworn. The second is a noun, meaning originally a rod, something stretched out; then a shoot or twig; but in use most often, the tribes of Israel.”¹² “The first word may be rendered ‘seventh’ (related to Sabbath)”¹³

A quick view at the McClintock & Strong reference to “Oath” in the box at the top of the following page, will show its interesting relation to the word “seven.”

A possible translation suggested by F. C. Cook’s Commentary is “Sevens of chastisements are the decree.” When this word is used in Leviticus 26, it is translated “seven times.” With this approach, the passage could be rendered “seven times of chastisements are decreed.”

If this is the meaning, then who are the chastisements against? Are the seven times against Babylon? The context suggests this thought since most of the chapter is about God’s anger against the enemy of Israel.

The New American Standard translation expresses this in the past tense, “The rods of chastisement were sworn.”

“Oath” and its Relation to “Seven”

“Oath” is the rendering in the A. V. of two Hebrew words, *alah*, and *shebuah*, each of which is used in the three significations: 1. An oath as an appeal to God in attestation of the truth of a statement (Nehemiah 10:30; Exodus 22:10); 2. A sworn covenant (Genesis 26:28; 2 Samuel 21:7) 3. A curse or imprecation (Numbers 5:21; Daniel 9:11). In the first of these senses, which answers to our word “oath,” the Greek Septuagint renders both words by *horkos*, and the Latin Vulgate by *juramentum* or *jusjurandum*; while in the last sense we have the Latin Vulgate rendering *maledictio*.

The two words *alah* and *shebuah*, however, are by no means synonymous. They denote two different modes of swearing, or rather two classes of oaths. Thus *alah* (from a root meaning to lament; to wail, to express woe; or, according to Gesenius, Thesaurus p. 44, 99, akin with the word for God) properly means the invocation of woe upon one’s self, and shows that the mode of swearing which it describes was connected with an invocation of divine vengeance on the party, if the asseveration made were not true; while *shebuah* (from seven) literally signifies to seven one’s self, to produce seven, i.e. to make a declaration confirmed by seven victims, or before seven witnesses, because, as Ibn-Ezra who is followed by most modern expositors and lexicographers, rightly remarks, seven animals were used in ancient times when mutual promises were given and when alliances were effected (Genesis 21:28-30).

This is moreover confirmed by the practice of the ancient Arabians, who, in pledging their faith, drew blood by an incision made in their hands, and smeared it on seven stones (Herodotus 3:8). *McClintock & Strong’s Cyclopedia*.

Inserting “seven times” for “rods,” this could be translated “seven times of chastisement were sworn” or “seven times of chastisement were decreed,” looking at the completion of the “seven times” from the end. In this case, perhaps the prophecy considers the “seven times” against Israel as completed, and now shows what else was to happen to the nation.

If the word “chastisement” is not a correct translation, it could bear the meaning of “seven times for the tribes.” This would answer the question of who the “seven times” would be applicable to in a direct manner and make the passage a bit clearer.

These possible translations may explain the *selah* placed after this phrase. *Selah*, pause and consider, the “sevens” or the “seven times” for Israel.

“SEVEN TIMES”

Keil & Delitzsch’s Commentary says “Ewald’s rendering, ‘sevenfold darts of the word,’ is precluded by the combination of ideas, ‘darts of the word’ ... is quite foreign to the context.”¹⁴ But this comment does not show that the word should not be translated “seven,” but rather that the phrase, “darts of the word” is foreign to the context. Most translators and commentators would not translate the word “seven” in this verse since they do not understand the meaning of the “seven times” in prophecy in Leviticus or Daniel either.

Can the case be made to translate “seven” as “seven times” here, when the Hebrew word for “times” is not used anywhere in the verse? It is also not used in Leviticus 26 where the word “seven” is used. The passage in Leviticus does add the word “more” as a qualifier in verses 18 and 21. But in verses 20 and 32 we have only the word “seven,” and the translators still express the thought as “seven times.”

That the word “seven” is used in both Habakkuk and Leviticus, does not necessarily mean that the two passages refer to the same thing. But there appears to be a cause and effect in these verses. In Leviticus we see the cause or reason for punishing Israel “seven times” was disobedience to the Lord and not upholding the covenant, and Habakkuk describes the actual fulfillment of the punishment threatened in Leviticus.

Some of the similarities can be seen as follows:

“I will also break down your pride of power ... you shall be delivered into enemy hands ... I will scatter among the nations and will draw out a sword after you, as your land becomes desolate and your cities become waste” (Leviticus 26:19, 25, 33).

Babylon’s Pride of Power: “They are a feared and dreaded people; they are a law to themselves and promote their own honour” (Habakkuk 1:7 NIV).

Enemy Hands: “[The Chaldeans] bring all of them up with a hook, drag them away with their net, and gather them together in their fishing net. Therefore, they rejoice and are glad” (Habakkuk 1:15 NASB).

Scattering Israel: “They stormed in to scatter us; Their exultation was like those Who devour the oppressed in secret” (Habakkuk 3:14 NASB).

Drawing a Sword after them and Desolation of Land: “For the violence done to Lebanon shall cover you, and the destruction of the animals terrified you, because of men’s blood and violence done to the land, to the city, and to all that dwell in it” (Habakkuk 2:17, Dead Sea Scrolls translation).

Space does not allow for many of the similarities between Habakkuk’s prophecy and Leviticus 26 to be outlined here. But we encourage each student of the scriptures to take time to research this.

Israel was to be removed from their lands and delivered into enemy hands for “seven times” at the beginning of this period in 607 BC, and after the period is completed (2520 years to 1914) we should see the completion of the “seven

times” for Israel in the context. Leviticus warns of the threat. The “seven times” of Daniel 4:16, 23, 25, 32 and Habakkuk refer to beginning the fulfillment of that threat.

HABAKKUK 3

“You came out to save your people, to save your chosen one. You crushed the leader of the wicked ones and took everything he had, from head to toe. Selah. With the enemy’s own spear you stabbed the leader of his army. His soldiers rushed out like a storm to scatter us. They were happy as they were robbing the poor people in secret” (Habakkuk 3:13-14, New Century Version).

Here at last we have an answer to the questions Habakkuk asked previously in the book (see especially Habakkuk 1:1-4). The prophet reviews what he has seen. Verse 3 seems to describe the beginning of the second advent when it refers to the Lord coming “from Teman.” The word “God” in this verse is singular in Hebrew, *Eloah*. It is not used in any of the other minor prophets, Jeremiah, or Ezekiel. It is used in Isaiah, Daniel, Job, and Deuteronomy. Generally the word used in Scripture for God is *Elohim*, the plural of the word *Eloah* found in this verse. When it says “God” comes in this verse, it could refer to Messiah, Christ, as Hebrews refers to when citing Habakkuk in Hebrews 10:37.

In Habakkuk 3:13, the word “salvation” is repeated twice. Perhaps the prophet repeats the words to call attention to this point; however he used the word *Selah* elsewhere in this chapter to do just that. It is more likely that the “Salvation of thy people” refers to Israel, and the “Salvation of your anointed” refers to the Church. Some commentators interpret the “anointed” here as Christ, but this seems far fetched. Several of the Hebrew manuscripts, and also the Septuagint, translates this “thy anointed ones,” i.e., God’s Christs, God’s Messiahs, God’s anointed, God’s saints. The Hebrew for “anointed” here is plural, a collective of anointed ones.

This is the same time period we read of in Obadiah 21, “Saviors shall come up on mount Zion to judge the mount of Esau; and the kingdom shall be the LORD’s.” These anointed ones will deliver the world from the oppression of Antichrist’s false doctrines, superstitions, idolatry, and from sin and death.

Regarding Israel after 1914, the nation was saved from two millennia of non-existence as a nation. They have been regathered from being scattered all over the earth, but we have not yet seen their full and complete salvation when God will pour out His spirit on that nation and they will recognize Messiah (Zechariah 12:10). There are still more blessings to come for God’s chosen people.

Wounding the head of the house of the wicked one reminds us of the promise to Eve in Genesis 3:15. This seed, Christ and his anointed ones, will destroy Satan, not only by crushing the serpent’s head, but as the verse here says, “destroying all from head to toe,” and piercing the head of the warrior. “The God of peace shall crush Satan under your feet shortly” (Romans 16:20).

But as this leader is pierced, his warriors storm in to scatter the anointed ones, like a whirlwind. This verb also is in the future tense. As Babylon waged war like wild beasts on Israel in Nebuchadnezzar’s day, this is also the character of mystical Babylon. Both rejoiced in swallowing up Israel, natural and spiritual. Mystical Babylon will share the same fate and destiny as literal Babylon did.

Not only is the restoration of Israel anticipated, but also the entire world. “For the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea” (Habakkuk 2:14).

Habakkuk ends his prayer with the words, “I will wait patiently, for the day of disaster that will come to the people who attack us ... The Lord God is my strength. He makes me like a deer that does not stumble so I can walk on the steep mountains” (Habakkuk 3:16-19, NCV).

These verses anticipate restoration. Once more Israel will rejoice in the mountains of Judea, in the mountains of the Lord. Habakkuk here trusts that the Lord will protect him, guide him, and his people, just as a deer can maneuver in difficult terrain in high places without injury.

SUMMARY

Habakkuk 3:9 and its context has been an enigma to scholars for centuries. The diversity of renderings suggests the difficulty translators have with the text.

We propose a rendering like this: “seven times of chastisement were sworn” or “seven times of chastisement were decreed.”

Viewing the passage with the thought of “seven times” has three advantages. (1) It makes sense in context, (2) it provides another testimony to the “seven times” of Leviticus 26 and Daniel 4, and (3) it provides an enhanced understanding of the rest of the chapter.

—Jeff Mezera

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- (1) Aron Pinkner, *Biblica*, 84 (2003) pp. 417-420
 - (2) E. Henderson, *The Book of the Twelve Minor Prophets*
 - (3) Old Testament Handbook Series, United Bible Society, Copyright 1978-2004
 - (4) Lange’s Commentary on Habakkuk 3:9
 - (5) UBS Old Testament Handbook Series. Copyright 1978-2004 by United Bible Societies
 - (6) Commentary in Barnes Notes on Habakkuk 3:9
 - (7) Commentary by F. C. Cook
 - (8) E. Henderson, *The Book of the Twelve Minor Prophets*
 - (9) Keil, C. F., & F. Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament*, (10:422), Hendrickson, Peabody, MA (2002)
 - (10) E. Henderson, *op.cit.*
 - (11) Aron Pinkner, *op.cit.*
 - (12) Henry Cowles, *op.cit.*
 - (13) Commentary by Walvoord and Zuck
 - (14) Keil and Delitsch, *op. cit.*

Newton: Bible Student and Scientist

Isaac Newton (1642-1727) was born in Lincolnshire on Christmas day nearly two months premature, and posthumous to his father. In the superstition of the day, all three of these circumstances were considered to portend a child of exceptional abilities, and so he was. He was born in the last year a witch was publicly burned at the stake in England. When he went to his grave at age 85, he was and still is remembered as one of the greatest scientists of all time.

But the advocates of rational thought were inventing a fiction, for first and foremost Newton was a man of faith. This community has long ignored or belittled Newton's strong commitment to Christianity and earnest non-conforming Bible study. Nearly one million words, mostly unpublished even today, range over biblical prophecy, the Times of Restitution, translation and manuscript errors, chronology, the measurements of Ezekiel's temple compared against the New Jerusalem, and the Great Pyramid

The article following reproduces some of Isaac Newton's writing on Scripture. The editors do not concur with all of the specific interpretations, but it is remarkable how much of an understanding of the kingdom was known so far back. Newton's keen mind permitted him to see truths that we might have thought were little known until the harvest.

Newton's public anti-Trinitarian positions and writings continually created difficulties for his patrons. He required special royal dispensation for him to secure a post as professor, ironically enough, at Trinity College, Cambridge. Significantly, he is responsible for the scholarship that challenged the spurious acceptance of 1 John 5:7 into the Greek New Testament.

When Newton died unmarried, the executors of his estate largely found his religious writings to be an embarrassment. They kept all but four sequestered, where they remained unread until the twentieth century.

(This synopsis is based on the highly recommended "Religion of Isaac Newton," by Frank E. Manuel, Oxford, 1974. See also H. MacLachlen, Isaac Newton, 1950. Modern spelling adopted throughout.)

— Richard Doctor

Of the Day of Judgment and World to Come

Extracted from Yahuda Ms. 6, folio 12-19, part of "The Synchronisms of the Three Parts of the Prophetick Interpretation" (Sotheby Catalogue, Lot 244).

RESTITUTION

The mystery of the restitution of all things is to be found in all the Prophets: which makes me wonder with great

admiration that so few Christians of our age can find it there. They understand not that the final return of the Jews captivity and their conquering the nations of the four Monarchies and setting up a peaceable, righteous and flourishing Kingdom at the day of judgment is this mystery.

[In] the last chapters of Isaiah ... the Prophet conjoins the new heaven and new earth with the ruin of the wicked nations, the end of weeping and of all troubles, the return of the Jews captivity and their setting up a flourishing and everlasting Kingdom, the springing up of the bones of the righteous as an herb, and the judgment of transgressors whose worm dieth not and whose fire is not quenched. So also in Jeremiah 30 and 31, Ezekiel 37 and 38, Hosea 3, Joel 2 and 3, Amos 9, Obadiah, Micah 3 and 7, Nahum 1, Zephaniah 3, Haggai 2, Zechariah 12 and 14, Malachi 4, Deuteronomy 30, Psalms 2 and other places.

I forbear to cite the places because enough has been already said to confirm this synchronism. But yet for removing some prejudices which may make this synchronism difficult to be believed, I out of all the Prophets compared together observe the following particulars.

First, that the earth shall continue to be inhabited by mortals after the day of judgment and that not only for a 1000 years but even for ever. For at the sounding of the 7th Trumpet the Kingdoms of this world become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ and he shall reign for ever and ever (Apocalypse 11). One like the son of man came with the clouds of heaven — and there was given him dominion and glory and a kingdom, that all people, nations and languages should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion which shall not pass away and his Kingdom that which shall not be destroyed (Daniel 7:14, 27). In the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed and the kingdom shall not be left to other people but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms and it shall stand for ever (Daniel 2:44). The Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his Father David and he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever and of his kingdom there shall be no end (Luke 1:33). Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end upon the throne of David and upon his Kingdom to order it and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever (Isaiah 9:7).

ISRAEL

I will take the children of Israel from among the heathen whether they be gone and will gather them on every side and bring them into their own land (Ezekiel 37:21). And they shall dwell in the land that I have given unto Jacob my servant ... even they and their children and their children's children for ever and my servant David shall be their Prince for ever. Moreover I will make a covenant of peace with them: it shall be an everlasting covenant with them: and I will place them and multiply them and I will set my sanctuary in the midst of them for evermore. My tabernacle also shall be with them. Yea, I will be their God and they shall be my people. And the heathen shall know that I the Lord do

sanctify Israel when my sanctuary shall be in the midst of them for evermore (Ezekiel 37:25-28).

Thus saith the Lord which giveth the Sun for a light by day and the (Moon) ordinances of the Moon and of the stars for a light by night — if those ordinances depart from before me saith the Lord, then the seed of Israel also shall cease from being a nation before me for ever; Jeremiah 35:35, 36.

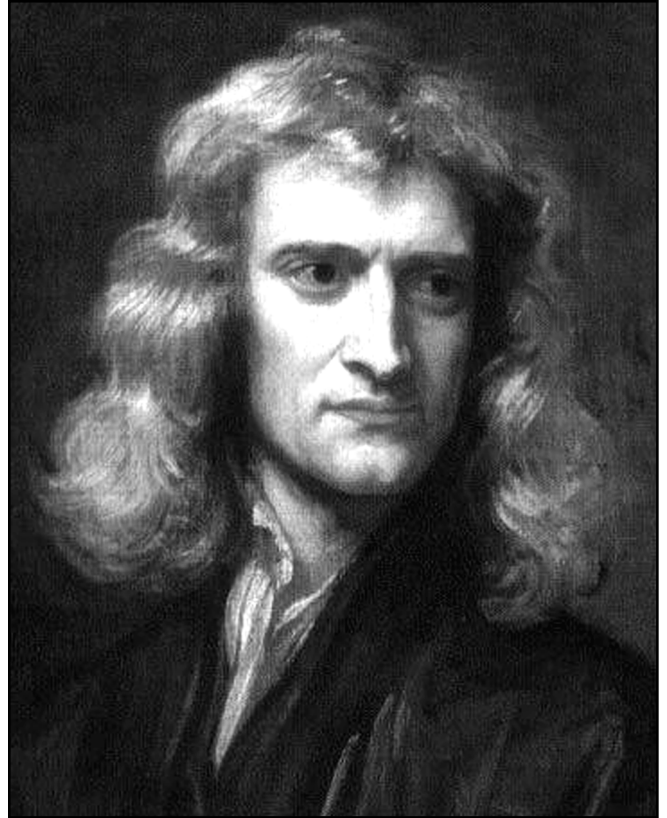
MORTALS

In the Apocalypse where ... they bring the glory and honor of the nations into the new Jerusalem, those nations are certainly mortals, for they are the nations whom the Dragon deceived no more till the thousand years were expired, and who being at the end of those years again deceived by him, did compass the beloved city and were devoured by fire from the throne, that is by war. Thus is there an end of those rebellious nations, but not of the beloved city. Their dominion is confirmed and perhaps enlarged by the conquest of those nations nor is the end of it any where described, but on the contrary tis said that they shall reign for ever and ever (Apocalypse 22:5).

That the citizens of this city are not the saints risen from the dead, but a race of mortal men like those nations over whom they reign, is evident from Isaiah's description of the new heavens and new earth and new Jerusalem. For of this Jerusalem he saith: The voice of weeping shall no more be heard in her nor the voice of crying. There shall be no more thence an infant of days nor an old man that hath not filled his days: for the child shall die an hundred years old but the sinner being an hundred years old shall be accursed and they shall build houses and inhabit them and plant vineyards and eat the fruit of them, etc. (Isaiah 65:19-21). These mortal inhabitants of this city the Prophet afterwards tells you are to be the nation of the Jews returned from captivity and saith of them that as the new heavens and new earth which he will make shall remain before him so shall their seed remain: which is as much as to say that both shall remain for ever.

To assure you that this is after the day of judgment he adds that they shall go forth and look upon the carcasses of the men that have transgressed: for their worm shall not die neither shall their fire be quenched and they shall be an abhorring to all flesh. The state of this new Jerusalem [is] further described in Isaiah 60, namely how it is a city of mortals assembled from captivity and rules over the nations and continues for ever, and how (as in the Apocalypse) the Gentiles come to her light and the Kings to the brightness of her rising and her gates are open continually that they may bring unto her the riches of the Gentiles and the Sun is no more her light by day, nor the moon, but the Lord is her everlasting light.

So again in Isaiah 54 the same state is thus described. They seed [returning from captivity] shall inherit the gentiles and make the desolate cities to be inhabited — for thy maker is thy Husband (the Lord of Hosts is his name) and thy redeemer [from captivity] the holy one of Israel, the God of the whole earth shall he be called. For the Lord hath



Sir Isaac Newton at 46 in 1689 (Godfrey Kneller portrait).

called thee as a woman forsaken and grieved in spirit and a wife of youth when thou wast refused, saith thy God. For a small moment have I forsaken thee [during thy captivity] but with great mercies will I gather thee [from among the nations.] In a little wrath I hid my face from thee for a moment but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee, saith the Lord thy redeemer. For this is as the waters of Noah unto me: for as I have sworn that the waters of Noah should no more go over the earth: so have I sworn that I would no more be wroth with thee nor rebuke thee. For the mountains shall depart and the hills be removed but my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, saith the Lord that hath mercy on thee.

O thou afflicted, tossed with tempest and [during thy captivity] not comforted: behold [the days come that] I will build thy walls with carbuncles and lay thy foundations with sapphires and I will make thy windows of Jasper and thy gates of carved Jewels and all thy borders of pleasant stones. And all thy children shall be taught by the Lord and great shall be the peace of thy children. In righteousness shalt thou be established: thou shalt be far from oppression for thou shalt not fear, and from terror for it shall not come near thee. Behold they shall surely gather together [in the war of Gog and Magog] but not by me. Whosoever shall gather against thee shall fall for thy sake. ... No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper, and every tongue that shall rise against thee in judgment thou shalt condemn. This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord.

This prophesy I have set down at large because of its analogy with that of the new Jerusalem. For here by calling this people the wife of the Lord and describing her an holy and peaceable city built of precious stones and inheriting the nations, you may know that she is the new Jerusalem the Lamb's wife. By her being returned from captivity, her inhabiting the desolate cities and her inheriting the nations and by their making war upon her with weapons formed by the smith you may know that she is a city of mortals; a city not in a literal sense, but mystically put for the whole nation of the Jews, the precious stones and pillars and foundations thereof being the saints and Apostles. And by God's oath that he will never rebuke her as he did the old world you may know that she shall be eternal. The mountains, saith he, shall depart and the hills be removed but God's kindness shall not depart from her nor the covenant of his peace be removed: an expression of the same kind with that whereby the eternity of the Son of God himself is in the highest manner asserted (Hebrews 1:11).

She is so far from ending with the millennium that the time of her captivity (which hath already lasted much above a thousand years) being compared with the time of her flourishing reign which is to follow it, is here represented but as a moment to eternity. In a little wrath, saith he, I hid my face from thee for a moment, but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee. Seing this Kingdom outlasts the Millennium in so vast a disproportion of time and its end after that is no where predicted: we may well conclude with Jeremy that it shall last as long as the ordinances of the Sun, Moon and stars; with Daniel, John and the other Prophets that it will stand for ever and ever, and with Luke that it shall have no end.

This was God's covenant with Abraham when he promised that his seed should inherit the land of Canaan for ever, and on this (promise) covenant was founded the Jewish religion as on that is founded the Christian; and therefore this point is of so great moment that it ought to be considered and understood by all men who pretend to the name of Christians.

END OF THE AGE

In the next place I would observe out of the Prophets that in the end of this present world when Christ shall come to judge the quick and dead, the quick to be then judged are the people of this kingdom, both Jews and Gentiles.

... The Book of life contains not only the names of the Saints in heaven but also the names of them that escape the captivity. ... Michael shall stand up ... the great Prince which is set over the people of the Jews, and they shall be delivered every one that shall be found written in the Book and that at the same time many of those that sleep in the dust shall awake, some to everlasting life and some to shame and everlasting contempt. Here Michael the Prince of the Jews at his second coming stands up in judgment and judges both quick and dead.

For the book here mentioned, wherein the captivated Jews as many as shall be delivered are written, is the book of life



John the Apostle, who later received a vision of New Jerusalem

now opened in judgment, as you may understand by comparing this place with such another in the Apocalypse where tis said, There shall no wise enter into the new Jerusalem any thing that defileth or worketh abomination or a lie, but they which are written in the Lambs book of life (Apocalypse 21:27). This book was opened before in the general judgment and all the dead who were not found written in it were there cast into the Lake of fire (Apocalypse 20:15).

Here in the same day of judgment the living are also judged out of it and only those admitted into the new Jerusalem whose names are found written therein. Whence also the living (both Jews and Gentiles) as well as the dead are now said to be saved. The nations of them which are **saved** shall walk in the light of it and the Kings of the earth do bring their glory and honour into it (Apocalypse 21:24).

... The saving in these and such like places of scripture is of mortals at the last day from misery and death both temporal and eternal. When Christ comes to judge the dead he comes also to smite the nations with his two edged sword and to rule them with a rod of iron and as the vessels of a potter shall be broken to shivers (Apocalypse 19:15, 2:27). And at that time he shall send forth his Angels and they shall gather out of his Kingdom all things that offend and them which do iniquity and shall cast them into a furnace of fire (Matthew 13:41).

The rest of his kingdom are the nations of them which are saved and they are mortals remaining on earth, because Christ has a kingdom there which he now begins to rule

with a rod of iron, and tis only out of this kingdom which the wicked could be gathered.

Conceive therefore that when Christ comes to judge the dead, he judges also the living and that as many as are found written in the Book of life are adjudged to life and saved by being either caught up into the air to be with the Lord or left below on earth in the Kingdom of mortals which he thenceforth rules with a rod of iron and that the rest are adjudged to death and cast into the Lake of fire (1 Thessalonians 4:16, Matthew 24:31). ... Thus Christ judges the quick and dead at his coming and his Kingdom (2 Timothy 4:1). Which being an Article of faith ought to be well understood.

SYMBOLIC LANGUAGE

It is a received opinion that this judgment shall be accompanied with a conflagration of the world; and some hearing that in the future world the Wolf shall lay down with the Lamb and all beasts shall become gentle and harmless and the earth become fuller of rivers and more fruitful; and the light of the sun and moon be much increased and the royal City be as it were of Jewels and gold like clear glass, have conceived that an amendment of the whole frame of nature shall ensue that conflagration. But these fancies have been occasioned by understanding in a vulgar and literal sense what the Prophets writ in their own mystical language.

... The conflagration of the world ... signifies the consumption of Kingdoms by war, as you may see in Moses, where God thus describes the desolation of Israel, "I will provoke them to anger with a foolish nation. For a fire is kindled in mine anger and shall burn unto the lowest hell and shall consume the earth with her increase and set on fire the foundations of the mountains. I will heap mischiefs upon them. I will spend mine arrows upon them. They shall be burnt with hunger and devoured with burning heat and with bitter destruction" (Deuteronomy 32:22).

But in the day of judgment there is also a literal conflagration of the world politic in the lake of fire and to those that are cast into it a conflagration also of the world natural, the heaven and earth where they are being on fire and the elements melting with fervent heat. And whilst the Apostle Peter tells us that none but the wicked shall suffer in this conflagration and that this is a time of refreshing to the Godly, I cannot take it for a conflagration of any considerable part of this globe whereby the rest of the habitable world may be annoyed. And if the world natural be not burnt up there is no ground for such a renovation thereof as they suppose. The glorious Sun and Moon, multiplied rivers and copious vegetables of the new world are its Kings and people, the peaceable and harmless Beasts it's peaceable Kingdoms, and the new Jerusalem that spiritual building in Sion whereof the Chief corner stone is Christ.

The 12 Gates are the elders of the Tribe which used anciently to judge in the Gates. Christ and the rest of the stones and gold are the saints (1 Peter 2:4-6). Particularly the City and streets of pure Gold are the holy people purged from

the wicked as Gold is refined from dross (Isaiah 1:25, Malachi 3:2). The 12 foundations are the 12 Apostles whose names are written on them and the rest of the precious stones and gold are the rest of its citizens. Tis represented of a cubical figure and the 12 Gates the Elders of the Tribes. For the names of the Apostles and Tribes are written on them. Gates are put for Elders because the Elders judged in them, and these Gates (1 Peter 2:4-6), the Gold being the holy people refined from the wicked (Isaiah 1:25), and foundations are of Pearls and precious stones to denote them Kings and Princes. For great and valuable men are known by rich and precious ornaments.

Tis represented of a cubical figure with the throne of God in it and without any Sun Moon or Temple, to insinuate that it is a spiritual building and that heavenly City which was prefigured by the most holy. For the most holy was cubical, and had in it the throne of God; but not any other Temple [nor] flame and fire of the Altar which are the sun and moon of the Temple, nor had it any windows to let in the light of the natural Sun and Moon. Neither had it any Temple in it, but is the Temple itself; that Temple in whose courts the palm-bearing multitude worship (Apocalypse 7:15) and the pillars of whose courts are the saints of all nations (chapter 3:12).

If you desire to know the manner of this city on earth and of the war of Gog and Magog you may see them both described by Ezekiel chap 38 and 39 (and particularly) where he represents how the Jews after their return from captivity dwell safely and quietly upon the mountains of Israel in unwall'd towns without either gates or bars to defend them until they are grown very rich in Cattle and gold and silver and goods and Gog of the land of Magog stirs up the nations round about, Persia and Arabia and Africa and the northern nations of Asia and Europe against them to take a spoil, and God destroys all that great army, that the nations may from thenceforth know that the Jews went formerly into captivity for their sins but now since their return are become invincible by their holiness.

We have hitherto considered the new Jerusalem as a City of mortals only: but whilst Christ is the chief corner stone of this city, whilst he rules the nations with a rod of iron and gives power over them to the saints risen from the dead (Apocalypse 2:26) and makes them Kings over the earth (Revelation 1:6 and 5:10) and gives them to eat of the tree of life which is in the midst of the Paradise of God and to enter in through the gates into the City (Revelation 2:7, 22:14), and writes upon them the name of this new Jerusalem (Revelation 3:12), this city must be understood to comprehend as well Christ and the children of the resurrection as the race of mortal Jews on earth. It signifies not a material city but the (spiritual) body politic of all those who have dominion over the nation whether they be the saints in heaven or their mortal vice-regents on earth and therefore the Apostle Paul in his Epistle to the Hebrews chapter 11 understands it of the saints in heaven and in Galatians 4:26 calls it Jerusalem which is above.

— Isaac Newton (to be continued)