



THE COVENANT VISION.

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**“Heaven and earth shall pass away:
But My words shall not pass away.”**

THE COVENANT VISION.

EDITOR: *Pastor Frank W. Dowsett. J.P.*

In presenting this magazine, it is not our intention just to indiscriminately add to the number of Christian journals already available. Our only purpose is to present the Word of God in its fulness as we feel God has revealed it to us, in order that the God of our fathers Abraham, Isaac and Jacob may be glorified.

It is our firm conviction that we are living in the very last days prior to the appearing and return of our Great God and Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ.

We are also convinced that never before in the history of our nation and people has there been such a need for the "Watchmen in Israel" to sound the alarm in order to awaken God's people to the urgent need to repent, and to return to God with all their hearts, and with all their minds, and with all their strength.

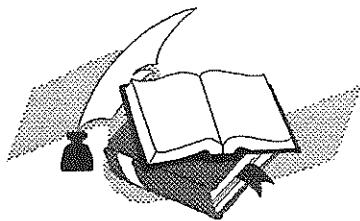
Denominational doctrines and differences are not our concern, and it is not our intention to enter into such arguments. There is not enough time left to waste it on such unproductive, and indeed, destructive, exercises. We are concerned ONLY with what we believe the Word of God says and teaches.

We proclaim the absolute necessity for all people to accept the Lord Jesus Christ as their own personal Saviour, as the only means to Eternal Life.

We proclaim the absolute necessity for the Anglo-Saxon-Celtic people to recognise their identity, their inheritance, and their responsibility, as the literal descendants of God's people Israel.

We proclaim the absolute necessity for all who would faithfully serve God to 'receive the power from on high', which can only

(continued on inside back cover)



Editorial.

Wake up Time is Here!

"Cry loudly, do not hold back; Raise your voice like a trumpet, And declare to My people their transgression, And to the house of Jacob their sins."

Thus declared the prophet Isaiah.

There comes a time in the history of all nations when the people who comprise that nation must ask themselves the question as to why they are beset with so many problems which seemingly have no solution.

We are constantly told that things are really getting better. It's just that we need to give all these new ideas time to get themselves into gear. But the fact soon becomes patently obvious that the solutions which our beneficial leaders offer us are no more than sops to distract us from the fact that we are really in a mess, and to cover up the real extent of that mess. They have no idea in the world as to how to get us out of it, and in fact, because of their dedication to their foreign masters, have no intention of changing anything of real substance which would alleviate the situation.

Enough is enough! It is high time that we, as a people, took a real good look at ourselves, and at the precarious position in which we are now found. It doesn't matter where we turn, or what we do, tragedy follows tragedy, disaster follows disaster, and suffering and sorrow follows on behind.

Surely we are not so insensitive or naive as to accept that this is just a normal course of events in some evolutionary process on the way to Utopia?

There is a reason for our present plight of which even the majority of our religious leaders seem to be blissfully unaware. Forget the politicians. The ones that matter are in the pocket of, or under the influence of, the "globalists" and the loan sharks.

But whether we like to accept it or not, God is still in absolute control of what is going on down here. He always has been, and doesn't intend changing the system now.

The prophet Issiah's call rings out as certainly today as it did in the day in which he first proclaimed it. And it applies to us today just as certainly as it did to the people of his day.

The root cause of ALL our problems is that we have transgressed and sinned against God .

But most people ask, "How did we do that? We live good lives, and don't commit crimes. We go to church and help our neighbours." But all of this will never out-way, let alone replace, the fact that as individuals and as a nation, we have sinned against Almighty God.

And in what way have we sinned against God, we might ask?

Simply because we have deliberately turned from, and disobeyed, God's Holy Laws, Commandments, Statutes, and Judgments.

Now I've never won any popularity competitions, and certainly don't expect to win one now, but as long as we excuse ourselves from obedience to these righteous laws, which cover every aspect of our lives, and hide under the pretence of the grace of God in order to do whatever seems right in our own eyes, we will continue to suffer. And this, not because of some personal fad of mine, but because it is what God has said. In Jeremiah chapter seven and verses eight to eleven we read of God's reaction to this situation. I will present it in the up-to-date vernacular.

"You trust in lying words that lead to ruin. Will you steal, murder, and commit adultery, and swear falsely, and compromise with other gods and cultures which have nothing to do with you, and then have the confounded audacity to go to church and stand before me in the house that you call by my name, and tell me that you now have the right to do all these abominations? You have turned my house into a den of robbers."

"And I have seen it, says the Lord."

(continued on Page 12.)

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The Heritage of Israel.

By Frank W. Dowsett.

Part Fifteen.

The Covenant & The Promises. Part 10.

The Abrahamic Covenant. Part 7.

In our previous issue, we commenced a short study of those who falsely claim to be the recipients of the Covenants which God made with our forefathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. I believe that this knowledge is essential to the proper understanding of the fulfilment of these great promises. To apply them to the wrong people is to cause utter confusion in the understanding of God's Word.

We mentioned that there were three entities spoken of by our Lord Jesus Christ, and the apostles John and Paul; namely "anti-Christ" as mentioned by John, "the Man of Sin" as mentioned by Paul, and "the synagogue of Satan" as mentioned by our Lord. We also suggested that these were different titles for the one entity, and commenced with the study of "anti-Christ".

So we now turn to the second of these entities, namely:-

"the Man of Sin".

We read in 2 Thessalonians 2:3-12;

"Let no man deceive you by any means. For that day (the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ of verse 1) shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition;

Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the Temple of God, shewing himself that he is God.

Remember ye not, that when I was with you, I told you these things?

And now that ye know what withholdeth that he might be revealed in his time.

For the mystery of iniquity doth already work. Only he who now letteth (i.e., restrains), will let (restrain), until he be taken out of the way.

And then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming.

Even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders.

And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of truth, that they might be saved.

And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie.

That they might be damned who believe not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness."

As in our previous study of "Anti-christ", we again find that the above statement regarding the Man of Sin contains some very important factors which require careful study if we are to properly understand what God is trying to reveal to us. Firstly, we find that the phrase "the Man of Sin" does not refer to just one specific man. The Greek word '*anthropos*' from which the word 'man' is here translated applies more generally to

'mankind', as distinct from a special or particular person. You will remember that we found this same feature in our study of "Anti-christ". We also find that in verses 10 to 12, God refers to this entity in the plural by the use of the words 'them' and 'they'.

The second thing that we need to understand is the timing involved. A study of verse 7 reveals that the 'man of sin', under the title of 'the mystery of iniquity', was already operating at the time Paul wrote his epistle. Then in verse 8, under the title of 'that Wicked', we are informed that this entity will continue to operate until the second advent of our Lord Jesus Christ when he will be destroyed by the brightness of Christ's coming. Thus we find that the time frame of 'the man of sin' is from a time prior to when Paul wrote, up to the return of our Lord Jesus Christ, the exact same time period as for the operation of 'anti-christ'. Again, as we found for 'anti-christ', this phrase cannot be restricted, at least in its fullest sense, to the Roman Catholic Church, because that particular church did not come into operation until many years later. However, we must not overlook the fact that it does have a very pertinent application to the activities of this particular church.

The third point to be noted is that Paul was referring to something that was known about at the time of writing, in just the same way as 'anti-christ' was known about at the time of John's writing. In verse 5 he reminds the Thessalonians that he told them about this on a previous visit.

The only way to understand what God is telling us in this passage is to study the words used in the original language. The authorities I am using are:-

1. "A Critical Lexicon & Concordance of the English and Greek New Testament" by E.W. Bullinger, D.D.
2. "Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words" by W.E. Vine, M.A.

So as an example, let us study the words of verses three to seven.

"Falling Away"

"Apostasy, not only religious. It covers all aspects of both individual and national life, including finance, politics, morals, religion, and faith. It means a collapse, or falling away from what should be. It covers not only the structure, but includes the FOUNDATIONS." Thus, not only is TRUTH destroyed, but THE FOUNDATIONS ON WHICH TRUTH IS BUILT.

"If the foundations be destroyed, what can the righteous do?"

(Psalm 11:3)

"Man of Sin"

"Man" = mankind. A group of people, as distinct from a special or particular person.

"Sin" Lawlessness.

"Sin is the transgression of the law."

(John 3:4)

Used here, it does not apply just to the act of sin or lawlessness, but to the **evil principle or intent of the heart** covering and motivating all forms, phases, and movements of sin. It is also referred to as **iniquity**.

"Son of Perdition"

"Son" Not necessarily a descendant. It refers to the origin and nature which determines the character of what is being referred to. For example:-

"The field is the world. The good seed are the children of the Kingdom; but the tares are the children of the wicked one."

(Matthew 13:38)

"Perdition" Destruction and ruin which is final, absolute, and irreversible.

“Opposeth” To be set opposite to, and to be totally repugnant to.

“Exalteth” To lift oneself up in arrogance and conceit.

“The Temple of God”

God’s People, not only individually, but nationally as applying particularly to Israel.

“And what agreement hath the Temple of God with idols?

FOR YE ARE THE TEMPLE OF THE LIVING GOD.

As God hath said, ‘I will dwell in them, and walk in them. And I will be their God, and they shall be My people.’ ”

(2 Cor. 6:16; quoting Lev. 26:11-12)

“Shewing” Displaying, but in such a way as to take attention from themselves and direct it to something else.

“Revealed” To remove the veil or covering away from, and so to expose to open view what was previously hidden, (and obviously in existence).

“Mystery” That which is known to the initiated. In the ordinary sense it is equal to ‘knowledge withheld’, but in the Scriptural sense, it means, **TRUTH REVEALED.**

Let us remember that all these aspects which we have just studied were already in existence, and already operating when the Apostle Paul wrote these words. Paul describes the Man of

Sin and the way in which it operated as "The Mystery of Iniquity", and went on to say that 'it was already working'.

If was only left for the **IDENTITY** of this power to become manifest just prior to the return of our Lord Jesus Christ.

So applying the above word studies, we arrive at the following amplified paraphrase of Paul's statement:-

"Just prior to the return of our Lord Jesus Christ, the wise shall understand the revealed truth that there will be a collapse, not only of truth, but of the very foundations of truth, which will include all aspects of our society and way of life. This collapse will be motivated by a group of mankind who will not only be lawless, in terms of their disobedience to the Laws of God, but who will be dedicated to the very evil principle and intent of the heart to promulgate evil. Its aim will be the absolute, final and irreversible destruction of everything pertaining to God. It will be arrogant, conceited, and repugnant to God. It will be utterly deceitful, in that it will represent itself to be what it is not, and hide its true identity by focusing peoples' attention elsewhere, and it will operate within God's people."

We now ask the question. Who is this group who is so ruthlessly opposed to our Lord Jesus Christ and His Kingdom here on earth?

Who is this group of mankind who are so dedicated to the propagation of everything that is evil, that it will do everything in its power to destroy the mind and the will of God's people through constant brain-washing, falsehoods, and deceits?

Who is this group who are the self-confessed enemies of God?

They were operating in Paul's day, and they are still operating today!

Their aims are still the same!

WHO ARE THEY ???

WHO IS 'THE MAN OF SIN' ???

A study of verses 9 to 12 of 2 Thessalonians, chapter 2, gives us the information we need in order to decide this question. Remember as we study that it is God's stated intention to reveal its identity prior to the return of the Lord. Verses 9 and 10 tell us:-

"Whose coming, (i.e. 'that wicked' of verse 8), is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders, and with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish."

God does not leave us in any doubt as to whom He is referring here. If we turn to Revelation 13:13-14 we find the description of a beast coming up out of the earth who -

"Doeth great wonders, so that he maketh fire come down from heaven on the earth in the sight of men, and deceiveth them that dwell on the earth by the means of those miracles which he had power to do . . ."

I believe that this is a reference to the same entity to which Paul was referring under the title of 'the man of sin'. Their mode of operation and aims are too identical for them to be otherwise. But verse 11 of this chapter of Revelation identifies this beast as "*having two horns like a lamb, and speaking as a dragon*". Here we have the original 'sheep in wolves' clothing'. Here we have the description and identification of a group who pose as God's people Israel, but are actually not, but are led by, and speak with the voice and authority of, Satan. With this authority, they have deceived God's people by the seemingly miraculous nature of their deeds and power. Even the most casual investigation into the way they control and manipulate the world's money supply and media gives a remarkable illustration of the 'miracles' they perform in order to wield their Satanic

power. It is interesting to note that the remainder of chapter 13 of Revelation deals with this very subject.

But I feel that we should not overlook the statement contained in Revelation 13:13 which says that "*they make fire come down from heaven on the earth in the sight of men*". No doubt, many will be wondering what this means. Once again, we go to the Scriptures. In Leviticus 9:24 we read that after Aaron had properly prepared and offered the sacrifice to God, then a fire came from God and consumed the sacrifice upon the altar. This was a very special fire, being the evidence of God's acceptance of the offering. As a matter of fact, Deuteronomy chapters 4 and 5 make mention several times of the fact that the Lord God of Israel dwells in the fire. The use of this statement that the 'beast' of Revelation 13, (being another expression of 'the man of sin' of 11 Thessalonians 2), makes "fire come down from heaven" is very interesting, because it is identifying the fact that this entity is deliberately presenting itself as being blessed by God, and having the power and authority of God to pass judgment on all other people by putting their seal of approval on whatever they choose.

Verse 10 also tells us:-

"They received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved."

Speaking to the Jews of His day who would not accept Him, Jesus said:-

"Ye are from beneath. I am from above. Ye are of this world. I am not of this world."

I said therefore unto you, that ye shall die in your sins. For if ye believe not that I am He, ye shall die in your sins."

(John 8:23-24)

Speaking a little later to the same people, Jesus added this very potent remark:-

"I told you, and you believed not. The works that I do in my Father's name, they bear witness of Me.

But ye believe not,

BECAUSE YE ARE NOT MY SHEEP!"

(John 10:25-26)

Finally, verses 11 and 12 tell us the result of their deceitfulness. The enemy themselves are to become victim to their own deceit. They shall be swallowed up themselves in their own delusion. And they shall become subject to the judgment of God for what they have done.

*"And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie.
That they might be damned who believe not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness."*

So let us be sober and watchful, because Satan is now going abroad like a roaring lion, devouring whom he can, because he knows that his time is short. His name means "the deceiver of the brethren", and the degree of his success in this is patently obvious to those who have 'eyes to see, and ears to hear.'

(to be continued).



**Blindness to the existence
and identity of the enemy
makes it impossible to conquer him.**



C.V. NEWS.

Greetings once more to all our friends. These last two months have been fairly uneventful from the point of view of our Ministry, but it has been a real blessing to continue hearing from so many of you. We have even had contacts from several folk from whom we have not heard for some time, which has been an added blessing. Our grateful thanks for all those who so kindly rang to check up on me following our last report on my health scare. They ranged from Scotland to Canada and New Zealand, and of course from within Australia. It's a great comfort to know that we have such loving support in these times. The good news is that I have had no further troubles in that direction (or any other), and your prayers have been a great blessing both to Betty and myself. Betty is still bothered quite a bit with arthritis, but is restricted in what she can take because of kidney problems. So we would appreciate your prayers for her as well. One item of good news is that we have been presented with our 14th grandchild, a grandson, Levi Jackson, to David and Cheryl. Mother and son are doing fine.

One request. Will all those who write with requests please print in **LARGE** letters. Betty handles all the mail, and has great difficulty reading small print or writing. She would really appreciate your help in this area. A big "thank you" to all who so faithfully support our work. Without you we would find it very difficult financially to continue in the present economical climate. So we pray God's richest blessing upon you all.



(Editorial: Continued From Page 2).

If any of you think that there is a human solution which will stem this tide of evil, and loathsome immorality and betrayal that has all but destroyed the very fibre of our Christian culture, then please think again. There is only one answer to our problems. It is clear, it is concise, and it is absolutely guaranteed to work.

God willing, we will deal with it in the next issue. So if you wish to become part of the solution and not remain part of the problem, stay tuned.

A WALK THROUGH THE GOSPELS.

PART 18.

By Bruce Horner.

THE CRISIS APPROACHES.

THE HEALING OF THE BLIND MAN AND THE POOL OF SILOAM.

John 9:1-5 FFB *Then, passing by, he saw a man who was blind from birth. His disciples asked him, 'Rabbi, was it he or his parents who sinned, that he should be born blind?' Jesus replied, 'It was neither he nor his parents who sinned; it was that the works of God might be manifest in him. We must do the works of him who sent me while it is day. The night is coming, when no one can work. While I am in the world, I am the light of the world.'*

As the healing of the cripple at the pool of Bethesda in **John Chap 5** introduces the presentation of Jesus as the one who executes judgment and imparts life, so the healing of the blind man at the pool of Siloam illustrates Jesus' claim (made already in **John 8:12**) to be the light of the world. In the lively account of the present healing (by contrast with the earlier one) the man who has been healed plays an active part. The cut and thrust of animated debate in this chapter, preceded and followed by the monologues of chapters 8 and 10, bears witness to the evangelist's versatility of style.

How the disciples knew that the man's blindness was congenital is not said, but it was this knowledge that dictated the form of their question. In their thinking about divine retribution they had not advanced far beyond the position of Job's friends. Blindness, they imagined, was punishment for sin - but for whose sin? Did God punish the parents for some sin previously committed by causing their son to be born blind? The very idea is an aspersion on the character of God, but before we condemn the disciples let us reflect that even today one meets Christians whose thinking about God runs along very similar lines to theirs. Bruce makes a footnote here, saying that despite what has

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sometimes been thought in more recent times, there is no suggestion here of the son's blindness being due to venereal disease contracted by one or other of the parents; to suppose otherwise is to credit the disciples with a degree of medical knowledge which they would not have possessed.

Or, if his blindness was not due to his parent's sin, might it be due to his own? It does sometimes happen that men and women are themselves responsible in part for physical ailments that beset them; it may be implied in **John 5:14** that the condition from which the cripple was healed at the pool of Bethesda was something for which he himself was to blame. But it is not usually so, and it seems particularly inept to suggest that congenital blindness could be due to the infant's own sin. The idea that an infant might sin while still in the womb, however, appears to have been entertained by some rabbis, and the disciples may have thought it possible. In the rabbinical commentary *Genesis Rabba* 63.6 there is a curious discussion of Esau and Jacob's pre-natal conduct (**Gen 25:22**), in which **Psalm 58:3** ("*The wicked go astray from the womb*") is variously interpreted so as to show how Esau's sinful propensity was manifested while he was still in the womb. It is not likely that they thought he might have sinned in a previous existence.

Bruce tells us that the clause '*that he should be born blind*' has in Greek the form of a purpose clause but the sense requires us to take it as a clause of result. On the other hand the clause in Jesus' reply, '*that the works of God might be manifested...*' is a clause of purpose in meaning as well as in form. Jesus bids his disciples have done with their talk of the man's blindness being caused by somebody's sin. The purpose of his blindness was that a divine work should be wrought in him and the divine glory be revealed (as it is revealed in all the 'signs' of this Gospel).

This does not mean that God deliberately caused the child to be born blind in order that, after many years, his glory should be displayed in the removal of the blindness; to think so would again be an aspersion on the character of God. It does mean that God overruled the disaster of the child's blindness so that, when the child grew to manhood, he might, by recovering his sight, see the glory of God in the face of Christ, and others, seeing this work of God, might turn to the true Light of the World.

'We must do the works of him who sent me', said Jesus, referring primarily to himself. At the time of the earlier healing he had said, *'My Father keeps on working until now, and I also work'* (John 5:17) - doing the things he saw his Father doing. *'I have come down from heaven'*, he said in Galilee, *'not to do my own will but the will of him who sent me'* (John:38:6). If his disciples were indeed, then these were the works which they also must do, in fellowship with their Master (cf also John 14:12).

Moreover, the Father's works must be done *'while it is day'* - which meant, so far as Jesus himself was concerned, *'while I am in the world'* (verse 5). The coming night was the period of his withdrawal from the world: so in John 13:30, Judas went out into the 'night', while the other disciples remained in the circle of the true light while the true light was with them (cf. John 12:35 f). To the same effect Jesus, when he was about to raise Lazarus from the tomb (another 'sign' in which the glory of God was shown), said, *'Are there not twelve hours in the day? If one walks about in day-time, he does not stumble, because he sees the light of this world'* (John 11:9), with the implication of an analogous truth where the light of the heavenly world is concerned.

The true light was not totally removed when the time came for Jesus *'to depart from this world to the Father'* (John 13:1), for it was then mediated through others; but Jesus was here concerned with the existing situation, which would not last more than a few months now. The clause *'I am the light of the world'* echoes the affirmation of John 8:12, but it does not carry the same emphasis here. The independent pronoun *ego* is absent here, so that this statement does not rank (as that of John 8:12 does) among the 'I am' affirmations of the Fourth Gospel. The incident introduced in these opening verses of Chapter 9 is an acted parable setting forth Jesus' ministry as *'the light of the world'*.

John 9:6, 7 FFB *Having said this, he spat on the ground and made mud with the saliva; then he smeared mud on the man's eyes and said to him, 'Go to the pool of Siloam and wash.' So he went off and washed, and came back with his sight restored.*

The application of saliva in healing is attested in Mark's record of the deaf and dumb man in the Decapolis (Mark 7:33) and of the blind man at Bethsaida (Mark 8:23), but there is no THE COVENANT VISION.

word there of its being mixed with earth to form a paste or poultice as here. When his sightless eyes had been covered with this paste, the man was told to wash it off in the pool of Siloam. The pool of Siloam may have been the nearest water-supply, but the Evangelist points out a further significance. Siloam, he says, meant 'sent' - the Hebrew form *Shiloah* (as in '*the waters of Shiloah that flow gently*' of **Isaiah 8:6**) is patently derived from the verb *shalah* 'send' - and it speaks of Jesus, the sent one of God, who alone is qualified to impart inward illumination. Without question, the man did as he was told: he went and washed the past off his eyes in the pool of Siloam, and found himself able to see for the first time in his life.

The pool of Siloam, south-west of Ophel (the city of David) near the junction of the Tyropoeon Valley and the Valley of Hinnom, received the water which was carried, or 'sent', through a channel from the spring of Gihon (later called the Virgin's Fountain) in the Kidron Valley. It is called the 'Pool of Shelah' in **Nehemiah 3:15**, and is to be identified probably with the 'lower pool' or 'old pool' (**Isaiah 22:9, 11**), today's *Birket el-Hamra*, lying a little way to the south-east of what is now known as the Pool of Siloam.

John 9:8, 9 FFB *So his neighbours and those who were formerly used to seeing him (and knew) that he was a beggar started to say, 'Is not this the man who used to sit and beg?' Others said, 'Yes, it is he'; others again said, 'No, but he looks like him'. But the man himself said, 'I am he.'*

The blind man had been a familiar sight in his neighbourhood. The only way in which a person so handicapped could get a little money or anything else was by begging; people had been accustomed to seeing him begging. The man whom they now saw obviously seeing his way around was very like the well-known blind man; but it could not be he, could it? John characteristically reports the interplay of uninformed opinion (just as he has done in 7:12, 25-27, 31 when describing the variety of opinions expressed about Jesus at the feast of Tabernacles); it is cut short by the man's assurance that he is the selfsame person.

John 9:10-12 FFB *So they said to him. 'Well, how were your eyes opened?' He replied, 'The man called Jesus made*

mud and smeared my eyes with it; then he told me to go to Siloam and wash, so I went off and washed and received my sight.' 'Where is he?' they asked him. 'I do not know', said he.

Naturally they wanted to know what had happened to him. He gave them a brief factual account. It may be possible to trace a gradation in his estimate of Jesus in his successive references to him throughout the narrative. To begin with, he is '*the man called Jesus*'; at the end, he is the object of his faith and veneration (verse 38). Unlike the cripple at the pool of Bethesda (John 5:13), the once-blind man knows his benefactor's identity and gives credit where credit is due. The question 'Where is he?' suggests that those who questioned the man would have liked to question Jesus too, to see if the two accounts tallied. But Jesus was not available to abide their question.

INTERROGATION BY THE PHARISEES (John 9:13-17)

John 9:13 FFB *They took the man who had formerly been blind to the Pharisees.*

Why to the Pharisees? Because they felt that a religious issue was involved, and they respected the Pharisees as authorities on the law and its interpretation. Unlike the Synoptic Evangelists, John does not explicitly mention the scribes. In Jesus' day there were scribes attached to the Pharisaic party (Mark 2:16) and scribes attached to other parties, although it is the Pharisaic scribes who normally feature in the Synoptic Gospels. The scribes were the experts in the law, teaching their interpretations to the people in synagogue and elsewhere. By the time John's Gospel was written, there were no Jewish scribes except those in the Pharisaic tradition; he therefore can refer to all scribes as 'Pharisees' without fear of confusion. There were few areas of life which had no religious bearing, and it was natural to consult legal experts rather than medical men about this strange case of healing. Moreover, as now appears for the first time, there was one factor in the situation which made it very much a matter for legal inquiry.

John 9:14 FFB *Now it was a sabbath on the day when Jesus made the mud and opened the man's eyes.*

So, Jesus had repeated the offence which led to so much trouble on the occasion of an earlier visit to Jerusalem: he had performed an act of healing on the sabbath. Not that an act of healing as such infringed the sabbath law, but an act of healing was very likely to involve something else which did infringe the law. On the former occasion Jesus encouraged a man to carry a burden through the streets on a sabbath; on this occasion he made a mud poultice with earth and saliva. What was wrong with that? Simply this: one of the categories of work specifically forbidden on the sabbath in the traditional interpretation of the law was kneading, and the making of mud or clay with such simple ingredients as earth and saliva was construed as a form of kneading.

John 9:15 FFB *So they asked him again - the Pharisees this time - how he had received his sight. He told them, 'He put mud on my eyes, and I washed, and I can see.'*

The man may well have told them his story in some detail, but the readers now need only the bare outline; They know what happened. The Pharisees are described as launching a serious inquiry; the man is interrogated as first witness, and when his witness proves inconclusive (from their point of view) they summon other witnesses (verse 18).

John 9:16 FFB *So some of the Pharisees said, 'This man is not from God; he does not keep the sabbath.' Others said, 'How can a man who is a sinner perform such signs?' There was a division among them.*

Two opposed points of view are expressed, and two opposed conclusions are reached. The one viewpoint was based on the major premise: 'A man who breaks the sabbath law is not a man of God.' Few would have been found to quarrel with that premise. The minor premise was: 'Jesus has broken the sabbath law.' (The sabbath law forbids the doing of any work on the seventh day, and Jesus, according to the accepted interpretation of the law, had 'worked' on that day by making a mud-paste to smear on the blind man's eyes.) The conclusion seemed inevitable: 'Jesus is not a man of God'. The expression *para*

theou ('from God') has no metaphysical significance: it is used in the sense in which it is used of John the Baptist in **John 1:6**. John, as a man 'sent from God', declared the word of God: he was a prophet. Jesus was held by many to be a prophet of God, but (it was argued) since he was guilty of sabbath-breaking, this could not be so.

The other viewpoint was based on the major premise: 'Anyone who cures a man of his blindness - especially a man *born* blind - is a man of God.' This premise would not have been universally admitted: in **Deuteronomy 13:1-5** the case is envisaged of a 'prophet' who by means of signs and wonders tries to gain a following and lead people astray from their allegiance to the true God. But some would have argued (and their argument would probably have been valid) that Jesus had not performed a sign or a wonder at random: this 'sign' involved a work of mercy, a work of healing, and such a work is so completely in accordance with the character of God that anyone who performs it must be in the way of God's will. So they framed their major premise, already expressed. The minor premise was: 'Jesus has cured a man of his blindness - a man, moreover, who was born blind.' The conclusion followed: 'Jesus is a man of God - he cannot be a sinner.' (A further conclusion might have followed from that: the accepted interpretation of the sabbath law called for a re-examination.)

As the crowd was divided in **John 7:43**, so the Pharisees are now divided over Jesus' credentials. Bruce here follows Adolf Schlatter, who was no mean authority in rabbinical scholarship, who thought that the division followed the tendencies attributed respectively to the schools of Shammai and Hillel. The school of Shammai tended to argue from first principles (so here: anyone who breaks the law is a sinner); the school of Hillel tended to have regard to the established facts of a case (so here: Jesus has performed a good work). In a case like this, their conclusions are bound to conflict with each other.

John 9:17 FFB *So they say to the blind man again, 'What have you to say about him? It was your eyes he opened.'*
He said, 'He is a prophet.'

The blind man - the man who had been blind until recently - was no authority on law or religion. Still, he had had direct dealings with Jesus; it would be interesting to know his opinion of him. Since they themselves were divided in their judgment,
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they might do worse than appeal to a third party. He gave his considered opinion: '*he is a prophet*'.

The Samaritan woman had perceived Jesus to be a prophet because her life story was an open book to him. The crowd that had been fed with loaves and fishes and the Jerusalemites who had heard his call to come and receive 'living water' identified him with 'the prophet' because in action and word he seemed to be the expected second Moses. The man who received his sight may have thought of this work of healing as putting Jesus in the succession of Elijah and Elisha. What the Jordan had done for Naaman's leprosy the pool of Siloam had done for his blindness. But perhaps he simply used 'prophet' as a synonym for 'man of God'. In any case, he now gave an assessment much more positive than 'the man called Jesus' (verse 11).

INTERROGATION OF THE PARENTS (John 9:18-23)

John 9:18-19 FFB *So the Jews refused to believe that he was blind and had recovered his sight until they had called the parents of the man who had recovered his sight. Then they asked them, 'Is this your son, who you say was born blind? In that case how can he see now?'*

'The Jews' of verse 18 are presumably the Pharisees of verse 13. The claim that the man had been *born* blind was a material factor in the incident which they were investigating; but obviously this was something on which his own testimony was not available. Even if he could not remember having ever seen, he might have lost his sight through some illness or accident in early infancy. The people who could testify acceptably whether he was born blind or not were his parents, so they were summoned. They obeyed the summons, but were very ill at ease. It was plain that the authorities were annoyed at what had happened and, although the parents were naturally glad that their son was no longer blind, they were unhappy that he should be mixed up with someone who was in disfavour with the authorities. But here they were, in a subordinate court of inquiry, and they had to give evidence. Wisely, they confined their evidence to what they actually knew; they gave plain answers to the first part of the question - 'Is this your son, who

you say was born blind? - but refused to indulge in speculation about his cure.

John 9:20,21 FFB *So his parents replied, 'We know that this is our son, and that he was born blind. But we do not know how he can see now or who opened his eyes. Ask him; he is of age; he will speak for himself.'*

'Yes', they said, 'he is our son' (of that they had no doubt). 'Yes', they said again, 'he was born blind' (they were equally sure of that). 'You ask, "How come he is able to see now?" We don't know. Nor do we know who restored his sight. You must ask himself: he is old enough to bear competent testimony in court.' (To be admissible as a witness in court he had to be at least thirteen; this man was certainly older than that.) But, limited to matters of known facts as the parents' testimony was, it made unpalatable hearing for the interrogators: they confirmed that their son had been born blind, and since he had plainly recovered his sight, it was difficult to avoid the conclusion that a miracle had been performed.

John 9:22, 23 FFB *His parents said this because they were afraid of the Jews; for they had already agreed that if anyone confessed Jesus to be the Messiah he should be expelled from the synagogue. It is for this reason that his parents said, 'He is of age; ask him.'*

Jesus' presence and activity in Jerusalem since he arrived halfway through the week of Tabernacles were well known through the city; and the man's parents were well aware that the healing of their son's blindness was due to Jesus. But anything they might say about Jesus was liable to be displeasing to the authorities; therefore they would say nothing at all about him. After all, they were not present when Jesus accosted their son and sent him to the Pool of Siloam, so they could reasonably plead ignorance of the cause and nature of his healing.

Bruce tells us that it is commonly suggested today that John, writing towards the end of the nineties, was influenced by a decision that had been taken by the reconstituted Sanhedrin a few years before. The Sanhedrin reconstituted with Roman permission in the period after AD 70 consisted exclusively of doctors of the law. One of these, Samuel the Less, reworded one of the blessings recited daily in the synagogues so as to

make it impossible for 'Nazarenes' (Jewish Christians) to take part in synagogue worship. This blessing, which traditionally included a curse on the enemies of God ('let all wickedness perish as in a moment'), was revised so that the curse ran: 'let Nazarenes and heretics perish as in a moment; let them be blotted out of the book of life and not be enrolled with the righteous.' The revision was approved by the Sanhedrin and adopted in synagogues, so that Nazarenes, being forced to keep silence when the new form of words were repeated by the congregation, would give themselves away. John probably does allude to this situation when he reports Jesus as saying to the disciples in the upper room, 'They will put you out of the synagogues' (**John 16:2**). The same adjective, *aposynagogos* (meaning 'excluded from the synagogue'), is used here in **John 9:22**. But here (as in **John 12:42**) the reference is to a situation in the context of Jesus' ministry, restricted perhaps to Jerusalem. It is uncertain whether we are to understand temporary expulsion or permanent excommunication here. The permanent ban was involved in the new ordinance of AD 90, but perhaps not at this time. Even so, the man's parents were sufficiently intimidated to keep their mouths shut and say nothing about Jesus, either good or bad.

SECOND INTERROGATION OF THE MAN (John 24-34)

John 9:24,25 FFB *So they summoned back the man who had been blind and said to him, 'Give glory to God. We know that this man is a sinner.' He replied, 'I do not know if he is a sinner. I know one thing: I was blind and now I see.'*

There was no way of getting around the evidence that the man had been born blind. Neither was there any way of getting around the evidence of their senses, that he was now able to see. The natural conclusion was that a miracle of healing had been wrought, but since the evidence also pointed unambiguously to Jesus as the one responsible for the cure, the further conclusion would be that the power of God had manifested itself through Jesus in an exceptional degree - that he was indeed, as the man had said, a prophet. But this further conclusion was inadmissible: in their eyes he was no prophet, but a sinner, because he had broken the sabbath law. Therefore some factor in the situation must be eluding them; perhaps it was being

deliberately concealed from them. Hence their charge to the man when he was summoned before them again: 'Own up; tell the truth.' 'Give glory to God' has the same force here as in the story of Achan: when the lot pointed to Achan as the man who had brought disaster on Israel, Joshua said to him, 'Give glory to the LORD God of Israel' - i.e. 'Own up; tell the truth' (Joshua 7:19). (It may well be that John plays characteristically on the double meaning of the words - the healing of the blind man did indeed reveal the glory of God - but our present concern is with what the interrogators meant.) 'Own up', they meant; 'whatever *you* say, *we* know that this man Jesus is a sinner, and therefore cannot have performed such a miracle of healing as you pretend. Tell the truth; what are you hiding?'

In his first reply the man is as circumspect as his parents; he confines himself strictly to what he knows, which is the duty of a witness. 'You know that he is a sinner; well, you are the authorities whose business it is to know that sort of thing. You wouldn't expect *me* to know anything about that. But here is what I do know: I was blind, and now I see.' It was frustrating for his interrogators that neither of those statements could be refuted: the former statement was confirmed by the evidence of the parents; the truth of the latter they could see for themselves. Why not admit the conclusion to which these two facts pointed?

The man's testimony has been repeated innumerable times by men and women who have found in his words the means of communicating their own experience of deliverance from spiritual blindness through the in-shining of the light of the world: 'I know one thing: I was blind and now I see.'

John 9:26-27 FFB *So they said to him, 'What did he do to you? How did he open your eyes?' He answered them, 'I have told you already and you paid no heed. Why do you want to hear it again? Do you also want to become his disciples?'*

Thus far the man has given straight factual answers to the questions put to him by the authorities. But now that they begin to ask the same questions all over again, he suspects that it is not the plain truth that they want: they are trying to trip him up, so as to nullify his positive witness in favour of Jesus. He now displays a hitherto unsuspected capacity for ironical repartee. Some authorities (including, it appears, Papyrus 66) omit the negative from the clause 'you paid no heed', as though

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the man meant, 'you heard me the first time; why do you want me to tell you again?' He knows very well that his interrogators have no thought of becoming Jesus' disciples, but his ironical question is used by the Evangelist as a means of introducing again the subject of true discipleship, touched upon in **John 8:31**.

John 9:28-29 FFB *Then they addressed him abusively, saying, 'You are that man's disciple; we are disciples of Moses. We know that God spoke to Moses; we have no idea where this fellow comes from.'*

Naturally they do not appreciate the man's irony; it is too evident that they have seen through his plan to trip him up. They therefore have recourse to abuse. Who would be a disciple of someone who is unknown and whose authority was disallowed by those in a position to judge such matters? An ignoramus like the man who stood before them might know no better than to take such a person seriously; They were better informed. Moses was their teacher; they were his disciples. The tradition of oral law transmitted in the rabbinical schools was held to stem from Moses, who (they believed) had received it on Sinai together with the written law. No one could doubt that God spoke to Moses: of him God himself had said, 'With him I speak mouth to mouth, clearly, and not in dark speech' (**Numbers 12:8**). Moses was the pre-eminent prophet of the Lord; the claim to be disciples of his was a claim worth making. The Disciples of this nobody from Nazareth were worthy of him whom they chose as their teacher. In all this, indeed, the Evangelist practises his own brand of irony: he and his readers know of Jesus' true origin; they know, moreover, that while 'the law was given through Moses', the full revelation of God came through Jesus Christ. (**John 1:17**).

John 9:30-33 FFB *'Why', said the man in reply, 'this I find surprising. You do not know where he comes from; yet he has opened my eyes. We know that God does not listen to sinners, but if any one worships God and does his will, he listens to them. No one has ever heard of any one who opened the eyes of one who was born blind. If this man were not from God, he would not be able to do anything.'*

The man continues to use the language of plain common sense. The authorities

Had previously argued among themselves , one group saying, 'This man is a sinner and therefore God cannot have performed a miracle through him', and another group saying, 'this man has worked a miracle which could not have been performed without divine aid; therefore he is no sinner.' The man repeats and underlines the second of these lines of argument; he brought an unprejudiced mind to the problem (except in so far as the fact that it was *his* eyes that were opened prejudiced him in favour of Jesus). The restoration of sight to the blind was not unknown: Tobit was given back his sight in the apocryphal book which bears his name, but he was not *born* blind. So far as memory and experience could say, congenital blindness was invariably incurable. Yet now, for once, congenital blindness had been cured. In the Synoptic Gospels the restoring of sight to the blind is a token that the new age has dawned, with such signs as the prophets foretold (*Isaiah 35:5; 42:7*); here the emphasis is rather on the authority and character of the one who performs the cure. Without knowing it, the man anticipates a rabbinical maxim later expressed in the form: 'Every one in whom is the fear of heaven, his words are heard.' A miracle of this magnitude must be recognized as an answer to prayer; the man who received this answer to prayer must be no ordinary man. The wonder of it is that the authorities disclaim all knowledge of him. The man can put two and two together; he has already concluded that Jesus must be a 'prophet' (verse 17), and now he reiterates his conviction by saying that he must have come 'from God'. This does not necessarily express faith in Jesus' divine origin in the sense in which that is taught by the Evangelist; it does at least mean that Jesus is acknowledged as 'a man sent from God', as John was (*John 1:6*). In this sense Jesus must have come from God; otherwise he could never have wrought such a miracle.

John 9:34 FFB They said in reply, 'You were altogether born in sins: are you teaching us? So they drove him out.

Their angry rejoinder shows that they realized they were getting the worst of the argument. On their own principles there was no answer to his argument. The context suggests that they not only pushed him out of the place where the interrogation

was held, but expelled him from synagogue membership, as his parents had feared might be done to them (verse 22). 'You were altogether born in sins' implies that (as Jesus' disciples had supposed) his congenital blindness was due either to his parents' sins or his own. In any case it was an impertinence for such an untrained member of the common people to argue with the acknowledged interpreters of the law.

CONFESsION OF FAITH (9:35-38)

John 9:35-38 FFB *When Jesus heard that they had driven him out, he found him and said, 'Do you believe in the Son of Man?' 'And who is he, sir,' said the man in reply, 'that I might believe in him?' 'You have seen him', Jesus told him, 'and he is the person who is talking to you.' 'Lord, I believe', said he, and prostrated himself before him in reverence.*

The once-blind man now appears as a sample of those who, as the opening words of chapter 10 go on to indicate, are called out of the Israel fold to become members of the flock of the good shepherd. Evicted from the synagogue, he is found by Jesus (whom he had not met since he went off at his bidding to wash in the Pool of Siloam) and is enrolled as one of his disciples.

'Son of Man', as **John 5:27** shows, is a designation associated with the role of judgment which the Father has committed to the Son, and prepares the reader for the language about judgment in **verses 39-41**. There may also be a link here with the role of advocacy assigned to the Son of Man in the Synoptic tradition, where those who acknowledge Jesus on earth are acknowledged by the Son of Man in the presence of the angels of God (**Luke 12:8**). On this occasion the Son of Man acknowledges his faithful confessor on the spot.

Naturally the man does not know who the Son of Man is, but he is very willing to learn, so he asks. Jesus replies in terms similar to those which he used with the Samaritan woman spoke of the coming Messiah: 'It is I, the person talking to you' (**John 4:26**). The man has no further hesitation. On whom would he more readily believe than on the man who had restored his sight? He had already called him a prophet; now he confesses him as more than a prophet. If the vocative *kyrie* in **verse 36**

has the courtesy sense of 'sir', in verse 38 it is more than a courtesy title; It implies that Jesus is a fit person to receive worship: 'Lord I believe', he said, and bowed low in reverence before him. So quickly has an honest and good heart progressed from recognizing the benefactor as the 'man called Jesus' (verse 11) to confessing him as Lord.

JUDICIAL BLINDNESS (John 9:39-41)

John 9:39-41 FFB *Then Jesus said, 'It is for judgment that I have come into this world, so that those who do not see may see may become blind'. Some of the Pharisees who were with him heard this and said to him, 'Are we blind too?' Jesus said to them, 'If you were blind, you would not have incurred sin. As it is, you say "We see"; your sin remains.'*

There is a *prima facie* discrepancy between this passage and those in which Jesus says that he did not come to judge the world (John 3:17; 12:47). But there is no real discrepancy. Jesus is not saying here that he has come to execute judgment; rather, his presence and activity in the world themselves constitute a judgment as they compel men and women to declare themselves for or against him, as they range themselves on the one side or the other. Those who range themselves against him are 'judged already' (John 3:18), not because he has passed judgment on them but because they have passed it on themselves. The 'judgment' (*krima*) here is practically equivalent to the 'division' (*schisma*) which more than once developed among his hearers as they took sides over his claims.

The healing of the blind man is presented as a parable of spiritual illumination. Thanks to the coming of the true light of the world, many who were formerly in darkness have been enlightened; this is not only the effect but the purpose of his coming. But on the other hand some who thought they had no need of the enlightenment he brought, because they could see perfectly well already, turned their backs on him and, without realizing it, moved into deeper darkness. The lesson of John 3:19-21 was exemplified in them. Had they acknowledged their spiritual blindness and allowed him to remove it, they would have been blessed. Had they lived in darkness and found no way out into the light, their plight would have been sad but no

blame would have attached to them. Blame did attach to those who, while living in darkness, claimed to be able to see, like those religious leaders who were present and heard Jesus' pronouncement about the effect of his coming. To be so self-deceived as to shut one's eyes to the light is a desperate state to be in: the light is there, but if people refuse to avail themselves of it but rather deliberately reject it, how can they be enlightened? As Jesus said, their sin remains.

(to be continued).



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HEROES OF FAITH.

Part Two.

By Frank W. Dowsett.

Enoch.

In previous studies, we had defined both how to obtain faith, and its basis, or foundation. Firstly, faith comes by hearing - or being informed by - the Word of God. Secondly, we found that faith is not based on doctrine, but upon conviction. The "Heroes of Faith" knew nothing about doctrine. What they did and said was based solely upon what God had said, and the unshakeable conviction that He meant exactly what He said.

Enoch, whose name means 'teacher', was no exception. We read of this in Hebrews 11:5;

"By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death; and was not found, because God had translated him: for before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God."

But we have to ask ourselves just what it was that Enoch really did to qualify him for inclusion in such conspicuous company as "The Gallery of Faith." There is so very little detail given of him in the Bible. In fact, his name is only mentioned nine times in its entirety; six times in the Old Testament and three times in the New Testament.

(He is not to be confused with Enoch the son of Cain who is mentioned three times).

Six of these references relate to his genealogy, in Genesis 5:18-23, and in Luke 3:37-38, the latter showing him to be the seventh in the line of Adam;

"Which was the son of Mathusala, which was the son of Enoch, which was the son of Jared, which was the son of Maleleel, which was the son of Cainan,"

Which was the son of Enos, which was the son of Seth, which was the son of Adam, which was the son of God.”

The seventh reference to him is found in Genesis 5:24;

“And Enoch walked with God: and he was not; for God took him.”

Here we merely have the statement that he “walked with God”, without any form of explanation.

The eighth reference is found in Hebrews 11:5, which we stated above, and which is little more than an enlargement of the reference in Genesis 5:24.

The ninth, and final reference, is found in Jude verses 14 and 15;

“And Enoch also, the seventh from Adam, prophesied of these, saying, Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousands of his saints, To execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed, and of all their hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against him.”

So we have to face the fact that we are extremely limited in ascertaining any information which would make him a man of such importance in the sight of God. So let us begin our search, commencing with Genesis 5:21-24;

21 *“And Enoch lived sixty and five years, and begat Methuselah:*

22 *And Enoch walked with God after he begat Methuselah three hundred years, and begat sons and daughters:*

23 *And all the days of Enoch were three hundred sixty and five years:*

24 *And Enoch walked with God: and he was not; for God took him.”*

Firstly, we find that Enoch was married, and had several children, the first being Methuselah, the longest living man recorded in the Bible. The significance of this is that he was a

normal human being, not **some** form of Divine being as some would suggest, based on the circumstances of his translation in order that he would not die. Divine beings, or angels, do not marry nor have children. This is made quite clear as we read Mark 12:22-25, where Jesus replies to the question put to him regarding the woman who had seven husbands who had pre-deceased her;

"And the seven had her, and left no seed: last of all the woman died also.

In the resurrection therefore, when they shall rise, whose wife shall she be of them? for the seven had her to wife. And Jesus answering said unto them, Do ye not therefore err, because ye know not the scriptures, neither the power of God?

For when they shall rise from the dead, they neither marry, nor are given in marriage; but are as the angels which are in heaven.

Secondly, we find the most interesting fact that Enoch lived for 365 years, the same as the number of days in our year. Coincidence? Could the years of his life been pointing to the era when we would be living under such a calendar, and during which his prophecy of judgment would be experienced? At least, it's food for thought.

Thirdly, we are told what must surely be the most significant characteristic of his life. We are told that "He walked with God". What does this mean? The word "walked" has a variety of meanings and applications, but those most obviously suited to this context are; "to walk along side of and follow continually, to travel with".

A clearer understanding might be obtained by reading the wording in the following translations;

Septuagint:

"was well pleasing to God".

Moffat:

"lived close to God".

Young:

"walked habitually".

Amplified:

"in habitual fellowship".

Lampsas:

"found favour in the presence of God".

All these conditions are necessary for God to consider that we "WALK WITH HIM". It is not our decision to make, as to whether or not we are worthy to be so designated. This is solely the prerogative of God. It's His decision, not ours. There are a lot of Christians today who would do well to take heed of this. We read in John 15:14-17;

"Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you. Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth: but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you.

Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain: that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you."

Fourthly, we are told that "he was not". Hebrews 11:5 reads; "and was not found, etc.." Now why wasn't he found? We are told in Genesis 5:24 that "God took him", and I'm sure that God was not having a practice run for the "secret rapture". Hebrews 11:5 says that "God had translated him". The word "translated" means "to be placed in, or transported or transferred to, another place." The only other occurrence of this word is found in Colossians 1:13;

"Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son:"

The question is often asked as to where this place was, or is, to which Enoch was transferred or transported, and we must face the fact that nowhere in the Bible are we told. Of one thing we can be certain. He was not taken up to the abode of God in the Heavens. The Word of God is very clear in its statement in John 3:13;

"And no man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of man which is in heaven."

But we should also note that there are obviously various levels of 'heaven' as noted by the apostle Paul. So before trying

to come to any firm conclusion of this matter, we should understand the next aspect of this translation, namely, WHY was he translated. There can be no doubt here as to the reason. We are told very clearly in Hebrews 11:5;

"By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death;"

This leaves us with no doubt as to the fact that Enoch did not die. Now that in turn leaves us with no alternatives than that he is either wandering around this planet in an invisible condition, or that he was transferred away from this earthly scene. Where this would be, we are not informed. If the Lord wanted us to know, I'm sure He would have used this incident to expand our knowledge of "the heavens", of which there is much more to learn than we have hitherto considered. The fact that God does not explain everything to us in detail does not give us licence to interpose our own conclusions, nor to cast doubts upon the veracity of His Word.

I have no doubt but that some will quote Hebrews 9:27;

"And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment:"

So let us have a quick look at this statement. The word "appointed" means "laid up in store" or "the natural end". It does not imply certainty in the sense that every human being is going to experience physical death. That conclusion would totally contradict Scripture. For instance, we read in I Cor. 15:51-53, and I Thess. 4:16-17;

"Behold, I show you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed,"

"In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed."

"For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality."

"For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord."

The natural end, laid up in store for us all, is death. But there are obvious exceptions to this rule, as evidenced by the above statements. So the statement that Enoch did not die does no violence to the Scripture whatsoever. The plain unarguable fact remains, that whether we like to accept it or not, Enoch did not die. The fact that we might not know exactly where he is does not alter in any way the basic fact.

But we are then left with a further question. WHY would God do this?

"By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death; and was not found, because God had translated him: for before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God." (Hebrews 11:5)

So we see that one, if not the main, qualification of being translated in order that we do not experience death, is to "please God". The word "please" here means "to be well pleasing", and Vine, in his 'Expository Dictionary', page 188, adds this note; "This sense of the word is illustrated by Moulton and Milligan (vocab.) from numerous inscriptions, especially describing 'those who have proved themselves of use to the commonwealth'." I have no doubt whatsoever that this will be the major requirement for those who, as 'the overcomers', will be appointed to the position of 'kings and priests', ruling with our Lord Jesus Christ over His kingdom, at the time of the First Resurrection. As we read in Rev. 20:6;

"Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years."

Thus, Enoch constitutes a perfect example of the conditions applicable to the First Resurrection. But what did

Enoch DO to please God? Other than the passage in Jude, to which we will refer later, the Bible is completely silent on this matter. But that should not prevent us from seeking information from other sources, provided that the information does not violate Scripture. In Joshua 10:13, and II Samuel 1:18, we find reference to "The Book of Jasher". The reader will have to make their own judgment as to the validity of the following statements, but I feel that they are worthy of consideration. In chapter three, we read of the life and ministry of Enoch. The chapter is far too lengthy to quote in full, so I intent quoting some relevant passages. In verses one and two we read;

"And Enoch lived 65 years and he begat Methuselah; and Enoch walked with God after having begot Methuselah, and he served the Lord, and despised the evil ways of men. And the soul of Enoch was wrapped up in the instruction of the Lord, in knowledge and in understanding." (Emphasis added).

The account goes on to detail how Enoch, in his rule over the people, separated himself from them for increasing periods of time, spending this time with the Lord, and then returning to them to pass on the Lord's instructions. In verses 11 and 12 we read;

"And Enoch taught them wisdom, knowledge, and the ways of the Lord; and he made peace among them, and peace was throughout the earth during the life of Enoch. And Enoch reigned over the sons of men two hundred and forty three years, and he did justice and righteousness with all his people, and he led them in the ways of the Lord."

When we turn to verse 36 we find a remarkably familiar statement;

"And when the kings returned they caused a census to be taken, in order to know the number of remaining men that went with Enoch; and it was upon the seventh day that Enoch ascended into heaven in the whirlwind, with horses and chariots of fire."

This phrase is made of only one other person, the Prophet Elijah! The prophet Malachi informs us as to the future ministry THE COVENANT VISION.

of Elijah, but we have no indication whatsoever as to that of Enoch. And I'm not about to speculate on that which God has chosen to remain silent. But the entire subject does surely encourage us to engage in some serious prayer and contemplation.

The final reference to Enoch is found in the fourteenth and fifteenth verses of the Epistle of Jude;

"And Enoch also, the seventh from Adam, prophesied of these, saying,

'Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousands of his saints, To execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed, and of all their hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against him.'

This is the only reference in the entire Bible of anything said by this great man. We should not miss the numerical significance of the fact that he was the "seventh" from Adam, nor that his only recorded statement is the "ninth" reference to him, and is one of judgment, the numerical number of which is "9".

So to whom, and of whom, is he recording judgment. In the context of the epistle, Jude addresses it thus in his first verse;

"Jude, the servant of Jesus Christ, and brother of James, to them that are sanctified by God the Father, and preserved in Jesus Christ, and called."

In fact, his entire epistle is directed to God's people Israel as one of warning for their gross sin and unbelief. In verse 5 he states;

"I will therefore put you in remembrance, though ye once knew this, how that the Lord, having saved the people out of the land of Egypt, afterward destroyed them that believed not."

Enoch is introduced into the account in the context of this judgment. He has no hesitation in warning God's people that

the purpose of the coming of the Lord with His saints is, as stated in verses 15 and 16;

"To execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed, and of all their hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against him.

These are murmurers, complainers, walking after their own lusts; and their mouth speaketh great swelling words, having men's persons in admiration because of advantage."

In light of these statements, can we really say that conditions have changed in respect to God's true Israel people? No! They certainly have not! That being the case, we surely have no option but to heed the warning given to us. Because whether we like it or not, judgment is to begin, and in fact is well advanced, at the 'house of God', His true Israel people.

Despite so little being recorded regarding Enoch, by searching and seeking out, we discover just how really great a man he was in the mind, and in the plans and purposes of God. The very fact of the limited information given to us points conclusively to the importance of heeding his message of warning. And it is only then that we realise why he was included in that august company of;

"The Great Cloud of Witnesses".

* * * * *

A man's words without his deeds
Are like a garden full of weeds.

* * * * *

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OUR PROTECTIVE GOD.

By Bruce Horner.

PART II.

THE BOERS, AND THE BATTLE OF BLOOD RIVER.

Part Two.

While the nobility of Lord Glenelg's character and his high purpose are beyond question, he, like other philanthropists of his period, short-sightedly but obdurately refused to face the outstanding fact that the coloured men for whom such genuine sympathy was felt in England not only could but did act at times as the most ruthless of savages. Even as that other member of the Clapham Sect, Sir James Stephen, when endeavouring to frustrate Wakefield's plans for the colonisation of New Zealand, had chosen to describe Hongi and his no less ferocious cannibal friends and enemies as 'inoffensive people', so now Lord Glenelg in his tremendously responsible position as Colonial Secretary went so far as to declare (without doubt in full agreement with Sir James Stephen) that the Kaffirs had 'ample justification' for the unspeakably bloodthirsty atrocities which Governor D'Urban and Colonel Harry Smith - the men on the spot - had thought it their first and most obvious duty to avenge. But the Boer 'trekkers' moving across the lands occupied by the Xisas and other tribes towards the territories recently conquered by the Zulu despot, Tshaka, had no illusions about the character of the natives whom they would be compelled to meet now that they had decided to move beyond the reach of the long arm of Whitehall.

The Zulus were, in fact, no more aboriginal dwellers in the territories which they had now occupied by force than were the Boers who were trekking towards them. Tshaka, their late chief, by training his warriors until he had produced an

invincible war-machine, had virtually exterminated the whole of the tribes who had previously lived in the lands now stolen by the Zulus.

He had disciplined his army as no black (and, indeed, no white) army had ever been disciplined before. As one example of his iron discipline, he once ordered a company of his warriors to ride over a cliff - and did they not straightway charge to their deaths, waving their spears and shouting their war-cries?

Before the Great Trek began, Dingaan (Tshaka's half-brother) and Umthlangana (his brother) had one day entered the chief's kraal, and the former, without wasting time by superfluous preliminaries, had promptly raised his spear and plunged it into Tshaka's body. Soon afterwards, preferring to be without any possible rival, he had murdered Umthlangana too. So Dingaan had now established himself as the ruler of the Zulus, in Tshaka's place. Dingaan proved to be an even greater tyrant than Tshaka.

Murder was his especial delight, and executions took place daily on 'Execution Hill', outside his great kraal. The Reverend Francis Owen, a courageous missionary who, in an incredible spirit of heroic self-sacrifice, had settled down to live close by to Dingaan's 'Great Place', has left us a description of a ceremony during which Dingaan's wives filed before him, "a crouching file of hideous figures", all raising their arms up and down and singing in hoarse voices:

'Arise thou Vulture!

Thou art the bird that eateth other birds!'

Towards this sinister figure a large company of the 'trekkers' descended from the High Veld under the leadership of Pieter Retief. With an advance party of fifteen men and four wagons Retief left his main body and made, first of all, for Port Natal, where a few British settlers had been living since as far back as 1824, though the British Government (opposed as ever to a policy of expansion) had repeatedly refused to annex the place. Lord Glenelg, had however, recently endeavoured to cope with the difficulties of the situation by the Gilbertian method of appointing a missionary to act as magistrate - though without the 'insult' of a salary, or even a single policeman!

It was Retief's intention to visit Dingaan in the hope of negotiating a treaty for the cession of land on which his

emigrants might settle. In due course he arrived in Port Natal - now the beautiful city of Durban, but at that time a squalid little village inhabited by perhaps forty Europeans and a few coloured people. He was given a whole-hearted welcome by the English community, two of whom - John Cane and Thomas Halstead, 'who spoke Zulu like a native' - agreed to accompany him to Dingaan's kraal.

The party then left the port and reached the Tugela, near the mouth of which they parked their wagons, and Retief, accompanied by the two Englishmen and four or five of his own party, set out on horseback on a twenty four hour ride to Dingaan's capital. This proved to be a huge oval-shaped kraal, fenced round with interwoven bushes and situated on a slope above a stream. Inside the palisade about a thousand bee-hive huts were arranged in concentric rings, often six deep, part of the open space within the ring of huts being fenced off as a cattle kraal. On the high ground, surrounded by the huts of his wives and concubines, was the King's own magnificent hut, twenty five feet high, its plaited roof supported by wooden pillars closely covered by coloured beads, its floor made of anheap mud mixed with blood and polished so that it shone like a mirror.

Dingaan, a gigantic savage, his immense jet-black body glistening with grease, received his visitors with superficial cordiality, listened with apparent sympathy to their request, and finally informed them that if they could recover for him some cattle that had been stolen from him by a distant minor chieftain he would cede all the land required by the settlers.

The party returned to Port Natal in high spirits and messengers dashed off on horseback to convey the great news to the main body anxiously waiting on the High Veld. Then the wagons began moving down the steep slopes, baggage and chests tightly lashed in position, the hind wheels skidding, men holding on to thongs fixed to the sides to prevent them (by no means always successfully) from overturning, and in course of time over a thousand wagons were parked in the neighbourhood of the Tugela River.

Meanwhile, the chief who had stolen Dingaan's cattle had been lured by Retief into his camp on the pretence of wishing to discuss the question of a right of way through his territories. Retief had then handcuffed him and kept him prisoner until the stolen cattle had been returned. Whereupon
THE COVENANT VISION.

Retief, ready to pay his second visit to Dingaan, appealed for volunteers to accompany him, and seventy of the Boers answered his call. These men, together with thirty Hottentot grooms to ride or lead their spare horses, and Thomas Halstead, who had agreed to act as interpreter, rode off to the great kraal in spite of warnings of Dingaan's intended treachery which had been brought by a half-caste and foreshadowed in various other ways.

On arriving at Dingaan's kraal there appeared to be more warriors about than there had been on the occasion of their previous visit, and they were wearing their war-plumes - in order (as Retief rather too hopefully thought) to make a good impression on their visitors. Retief and his party first rode to the brow of a neighbouring hill where Mr Owen had built his hut, and there they found the missionary just finishing his morning prayers. Owen told them that he was deeply concerned about their safety. Dingaan, he said, meant mischief. Three thousand fighting men were hidden in the huts that lined the palisade of the kraal. The reports of the way in which the Matabele had been defeated by the trekkers had frightened Dingaan, and the story of the 'magic' by which Retief had recovered the stolen cattle had made a further unfortunate impression on Dingaan's savage mind. The savage, said Owen, is (like an animal) 'most dangerous when frightened'. Retief, however, trusted Dingaan, and was convinced that Dingaan trusted him. He felt that he understood the black man better than any missionary.

Dingaan first entertained his visitors with feasting and dancing; then the negotiations began. Sunday passed and the promised land remained unceded. The following day the shrill screams of the women announced the arrival of another black regiment.

At last, on the Tuesday, Dingaan put his mark to an agreement transferring to 'the Dutch emigrant South Africans' all the lands from the Tugela to the Umzimvubu River in payment for services rendered. Then, to celebrate this great occasion, the guests were invited into the great kraal to drink a parting draught of beer. The warriors danced - leaping, stamping, howling, and hissing in savage excitement - until suddenly Dingaan sprang to his feet.

'Bulala amatagati,' he shouted. 'Kill the wizards!'

Instantaneously the dancers fell upon the guests while thousands of warriors poured from the surrounding huts, and the victims, quickly overpowered and bound with thongs, were led - surrounded by exultant warriors and shrieking women - in the direction of the 'Hill of Execution'. A young Zulu shepherd who was herding cattle just outside the great kraal has since described how the white men were led to the top of the hill, where their brains were beaten out with kerries.

From the doorway of his rude hut the frightened missionary heard the fierce chanting, the shouts, and the shrieks, and saw the swarming, eddying, black crowd with the waving plumes ascend to the summit, while the vultures wheeled and hovered in the sky above.

The trekkers who had followed Retief into Natal were encamped in small groups over an area some forty miles by twenty five in the vicinity of the Tugela River and its numerous tributaries, anxiously awaiting the return of their leader. Into one of these encampments in a pretty cup-shaped valley, at a place now known by the Dutch name of Weenen - 'the place of weeping' - a horde of Dingaan's Zulus burst; whereupon men, women, and children were mutilated and murdered in a scene of indescribable horror. Not one was spared, but a young Boer standing near saw the massacre, leapt into his saddle, and spread the alarm. Messengers rode out in haste to warn the other encampments, and one of these fast-riding messengers, so it is said, was a tall, bearded, finely built young Englishman - Dick King (now 'waiting in the wings', so to speak, ready to play his short but vital role in South Africa's drama).

The trekkers met the attack in their laagers - wagons marshalled in circles wheel to wheel and lashed together. Each man stood at his appointed place behind the wagon with his gun ready, his womenfolk behind him loading his spare guns, the children in a specially prepared position in the centre of the laager. The blacks hurled themselves against one laager after another and many a brave Boer was lost.

The crucial battle was fought in December 1838 near a tributary of the Tugela at a place which 'the Lord in His holy providence had appointed'.

C.A. Venter, an Afrikaner historian, says this:
"The historic Battle of Blood River made 'the laager' synonymous with survival, solidarity and victory for the Afrikaner. This battle was fought on the 16th December 1838.

It followed after seven days of prayer and pleas for intercession to the Almighty in which the Afrikaners beseeched the Lord to give them the victory in the pending attack by Dingaan and his 30,000 Zulu impis and to preserve them as a nation.

“On the morning of December 16, 1838, under the leadership of Andries Pretorius and Sarel Cilliers, a covenant was made with the Lord. It read as follows:

“My brothers and fellow citizens, here we stand in the presence of the Holy God, creator of heaven and earth, to make a vow unto Him, that if His protection shall be with us and (He) give our enemy into our hand so that we might be victorious over him, that this day and date every year shall be spent as a birthday and a day of thanksgiving, just as a Sabbath is spent, and that we shall erect a temple to His honour wherever it will be pleasing to Him, and that we shall also instruct our children that they must also share in it, as well as for our generations yet to come. Because the Honour of His name shall thereby be glorified, and the glory and honour of the victory shall be given to Him.” The original was in Dutch.

At dawn on Sunday the 16th December 1838 the Zulus attacked. The plumed warriors leapt and leapt again, charging the stubbornly defended wagons while the Boers fired and fired, and their wives loaded and reloaded, until the Zulu dead were piled in thousands round the wagons and the scene was one of ‘- shouting and tumult and lamentation and a sea of black faces, and a dense smoke that rose straight as a plumb-line upwards from the ground. After two hours of desperate conflict the Zulus were driven off - many of them into the waters of the river that has ever since been known as blood River - and the anniversary of the battle was commemorated every year in South Africa as ‘Dingaan’s Day’ the most sacred anniversary in South Africa’s calendar’, but I expect that modern history has displaced this day from the calendar.

Venter tells us that 460 odd Afrikaner men with their women and children not only successfully fought off the repeated onslaughts, with the loss of Zulu lives estimated at 12,000, and not a single casualty on the Afrikaner side, but they also irrecoverably bound future generations for survival to Him, Almighty God.

“If the outcome of the battle is to be considered a miracle, then equally miraculous is the fact that the Afrikaners did not lose a single one of their animals, notwithstanding the

thousands of spears hurled inside the 'laager'. Neither did the animals (900 oxen and 500 horses) stampede at the blood chilling battle cries that accompanied 30,000 warriors' attack after attack. Neither did the odour of blood which permeated the air give cause to stampede.

"Old Zulus who took part in the battle as young warriors were later to tell that 'what decided the battle against them was not the Boers shooting from between the wheels of the wagons, but Boers shooting from the White cloud hovering above the laager all day'....Afrikaners know that their survival is completely dependent on divine intervention."

A Boer Republic was then set up at Pietermaritzburg, at that time no more than a glorified laager named after Pieter Retief and Gerrit Maritz, and the first building to be erected was the promised church.

One cannot leave the story unfinished at this point. The Colonial Office in London was at once in a quandary, for although they were consistently averse to colonial expansion, they were now faced with the unpleasant fact that the port and coastline of Natal were in danger of being occupied by an unfriendly power - a port, too, in which British subjects had long been settled. Furthermore, the Republic had been proclaimed by people who were nominally British subjects. In addition to these awkward facts, the strength of the humanitarian movement was irresistible, and the 'philanthropists', who so disliked annexing the territory of native peoples, nevertheless regarded it as their bounden duty to protect the African negroes from what they regarded as the 'oppression' of the Boers.

And so, after the usual amount of vacillation in Downing Street, a very small British force was at last sent to garrison Port Natal. As might be expected after so many precedents, it was an altogether inadequate force. And, of course, it was surrounded before long by superior 'trekker' forces.

So, once more a hopelessly inadequate British force was faced by the humiliation of defeat. On a moonlit night, with sea and land bathed in brilliance, Dick King (do you remember him?) was rowed ashore from a ship in the bay, carrying with him a despatch to Colonel Hare appealing for reinforcements. Two horses were towed behind the small boat, and on reaching the shore, King was joined by a sixteen-year-old native boy. Then began a ride against time beside which the vaunted and mythical performance of Dick Turpin seems merely ordinary.

The hand of every man that they met, whether black or white, was likely to be against King and his companion; their routes lay across 600 miles of the loneliest and wildest country imaginable, even in Africa. The strain imposed on the two riders was so great, and King's fatigue became so extreme after a time, that for two days he was unable to move, while soon afterwards the boy broke down so completely that King had to complete the journey alone. Even up to 1943 there was still no direct rail communication between the Cape and the Natal systems, because of the desolation of the country and the immense engineering difficulties. He was able to procure one fresh mount from an Englishman who kept a trading store. After nine days of constant danger and extremity of fatigue, King rode into Grahamstown, hollow-eyed and utterly exhausted, on a mount which, according to an observer, was still 'something like a horse'. 'In fact,' he added, 'you could see it was a horse!'

King stumbled into the quarters of Colonel Hare, handed in the despatch, and instantaneously fell into a deep sleep.

Dick King's ride to Grahamstown was an even greater feat than the ride of Sir Harry Smith. Indeed, although for distance it does not compare with some other historic rides, it nevertheless ranks as one of the world's greatest equestrian achievements, since King had to cross lion-haunted country, to swim several crocodile infested rivers, and to evade enemies, both Boer and tribesmen from the beginning of his journey to the end.

The reinforcements were sent, and the British force was spared the humiliation of surrender. The gallant Boer trekkers (with the exception of some few who decided to remain in what was to become the British colony of Natal) retraced their steps across the mountains, while others continued to move north from the Cape across the Orange River, the result being that the Boer Republics were eventually founded in the area later known as the Transvaal and the Orange Free State.

And henceforth the possibility of racial reconciliation in South Africa became more and more remote, the Home Government heaping mistake upon mistake. One great administrator after another was recalled from South Africa - in disgrace. Sir Benjamin D'Urban (who had won the support of British and Dutch alike) was relieved of his office. And Sir Harry Smith was also sacrificed to party politics. For, after

having successfully conducted operations in Kaffraria, he was brazenly recalled for 'want of energy in conducting the war' - a monstrous libel. Sir George Grey (not without claim to be one of the very greatest of all English colonial administrators) was recalled and censured for his work in promoting the union of the white races in South Africa.

One could keep on and on with such discussion. As some writers have noted, it almost seems to have been ordained that the British Empire should come into existence, in spite of all that was done to hinder it. Despite all the great blunders of our politicians, our course has been shaped by God's guiding hand, who looks not at the moment but far into the future, and we must rest secure in the knowledge that He is our God and that we are the people of His pasture.



Israel looked upon Goliath as someone

too big to hit:

David looked upon him as someone

too big to miss.



"And what one nation in the earth is like thy people Israel, whom God went to redeem to be his own people, to make thee a name of greatness and terribleness, by driving out nations from before thy people, whom thou hast redeemed out of Egypt?

For thy people Israel didst thou make thine own people for ever; and thou, LORD, bearest their God."

I Chronicles 17:21-22.

ZEPHANIAH.

Part Four.

A Study by
Frank W. Dowsett.

Chapter Three. Part One.

Chapter three of the Prophecy of Zephaniah commences with an indictment against what he refers to as "the oppressing city". Our first impression may be that this is the same city to which he referred in verse 15 of his previous chapter. But a comparison of the two verses shows otherwise. Zephaniah 2:15 reads;

"This is the rejoicing city that dwelt carelessly, that said in her heart, I am, and there is none beside me: how is she become a desolation, a place for beasts to lie down in! every one that passeth by her shall hiss, and wag his hand."

Whilst chapter three, verse one, reads;

"Woe to her that is filthy and polluted, to the oppressing city!"

It is obvious that these are two different cities. As we found in our previous study, the first applied to Babylon, the city that had constantly boasted about its glory and power. But the context of this chapter shows quite clearly that we are now reading of the city Jerusalem, used here in a representative manner of the nation of Israel. This, of course, is not an unusual custom, the most outstanding being the reference in Rev. 21:2;

"And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband."

The supporting verses are too extensive to quote here, but we find in verse three that this "holy city, the New Jerusalem" is quoted as being "the bride - the Lamb's wife" (verses 2 and 9; and "the tabernacle wherein God dwells amongst His people" (verse 3). These two statements alone identify the "New Jerusalem" as His people Israel. But verses 10-14 describe this city in no other terms than can be associated with Israel.

But that is where the similarity ceases in historical or chronological terms. Whereas the Revelation reference refers to Israel in its perfected condition, Zephaniah refers to the same people in their time of rejection and punishment. This final chapter of his prophecy reveals God's dealings with Israel through the time of their rejection of God, through their time of punishment, and thence to their final deliverance.

A study of the words used in verse one, as quoted above, reveal some very interesting, and important, facts. Firstly she is referred to as being "filthy". This word means "rebellious", and would be the understatement of the century. "Rebellion" has been one of, if not the most serious sin of the nation of Israel virtually from the time of its formation. It has been the cause of ALL our troubles and woes right up to the present day. Secondly, we read that Israel is "polluted". The Hebrew word means "to desecrate:--defile, pollute, stain." Strong's #1351. But is also closely associated with - In fact it is the same Hebrew word as found in Strong's #1350 - which means, "to redeem, as buying back a relative's property; to purchase, or ransom". I never cease to be amazed at the intricacies of God's Word, and the necessity to **"STUDY IT"** as distinct from just reading it. In just one word, God has covered in cameo form, the state to which His people had descended, and the manner by which He is to restore them to perfection. She has become common, or unclean, but despite this, she is also redeemed, or bought back from this position. Unbelievable!

The third description given is that they were "the oppressing city". It does not say "the oppressed" but the **"oppressing"** city. The word means; "to rage or be violent: by impl. to suppress, to maltreat:--des...oy, (thrust out by) oppress (-ing, -ion, -or), proud, vex, do violence." (Strong's #3238). It does not refer to what is happening to Israel, but to what Israel is herself doing. As a result of her uncleanness, she has reverted from being a blessing to all the families and nations of

the earth, as was God's intention for her, to becoming a stumbling block to them, simply because she has rebelled against her God-given destiny and calling. Verses 2 to 5 of the third chapter of Zephaniah say it all;

"She obeyed not the voice; she received not correction; she trusted not in the LORD; she drew not near to her God.

Her princes within her are roaring lions; her judges are evening wolves; they gnaw not the bones till the morrow.

Her prophets are light and treacherous persons: her priests have polluted the sanctuary, they have done violence to the law.

The just LORD is in the midst thereof; he will not do iniquity: every morning doth he bring his judgment to light, he faileth not; but the unjust knoweth no shame."

This list of indictments is frightening! So let us take a look at what the Lord has said; let's look at those things of which we are, even today, guilty in God's sight;

1. **She obeyed not the voice; that is, God's Voice.** The result of this stupidity is stated in Deut. 28:15, 45-47;

"But it shall come to pass, if thou wilt not hearken unto the voice of the LORD thy God, to observe to do all his commandments and his statutes which I command thee this day; that all these curses shall come upon thee, and overtake thee:

"Moreover all these curses shall come upon thee, and shall pursue thee, and overtake thee, till thou be destroyed; because thou hearkenedst not unto the voice of the LORD thy God, to keep his commandments and his statutes which he commanded thee:

And they shall be upon thee for a sign and for a wonder, and upon thy seed for ever.

Because thou servedst not the LORD thy God with joyfulness, and with gladness of heart, for the abundance of all things;"

Despite these warnings we have deliberately rejected the alternative set forth in Isaiah 48:17-18;

"Thus saith the LORD, thy Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel; I am the LORD thy God which teacheih thee to profit, which leadeth thee by the way that thou shouldest go. O that thou hadst hearkened to my commandments! then had thy peace been as a river, and thy righteousness as the waves of the sea:"

2. **She received not correction, or discipline;** We have behaved like a pack of spoiled brats, doing our own thing, causing all the havoc we can lay our heart to, satisfying every insane, objectionable and immoral desire - many of which actually boggle the human mind, and when we reach the inevitable end of all this, we blame God, and just about everything and everybody else for our problems. I well remember very recently the terrible incident in the U.S.A. where several students were shot in their classrooms. Some one wrote in questioning why God had allowed this to happen. The reply came back as to why, or how, could He, seeing that He was no longer allowed within the schools! We never learn from our mistakes. All we do is weep and lament, and then go on committing bigger and 'better' sins. When convenient, God seems to be always in the background to serve as a whipping post whenever we find it convenient. No wonder we are in our present parlous position. If we are not going to accept God's discipline, then we are left with no alternative but to experience His correction.
3. **She trusted, or confided, not in the Lord.** What do we see today? What are those things in which we now place our trust? Well, first of all, there are our revered leaders, both Ecclesiastical, and Political. As the present saying goes, "Would you buy a used car from these people?" I don't have to offer a personal opinion regarding these false shepherds. God has said it all, as we will see a little further on in our study when we reach verses 3 and 4. Have you noticed lately the increasing amount of Satanic content in the advertisements on T.V.? And no one but maybe the blind and deaf could miss the confidence and acceptance we now show for every form of sexual depravity that could be invented by the human mind. Sport is another activity in

which we place our confidence, as evidenced by our present paranoid devotion and commitment to the Olympic Games!

4. **As a result of this we have graduated to the next step of ceasing to draw near to God.** We are no longer taught to trust Him - to have confidence in His power to release us from the terrible bondage in which we now live. The pity of it all is that as a result of the infidelity of our leaders, the people don't even recognise that they are in the greatest captivity since our forefathers were in Egypt. The newscasters tell us of all the problems we are facing, directly followed by the 'Cheshire Grin' of some politician assuring us that everything in the garden is actually rosy! We are ruled and governed by arrant hypocrites and liars whose only purpose in life is to retain power by fawning at the feet of their international masters. When are we going to wake up? When are we going to realise that our only hope lies in the confidence and strength which comes only from the Lord God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob?

Let us now go on to verses three and four. God is not leaving anyone out of this picture who is involved to the slightest degree in the contamination and destruction of His people.

1. **Her PRINCES within her are roaring lions;** Who are these 'princes'? They refer to our secular leaders; our politicians and leaders of industry. You must surely know the ones. Those are the people who actually run our country to the best advantage of those from whom they can obtain the best personal advantage for themselves. Their basic motives are for financial gain, at any cost. But why are they likened to 'roaring lions'? Simply because the lion usually roars when he is ready for supper. He has only one intent at such a time, and that is to destroy and consume anything in his path. They are universally feared and hated. They use their power for destruction rather than for edification. This phrase is used on four occasions in God's Word.

Psalm 22:13; "They gaped upon me with their mouths, as a ravening and a roaring lion."

Proverbs 28:15; “As a roaring lion, and a ranging bear; so is a wicked ruler over the poor people.”

Ezekiel 22:25; “*There is a conspiracy of her prophets in the midst thereof, like a roaring lion ravening the prey; they have devoured souls; they have taken the treasure and precious things; they have made her many widows in the midst thereof.*”

I Peter 5:8; “*Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walkeith about, seeking whom he may devour:*”

2. **Her JUDGES are evening wolves; they gnaw not the bones till the morrow.** Instead of being the protectors of the innocent, they have become selfish and greedy, their cruelty and covetousness seeming to become insatiable. As God's Word says, they ‘gnaw not the bones till tomorrow’. In other words, they take delight in prolonging the cruelty they impose by their selfish delight and pleasure in their own power to control their fellow man. And of course, this applies to those who make the laws, not merely to those who sit in the seat of the judge, who are virtually controlled in their judgments by the laws under which they are forced to operate.
3. **Her PROPHETS are light and treacherous persons.** They pretend to be special messengers from heaven, but they are light and treacherous. That is, they are frothy and airy and fanciful, with a vain imagination and loose conversation, without any consistency in which anyone could place any confidence. They are so given to banter and platitudes that it is difficult to know when they are serious. Their pretended prophesies are nothing more than a sham, and they take delight at the number of people who become enamoured by their teachings. We read in Jeremiah 23:14 and 26:27, and Ezekiel 34:8;

“I have seen also in the prophets of Jerusalem an horrible thing: they commit adultery, and walk in lies: they strengthen also the hands of evildoers, that none doth

return from his wickedness: they are all of them unto me as Sodom, and the inhabitants thereof as Gomorrah." . . .

"How long shall this be in the heart of the prophets that prophesy lies? yea, they are prophets of the deceit of their own heart;

Which think to cause my people to forget my name by their dreams which they tell every man to his neighbour, as their fathers have forgotten my name for Baal."

"As I live, saith the Lord GOD, surely because my flock became a prey, and my flock became meat to every beast of the field, because there was no shepherd, neither did my shepherds search for my flock, but the shepherds fed themselves, and fed not my flock;"

4. **Her PRIESTS have polluted the sanctuary, they have done violence to the law.** Those who have charge of "God's Holy Things" have betrayed their trust, and have become false to their high office. They are those who have been charged with retaining the purity of God's Sanctuary, but instead have been the very ones who have polluted it with their modernistic and abhorrent teachings. They perverted the teaching of God's Law by patronising those whose clear intent was to circumvent it. They blessed those whom God has clearly cursed, and made that which an abomination in His sight to be acceptable to men. Thus they have done violence to His righteous Laws, as we read in Jer. 2:8 and 19;

"The priests said not, Where is the LORD? and they that handle the law knew me not: the pastors also transgressed against me, and the prophets prophesied by Baal, and walked after things that do not profit." . . .

"Thine own wickedness shall correct thee, and thy backslidings shall reprove thee: know therefore and see that it is an evil thing and bitter, that thou hast forsaken the LORD thy God, and that my fear is not in thee, saith the Lord GOD of hosts."

The prophet Jeremiah also has this to say regarding those who so contemptuously handle and teach God's Word;

"Behold, ye trust in lying words, that cannot profit. Will ye steal, murder, and commit adultery, and swear falsely, and burn incense unto Baal, and walk after other gods whom ye know not; and come and stand before me in this house, which is called by my name, and say, We are delivered to do all these abominations?"

Is this house, which is called by my name, become a den of robbers in your eyes? Behold, even I have seen it, saith the LORD."

All the above aspects are covered in God's statement of indignation as recorded in Ezekiel 22:23-31;

"And the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, Son of man, say unto her, Thou art the land that is not cleansed, nor rained upon in the day of indignation. There is a conspiracy of her prophets in the midst thereof, like a roaring lion ravening the prey; they have devoured souls; they have taken the treasure and precious things; they have made her many widows in the midst thereof. Her priests have violated my law, and have profaned mine holy things: they have put no difference between the holy and profane, neither have they showed difference between the unclean and the clean, and have hid their eyes from my sabbaths, and I am profaned among them. Her princes in the midst thereof are like wolves ravening the prey, to shed blood, and to destroy souls, to get dishonest gain. And her prophets have daubed them with untempered mortar, seeing vanity, and divining lies unto them, saying, Thus saith the Lord GOD, when the LORD hath not spoken.

The people of the land have used oppression, and exercised robbery, and have vexed the poor and needy: yea, they have oppressed the stranger wrongfully.

And I sought for a man among them, that should make up the hedge, and stand in the gap before me for the land, that I should not destroy it: but I found none.

Therefore have I poured out mine indignation upon them; I have consumed them with the fire of my wrath: their own way have I recompensed upon their heads, saith the Lord GOD."

I think it would be very safe to say that God is not very happy with His rebellious people. This being the case, it may not be wise to overlook or ignore the following warning;

"The just LORD is in the midst thereof; he will not do iniquity: every morning doth he bring his judgment to light, he faileth not; but the unjust knoweth no shame."

We have a sure promise, just as viable as any other promise He made, to the fact that He is very much aware of what we are doing, and that because of our sinfulness, He will not fail, day after day, to visit upon us His righteous judgment. If we continue to think that because God is somewhere up in the sky, and that we are down here on earth that we can do what we want and get away with it, then we have a very severe surprise in store for us. We are governed by traitors; we are educated by fools; we are patronised by idiots; we are deluded and destroyed by those who are sworn to destroy us; and yet we still "love to have it so". We have become a nation of thieves, drug addicts, drunken brawlers, deceivers, murderers, sodomites, degenerates of every variety conceivable, and if anyone objects to the slightest degree, we are branded as religious fanatics, and a danger to our society. Well so be it! Be well assured. We need to be a danger to our present society. If we're not, then we are not doing our job as watchmen on the walls of Israel.

All the prophets of old, without exception, raised their voices against this unrighteousness in our midst, realising that it was a stench in the nostrils of Almighty God.

Have things changed over the centuries since the prophets wrote? Not a bit. As we read above,

"the unjust knoweth no shame."

Well, that IS a shame, because the inevitable judgment of a righteous God will continue to pour down upon us, as surely as the fire of God fell upon Sodom and Gomorrah. And I have not chosen the illustration loosely.

God willing, in our next issue, we will conclude this series of studies in the Prophet Zephaniah.



come through the infilling, baptism, and ministry of the Holy Spirit within us.

We proclaim the absolute necessity for our nation to return to full obedience to the Law of God as the only way by which we can receive the full blessings of God.

We proclaim the absolute necessity for each and every individual Christian to prepare themselves for the greatest event yet to be witnessed on this earth, namely,

THE RETURN OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST.

Whilst the production, publication and distribution of this magazine is undertaken as a faith ministry, it is totally dependant on the tithes and offerings of our readers. We are happy to continue sending it freely to all who wish to receive it but genuinely cannot afford to contribute in any way. However, we do request an offering to at least cover the cost of postage, especially for overseas readers. But in order to be faithful stewards of the offerings sent to us, at the end of each year we will be obliged to remove the name from our mailing list of anyone who has not contributed or contacted us within the past year. The financial assistance and prayers of those who read it, and are blessed by it, are therefore vitally necessary for its continuance and growth.

We also invite our readers to send us the names and addresses of any whom they think would be genuinely interested in receiving a sample copy. In this way you can share in the proclamation of the Gospel of the Kingdom, that the name of our Lord Jesus Christ may be glorified.

It is our fervent prayer that you will be blessed and lifted to higher planes of joy and blessing as you study and learn of the wonders of God's Word, and of His boundless and merciful love for each of us.

With our Christian love,

Frank and Betty Dowsett.

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**LORD God of Israel,
there is no God like thee,
in heaven above, or on earth beneath,
who keepest covenant and mercy
with thy servants that walk before
thee with all their heart:**

I Kings 8:23.

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