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The Herald

Of Christ's Kingdom



Old Testament Rites

Circumcision • Covenant Sacrifices

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In the Beginning

Old Testament Rites

The Old Testament speaks of many ancient rites, some connected to the Law and some which preceded it. Paul tells us of Israel's experiences: "These things happened to them as an example, and they were written for our instruction, upon whom the ends of the ages have come" (1 Corinthians 10:11, NASB). Evidently the same applies to the earlier narratives and experiences related in the Bible. Thus the various rites and ordinances therein described also contain lessons of spiritual and typical value for us.

This issue begins with *The Covenant of Circumcision*, a rite which symbolizes our need to cut away earthly defilements. *Covenant Sacrifices* looks at the method of ratifying covenants in the Old Testament, which not only men observed, but to which even God condescended, to give us assurance of his promises.

One of the covenants God made was with King David. Its meaning is examined in *The Sure Mercies of David*. The article *Covenant Signs* looks at various signs, or emblems, that were attached to God's covenants with the ancients. *The Jewish Influence on Early Church Meetings* explores how the practices of old times, and their Jewish customs, influenced the operation of ecclesias in the opening of the Gospel age. The final article on this theme, *Baptism*, shows that this Gospel age practice was represented long ago at the crossing of the Red Sea, and during the flood

We end by examining a subject treated in the last issue of 2004, the engaging prophecy of Revelation 17 describing a woman riding on a beast with seven heads and ten horns. Two thoughtful approaches are aired in the articles *A Foundation for Understanding Prophecy*, and *Heads and Horns*. Both articles embrace the common position that the woman is the Roman Catholic Church, and that the close of the prophecy speaks of its demise. However, each reaches a different conclusion about how that end is represented.

We hope this issue brings a greater appreciation of the Old Testament record. May we apply its lessons and exhortations to be cleansed from the world, rejoice in the assurances of its covenant promises, and delight in the insights to God's plan which their study affords.

Cutting Off the Old Nature

The Covenant of Circumcision

And he [God] gave him [Abraham] the covenant of circumcision.—Acts 7:8

Michael Nekora

The subject of circumcision is first mentioned in Genesis 17. God speaks to Abram and tells him he is entering into a covenant relationship with him. He changes Abram's name to Abraham and promises all the land of Canaan to him and his seed after him for an "everlasting possession." As a proof or token of this special covenant relationship between God, Abraham, and Abraham's seed, God required that 99-year-old Abraham be circumcised, and that every male in his house, whether a member of the family or a slave, also be circumcised. From that point forward all who entered Abraham's family, or that of his children, or his children's children, forever were to follow this ceremony showing that they were a part of this covenant arrangement.

The procedure was not optional: "The uncircumcised man child ... shall be cut off from his people; he hath broken my covenant" (Genesis 17:14).

Ishmael was thirteen years old when he and his father were circumcised. Because of this, Arabs who trace their lineage to Abraham through Ishmael still circumcise their males at age thirteen. However, God said from that point forward, circumcision was to occur when a male was eight days old. Thus when Isaac was born a year later, he was circumcised on the eighth day. The importance of the eighth day was so great that when Israel received the Ten Commandments that specified that no work be performed on the Sabbath, an exception was made for circumcisions. Jesus used this exception in his answer to the Pharisees who accused him of violating the Sabbath by healing a man: "Because Moses gave you circumcision (though actually it did not come from Moses, but from the patriarchs), you circumcise a child on the Sabbath. Now if a child can be circumcised on the Sabbath so that the law of Moses may not be broken, why are you angry with me for healing the whole man on the Sabbath?" (John 7:22,23, NIV).

Moses and Zipporah

When Moses was forty years old, he thought he was ready to lead Israel out of Egyptian slavery; instead he was forced to flee for his life. He went into the land of Midian, eventually married Zipporah, and had two sons, Gershom and Eliezer (Exodus 18:3,4). Midian was a son of Keturah and surely Abraham followed the rite of circumcision with all the sons he had by Keturah.

Yet, for reasons that are never explained, in the land of Midian Moses does not circumcise one of his sons. This leads to a quite unexpected event as eighty-year-old Moses, Zipporah, Gershom, and Eliezer were on their way to Egypt: "And it came to pass by the way in the inn, that the LORD [Jehovah] met him, and sought to kill him. Then

Zipporah took a sharp stone, and cut off the foreskin of her son, and cast it at his feet, and said, Surely a bloody husband art thou to me. So he let him go: then she said, A bloody husband thou art, because of the circumcision” (Exodus 4:24-26).

Who was God trying to kill? Many translators think it was Moses so they have substituted his name for the pronoun “him.” But since God had just told Moses what to say to Pharaoh, it was inconceivable he would now try to kill him. It is far more likely it was Moses’ son. The law of circumcision demanded that the uncircumcised person be “cut off from his people” (Genesis 17:14), not the father of the son. When Zipporah realized it was the son who was in jeopardy, she knew what must be done and she did it. At whose feet did Zipporah cast the bloody skin? We read that, as soon as she did it, “**he** [Jehovah] let **him** [the son] go.” Zipporah had just saved the life of her son, so she was not angry. She cast it at the feet of the angel or representative of the Lord, and said: “Surely a bridegroom by rites of blood art thou to me” (Exodus 4:25, Rotherham).

Zipporah was not a descendant of Jacob. In Numbers 12:1 she is called “an Ethiopian.” She was a foreigner in the commonwealth of Israel. But by this act, she claimed the right to a covenant relationship with God [through his representative, of course]. When this was all over, and for reasons that are never explained, Zipporah and her two sons returned to her father Jethro’s house; they did not go with Moses into Egypt. Later they rejoined him in the wilderness (Exodus 18:5).

The Exodus

We know circumcision continued to be practiced when the Israelites were slaves in Egypt because Joshua 5:5 says all who came out of Egypt were circumcised. But why did no circumcisions occur in the wilderness? The Scriptures do not give an explicit answer, but we know that because a lack of faith made the nation reject Joshua’s and Caleb’s favorable report of the promised land, the Israelites were estranged from God. It is probable that God himself prohibited them from enacting this sign of the covenant during the forty-year period of punishment. When this period was over, God told Joshua to circumcise the people: “It came to pass, when they had done circumcising all the people, that they abode in their places in the camp, till they were whole. And the LORD said unto Joshua, This day have I rolled away the reproach of Egypt from off you” (Joshua 5:8,9).

Israel had now returned to a covenant relationship with God. Perhaps the phrase “reproach of Egypt” can be best understood from the words Moses said to God when he threatened to destroy Israel for their wickedness: “Look not unto the stubbornness of this people, nor to their wickedness, nor to their sin: lest the land [Egypt] whence thou broughtest us out say, Because the LORD was not able to bring them into the land which he promised them, and because he hated them, he hath brought them out to slay them in the wilderness” (Deuteronomy 9:27,28).

There is almost nothing more on this subject in the Old Testament except for a quite unexpected use of the word by Jeremiah: “Circumcise yourselves to the LORD, **circumcise your hearts**, you men of Judah and people of Jerusalem, or my wrath will break out and burn like fire because of the evil you have done” (Jeremiah 4:4, NIV).

Judah and those of Jerusalem were certainly practicing ordinary circumcision, but this outward act had no value unless they “circumcised their hearts”—a phrase that perhaps meant nothing to them.

Circumcision in the New Testament

The question of whether to circumcise or not was a controversial topic in the early church. Those who were deeply committed to Judaism were sure the Gentile converts had to come into the Jewish covenant to be blessed and that meant they had to be circumcised: “And certain men which came down from Judaea taught the brethren, and said, Except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved” (Acts 15:1).

Paul and Barnabas debated the matter without success, so a delegation was sent to Jerusalem asking the apostles to settle this question. During that discussion Peter speaks: “God, who knows the heart, showed that he accepted them [the Gentiles] by giving the Holy Spirit to them, just as he did to us. He made no distinction between us and them, for he purified their hearts by faith. ... We believe it is through the grace of our Lord Jesus that we are saved, just as they are” (Acts 15:8,9,11, NIV).

That was a compelling argument. God had accepted the “uncircumcised” just as they were. Why could not everyone else accept them that way too? They could. James stood up and proposed a letter be sent to the distant congregations. It was sent and it contained not a word about circumcision.

Paul put this question into proper perspective: “For he is not a Jew, which is one 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**, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God” (Romans 2:28,29).

Here is the “circumcision of the heart” Jeremiah spoke about. It is not the cutting off of skin, but the cutting off of the entire “old nature.” Once that “old nature” is gone, we have something new: “Neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature” (Galatians 6:15). To the Jews circumcision represented the entering into a relationship with God. But the relationship a Christian has with God is different. A Christian’s justification comes from faith, not from works. But if circumcision is not the means to show a Christian’s relationship with God, what is?

“In whom also ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ: **buried with him in baptism**, wherein also ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead. And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses” (Colossians 2:11-13).

Baptism is the symbol for Christians. We are cleansed from sin. We go under the water, symbolically “buried with him,” and come up alive as a new creature, ready to walk with him in newness of life. Just as circumcision was a kind of initiation into a group possessing certain rights, privileges, and responsibilities, so also is baptism a kind of initiation into a special group with its rights, privileges, and responsibilities. It is a step taken only by those who share the faith demonstrated by father Abraham who “received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness that he had by faith while he was still uncircumcised. So then, he is the father of all who believe but have not been circumcised, in order that righteousness might be credited to them. And he is also the father of the circumcised who not only are circumcised but who also walk in the footsteps of the faith that our father Abraham had before he was circumcised” (Romans 4:11,12, NIV).

There was another reason God wanted the Jews to practice circumcision. It set them apart from their heathen neighbors and they knew it. Samson’s parents, for example, could not understand why he wanted a wife from among the “uncircumcised Philistines” (Judges 14:3). Likewise, baptism sets us apart from our heathen neighbors. Only Christians practice it, and only a few groups perform full body immersion in water as Jesus did: “After these things came Jesus and his disciples into the land of Judaea; and there he tarried with them, and **baptized**” (John 3:22).

The Greek word translated “baptized” is Strong’s #907, *baptizo*. It means “to make fully wet.” Like circumcision, it is only a symbol. That baptism is not required for spirit begetting was demonstrated with the first Gentile convert. In Acts 10 as Peter preached to Cornelius, the holy spirit fell on the uncircumcised Gentiles. They spoke with tongues and magnified God. The Jews who were with Peter were astonished, but he asked, “Can anyone keep these people from being baptized with water? They have received the Holy Spirit just as we have. So he ordered that they be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ” (Acts 10:47,48, NIV).

Paul equates baptism with “putting on” Christ: “For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. ... And if ye be Christ’s, then are ye Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise” (Galatians 3:26,27,29). This is similar to his words in Romans 13:14 where he writes, “Put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh.” In other words, cut off the flesh; be baptized into Christ and thus become clothed with him. Put on the robe of Christ’s righteousness and enter a covenant relationship with God; be his special people.

Circumcision never guaranteed that the Jews would attain the blessings God had for them. The unfaithful circumcised Israelites all died in the wilderness and never entered the promised land as they expected to do when they left Egypt. Likewise baptism does not guarantee that Christians will attain the blessings God has for them. Unfaithful Christians will die in the “wilderness” and will not enter the promised land as they expected when they left their “Egypt” of sin, sickness, and death.

We should look at Israel’s failures and learn lessons that apply to us: “See to it, brothers, that none of you has a sinful, unbelieving heart that turns away from the living God. But encourage one another daily, as long as it is called Today, so that none of you may be hardened by sin’s deceitfulness. We have come to share in Christ if we hold firmly till the end the confidence we had at first” (Hebrews 3:12-14, NIV).

The Eighth Day

Why did God require that circumcision be done on the eighth day? Although some suggest that certain clotting characteristics of the blood are better in a baby on the eighth day than at any other time, it is more likely there is a lesson associated with the number eight. For example, when the first high priest and the underpriests were inaugurated into office, a seven-day period called the “consecration of the priesthood” occurred (described in Leviticus chapter eight). On the eighth day that typical priesthood began to function. Likewise the antitypical “priesthood,” after its consecration, receives its mark of a “covenant relationship with God,” a “circumcision made **without** hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ” (Colossians 2:11). After being faithful unto death, it can begin to function.

There is also a picture at the end of the Millennial Age. The close of God’s seventh day will be followed by God’s great eighth day when the complete cleansing of the flesh will have been accomplished through restitution. Mankind will have attained the perfection that was Adam’s when all perfection resided in him. All the obedient of mankind will reach this condition by the close of the Millennium before they are presented to God by the Christ class, whose work will then be complete. Mankind will be purified; the old, sinful, fleshly failings will have been completely cut off and they will have an everlasting covenant relationship with the heavenly Father.

Conclusion

God’s relationship with his typical people Israel contains lessons which teach us what we must do to be pleasing to him today. Baptism for the Christian is the equivalent of circumcision for the Jew. Through baptism Christians enter into a covenant relationship with God. It is not the water that saves, it is what Peter calls a “good conscience.” He saw the water which saved Noah and his family by floating the ark as a symbol of a Christian’s baptism: “In it [the ark] only a few people, eight in all, were saved through water, and this water symbolizes baptism that now saves you also—not the removal of dirt from the body but the pledge of a good conscience toward God. It saves you by the resurrection of Jesus Christ” (1 Peter 3:20,21, NIV).

Baptism is not a one-time ritual that guarantees special favor. It is a life-long commitment. Jesus asked his disciples, “Can ye drink of the cup that I drink of? and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?” (Mark 10:38). They said they could, and they were right. Jesus asks us that same question. By God’s grace and through his strength and power, may we all say, “We are able.”

God's Plan to Bless Mankind

Covenant Sacrifices

Where a covenant exists, the death of that which has ratified it is necessary to be produced; because a covenant is firm over dead victims.

—Hebrews 9:16,17, Emphatic Diaglott

Wade Austin

Animal sacrifices for religious purposes have occurred from the very earliest times. Abel sacrificed the best of his flock and God accepted his sacrifice and not the “fruit of the ground” offering of his brother Cain. The symbolism of an animal sacrifice certainly indicates a strong commitment on the part of the individual making the offering, even unto death. The symbolism apparently continued after the flood and became part of religious rituals among people and cultures that had strayed far from God.

God used this symbolism to confirm his covenant with Abraham. Perhaps he did this because of Abraham’s familiarity with similar covenant confirming practices among the tribal peoples in his experience. More likely God chose this method because it showed in the most powerful way possible the seriousness of the covenant. After all, other practices of the time served to bind parties to a covenant. These included shaking hands (Ezekiel 17:18), “loosing the shoe” (Ruth 4:7-11), and giving presents (Genesis 21:27-30), to name a few.

Genesis 15

The account of God ratifying his covenant to Abraham by animal sacrifices is recorded in Genesis 15:9-21 in response to Abraham’s request in verse eight for a sign that God would do as he had promised. God instructed Abraham to “take” a heifer, a goat, a ram, a dove and a pigeon. Abraham knew that this meant he was to kill these animals and that he was to divide them into halves (except the birds) and place them in such a way that someone could walk between the pieces. One can assume that the birds were not divided because of their size, but perhaps there is a deeper symbolism both in the kinds of animals sacrificed and in whether or not they were cut asunder.

What is the meaning of such a symbolic practice of slaying animals and passing between their divided bodies? Surely the death of valuable animals would indicate a commitment on the part of an individual to be faithful to his part of an agreement, but by walking between the cut pieces an individual further symbolized his willingness to be put to death and cut asunder if he was not faithful to his covenant. Obviously God cannot die, but nevertheless, the symbolism carried the same weight as God’s oath to Abraham described in Hebrews 6:13, “For when God made promise to Abraham, because he could swear by no greater, he swore by himself.”

Here is a thought from *A Commentary* by Jamieson, Fausset and Brown on this passage: “On occasions of great importance, when two or more parties join in a compact, they ... observe ... the same rites as Abram did ... According to these ideas, which have been from time immemorial engraven on the minds of Eastern people, [God] condescended to enter into covenant with Abram ... [Abram] asked a sign, and God was pleased to give him a sign, by which, according to Eastern ideas, He bound Himself.”

Other Lessons

Having recognized the important overriding principle inherent in the covenant sacrifice just described, one might ask, “Are there yet other lessons to be learned from the details provided in the account?” Is there a typical significance to the total number of pieces between which passed the “smoking pot [furnace] and burning lamp” (Genesis 15:17)? Do the lamp and the pot typify important lessons? Why were the birds not cut asunder? Is the covenant with Abraham typical of a greater covenant and the details of the sacrifice that ratified the covenant therefore typical of another greater covenant?

A commitment to be slain for not fulfilling one’s promise or covenant was also shown in the making of the Law Covenant as recorded in Exodus 24:3-8. In this instance, the blood of the sacrificed animal was sprinkled on those promising to be obedient to the covenant as a sign that death should be required of them if they were not faithful to their promise. The death of the animal showed the consequence of disobedience. But in this instance it is the sprinkling of the blood that indicated the ones to whom it applied, rather than walking between the pieces of a sacrificed animal. It also pictured the greater sacrifice of Jesus that would ratify a new and better covenant than the Law Covenant (Hebrews 9:14-22).

Other Symbolic Pictures in Genesis 15

God instructed Abraham to slay five animals. Five is a picture of the New Creation, as in the five wise virgins (and their companions of the same number). In like manner, Genesis 15 seems to focus specially on the spiritual seed of Abraham, and thus God’s instructions for Abraham to slay five animals is symbolically consistent. Further evidence that this passage deals primarily with the spiritual seed is indicated by the following:

1. Abraham was concerned over the lack of a seed. God affirms that he will have the promised seed, which turns out later to be Isaac, who represents the church (Genesis 15:4; Galatians 4:28).
2. When God answered Abraham (Genesis 15:5), he mentioned the “stars of the heaven” but not the “sand of the sea” nor the “dust of the earth.” Specifically God said, “Look now toward heaven, and number [ASV] the stars, if thou be able to number them: and he said unto him, So shall thy seed be.” We thus conclude that this passage focuses on the spiritual seed.

3. In Genesis 15:13 God informed Abraham that his seed was to be afflicted by the Egyptians for 400 years before obtaining the promised possession. (When Ishmael and Hagar were cast out, Ishmael would be regarded as an Egyptian—Genesis 16:1; 21:9,21.) About 400 years later Israel left Egypt and subsequently inherited the Promised Land. But there is possibly a deeper spiritual level also. If one multiplies 400 years by 360 days (the length of one prophetic year), the result is 144,000 days. This is a numerical tie to the number used for the church in Revelation 7:4 and 14:1,3.

4. The 400 years represent a period of testing, trial, and development. In this case it represents the Gospel age testing of the saints, the spiritual seed of Abraham. The period ends at the Exodus, a result of the plagues sent by God through Moses, just as the Gospel age ends with the seven last plagues of Revelation. Since there were 430 years between Abraham entering the land at age 75, and the Exodus, these 400 years evidently began when Abraham was 105, five years after the birth of Isaac. It is possible that this was the time Ishmael was mocking at the weaning of Isaac, representing the Jewish persecution of the church at the beginning of the Gospel age (compare Genesis 21:8,9; Galatians 4:29). Thus the 400 years began with an episode which represents the beginning of the Gospel age, and ends with an episode that represents the end of the Gospel age.

5. The burning lamp represents the Divine Presence. The smoking furnace represents the trials and afflictions that would attend Israel in Egypt (compare Deuteronomy 4:20; Jeremiah 11:4). On the spiritual level, the shining lamp represents the presence of Jesus among the church (compare Revelation 1:14, 15, “his eyes were as a flame of fire” as Jesus walks among the churches which are pictured by the animal sacrifices in Genesis 15). The smoking furnace represents the purifying trials and afflictions of the church.

6. The ending of the chapter lists ten peoples which the Israelites would master. This seems to represent the world of mankind (ten is an earthly number), inherited by the saints (Daniel 7:27). Also note Isaiah 53:12 where God divides the spoil with Jesus, and Jesus with the church.

Heifer, Goat, Ram

The heifer, the goat and the ram are used in other texts that imply cleansing, reconciliation, and an acceptable sacrifice (burnt offering) in that order. Specific texts for consideration include Numbers 19:17 and Hebrews 9:13 for the heifer, Leviticus 16:15,18 for the goat, and Leviticus 16:3,5 for the ram. Collectively these three animals picture redemption (the symbolic meaning of three). Through redemption comes cleansing, reconciliation, and acceptance.

The age of each of the three animals was three years, amplifying the theme of redemption. So on all levels—the number, kind, and ages of animals—Genesis 15 speaks of the redemption of the church.

Dove, Pigeon

The number five is composed of 2+3. These two numbers represent, respectively, the holy spirit and redemption. Perhaps the two birds (a dove and a pigeon) symbolize the holy spirit, and the three larger animals symbolize redemption.

Thus God's instructions together with Abraham's night vision symbolize how God would carry out his plan to bless all mankind. What a magnificent confirmation of God's promise was thus provided to Abraham in response to his request for a sign from God. What a blessed assurance to us who are of the faith of Abraham that what God has promised he will surely perform.

Old Testament Rites

The Sure Mercies of David

*But my faithfulness and my mercy shall be with him [David]:
and in my name shall his horn [authority] be exalted.—Psalm 89:24*

Richard Evans

Many centuries after his unconditional covenant with righteous Abraham, God set forth another **unconditional** covenant through the prophet Nathan. It was a covenant with David, king of Israel, a man after God's own heart (1 Samuel 13:14; Acts 13:22). Like the Abrahamic Covenant, it was mediated by an oath of God (Genesis 22:16-18; Psalm 89:3; 132:11). "God, willing more abundantly to shew unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, ~~confirmed~~ [mediated—*mesiteuo*, Strong's 3315, to interpose] it [*the Abrahamic Covenant, verse 13*] by an oath" (Hebrews 6:17).

The Davidic Covenant

God swore an oath to David that the future of God's people Israel, David's seed, David's house and kingdom, and David's throne, would be certain (Isaiah 9:7; 16:5). "I [*God, vs. 8*] will appoint a place for my people Israel, and will plant them, that they may dwell in a place of their own, and move no more ... I will set up thy seed after thee [*David*], which shall proceed out of thy bowels, and I will establish his [*the seed's, Messiah*] kingdom. ... And thine house ~~and~~ [even]¹ thy kingdom shall be established for ~~ever~~ [an age]² before thee: thy throne shall be established for ~~ever~~ [an age]²" (2 Samuel 7:10, 12, 16).

The structure of verse 16 indicates David's house and David's kingdom are one and the same. In verses 12, 13, and 16 God covenanted with David that he "will establish his kingdom." Yet, in response, David specified "house," not "kingdom" (2 Samuel 7:18-29). This suggests "house" and "kingdom" were synonymous to David. Accordingly, there are four entities addressed in God's oath-bound covenant with David:

| | | | | |
|-----------------|------------|---------|--------|-----|
| —God's | people, | Israel | (verse | 10) |
| —David's | seed, | Messiah | (verse | 12) |
| —David's | house, | kingdom | (verse | 16) |
| —David's throne | (verse 16) | | | |

These entities, though different, are inseparable and are to be "established for an age," the age of God's future kingdom on earth: "And in the days of these kings [*depicted by Nebuchadnezzar's image*] shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed" (Daniel 2:44).

Like that given Abraham, the ultimate outcome of David's covenant does not depend upon creature righteousness. It is unconditional! Against all contingencies David's

throne, David's house, and God's people Israel, will be secure under the reign of David's seed (Messiah).

Verse 14 of 2 Samuel 7 is difficult and most translations do not render it adequately. One that does is by Farrar Fenton: "I [*God*] shall be his Father, and he [*David's seed*] will be my son. He will be a guide to the wandering; and I will cause him to correct men [*humanity*] with a staff, and the sons of Adam with a touch" (2 Samuel 7:14).

Thus the elements of David's covenant parallel those of the Abrahamic. Not only is it personal and national, it is also universal. David's seed, Messiah, as King and High Priest of God, will bless all families of the earth: "The LORD hath sworn [*to David*], and will not repent, Thou [*David's seed, Hebrews 5:6*] art a priest for ~~ever~~ [an age]² after the order of Melchizedek [*a king and priest, Genesis 14:18*]" (Psalm 110:4).

As antitypical Melchizedek, David's seed will "correct" the "sons of Adam" with the gentle leading of a shepherd's staff and the touch of a loving hand.

The Divine Oath

The perpetuity of David's throne—thus David's kingdom with God's people Israel—is based on God's oath and that oath rests upon his holiness: "I [*God*] have made a covenant with my chosen, I have sworn unto David my servant, Thy seed [*Messiah*] will I establish for ~~ever~~ [an age]², and build up thy throne to all generations. Selah. ... My mercy will I keep for him [*David*] for ~~evermore~~ [an age]², and my covenant shall stand fast with him. His seed also will I make to endure for ~~ever~~ [perpetuity] [*ad, #5703*], and his throne as the days of heaven[s]³. ... My covenant will I not break, nor alter the thing that is gone out of my lips. Once have I sworn by my holiness that I will not lie unto David. His seed shall endure for ~~ever~~ [an age]², and his throne as the sun before me. It shall be established for ~~ever~~ [an age]² as the moon, and as a [the]⁴ faithful witness in ~~heaven~~ [in the cloud] [*the rainbow, Genesis 9:12-17*]" (Psalm 89:3,4, 28,29,34-37).

God swore that his mercy for David, the "sure mercies of David," and his covenant with David are as permanently secure as the sun and the moon, and as the rainbow of the Noahic Covenant.

David's House, God's People

Zechariah also spoke of this certainty of God's mercy for David's house, his kingdom, even though Israel was stiffnecked and disobedient (Acts 7:51). "I [*God*] will pour upon the house [*kingdom*] of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications ... In that day [*Second Advent*] there shall be a fountain opened to the house of David and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem for sin and for uncleanness" (Zechariah 12:10; 13:1).

Jeremiah described the reaction of God's people, the Israel of God (Galatians 6:16), subsequent to their new spirit: "In those days [*Second Advent*], and in that time, saith the

LORD, the children of Israel shall come, they and the children of Judah together, going and weeping: they shall go, and seek the LORD their God” (Jeremiah 50:4).

“Those days” follow the day of Jacob’s trouble: “Alas! for that day is great, so that none is like it: it is even the time of Jacob’s trouble; but he shall be saved out of it. ... But they [*Jacob’s seed*] shall serve the LORD their God, and David their king, whom I will raise up unto them” (Jeremiah 30:7,9). This day of Jacob’s salvation is the same “day” of which Zechariah spoke, the day when a fountain will be opened “for sin and for uncleanness.”

David’s Seed, David’s Throne

In that day, when David’s seed reigns on David’s throne, God’s people will be saved and dwell safely: “The days come [*Second Advent*], saith the LORD, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch [*David’s seed—Isaiah 61:1-3; Luke 4:16-21*], and [as]⁶ a King [he]⁶ shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment⁷ [*deliverance*] and justice [righteousness]⁸ in the ~~earth~~ [land] [*Israel*]⁹. In his days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely: and this is his [*David’s seed*] name whereby he shall be called, THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS” (Jeremiah 23:5, 6).

Under the reign of David’s seed God’s mercy extends to all of David’s divided and scattered house (kingdom).¹⁰ “I [*God*] will make them one nation in the land upon the mountains of Israel; and one king [*David’s seed*] shall be king to them all: and they shall be no more two nations” (Ezekiel 37:22).

The prophet also described this reign of David’s seed using a metaphor of sheep and shepherd: “Thus saith the Lord GOD ... I will both search my sheep [*God’s people in Diaspora*], and seek them out. ... and will deliver them out of all places where they have been scattered in the cloudy and dark day [*Jacob’s trouble, Jeremiah 30:5-11*]. ... And I will set up one shepherd over them, and he shall feed them, even my servant David [*David’s seed*]; he shall feed them, and he shall be their shepherd. ... And I will make them [*God’s earthly chosen people*] and the places round about my hill [*Zion, Psalm 132:13,14; Revelation 14:1*] a blessing” (Ezekiel 34:11,12, 23,26).

Deliverance for God’s people follows the “cloudy and dark day” of Jacob’s trouble. Then, after deliverance, in the mercy of which he swore, God will make his people Israel “a blessing” (Deuteronomy 7:6; 14:2; Isaiah 45:4; 65:9,22).

The Sure Mercies of David

The restored Israel of God will be the divine agent to return God’s earthly creation to its original glory, the mercy God promised David (Psalm 28:6-9; Isaiah 16:5): “Incline your ear [*servants of the LORD—Isaiah 43:10; 54:17*], and come unto me [*God*] ... and I will make an everlasting covenant [*New Covenant*] with you [*both houses, Israel and Judah—Jeremiah 31:31-34*], even the sure mercies of David” (Isaiah 55:3).

“For a small moment have I [*God*] forsaken thee [*Israel*]; but with great mercies [*the “sure mercies”*] will I gather thee. In a little wrath I hid my face from thee for a moment [*Jacob’s trouble*]; 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 [*in the Davidic Covenant*] that I would not be wroth with thee, nor rebuke thee. For the mountains [*worldly nations*] shall depart, and the hills [*false religious systems*] be removed,¹¹ but my kindness shall not depart from thee [*Israel*], neither shall the [*new*] covenant of my peace be removed, saith the LORD that hath mercy on thee” (Isaiah 54:7-10).

The restoration of the house of David will be the maturation of the mercies promised in the Davidic Covenant, the “sure mercies of David.”

“As concerning that he [*God*] raised him [*Jesus, the seed of David*] up from the dead, now no more to return to corruption¹² [*the “present evil world,” Galatians 1:4*], he said on this wise, I will give you [*Israelites, the Greek is plural*] the sure mercies of David [*the blessings of the New Covenant, Isaiah 54:10, 55:3*]” (Acts 13:34).

Paul quoted Isaiah to set forth the reason God raised up Jesus. He indicated the Second Advent return of Jesus is not physical as so many in Christendom believe (Isaiah 9:7; Daniel 12:1; 1 Corinthians 15:28; Revelation 19:11-15). Jesus gathers the “dead in Christ” (the church) “in the air” (1 Thessalonians 4:16,17), so he will not be visible to physical eyes. “Air” is the spirit realm in which Satan has been restrained since Eden (Genesis 3:14; 2 Peter 2:4; Jude 6) and from which he invisibly reigned so long (Ephesians 2:2).

Believing God will keep his covenant with David, the apostle not only spoke of God’s mercy for Israel (Luke 1:54,68-72; Romans 11:31), the “sure mercies of David,” he also prayed for it: “As many as walk according to this rule [*the church*], peace be on them, and ~~mercy, and~~ [also mercy]¹³ upon the Israel of God” (Galatians 6:16).

Apostles and prophets understood the gracious and merciful deliverance of the Israel of God is the precursor of a salvation that reaches to “the ends of the earth.”

“The LORD hath comforted his people [*Israel*], he hath redeemed Jerusalem. The LORD hath made bare his holy arm [*David’s seed, Messiah—Psalm 98:1; Isaiah 51:9*] in the eyes of all the nations [*Second Advent*]; and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God [*the salvation of human creation*]” (Isaiah 52:9,10).

“The Lord GOD which gathereth the outcasts of Israel [*the faithful remnant of Israel, rejected by Israel’s polity*] saith, Yet will I gather others [*the residue of humankind—Acts 15:17*] to him [*the remnant*], beside those [*unfaithful of Israel, Romans 11:26*] that are gathered unto him” (Isaiah 56:8).

This is the gospel given Abraham (Galatians 3:8), the “good news” of which Paul was “not ashamed” (Romans 1:16). “For if the casting away of them [*Israel’s casting away of*

David's seed] be the reconciling of the world, what shall the receiving of them be [*Israel's receiving of David's seed*], but life from the dead [*for Israel and all humankind*]?" (Romans 11:15).

Israel's "casting away," its rejection of David's seed, God's Messiah (Romans 9:32,33), resulted in the sacrifice that reconciles Adam and his seed (Romans 5:10-19). Israel's "receiving," its acceptance of Messiah, will bring God's outpouring of the "spirit of grace and of supplications,"¹⁴ the "sure mercies of David."

"So I prophesied as he [*God*] commanded me, and the breath¹⁵ [*spirit*] came into them [*the whole house of Israel*," *verse 11*], and they lived [*as a nation*]" (Ezekiel 37:10).

The national restoration of Israel will be the archetype for the restoration of all peoples—life from the dead for all of God's human creation. The Jews' return of favor will demonstrate God's mercy and benevolence to his earthly creation, the "sure mercies of David."

"In that day [*Second Advent*] shall this song be sung in the land of Judah; We have a strong city; salvation [*of humankind*] will God appoint for walls and bulwarks. ... for when thy judgments are in the earth⁹ [*land*] [*Israel*], the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness" (Isaiah 26:1,9).

"And they [*other peoples*, *verse 34*] shall say, This land⁹ [*Israel*] that was desolate is become like the garden of Eden; and the waste and desolate and ruined cities are become fenced, and are inhabited. Then the heathen [*fallen humanity*] that are left round about you [*Israel*] shall know that I the LORD build the ruined places, and plant that that was desolate ... so shall the waste cities be filled with flocks of men [*repentant humanity*]; and they shall know that I am the LORD" (Ezekiel 36:35, 36,38).

The resultant relationship of Israel with the rest of humankind is to be as a mother with a newborn: "Rejoice ye [*Gentiles*, *verse 12*] with Jerusalem [*Israel*], and be glad with her, all ye that love her: rejoice for joy with her, all ye that mourn for her: That ye may suck, and be satisfied with the breasts of her consolations; that ye may ~~milk-out~~¹⁶ [drink deeply], and be delighted with the abundance of her glory. For thus saith the LORD, Behold, I will extend peace to her like a river, and the glory of the Gentiles like a[n] [over]flowing¹⁷ stream: then shall ye [*Gentiles*] suck [*as a newborn*], ye shall be borne upon her [*Israel's*] sides, and be dandled upon her knees" (Isaiah 66:10-12).

Again, there is a sequence to God's blessing. Peace is first extended to Jerusalem (Israel) "like a river;" then the glory of the Gentiles (fallen humanity) is to be "like an overflowing stream."

David's Tent

When speaking of the “sure mercies of David” the prophets employed in place of “house” the figure of a “tent.” They used “tent” much as Job used it: “He buildeth his house as a moth, ~~and~~¹ [even] as a booth¹⁸ [tent] that the keeper [of a vineyard] maketh” (Job 27:18).

Thus, “tent” depicted the ignominious condition to which David’s house (kingdom) had fallen following the reigns of David and Solomon: “And in mercy shall the throne [of David] be established: and he [David’s seed] shall sit upon it in truth in the tabernacle¹⁹ [tent] of David, judging, and seeking judgment [deliverance],⁷ and hasting righteousness” (Isaiah 16:5).

At a singular meeting of Paul and Barnabas with the apostles and elders of Jerusalem, James spoke of the “tent” (ravaged house) of David and the fulfillment of the promises of the Davidic Covenant. Quoting the prophet Amos, he too made manifest the salvation of humankind was to be a sequel to the restoration of that tent (kingdom):

“James answered, saying ... Simeon [Peter] hath declared how God at the first did visit the Gentiles [non-Jewish world], to take out of them a people for his name [the Church, a heavenly salvation—1 Corinthians 15:49; Ephesians 2:6; Hebrews 3:1; 6:4]). And to this agree the words of the prophets; as it is written, After this [after taking out a people, verse 14] I [God] will return [to Israel],²⁰ and [as Amos wrote, Amos 9:11,12, LXX], [God] will build again the tabernacle²¹ [tent] of David,²² which is fallen down; and I will build again the ruins²³ thereof, and I will set it up: That the residue of men [fallen humanity] might seek after the Lord [through Israel, Zechariah 8:23], ~~and~~²⁴ [even] all the Gentiles, upon whom my name is called [those who “seek” God]” (Acts 15:13-17).

James quoted Amos (9:11,12) using the Septuagint (LXX); however, the words “after this I will return” (verse 6) are the apostle’s, not the prophet’s. “After this” refers back to “at the first” (verse 14). “I will return” cites God’s promise through the prophets²⁰ that he will again look upon Israel with favor following its correction “in measure” (Jeremiah 46:28). The purpose of this return was made evident in Amos’ prophecy:

“In that day will I [God] raise up the tabernacle¹⁸ [tent] of David [Israel] that is fallen, and close up the breaches²⁵ [of the tent—the division of Israel into two houses] thereof; and I will raise up his [David’s] ruins,²⁵ and I will build²⁵ it [the tent—kingdom] as in the days of old [the promise of the Davidic Covenant]: That they [the two houses of Israel, Romans 11:26] may possess the remnant of Edom²⁶ [the descendents of Esau],²⁷ and [the remnant] of all the heathen, which are called by my name²⁸ [those of humankind who turn to God], saith the LORD that doeth this. Behold, the days come [in God’s future kingdom], saith the LORD, that the plowman shall overtake the reaper, and the treader of grapes him that soweth seed [the land will be blessed and become superabundant, Leviticus 26:4,5]; and the mountains shall drop sweet wine, and all the hills shall melt [deluding secular and religious institutions will have been removed]. And I will bring again the captivity of my people of Israel ... And [as promised David] I will plant them

upon their land, and they shall no more be pulled up out of their land which I have given them.”—Amos 9:11-15.

With David’s seed on the throne, David’s kingdom (tent) though fallen and breached—divided and scattered—will be gathered and reestablished.

The prophet addressed all aspects of the Davidic Covenant. “In that day” God will raise up David’s seed, the Messiah (Jesus—Mark 10:47; 12:35), and, “as in the days of old,” will give him the throne, the kingdom (tent), and God’s earthly chosen people. These entities are interdependent and inseparable. The reestablishment of one requires the existence of the others. When David’s seed (Messiah) sits on David’s throne the “spirit of grace and of supplications” will inhabit David’s house (tent), David’s kingdom (Israel). Divine favor will return to the Israel of God!

Isaiah spoke not only of the restoration of David’s kingdom (tent) but its enlargement: “Sing, O barren [*Sarah, Abrahamic Covenant, Galatians 4:27*], thou that didst not bear [*by the time of the prophecy*]; break forth into singing, and cry aloud [*with joy, not resentment as did Sarah, Genesis 16:6-10*], thou that didst not travail with child: for more are the children (Genesis 16:10; 17:20; 21:18) of the desolate (Isaiah 62:4; 64:10; Ezekiel 36:35; Lamentations 1:4; Joel 2:3) [*Hagar, Mosaic Covenant, Galatians 4:27*] than the children of the married wife [*Sarah*], saith the LORD. Enlarge the place of thy tent,¹⁹ and let them stretch forth the curtains of thine habitations: spare not, lengthen thy cords, and strengthen thy stakes [*addressed to Israel (verses 5-8), as pictured by Hagar*]; for thou [*Israel, Hagar*] shalt break forth on the right hand and on the left; and thy seed shall inherit the Gentiles [*rest of humanity*],²⁹ and make the desolate cities to be inhabited. ... thou [*Israel, Hagar*] shalt forget the shame of thy youth [*Diaspora*], and shalt not remember the reproach of thy widowhood [*the brief loss of divine favor*]³⁰ any more” (Isaiah 54:1-4).

The Torah of Humanity

After hearing the wondrous words of the covenant, David’s response to God reveals he understood their import and was awestruck: “Who am I, O Lord GOD? and what is my house [*kingdom*], that thou hast brought me hitherto? And this was yet a small thing in thy sight, O Lord GOD; but thou hast spoken also of thy servant’s house [*kingdom*] for a great while to come. And ~~is this~~ [this is] the manner³¹ [Torah] of man³² [Humanity]” (2 Samuel 7:18,19).

David’s sublime observation, “This is the Torah of Humanity,” is obscured in most English translations. Taken in the simplest and most literal sense, it signifies the Davidic Covenant to be a restatement of God’s purpose for creating the human race (Genesis 1:26) and his subsequent covenant with Abraham. With David’s seed on David’s throne, God swore that through David’s house (kingdom) the human creation will be transformed into the “likeness” of God—a creation of loving beings. This transformation, as Paul made manifest, begins with the Israel of God—“the Jew first, and also to the Gentile” (Romans 2:9,10). This is the “Torah of Humanity” (2 Samuel 7:19).

END NOTES

1. Hebrew prefix *waw*—and, but, even, namely.
2. *'olam*, #5769—period of time, age.
3. The Hebrew word is plural.
4. The Hebrew text has the definite article.
5. *shachaq*, #7834—cloud. Hebrew has the article.
6. See ASV, NASB, RSV, NRSV.
7. The work of a judge is to deliver (Judges 2:16,18; Isaiah 33:22; John 5:27-29).
8. *tsedaqah*, #6666—righteousness. Isaiah 26:9.
9. *'erets*, #776—earth, land, ground.
10. Some assert Anglo-Saxons are the descendants of the ten “lost” tribes and, thus, are heirs to Israel’s promises. The Davidic Covenant, as interpreted by Amos (9:11,12) and James (Acts 15:16,17) and the doctrine of a faithful Remnant (Isaiah 1:9; Romans 9:29) preclude such a claim.
11. Isaiah 40:4; 41:15. The imagery employed by the inspired writers included use of “mountains” (Psalm 46:2-6; Isaiah 2:2,3; Daniel 2:35,44) and “hills” for kingdoms. As the Old Testament records, “hills” were set aside for idolatry, the venues for the worship of false gods (2 Kings 16:4; Jeremiah 13:27; 17:2).
12. *diaphthora*, #1312—complete corruption. An intensified form of *phthora*, #5356. In the Bible “corruption” refers to the immorality of the spirit (Romans 8:21; Galatians 6:8; 2 Peter 1:4; 2:12,19), not to the decay of the body.
13. *kai ... kai*, #2532—and, also.
14. Zechariah 12:10. See above.
15. *ruwach* or *ruach*, #7307—breath, air, wind, spirit.
16. See JPS, RSV, NIV.
17. *shataph*, #7857—overflow, flood.
18. *cukkah*, #5521—booth, tent, tabernacle.
19. *'ohel*, #168—tabernacle, tent. Best to use “tent” to prevent confusion with the Mosaic Tabernacle.

20. Leviticus 26:44,45; Numbers 10:36; Deuteronomy 30:3,9; Psalm 6:4; 50:3; 80:3,7,14,19; 90:13; Isaiah 35:4; Jeremiah 12:12-15.

21. *skene*, #4633—booth, tent, tabernacle. Best to use “tent” to prevent confusion with the Mosaic Tabernacle.

22. To “build again the tent of David” implies restoration of David’s kingdom, Israel (Acts 1:6; 3:21).

23. In Amos’ prophecy this clause refers to David’s seed, not to his “tent.” The LXX did not maintain the gender variance evident in the Hebrew (see footnote 26 below). Apparently, since James had already spoken of the Church (verse 14) the difference was not critical to his argument, so he followed the LXX without comment.

24. *kai*, #2532—and, namely, even, also.

25. The parsing in this text requires careful attention. The feminine plural suffix on the word rendered “breaches” could only refer to “tent,” which is feminine, and alludes to the division of David’s kingdom. Hence, the closing of the “breaches” must connote the future unification of the two houses, the unification Ezekiel foretold (Ezekiel 37:15-28). The masculine suffix on the word rendered “ruins” must refer to David himself, not his “tent”; however, the feminine singular suffix on the word rendered “build” must address the tent (the breached kingdom).

26. Edom was the name given Esau after he sold his birthright (Genesis 25:30). The name was subsequently applied to the people descended from him and to their home country.

27. The possession of “the remnant of Edom” will be the fulfillment of God’s promise to Rebekah (Genesis 25:23; Romans 9:12) and of Isaac’s blessings of Jacob (Genesis 27:29) and Esau (Genesis 27:40). Some suggest Edom’s subjection by David (2 Samuel 8:14) was the fulfillment; however, that servitude was short-lived and not sufficient.

28. The phrase “which are called by my name” implies a creature’s willing acceptance of God’s sovereignty—the goal of the future kingdom, God “all in all” (1 Corinthians 15:28).

29. Ezekiel 36:35-38; Amos 9:12; Acts 15:17. See above.

30. Isaiah 54:7-10. See above.

31. *towrah* or *torah*, #8451—law, instruction, teaching, direction.

32. *'adam*, #120—humankind, individual man, name of first man

Covenant Signs

The children of Israel shall keep the sabbath ... throughout their generations, for a perpetual covenant. It is a sign between me and the children of Israel.

—Exodus 31:16,17

The sabbath day observance was a mark of God's covenant relationship with Israel. The observance was not given as a commandment to Abraham, Isaac, or Jacob. It was given later, to the Israelites, following their Exodus from Egypt. It was referred to in Exodus 16:23 when God gave them manna from heaven. They were to gather it daily for six days, but rest on the sabbath. Later the sabbath day was incorporated into the body of the Law as shown in the text heading this article. Thereafter it was a sign of God's covenant relationship with Israel.

The Israelites also practiced circumcision, but this obligation began with father Abraham. It was also a sign of God's covenant, but in this case it was the Abrahamic Covenant rather than the Law Covenant. Since the Israelites were descendants of Abraham, and thus inheritors of the covenant arrangements, they observed this sign as well: "This is my covenant, which ye shall keep, between me and you and thy seed after thee; every man child among you shall be circumcised ... it shall be a token of the covenant betwixt me and you" (Genesis 17:10,11).

The Law Covenant was added 430 years after the Abrahamic Covenant. Paul mentions this in Galatians 3:17 to distinguish between the two covenants. Later, in Galatians chapter four, Paul explains that Sarah represented the original covenant, and Hagar, who was added to the family, represented the Law which was added to the original covenant.

Paul makes the point that Christ and his church are developed from that original covenant, to show that we are not obliged to keep the ceremonial commands of the Law. Thus Sarah represents the spiritual part of the Abrahamic Covenant. We can extend the lesson a little further by observing that after the passing of Sarah, Abraham took another wife, Keturah, who would reasonably picture the earthly part of the Abrahamic Covenant. This will operate toward mankind in the kingdom.

Other Covenant Signs

Noting that a special sign accompanied these two famous covenants suggests the possibility that other Old Testament covenants might have signs associated with them as well. Certainly this was true of God's covenant to Noah that he would never permit such a deluge again as had recently occurred. God gave Noah a token of this pledge in the rainbow: "This is the token of the covenant which I make between me and you and every living creature that is with you, for perpetual generations: I do set my bow in the cloud, and it shall be for a token of a covenant between me and the earth" (Genesis 9:12,13).

Evidently this was a new sign, indicating the phenomenon was not observable in pre-flood circumstances. Perhaps this was because of a canopy of vapors before the flood,

which descended in the flood, making atmospheric conditions different enough to permit the lovely formation of the rainbow to which we are now accustomed.

God's covenant with Adam, to give him everlasting life, was broken by Adam's disobedience. But while the covenant endured, perhaps the sign of that covenant was the lovely paradise home of Eden, which was a tangible emblem of God's promise.

God also made a covenant with David that the kingly line of Judah would always be occupied by one of his descendants (Psalms 89:1-4; 2 Samuel 7:11-16). Thus we have the expression, "The Sure Mercies of David" (Isaiah 55:3; Acts 13:34). The tangible emblem of this promise was the continuing Throne of David, preserved against usurpation and conspiracy through eighteen successors before the kingdom was suspended. Its regal authority was then reserved for Christ, who also descended from David.

The Jewish Influence on Early Church Meetings

So continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart, praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved.—Acts 2:46,47, NKJV

And every day, in the temple and from house to house, they did not cease teaching and preaching Jesus as the Christ.—Acts 5:42, NKJV

Leonard Griehs

For the first three hundred years of its existence, Gentile Christians did not hold meetings in specially designed buildings. In his letter concerning Philemon, Paul addresses Archippus and the church in his house (verse 2). In Colossians, Paul greets the church that meets in the house of Nymphas (4:15). In Thyatira, a congregation meets in the house of the city's first convert, Lydia. (Acts 16:40). 2 John warns the congregation in Ephesus not to receive false teachers into their house (verse 10).

Early Jewish followers of Jesus followed a slightly different practice: they continued going to the synagogue. Acts 12:12 alludes to a group of brethren gathering in Jerusalem at the home of Mary, John Mark's mother, during Passover. However, this may have been brethren at Jerusalem celebrating the memorial feast together rather than gathering for regular worship.

Religious Meetings Outlawed in Rome

Julius Caesar, first Emperor of Rome, forbade all religious societies in Rome other than Judaism. Jewish communities only could worship freely because they predated the Empire's presence. As *collegia*—a religious and legal entity with the right to assemble, to have common meals and to share property—the synagogues governed their congregation (Romans 13:1), enforced their own discipline (John 18:31) and collected taxes (Matthew 17:24).

While the Jewish synagogue system was autonomous locally, congregations throughout Israel and the Roman provinces came under the uniformity dictated by Jerusalem. Each required reading of Torah, observance of the Sabbath, circumcision of males, and following of dietary *halakhah* (legal rulings). All synagogues answered to the high priest and the Sanhedrin, the ruling body of Jerusalem.

The Sanhedrin, (*Sanhedriyaot*), the Jewish "Supreme Court," consisted of seventy-one great Torah Sages and met in the "Lishkat HaGazit," the "Office of Hewn Stone" adjacent to the Jerusalem Temple. Members were required to have a background of training in tradition as young men. The Sanhedrin debated fundamental principles of Torah and ruled by majority vote. As Supreme Court, the Sanhedrin exercised authority in difficult cases, or in offenses requiring capital punishment.

Josephus reports that the Roman procurator appointed the High Priest at Jerusalem (Antiquities 18, iv, 3), suggesting the quasi-political nature of the position. Roman governors expected the individual to be a liaison between Roman authority and the subject population. Caiaphas, high priest at the time of Jesus (John 18:13), was expected to prevent trouble at the threat of his own existence (John 11:48-50). Any insurrection was expected to be dealt with swiftly, with offenders surrendered to Roman authorities.

While politically motivated, the high priest maintained wide authority over Jewish religious life throughout the Roman Empire. This provided Saul the means to wreak havoc with Jewish followers of Jesus: “And Saul, yet breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord, went unto the high priest, and desired of him letters to Damascus to the synagogues, that if he found any of this way, whether they were men or women, he might bring them bound unto Jerusalem” (Acts 9:1, 2).

The Congregation at Rome, Both Jew and Gentile

Paul does not use the word *ekklesia* for those who met in Rome, nor indicate that he or any other apostle founded the group (Romans 15:20). The first believers in Jesus there were Jews and Gentile proselytes who returned from Jerusalem after hearing Peter’s message at Pentecost: “When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place ... now there were dwelling in Jerusalem Jews, devout men from every nation under heaven ... and visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes” (Acts 2:1,5,10, RSV). Baptized into Christ, the Messianic believers returned to Rome and preached Jesus in the synagogue. This apparently led to the peculiar situation of a synagogue system that contained practicing Jews and proselytes, Messianic Jews, and Gentile believers in Jesus.

Paul wrote a letter to the Gentile believers who lived within this strange mix. Jewish believers in Jesus were faced with the similar situation of continuing to abide in the only permitted worship while trying to grow in their new found faith in Jesus. **{Footnote:** For a thorough discussion of the history and development of the church at Rome, see *The Mystery of Romans: the Jewish Context of Paul’s Letter*, by Mark D. Nanos, Fortress Press, Minneapolis, 1996.}

Priscilla and Aquilla were Jewish Christians who lived in Rome. They had heard of Jesus from Paul while working in Corinth under banishment during the reign of Claudius in 52 A.D. (Acts 18:2). When they returned to Rome as believers they sponsored an *ekklesia* in their home (Romans 16:5; 1 Corinthians 16:19), indicating this may have been exclusively Christian believers, either Jewish or Gentile. Archaeologists have uncovered ruins in Rome of at least twelve such first-century synagogue communities, some within the larger homes of the less wealthy sections of the city.

In the list of more than twenty Christians Paul greets in his letter to Rome (chapter 16) only five to eight names are Jewish. Apparently many Gentiles—either proselytes or recent converts—were among those who gathered in Rome and were eager to hear Paul’s advice regarding their keeping their faith in the midst of both Jewish and Roman authority.

The Mix of Jews and Gentiles

Paul's advice to the peculiar congregation at Rome undoubtedly was founded on the agreement that had been made at the council in Jerusalem. James and the others agreed to settle the issue by eliminating the requirement for circumcision from the list of practices expected of Gentile Christians meeting in the synagogue to hear the word of the Lord: "Therefore it is my judgment that we do not trouble those who are turning to God from among the Gentiles, but that we write to them that they abstain from things contaminated by idols and from fornication and from what is strangled and from blood. For Moses from ancient generations has in every city those who preach him, since he is read **in the synagogues every Sabbath**" (Acts 15:19-21). The authority of the synagogue would still provide direction, but Gentile believers in Christ would have no need to be initiated through circumcision. They would only be expected to respect the Jewish practices of the synagogue.

Luke amplifies on this in recording Paul's later encounter with James on his final visit to Jerusalem (Acts 21:20-26). After praising Paul's success among the Gentiles, the elders of Jerusalem requested that Paul dispel the rumors that he had urged Jews who lived away from Israel to abandon Jewish practices and traditions, including circumcision. This was clearly untrue (Acts 16:1-3), for Paul never demanded that Jewish Christians forsake their heritage. He only resisted attempts to force Gentile converts to comply with Mosaic Law in order to be accepted into the community. James and the other elders feared that Paul's presence in Jerusalem, along with a huge crowd of Jews attending the feast from all over the area, would cause a riot among the Jews.

When the elders suggested to Paul that he could show respect for the Law by supporting individuals in Jerusalem who had taken a Nazarite vow (see Numbers 6:1-21), Paul agreed to join them and pay for their sacrifices initiating the period of purifying. Josephus indicates (Antiquities 19.6.1) that this was a permissible practice as Agrippa I paid for many Nazarite sacrifices.

Paul's agreement indicates that he saw no violation of principle in continuation of Jewish practice, and may help explain his advice to Roman Gentile Christians to submit to the requests of the synagogue leaders: "We then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves. Let every one of us please his neighbour for his good to edification ... For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope" (Romans 15:1,2,4). There is no evidence that the Jerusalem elders were not abiding by the decision of the Jerusalem council pronounced by James since they referred to it: "But concerning the Gentiles who have believed, we wrote, having decided that they should abstain from meat sacrificed to idols and from blood and from what is strangled and from fornication" (Acts 21:25, NAS).

Historically, this was still a period of transition, and we find the Jewish segment of the Christian church following temple worship and feasts (Acts 18:21; 20:16; 24:11). As long

as it was voluntary and not imposed upon Gentile believers in Christ, Paul nowhere opposes such activity.

Early Church Worship

The first five chapters of Acts describe a body of Jewish believers that met daily in the temple (Acts 1:13; 2:46; 5:42) as well as in Solomon's Porch (5:12). It comes as no surprise that Jewish Christians in Jerusalem and Gentile Christians in Rome were comfortable meeting together with non-believers in the synagogue and the temple. God had preserved his word within that institution (Luke 4:17) and it burned a fire in the early Christian heart.

Old Testament Types

Baptism

All our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea; and were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea.—1 Corinthians 10:1,2

Baptism is a New Testament rite which is not mentioned in the Old Testament. But as the apostle Paul shows in the text above, it was represented in the Old Testament types.

Paul's mention of this is a passing reference, building toward a greater point. In this first epistle to the Corinthians, Paul gives advice along many lines. In chapter 10 he warns the brethren in Corinth against involvement in idolatrous practices, such as inadvertent fellowship with paganism through participation in pagan feasts.

He builds his argument by showing that Israel's baptism into Moses represents our baptism into Christ. Israel's blessing in the manna from heaven represents our blessing in the "living bread which came down from heaven," namely Jesus, who gave his flesh "for the life of the world" (John 6:51), and all the accompanying spiritual nourishment day by day through the Word of God.

Paul mentions the water they drank in the wilderness, which came from the "spiritual rock," the rock which pictured something spiritual. The rock represented Christ, who was smitten to produce the water of life for us. There was another episode, late in the wilderness wanderings, which represents the second occasion when Christ will issue forth the waters of life to the world in the kingdom. On that occasion God told Moses simply to speak to the rock, as a type that Christ need not be smitten again to produce this second blessing (Exodus 17:6; Numbers 20:8).

Then Paul reminds the brethren that after coming into God's favor and blessing in these ways, "with many of them God was not well pleased" and "they were overthrown in the wilderness" (1 Corinthians 10:5). "These things were our examples, to the intent we should not lust after evil things, as they also lusted" (verse 6). Then he gets directly to his point: "Neither be ye idolaters, as were some of them ... these things happened unto them for ensamples ... written for our admonition ... Wherefore, my dearly beloved, flee from idolatry" (verses 7, 11,14).

Paul follows this with a lesson from the observance of the emblems of our Lord's death. We jointly receive the cup, and jointly receive the bread, and thus are in fellowship together with our brethren and with our Lord, whose sacrifice we imbibe. Similarly, the priests of the Old Testament who ate of the offerings were in fellowship with God's arrangements and service (verses 15-18).

So if we participate in pagan festivals, for the sake of the meat, we would sit in fellowship with pagans and devils: "The things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to devils, and not to God: and I would not that ye should have fellowship with

devils. Ye cannot drink the cup of the Lord, and the cup of devils: ye cannot be partakers of the Lord's table, and of the table of devils" (verses 20, 21).

Peter's Reference to Baptism

The apostle Peter wrote about another picture of baptism. At the time of the flood there was water everywhere, as far as the eye could see, also beneath the ark, and of course in the clouds above. The ark represents Christ, and the eight souls saved in the ark represent those saved in Christ.

"The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh [as with the cleansings of the Law, compare Hebrews 9:13], but the answer of a good conscience toward God [baptism in Christ cleanses the "conscience," the real person, compare Hebrews 9:14]), by the resurrection of Jesus Christ" (1 Peter 3:21).

The picture of salvation is augmented by the dimensions of the ark given in Genesis 6:15. It was 300 cubits long and 30 cubits high, and three is the basic number of the atonement. It was 50 cubits wide, perhaps relating to the call of the saints during the first age of redemption, as five is the basic number of the new creation. Its perimeter was 700 cubits around, perhaps suggesting the 7,000 years for the entire plan of redemption.

Five Dates

There are five dates marked in the flood experience (Genesis 7:11; 8:4,5,13,14). These seem to represent progressive milestones in the plan of redemption. The dates are:

Year 600, Month 2, Day 17—Flood begins

Year 600, Month 7, Day 17—Ark rests

Year 600, Month 10, Day 1—Mountain tops appear

Year 601, Month 1, Day 1—Earth is dry

Year 601, Month 2, Day 27—Exit the ark

If the ark represents Christ, and coming into the ark represents coming into Christ, then the first date evidently represents Pentecost. Then Christ's sacrifice was applied to the church, commencing the first age of redemption, the Gospel age. This was in the year 33 A.D.

For the remaining date points we suggest the following: The ark coming to rest represents a significant ending point toward the close of the Gospel age, namely the second advent of Christ beginning in 1874. When Noah looked outside he still saw water everywhere, but knew the new beginning was at hand because the ark had come to rest. So in 1874 a

glance about the world showed no special mark of the end of the age. But Bible students recognized they had arrived at the end of the 1,335 days of Daniel. The interval of five months for this Gospel age picture is a fitting span of time. The same number, five, was used in Matthew 25:6, where five wise virgins awakened to the cry, "Behold, the Bridegroom!"

The "top of the mountains" appeared at the opening of month 10. This is an expression also used in Isaiah 2:2 and Micah 4:1, referring to Israel as the location of the kingdom of God. Perhaps the mention in Genesis refers to the reestablishment of Israel as a "mountain" or nation among the nations of the world. This is a visible sign of the proximity of the kingdom.

At the very opening of the new year dry ground appeared and the covering of the ark was removed. This represents the opening of a new age by the establishment of Christ's kingdom. Then the ark, atonement in Christ, will be revealed to all flesh. Then the world will appreciate the great blessings God intends for them (compare Isaiah 25:7-9).

But the ark was not yet vacated. This did not occur until month 2, day 27. This additional period evidently represents the kingdom of Christ. Mankind will remain in the ark, in Christ, until the end of the Millennium. Then, having achieved perfection, they can stand before God individually.

Months of 30 Days

The numbers in the account show that Noah counted months of thirty days each. This does not mean Noah was unaware of the true length of the year, 365 days. It was simply a matter of convenient calendar reckoning, which ancient Egypt and other nations employed as well. It was customary then to add five intercalary days at the end of the year, to accord with the cycle of the sun. This means the Gospel age is represented by a span of 150 days (15×10), and the kingdom is represented by a span of 56 days. Fifteen is $7 + 8$, and 56 is 7×8 .

The seven probably represents the heavenly salvation, eight the earthly salvation which follows the seven stages of the church. During this age we benefit from the ministry of the spiritual teachers appointed by God for us, and the "cloud of witnesses," the worthies of Old Testament times, who will lead the earthly kingdom. During the thousand-year kingdom of Christ the world will benefit by both as well.

Daniel and Revelation

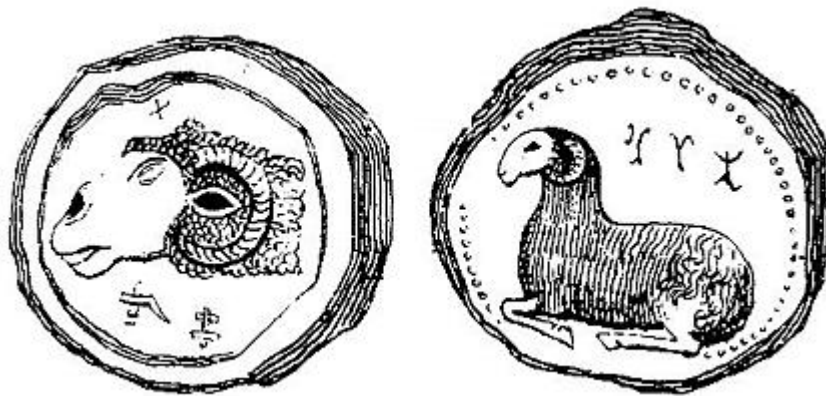
A Foundation for Understanding Prophecy

No prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation.—2 Peter 1:20

James Parkinson

The Book of Daniel presents many symbolic and narrative visions of prophecy, which set the stage for several of the visions in Revelation.¹: Notable among Daniel's visions are the smiting of Nebuchadnezzar's image (chapter 2), the four beasts (chapter 7), and the ram and the he-goat (chapter 8). The interpretations given are further corroborated by many artifacts of antiquity and archaeology.

In Daniel 8 a two-horned ram from the east is identified with the kingdom of the Medes and Persians, while the he-goat and its great horn signify the kingdom of Greece (Hebrew Javan, or Ionia) and its first great king (Alexander). Persian and Macedonian coins of the time show how each empire used a particular animal to represent itself (even as nations do today).²

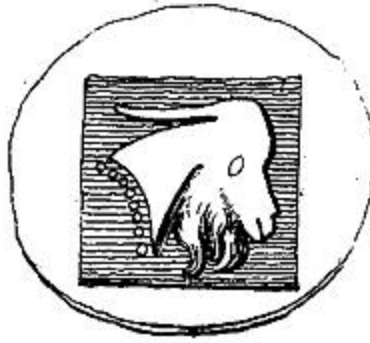


The Persian Ram

(A ram which had two horns . . . they are the kings of Media and Persia. -- Daniel 8:3,4,20)

Goat Conquers Ram

(There was no power in the ram to stand before [the goat.] -- Daniel 8:5,6)



The Macedonian Goat

(The goat had a notable horn between his eyes. The rough he-goat is the king of Javan. -- Daniel 8:5,21

Alexander's total victory over the Persian Empire is illustrated in yet another coin displaying the great horn extending over the defeated ram.



Goat Conquers Ram

(There was no power in the ram to stand before [the goat.] -- Daniel 8:5,6

The Macedonian Goat

(The goat had a notable horn between his eyes. The rough he-goat is the king of Javan. -- Daniel 8:5,21

The Persian Ram

(A ram which had two horns . . . they are the kings of Media and Persia. -- Daniel 8:3,4,20)

After the death of Alexander and his family, his generals each took a part of the empire: Cassander (Macedonia), Ptolemy I (Egypt), Seleucus I (Syria and Babylon), and Lysimachus (Thrace). By interpretation, Thrace founded Rome and there became dominant: there “came up four notable horns toward the four winds of heaven. And out of one of them came forth a little horn, which waxed exceeding great” (Daniel 8:8,9).

Daniel 7 describes four successive beasts which collectively have (1+1+4+1=) 7 heads, beginning with the office of the king of Babylon. They also had (0+0+0+10=) 10 horns, like the ten toes of Nebuchadnezzar’s image (Daniel 2:41,42), which evidently represent the ten Germanic (Hebrew Ashkenaz) tribes which took over the former Roman Empire.

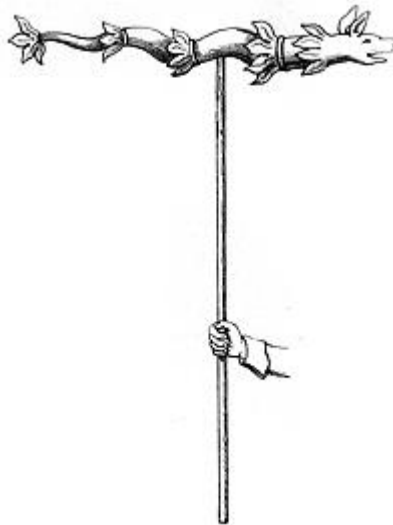
In sequence, the successive heads, or imperial capitals, were:

- | | | | | | | |
|----|---------|-----------------------|--------|----|--|------------------|
| 1. | | | | | | Babylon |
| 2. | | | | | | Medo-Persia |
| 3. | | Greece: | | | | Pella/Macedonia |
| 4. | | Greece: | | | | Alexandria/Egypt |
| 5. | | Greece: | | | | Antioch/Syria |
| 6. | Rome | (Imperial) | ["now" | in | | John’s day] |
| 7. | Greece: | Constantinople/Thrace | | | | |

In Revelation 12 we see these seven heads on the dragon, and with diadems on the heads. The dragon became the Roman imperial ensign near 300 A.D. It had the head of a wolf (the symbol of Thrace) on the body of a serpent.

Roman Imperial Ensign of the Dragon

(A great red dragon. -- Revelation 12:3



Roman Imperial Ensign of the Dragon
(A great red dragon. -- Revelation 12:3

About that time the Roman emperors began wearing the diadem, instead of solely the laurel wreath of victory.

Emperor Nerva
[with imperial crown]
96-98 AD

(And upon their heads as it were crowns [laurel wreaths] like unto gold. -- Revelation 9:7)



Emperor Nerva
[with imperial crown]
96-98 AD

(And upon their heads as it were crowns [laurel wreaths] like unto gold. -- Revelation 9:7)

Emperor Valens
[with royal diadem]
364-378 A.D.

[Seven heads and ten horns, and upon his heads
seven diadems.
-- Revelation 12:4)



Emperor Valens
[with royal diadem]
364-378 A.D.

[Seven heads and ten horns, and upon his heads
seven diadems.
-- Revelation 12:4)

The nineteenth-century school of higher criticism had insisted therefore that John's writings could not have been penned before the late third century A.D. Revelation manuscripts of the third century are now at hand (p⁴⁷, p¹¹⁶), as are manuscripts of the gospel of John from the second century (p⁵², p⁹⁰). Thus, a first century A.D. dating for all twenty-seven books of the New Testament is now quite generally agreed upon, even by unbelievers and by theologians with limited faith.

That the great power of the Roman Empire was known centuries in advance may be seen in the map of Italy:

A stone was cut out without hands, which smote the image on the feet that were of iron and clay. and break them in pieces . . . A kingdom which . . . shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand forever. -- Daniel 2:34,44



A stone was cut out without hands, which smote the image on the feet that were of iron and clay. and break them in pieces . . . A kingdom which . . . shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand forever. -- Daniel 2:34,44

A stone [Sicily] strikes the image of Nebuchadnezzar's dream on its feet, knocking the legs out from under the Roman Empire [Italy]. The stone pictures Messiah's kingdom, or the thousand-year kingdom of Christ, and ultimately the kingdom of God which will endure forever (Daniel 2:34,44).

In Revelation 13, the beast is traceable back through the leopard, bear, and lion of Daniel's beasts, and it therefore represents the indescribable beast of the Roman Empire. This beast is also identified with the seven heads and ten horns, but now the diadems are transferred to the horns. The ten horns are easily identified with the ten Germanic tribes which took over the entire Roman Empire (in later times called the West Roman Empire), each of which gained the East Roman Emperor's permission to display the diadem.³ Herules, Ostrogoths, and Lombards (all three later incorporated into the Kingdom of Italy, per Daniel 7:8); Vandals (Sicily and North Africa), Sueves (Portugal), Visigoths (Spain), Franks (North and West France), Burgundians (Southeast France), Alemans (Germany), and Anglo-Saxons (England).

In these illustrations a * after a name denotes an East Roman emperor; ‡# is associated with a tribal king. All have diadems.



Theodosius* 534-536 A.D. [Ostrogoths]



Queen Antharis# 584-591 A,D, [Lombards]



Odovacer* 476-493 A.D. [Heruli]



Hermenegild# 589-594 A.D. [Visigoths]



Richarius* 448-456 A.D [Suevi]



Thrasamund# 496-523 A.D. [Vandals]



Clovis# 481-511 A.D. [Franks]



Gonthram# 561-592 A.D. [Burgundians]



Theoderbert I# 534-548 A.D. [Alemans]



Offa# 755-794 A.D. [Anglo-Saxons]

“The great dragon was cast down, the old serpent, he that is called the Devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world; he was cast down to the earth” (Revelation 12:9, ASV). Constantine and his son display their interpretation of the fall of heathen Rome, showing the cross erected over the fallen dragon:

Constantine
313-337 A.D.

Constantine
313-337 A.D.



Constantine
313-337 A.D.

Constantius
353-361 A.D.

The seven heads and ten horns appear one last time, in Revelation 17. Seven mountains are mentioned in verse 9, “The seven heads are seven mountains, on which the woman sitteth.” Identification of the seven mountains is also given on Roman coinage:



Vespasian 69-79 A.D.

[Imperial Rome sitting on her seven mountains. holding her military sword of empire.]

Constantius
353-361 A.D.

A papal Roman medal shows Rome holding out her cup as a teacher of nations, calling to mind Scriptures such as “Babylon hath been a golden cup in Jehovah’s hand, that made all the earth drunken” (Jeremiah 51:7, ASV), and “the woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet, and gilded with gold and precious stone and pearls, having in her hand a golden cup full of abominations” (Revelation 17:4).



A Papal medal struck at Rome on the occasion of a jubilee.
[Papal Rome, mother and mistress, holding out her cup.]

Roman power came to a temporary end for about sixty-three years, 476-539 A.D., during which time it “is not” (Revelation 17:8,11). Papal civil power rose after the Arian Ostrogoths lifted the siege of Rome and the East Roman general, Belisarius, left Rome to pursue them (at the summer solstice of 538). By the time Belisarius was recalled to Constantinople (at the spring equinox of 540), the pope in Rome had become the civil ruler of the land. By the end of the century, Pope Gregory was levying taxes, raising armies, and negotiating with foreign powers. He had become the dominant political figure of the time. Papal involvement in the kingdoms of this world has been a fact of life ever since. Thus, Rome, as Papal Rome, became an eighth head, although it was really a revival of the sixth head.

Conclusions and Deductions

The symbols of Daniel and Revelation are consistent. Daniel’s interpretations apply also to Revelation.

The seven heads are seven successive world-class empires which sequentially bear rule over most of the Lord’s people as well as the world. The sixth head was Rome, which

was reigning at the time John wrote Revelation 17:10, “Five are fallen, the one is, the other is not yet come; and when he cometh, he must continue a little while.” The seventh head was Constantinople (politically Rome, but geographically Thrace), during which the ten horns—ten Germanic tribes—took over the West Roman Empire (everything west of the former Grecian Empire). A resurgent Rome—as Papal Rome—began ca. 539 as a little horn and became an eighth head.

In the Reformation and the French Revolution some of the horns began turning against the Vatican (chapter 17:16). The Anglican church-state was created in the image of the Roman church-state (but with the head of state becoming head of the church, chapter 13:11-17). At the end of the 1,260 years of about 539-1799, masses of people turned against all kinds of Christianity, but absolute monarchies gave way to limited monarchies, thus taking the masses into the governmental process (chapter 12:15,16).

Hence it would appear the prophecies of chapters 12, 13, and 17 were seen by those who lived during the papal reign and the Protestant era; so it is chapters 14 and 18 that remain to be fulfilled toward the end of the Gospel age.

What Might We Expect in Coming Years?

Events of the last day are seen in Revelation chapters 14 and 18, but there is no mention of Christ’s second advent in chapters 12, 13, or 17. The ten horns were first identifiable during the time of the seventh, or Constantinople, head. But Daniel 7:8 shows that the number of horns does not remain constant: it goes from ten to eleven to eight during the rise of the little horn that makes great claims. That time was long before the Reformation. Thus, one might expect no further world government based on ten Christian nations in Europe.

Further, some will note that Nebuchadnezzar’s image, once smitten, does not come back together again. Moreover, the lawless one is slain “by the brightness of his presence,” as a snowman melts in the sunlight (2 Thessalonians 2:8). Therefore one might not look for another world-dominant government before Gog of Magog opposes Israel and the West in Armageddon (Ezekiel 38).

Reliable expectations for the next several decades are more likely to be found by considering that the last day is divided into seven parts (Joshua 6:15,16), and thence by studying the seven last plagues of Exodus and Revelation.⁴: And as Israel continues to return to their land, in accord with Ezekiel 37, one may watch how rapidly the eastern and western blocks of Ezekiel 38 are each coalescing.

However strong or weak our prophetic eyesight may be, we can be assured Israel “shall be saved out of it” (Jeremiah 30:7). The promise God swore by an oath will assuredly come to pass, that in Messiah “shall all the families of the earth be blessed” (Genesis 28:14).

1. Revelation draws from nearly every book of the Bible (except perhaps Ezra, Habakkuk, Haggai, Philemon, and 3 John) to elucidate the Bible for the practicing Christian. Using I. N. John, "The Reference Passage Bible;" Lincoln, Nebraska: Alpha, 1913 (plus a cross-reference of Obadiah 21 from Revelation 14:1, and uncounted more of seven messengers with seven trumpets in Joshua 6), there are more than 1,400 cross-references from Revelation. While two-thirds of the 885 New Testament cross-references are to other parts of Revelation, the other most-frequently-referenced are Matthew (43), John (32), and Romans (25). However, in proportion to length of text, 2 Thessalonians, Jude, and then Philippians, are referenced most. Of the 532 or more Old Testament references, Isaiah (109), Psalms (71), and Daniel (68) receive the most. But in proportion to text length, Daniel, Zechariah, and then Joel, have the most. (It is of interest that Daniel, Zechariah, and Revelation are the three books which interpret many of their own symbols.

2. These drawings, and most of the other artifacts below, are from Edward Elliott, *Horae Apocalypticae*, 4 volumes; London: Seeley (5 editions, 1844-1862). Many more of these types of diademed coin may be seen in *Wealth of the Roman World, Gold and Silver A.D. 300-700*, ed. J.P.C. Kent and K.S. Painter; London: British Museum Publ., 1977.

3. A crown worn as a sign of royalty is called a diadem. A diadem signified that the coinage was to be recognized for trade throughout the former Roman Empire, much as the euro is issued by twelve different European countries and is accepted as legal tender in all euro-zone countries. The term East Roman Empire applies to the former Grecian Empire, symbolized by the third beast of Daniel 7.

4. The last three plagues of Exodus are: an east wind brings locusts devouring the remainder of Egypt's crops, followed by a west wind which drives all the locusts out again; three days of intense darkness which stills activity; and the deliverance of Israel's firstborn (heirs), accompanied by the sudden death of Egypt's firstborn. An East-West struggle has continued since World War II. Perhaps the next major world event will be a depression. The last event before Christ's kingdom will be the battle of Armageddon.

On the Other Hand

Heads and Horns

The seven heads are seven hills on which the woman sits. They are also seven kings. Five have fallen, one is, the other has not yet come; but when he does come, he must remain for a little while.—Revelation 17:9,10, NIV

David Rice

Appearing in the November/December 2004 issue of *The Herald of Christ's Kingdom* was an article titled "Seven Heads, Ten Horns." It presented a detailed treatment of Revelation chapter 17. There are differences among the present editors about the interpretation of that chapter. For this reason it was agreed, in the spirit of open and reasonable dialogue, to run two further articles, one each on the two views of this chapter.

The preceding article, "A Foundation for Understanding Prophecy," is the first of these. It presents the view that the seven heads of Revelation 17 are the same as the seven heads in Daniel chapter 7, and the "eighth" represents Papal Rome. This article supports the original one and holds that the seven heads of Revelation 17 represent seven kingdoms during the Gospel age.

A Point of Agreement

The preceding article contains an appealing application of the seven heads and ten horns of Daniel chapter seven. The critical student who is deeply interested in that chapter should not too quickly pass by the many engaging details found there. Take time to notice the specific ten Germanic tribes applied to the ten horns of Daniel 7:8. Enumerating ten specific horns has engaged Christian expositors for centuries, including Isaac Newton and a long retinue of distinguished writers.

The list of many of the tribes is shared by various writers, as would be expected. But the specific combination in the previous article—Herules, Ostrogoths, Lombards, Vandals, Sueves, Visigoths, Franks, Burgundians, Allemans and Anglo-Saxons—is unique. The coins of each of these powers specifically identify the ruler with the diadem: "Each of [them] gained the East Roman Emperor's permission to display the diadem." This is highly interesting and is a sensible gauge for judging which powers constitute the ten segments of the Roman power after it moved from Rome to the East.

The seven heads of Daniel chapter seven are clearly Babylon, Medo-Persia, the four divisions of the Grecian Empire, and Rome. On this there is general consensus among most brethren. Babylon was a unified kingdom (one head), Medo-Persian was a unified kingdom (one head), but the Grecian empire ruled in four independent parts following the death of Alexander. Thus the Grecian empire is shown with four heads. About two centuries later, when Rome's empire grew eastward, it subsumed one after another of these fragments and replaced them all as the seventh head of Daniel.

Revelation 13

In Revelation 13, when the Papal beast emerges from the sea, it is described in ways directly drawn from Daniel chapter seven. Probably this is to show that Papacy was the heir to the accumulated empires that preceded it. It had ten horns like Rome, a leopard body like Greece, feet of a bear like Medo-Persia, and a mouth as a lion like Babylon. The sequence of these symbols in Revelation 13 is the reverse of their sequence in Daniel. Perhaps this is to show Papacy grew out of the accumulated powers from Rome back to Babylon.

Verse 3 says one of its heads was “wounded to death” but his deadly wound was healed, to the amazement of the on-looking world. Probably this means the Roman head. Rome was wounded when it was overcome by others after Constantine moved the seat of empire to the east. But Rome revived as a world authority with Papacy.

The remainder of chapter 13 shows Papacy ruled for “42 months.” This was the 1,260 years from 539 to 1799. During this period another similar system rose, the Church of England, whose power spread everywhere the British Empire spread. This is the two-horned beast rising from the Christian earth in verse 11. Through these systems, one Roman Catholic, the other nominally Protestant, there was a great effort to associate all “Christian” people into one or another of the sects which share the spirit of the great mother church, Papacy. This is referred to through the remainder of chapter 13.

Chapter 14 begins with a vision of those who remain faithful to the Lord, receiving the name of God and Jesus in their foreheads (see Revelation 14:1, NASB). The judgment of the false systems is then described. These judgments are detailed in chapters 15 and 16 with the seven last plagues which traverse the harvest.

Chapter 17

Then chapter 17 presents another view of the judgment ending this age: “One of the seven angels which had the seven vials [said] ... I will shew unto thee the judgment of the great whore [Papacy] that sitteth upon many waters” (verse 1).

The prophecy opens with John transported into the wilderness. Elijah was also in the wilderness during the 3½ year drought. Both mentions of the wilderness are a picture of the church in a “wilderness” condition during Papacy’s reign of 1,260 years.

In this chapter Papacy appears as a woman riding on a scarlet beast with the same number of heads and horns as in chapter 13. But this beast, though closely related, is not the same beast which appeared in chapter 13. It is no longer described as a leopard, or bear, or lion, and its color is unlike any description in chapter 13.

The ten horns represent the countries of Europe dominated by Papacy during the Christian age. The originally pagan tribes were “converted” and became nominally Christian. The heads, which in chapter 12 represent pagan governments, now represent

nominally “Christian” governments in league with Papacy during the age. As there were seven pagan governments in the pre-Christian era, so there are a corresponding seven governments in the Christian age.

An Example of Something Similar

In Revelation 12 there is a vision of twelve stars, the sun, and moon. These picture the twelve apostolic “stars” of Spiritual Israel, the brightness of the gospel, and the typical teaching of the law. It is not a coincidence that the same entities appeared in Joseph’s dream long ago. But there the picture was about natural Israel. Those twelve stars represented the twelve tribal fathers, the sun Jacob, and the moon Leah.

The numbers are the same because natural Israel was a type of spiritual Israel. In a similar way the heads and horns in Revelation 12 match those in Revelation 17, but the first are pagan entities, the latter (nominally) Christian. The former are the powers Satan worked through in pagan times; the latter the corresponding powers Satan works through in Christian times.

“Five are Fallen”

Revelation 17:10 gives a time frame for the position of John in the vision. John represented the church at the end of the age, at the time of the Lord’s return (as intimated in John 21:18-23). Thus verse 10 is telling us that five dominating governments leagued with Papacy have fallen as of the Lord’s return, one exists, another would follow later and rule a “short space” relative to the others. The “short space” fits the Nazi regime which swept Europe in World War II.

The other possible view, of course, is that the “present” of this vision was literally John’s day, the close of the first century A.D. In this view the seventh head to come would be the Byzantine Empire. But this empire ruled for centuries, long outlasting the length of most of the pagan heads. It did not rule a “short space.”

The Eighth

There are only seven heads on the beast. The next power following these is the beast itself, which rises from the bottomless pit of inactivity and overwhelms the whore riding on it. Evidently this refers to the people rising up to overwhelm Papacy after her long reign. Such an uprising is once earlier mentioned, during the sixth trumpet, at the close of the 1,260 years. This applied to the French rising in revolt. This briefly ended Papal authority until it was recognized again just over three years later through concordats with Napoleon. (See Revelation 11:7-11. This revolt against Christianity did not distinguish the true from the false.)

In Revelation 17 the rising of the people from the “bottomless pit” of inactivity leads to the thorough destruction of Papacy, not just a temporary demise: “These shall hate the whore, and shall make her desolate ... and shall eat her flesh [reminiscent of Jezebel],

and burn her with fire” (Revelation 17:16). This final end is also mentioned in the next chapter: “She shall be utterly burned with fire” (Revelation 18:8).

The Tenses

In Revelation 17 this final judgment is expressed in the future tense: “And the ten horns which you saw, and the beast, these **will** [future tense] hate the harlot and **will** [future] make her desolate and naked, and **will** [future] eat her flesh and **will** [future] burn her up with fire” (Revelation 17:16, NASB).

Chapter 18, however, opens with the present tense: “I saw another angel come down ... the earth was lightened ... he cried ... Babylon the great is fallen ... Come out of her, my people ...” (verses 1-4). This contrast of tenses is appropriate if John represents the saints at the opening of the harvest. It was then time to leave Babylon. But the destruction of the apostate woman would still be future.

In this case—if the “present” of the vision is the beginning of the harvest—this is the time when five heads had fallen, one was, and the seventh was to follow later. This would be consistent with the heads being Gospel age governments rather than pre-Christian governments.

One Hour

Revelation 17:12 speaks of “one hour” in which the ten horns of this vision receive power as kings with the beast. When is this hour? Revelation 18:10 uses the same term when it says of Babylon, “in one hour is thy judgment come.” This is evidently a brief time in which Papacy meets her end.

Revelation 17:13 says that during this one hour the ten horns united with the beast give their strength and power to the beast. For what purpose? This is clarified in verses 16 and 17. They would “eat her flesh, and burn her with fire. For God hath put in their hearts [of the ten horns] to fulfill his will, and to agree, and give their kingdom unto the beast, until the words of God [the destruction of Papacy] shall be fulfilled.” The one hour is the time when people and leaders join with common consent against Papacy, for her demise.

As during the French Revolution the people did not distinguish the true from the false, so here the people and leaders will not distinguish, and will oppose both false Christianity, Papacy, and true. Thus, during this hour, they also make “war with the Lamb,” and those with him are the “called, and chosen, and faithful” (verse 14).

By this time the saints will be in glory. The same concept is expressed in Revelation 19. Following the marriage (Revelation 19:7), verse 14 shows the glorified saints as “armies which [are] in heaven” following Jesus on his white horse, smiting the nations and “tread[ing] the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God” (verse 15).

News and Views

Pastoral Bible Institute News

Financial Statement
of the Pastoral Bible Institute, Inc.

Statement of Net Worth [unaudited]

Cash and Investments: \$168,602
Fixed Assets: None
Liabilities: None
NET WORTH, APRIL 30, 2005 \$168,602

Analysis of Net Worth

INCOME

| | | |
|----------------------|------------------|--------|
| Bequests | \$ | 25,362 |
| Contributions | 11,042 | |
| Sale of Material | 5,820 | |
| Herald Subscriptions | 4,865 | |
| Interest | 1,979 | |
| Memberships | 27 | |
| Miscellaneous Income | 791 | |
| Total Income | \$ 49,886 | |

EXPENSES

| | | |
|---------------------------------|------------------|-------|
| Purchase of Material for Resale | \$ | 6,373 |
| Printing and Reproduction | 12,349 | |
| Postage and Delivery | 11,325 | |
| Administrative and General | 892 | |
| India Witness Work | 1,500 | |
| Total Operating Expense | \$ 32,439 | |

Net Gain from operating activities \$ 17,447

Net Worth, May 1, 2004 \$152,216
Adjustment to Retained Earnings (1,061)
Net Worth, April 30, 2005 **\$168,602**

Respectfully submitted by Len Griehs, Treasurer

PBI Annual Report for 2004-2005

*That I may publish with the voice of thanksgiving,
and tell of all thy wondrous works.—Psalm 26:7*

Once again it has been a great pleasure for the directors of the PBI and the editors of *The Herald* magazine to publish the grand message of the kingdom of Christ and the good news it will bring to all who have ever lived.

Circulation has remained steady and we have received several encouraging letters testifying to the blessings received from the bi-monthly visits of this journal. We appreciate this correspondence and rejoice in the privileges of the writing and preparation of the magazine.

The Herald continues to be published in the Polish language. Seven issues have been produced and distributed in the last thirteen months and each one bears a cover similar to its English counterpart. The brethren in Poland decide which issues they wish to reproduce, and they translate all articles into their language. While partially subsidized by the PBI, the bulk of the cost is born by the Polish brethren.

Prospects for the coming year include some major improvements to our web page to make it more interactive and user friendly. All of the issues of *The Herald* from the first issue in 1918 are accessible and searchable with the Google search engine. Click on the box for “search www.heraldmag.org” to limit an inquiry to *The Herald* page. Most of the material in the Bible Student Library CD ROM is also available on this site.

The directors of the PBI have approved a special bonus edition of *The Herald* containing an assortment of hymns written by Bible Students. Any who know of such hymns are invited to send us a letter or e-mail suggesting them to us. At present we are trying to select thirty-two from over a hundred on hand, but do not want to omit any from consideration.

During the year a number of financial gifts were received for which we are grateful, realizing the responsibilities involved with the use of these funds to the greater glory of God and his Son, Jesus Christ.

We welcome Dan Wesol as a new director of the PBI and bid farewell with sincere appreciation for his past service to our departing board member, Francis Earl.

As another year comes to a close, the editors and directors want to take this opportunity to express their thankfulness to our many readers and supporters. We offer our pledge to strive to the best of our ability to continue the publication of this journal and solicit an interest in your prayers to that end,

Directors and Editors of the Pastoral Bible Institute

World News

Religious

Joseph Ratzinger, a renowned theologian and hard-line enforcer of Catholic Church doctrine for the last two decades, was chosen to succeed his friend and close ally Pope John Paul II. The new pope will lead a church in crisis, sharply divided after John Paul's 26-year reign. Despite John Paul's personal magnetism, many of the church's one billion members are seriously disaffected [and] the faith is losing ground in many parts of the world to other religions. For the last 24 years, Ratzinger has headed the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, the successor to the Grand Inquisition of the Middle Ages.

—*Los Angeles Times*, 4/20/2005

Marty Minto, 39, is a senior pastor at a church in New Castle, Pennsylvania, and was a host on an Evangelical Christian talk show on WORD-FM, of Pittsburgh. A caller phoned in asking whether Pope John Paul II is in heaven after his death. Minto told the caller that whether a person was born again was “between an individual and the Creator.” Minto was told that he was alienating listeners and was fired by the station.

—*The Toronto Star*, 4/15/2005

Adolf Hitler's *Mein Kampf*, a bestseller in many sectors of the Muslim world, has become a best seller in Turkey—traditionally considered a moderate country. Tens of thousands of Arabic-language copies of Hitler's book—the English title of which is “My Struggle”—have been snatched off the shelves ever since they were reprinted in Turkey several months ago.

—*Arutz 7*, 3/22/2005

Dateline NBC broadcast a follow-up to an earlier episode which had examined Benny Hinn Ministries. They used documents obtained by employees of the ministries, hidden cameras at public meetings, interviews with employees, and interviews with people who claim to have been healed. They focused on the Ministry's practice of not releasing financial statements to the public. The report showed that the ministry lacks documentation which supports healing claims. One day later, Benny Hinn filed a lawsuit against NBC and Dateline producer Meade Jorgensen. The three claims in the civil suit appear to be mainly related to unauthorized possession of ministry records.

—*World Healing Center Church, Inc. vs, The National Broadcasting Company*, 2005-
MAR-04

Social

A suicide prevention conference in Portland, Oregon, featured warnings of the disastrous rate of self-inflicted death: At 29,000 suicides a year, 50% more people now die by their own hand than as victims of murder. Among young people ages 15-24, suicide counts as the third leading cause of death.

—USA Today, 3/9/2005

Today many Americans are getting expensive elective surgery at a fraction of the U.S. cost in places like India and Thailand. Bangkok is one example, where more than 350,000 international patients are treated in Bumrungrad Hospital per year by doctors, many of them Western trained. A quintuple heart bypass operation in the United States costs \$100,000. At Bumrungrad the price is \$12,000. It's often even cheaper in India, where many procedures cost just ten percent of what they cost in America.

—60 Minutes, 4/24/2005

The national average cost for a traditional funeral is around \$7,000. For a cremation, it's about \$1,500. The percentage of people who select cremation, which saves precious land, is already around 30% nationally. That figure is expected to rise above 50% within a generation or two.

—Los Angeles Times, 4/4/2005

Only 3% of Americans lead a healthy lifestyle that includes regular exercise and eating five or more fruits and vegetables daily, according to a study led by a researcher at Michigan State University. Researchers found that 76% of Americans don't smoke and that 40% maintain a healthy weight. But only 23% eat the minimum recommended amount of five daily servings of fruits and vegetables and only 22% exercise for at least 30 minutes five times a week. Taken together, only 3% hit all four indicators of a healthy lifestyle. The U.S. spends about \$1.5 trillion annually in health-care costs.

—Dow Jones Newswire, 4/25/2005

Accident victims taken to Penn State Milton S. Hershey Medical Center might be treated with artificial blood. About 25 hospitals nationwide are participating. The substitute is called PolyHeme and is made from a protein extracted from red blood cells. Ambulances don't carry blood because there are too many types and it takes about 45 minutes to determine what type a patient needs. Instead, patients who have lost a lot of blood receive salt water, which restores blood pressure but doesn't deliver oxygen to the brain and organs.

—The Patriot-News, 3/16/2005

Stamps.com Inc., the online postage seller, will resume a program allowing customers to turn personal photos or designs into valid stamps. The popular PhotoStamps service will resume May 16, with strict rules about what can and cannot grace a piece of postage. A sheet of 20 custom 37¢ stamps costs \$16.99—a markup of nearly 130%. Customers upload images to the company's website and receive stamps in the mail.

—Los Angeles Times, 4/27/2005

Currently, more than 8 million people around the world die each year because they are too poor to stay alive. Every morning our newspapers could report, "More than 20,000 people perished yesterday of extreme poverty." The poor die in hospital wards that lack

drugs, in villages that lack anti-malarial bed nets, in houses that lack safe drinking water. In 2002 the U.S. gave \$3 per sub-Saharan African. Taking out [what was spent] for U.S. consultants and technical cooperation, food and other emergency aid, administrative costs and debt relief, the aid per African came to the grand total of perhaps 6¢. Spin as we might in the U.S. about our generosity, the poor countries are fully aware of what we are not doing.

—*Excerpt from The End of Poverty*
by Jeffrey Sachs, *TIME*, 3/14/2005

There were an estimated 515 million cases of the deadliest form of malaria in 2002, according to a new study in *Nature*—50% more than earlier estimates. Malaria kills at least a million people a year, mostly children.

—*TIME*, 3/21/2005

Leprosy is still prevalent in many parts of the world. More than half a million new cases were detected in 2003—that's over 1,400 every day. It is neither hereditary nor flesh eating and can be cured with multi-drug therapy. It is difficult to catch and cannot be caught by a handshake. Over 95% of people are immune. Leprosy is a disease of poverty and tends to spread in areas of malnutrition.

—*LeprosyMission.org.uk web site*

Political

More than 1,600 tons of America's stockpiled mustard agent has been destroyed to meet the terms of a chemical weapons treaty. The mustard agent was the last batch stored at the Aberdeen Proving Ground, 35 miles northeast of Baltimore, and represented about 5 percent of the nation's total stockpile, said Jeff Lindblad, a spokesman for the chemical disposal facility at the Army base. The banned, carcinogenic liquid that blisters the eyes, skin and lungs, had been stockpiled at Aberdeen since World War II. The mustard agent was destroyed to help to meet the 2012 Chemical Weapons Convention Treaty deadline for destroying chemical weapons. Nerve gas and mustard agent are still stockpiled at seven depots in the country.

—*Associated Press*, 3/11/2005

Following popular revolts in Georgia and Ukraine, a third ex-Soviet republic is in turmoil after a disputed election. President Askar Akayev of Kyrgyzstan ordered a partial review of the results of parliamentary elections after protesters seized control of public buildings. "If the authorities and opposition fail to reach an accord and things break out of control, the nightmare of civil war becomes realistic," said Alexei Malashenko of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace in Moscow.

—*Financial Times*, 3/22/2005

Residents of three Siberian regions voted to merge into one province in what is likely to be a trend toward fewer autonomous regions within Russia. Evenki and Taimyr were

broken off from Krasnoyarsk after the 1991 collapse of the Soviet Union to give the ethnic minorities there more autonomy. The restored Krasnoyarsk will be a single, resource-rich province of Russia, larger than all of Western Europe. The move was cited as a first step toward the eventual consolidation of Russia's 89 regions down to around 40.

—*The Week*, 4/29/2005

Financial

\$518 billion: Approximate sum that will be paid out of Social Security to almost 48 million Americans this year.

—*Newsweek*, 4/18/2005

Electronic payments, including debit and credit cards, surpassed checks for the first time ever last year, according to the Federal Reserve. Last year, more than 3 billion (debit card) transactions were for under \$5.

—*Reuters*, 3/13/2005

An American worker costs [General Motors, Ford and Daimler-Chrysler] more than \$6,500 in health care per year. In Canada, which has a government-funded health-care system, the cost to the employer per worker is just \$800. This year General Motors will pay about \$5.2 billion in medical and insurance bills for its active and retired workers. That adds \$1,500 to the cost of every GM car. For Toyota, whose products are manufactured in many countries abroad, these costs add just \$186 per car.

—*Newsweek*, 4/18/2005

Rapidly rising pension and healthcare spending will reduce the debt status of the world's richest industrialized countries to junk within 30 years unless their governments move quickly to balance budgets and reduce outgoings, a report warns. Standard & Poor's, the credit rating agency, says if fiscal trends prevail, the cost of ageing populations will fuel downgrades of France, the US, Germany and the UK from investment grade to speculative, or junk, category—France by the early 2020s, the US and Germany before 2030, and the UK before 2035.

—*Financial Times*, 3/21/2005

The biggest impediment to [Afghanistan's] development is the country's dependence on opium. Last year's opium proceeds equaled 61 percent of 2003 gross domestic product of \$4.6 billion, making Afghanistan the world's most drug-dependent economy, according to the Vienna-based United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. Poppy cultivation has spread to every province, soaring 64 percent in 2004 and pouring \$2.8 billion into the pockets of warlords, traffickers and farmers, the UN agency says.

—*Bloomberg Markets*, May 2005
(monthly magazine)

Israel

Canada does not recognize the sovereignty of Israel in Jerusalem and has recalled the passports of Canadians who have “Jerusalem, Israel” written in their documents in order to erase the name of the Jewish State from alongside its capital. The B’nai Brith has been fighting a legal battle with Canada’s Ministry of the Interior in order to prevent the move, which is seemingly an emulation of the United States’ policy regarding not writing “Jerusalem, Israel” in passports.

—Arutz-7, 3/11/2005

Researchers from Haifa’s Technion University have developed a miniature robot that can navigate a flexible needle in the human body. The new needle will allow a surgeon to bypass obstacles in the needle’s path and safely reach its objective within the body, solving the problem of maneuvering around blood vessels, skin and muscles that prevent exactness in obtaining biopsies.

—Arutz 7, 4/19/2005

Israel’s Central Bureau of Statistics released its latest population figures.

| | | |
|--------|--|-------------------------|
| Total | population: | 6,862,000 |
| Jewish | population: | 5,235,000 or 76 percent |
| Arab | population: | 1,337,000 or 20 percent |
| Other, | including Christian and people belonging | |
| | to other ethnic groups: | 290,000 or 4 percent. |

Israel’s population increased by 114,000 people, the lowest increase since 1990. About 20,000 people immigrated: 18 percent of the new immigrants came from Ethiopia; 10 percent from France; and 9 percent from the United States.

— *Israel My Glory, March/April, 2005*

A number of foreign consortia, consisting mostly of U.S. investors, recently contacted Israeli government agencies and government company Petroleum and Energy Infrastructures with proposals to renew the oil pipeline to Iraq. The pipeline runs from Iraq through Jordan to Haifa Bay. Former Minister of Energy Adv. Moshe Shahal heads one of the consortia. The pipeline is designed to transport oil from Iraq to the Zarqa oil refinery in Jordan and from there to the oil refinery in Haifa Bay. The pipeline will eliminate the need to use the Suez Canal. In the initial stage, ten million tons of oil can be transported from Iraq to Israel through the new pipeline.

—*Globes, 3/2/2005*

Figures released by the Central Bureau of Statistics reveal that Israel’s agricultural sector is thriving and growing [in spite of] water shortages and steep water price hikes. The value of agricultural production in Israel jumped by 28.7% in the period from 1999 to 2004. Agricultural exports have also been climbing. Exports in 2004 were up by 31.1% over 2003, despite a 1.2% overall decline in price. An old food staple, the potato,

registered the biggest rise in agricultural exports. Almost twice as many Israeli potatoes were exported in 2004 compared to 2003, thanks to bad weather in Europe.

—*Arutz 7*, 4/4/2005

In 2004, 1.59 million people in the U.S. filed for personal bankruptcy, up from 780,000 a decade earlier. At least \$40 billion in debt is wiped out annually through personal bankruptcy, according to an industry-sponsored study in 1998 by the WEFA Group, now part of Global Insight, a Cambridge, Mass. consulting firm. More than 70% of the filings fall under Chapter 7 of the bankruptcy code. The provision allows consumers to erase credit-card, medical and many other debts. Todd Zywicki, a George Mason University law professor says reneging on debts has lost much of its stigma.

—*Wall Street Journal*, 4/6/2005

International health officials [are] fighting a deadly outbreak of Marburg fever in Angola. Marburg, named for the German city where it was discovered in 1967, kills about 90% of victims within 10 days. The virus is one of the most deadly pathogens and can be passed along by contact with any bodily fluid, including sweat. No vaccine or cure exists for the disease, which is similar to Ebola. The current Marburg outbreak began in October and has claimed more victims than any previous episode, killing most of the 214 people infected, according to WHO.

—*Los Angeles Times*, 4/13/2005

Short Features

"Are Ye Able?"

Are ye able to walk in the narrow, strait way,
With no friend by your side, and no arm for your stay?
Can ye bravely go on through the darkening night?
Can ye patiently wait till the Lord sends the Light?

Are ye able to crush your soul's longing for love,
Will ye seek for no friendship save that from above?
Can ye pass through this world, lone, unnoticed, unknown,
While your faith faintly whispers, "He knoweth his own"?

Where the feet of the Blessed One stood, can ye stand?
Can ye follow his steps to a wilderness land?
Are ye able to cast aside pleasure and fame?
Can ye live but to glorify his precious name?

Can ye smile as his dear voice says tenderly, "No,"
When "the field is so white," and your heart yearns to go?
Can ye rest then in silence, contented and still,
Till your Lord, the Chief Reaper, revealeth his will?

Are ye able to lay on the altar's pure flame
That most treasured possession, your priceless good name?
Can ye ask of your Father a blessing for those
Who see naught in your life but to scorn and oppose?

When the conflict twixt error and truth fiercer grows,
Can ye wield the strong "sword" against unnumbered foes?
Can ye lift up the "standard" e'en higher and higher,
While his praises ye sing in the midst of the fire?

When ye see the Lord's cause going down to defeat,
Will your courage endure in the seven-fold heat?
Will your faith keep you steadfast, though heart and flesh fail,
As the new creature passes beneath the last veil?

Ah, if thus ye can drink of the cup he shall pour,
And if never the banner of truth ye would lower,
His beloved ye are, and his crown ye shall wear,
In his throne ye shall sit, and his glory shall share!

My Morning Resolve

My earliest thought I desire shall be: “What shall I render unto the Lord for all his benefits toward me? I will take the cup of salvation and call upon the name of the Lord [for grace to help]. I will pay my vows unto the Most High.” (Psalm 116:12-14)

Remembering the Divine call, “Gather my saints together unto me; those that have made [“cut”*] a covenant with me by sacrifice” (Psalm 50:5), I resolve that by the Lord’s assisting grace I will today, as a saint of God, fulfill my vows, continuing the work of sacrificing the flesh and its interests, that I may attain unto the heavenly inheritance in joint-heirship with my Redeemer.

I will strive to be simple and sincere toward all. I will seek not to please and honor self, but the Lord. I will be careful to honor the Lord with my lips, that my words may be unctuous and blessed to all.

I will seek to be faithful to the Lord, the truth, the brethren and all with whom I have to do, not only in great matters, but also in the little things of life.

Trusting myself to divine care and the providential overruling of all my interests for my highest welfare, I will seek not only to be pure in heart, but to repel all anxiety, all discontent, all discouragement.

I will neither murmur nor repine at what the Lord’s providence may permit, because, “Faith can firmly trust Him, Come what may.”

—Reprints, p. 5165

* Word added to emphasize the original meaning of “made a covenant.”

Keep on the Highway

I walked to the seashore one cold dark morn'
Not knowing which way to go now
I was tired and weary and my heart was down
And I wanted to stay all alone.
Then I looked to the sky as the sun arose
I felt the warmth of its light
And I knew that the Lord abided with me
And guided me all the way home.

He told me to never be sad and so blue
For He watched over me every day
If only I'd ask Him for His guiding hand,
I'd know all the comforts of Him.
To call on His name was my only way through
To ask for His help every day,
To be willing and able to watch for His Word
And never fade back into sin.

Then His voice faded out and I walked on alone
But my footsteps somehow found the way
My worries were faded, my heart was aglow
My thoughts were upon a new day.
And as I walked on by the once lonely sea
My eyes were swept up in the tide,
And I knew as I walked I was never alone
But Jesus was there by my side.

“Keep on the highway don't walk in the sand,”
The Lord was calling to me.
“Just put all your trust in your faith and your hope
And someday with Me you will be.”

—Leonard Griehs

Loss and Sacrifice

The dearest experiences of a Christian life often spring from the loss or sacrifice of something precious to us. Perhaps it is cherished peace, upset by enemies swift to accuse or think evil. Perhaps a cherished possession, torn from our affections through disaster. Perhaps a loved one who passes beyond, leaving an open void in our heart. These trials reach deeply into our being and long endure. The loss brings sobriety, reflection, and maturity. It also focuses our mind on our great sustainer, our Heavenly Father. We reach for solace from one who understands – and He understands better than all. Thus our affection for Him increases. Thus grows our wish to be in accord with Him and His ways.